

**THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT:  
A LUTHERAN ANALYSIS**

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## DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to  
Lynn, my "thesis widow,"

and to

The Rev. Paul O. Rosnau and  
Mr. Robert E. Smith Jr. who  
gave much of their time in  
helping to improve several  
key aspects of the paper.

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## INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

### The Challenge

Of all the movements today which are promoting the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, the "church growth movement" is one of the most influential. One leading church growth proponent notes:

Evangelicals from all points on the ecclesiological continuum agree: the church growth movement is 'hot,' the debate it has stirred is getting hotter, and evangelicals around the world--not just those in the U.S.--are going to have to deal with it.<sup>1</sup>

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod - which is a part of this "ecclesiological continuum" - will have to deal with the church growth movement.<sup>2</sup> Since there are those in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (hereafter, LC--MS) who are very active in this primarily Reformed movement,<sup>3</sup> there is a need for careful scrutiny on the part of Confessional Lutherans. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine the church growth movement to see whether it is consistent with, and applicable within, the context of Confessional Lutheranism.<sup>4</sup>

### Background Information

One of the most difficult tasks in analyzing the church growth movement is finding and formulating its definition. One leading proponent defines the term "church growth" as follows:

The term "church growth" is a McGavranism. . . [used] to describe . . . what he . . . articulate[s]. . . Actually "church growth" means all that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into responsible membership.<sup>5</sup>

The church growth movement's understanding of the "church" and "growth" are expanded in Chapter Two. (For the examination of the "church" see "The Nature of the Church" and "The 'Celebration . . . Concept'"; and for "growth" see "The Purpose of the Church: Health and Growth.") The nature of the "movement" is examined in Chapter Four ("The Roots of the Theology of Growth") by narrowing down the emphases of church growth into its "formal principle" and "material principle." While the analysis of the nature of the "movement" provides a helpful definition of the "church growth movement," for now, note the following simple definition of the "church growth movement":

The church growth movement consists of those individuals who, in varying degrees, believe in, adhere to and promote the "church growth" presuppositions and principles (McGavranisms) articulated by Donald McGavran.<sup>6</sup>

The history of the church growth movement in North America goes back to the growing popularity of Donald McGavran and several of his books on the subject. Due to McGavran's growing popularity, he established the "Institute of Church Growth" at Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon in 1961. In 1965 the institute moved to Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California and was renamed "School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth." Experienced

missionaries with a variety of academic degrees make up the current faculty.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Method of Research

Primary source material from leading church growth proponents was consulted. These proponents include Reformed proponents (McGavran, Wagner, Schuller, and Arn) and Lutheran proponents (Hunter, Matthias, and to a lesser degree, Biesenthal, Miller, and Nadasdy). Although an attempt was made to emphasize the unique contributions which Lutherans have made to the movement, generally speaking, proponents from either side of the spectrum promote many of the same church growth emphases. One is safe in studying either Reformed or Lutheran church growth proponents when attempting to understand the movement. This can be easily seen, for example, by the way in which Reformed church growth proponents write many forwards to the books written by Lutheran church growth proponents.<sup>8</sup>

#### The Structure of the Paper

The body of the paper is arranged to cover key concepts such as: the doctrine of man and conversion (Chapter One); the Church, the public ministry and the priesthood of all believers (Chapter Two); the inerrancy of Scripture and how this relates to the Reformation (Chapter Three); and the relationship between science and theology (Chapter Four). Flowing from these insights are the nature and effectiveness

of church growth principles (Chapter Five); and the defense (Chapter Six) and acceptance (Chapter Seven) of the movement by Lutherans.

Each chapter will consist of two main sections: "Discussion Points" and "The Analysis." The former will consist of direct quotes from church growth proponents which will allow the reader to become familiar with primary source material. These points will provide the basis for the analysis of key Church Growth concepts. The latter will provide an analysis of these same insights through a variety of sources. In an effort to present a full Biblical perspective, several of these sources will be quoted at length. The analysis will parallel the issues raised through the quotes in the discussion section. To make this analysis easier reading, the same sub-titles appear in both sections (with only a few minor modifications occurring). These sub-titles (or their abbreviations) will also be used to refer the reader to various parts of the paper. (To shorten and simplify the referral of the reader to various parts of this paper, these locations will be cited as follows: See (analysis of) [Chapter] X: "Sub-title" (or its abbreviation). Note that "analysis" refers to "The Analysis" sub-section.) This technique is used frequently for two main reasons: (1) because a great deal of overlap exists between sections, particularly between Part I and Part II; and (2) the reader who wishes to make a thorough study of a specific aspect of the movement,

which is treated in various parts of the paper, may find this useful.

There is great diversity in the manner in which "church growth movement" is spelt.<sup>9</sup> Some use capital letters, some lower case, and still others use a combination of the two. Some Lutherans simply write this terminology in lower case letters when they feel they have "Lutheranized" the Reformed emphases. In this light, this paper, from this point on, will use: "Church Growth movement." The lower case letters in "movement" will emphasize the fact that, apart from the issue of presuppositions, it is probably more proper to use lower case letters. The capital letters in "Church Growth" will emphasize the fact that a specific "science,"<sup>10</sup> with specific presuppositions, is being referred to.

Throughout the paper, for the sake of brevity, "Church Growth" and "the movement," will often stand alone (or be separated by one or more clauses in a sentence). The word "proponent" will also be added to the various combinations of the "Church Growth movement" terminology. The "Church Growth proponent" will be used in a very general manner. It should not necessarily be assumed that when a Church Growth emphasis is discussed that that particular point of view is shared by ALL proponents of the movement. There is freedom within the movement to agree and disagree. For example, although C. Peter Wagner cites Dr. Robert Schuller 14 times in Your Church Can Grow,<sup>11</sup> and often finds it hard to improve on

his maxims,<sup>12</sup> he does openly differ on at least one point.<sup>13</sup>

The term "church" is another important term. When it refers to the "universal," it will be spelt: "Church." When it refers to a local "gathering," it will be spelt: "church." While ordinarily Lutherans use the term "congregation" to refer to the local gathering, this terminology had to be avoided in order to provide consistency. This is particularly important in Chapter Two under the discussion and analysis of: "The 'Celebration + Congregation + Cell = Church' Concept."

#### Special Considerations

Since the nature of this paper is to analyze a controversial subject, an attempt was made to narrow the scope of the discussion.<sup>14</sup> In Church Fights,<sup>15</sup> by Speed Leas and Paul Kittlaus, three basic types of conflicts were examined: intra-personal, interpersonal and substantive. For the purpose of this paper, the field was narrowed to the substantive conflict which is issue oriented and a "conflict . . . between two individuals, or between an individual and a group, or between groups."<sup>16</sup> There are four kinds of substantive conflict which include conflict regarding: (a) values; (b) the ends, or goals; (c) the facts of a situation; and (d) the methods, or means. These insights can be helpful in determining the nature of the conflict between Church Growth proponents and those who are opposed to the movement.<sup>17</sup>

The question of "values" is not the primary issue in the analysis of Church Growth. It should be assumed that individuals on both sides of the fence - and even those on the fence - possess Christian values, morals and concerns. With the question of "the end, or goals," there should be little debate here. Both the Lutheran and the Church Growth movement desire the same end, i.e., the growth of Christ's Church and the salvation of souls. When individuals are pre-occupied with these two points, much time can be consumed in what are actually secondary issues. It is best to "put the best construction" on the values of the other person so that more weighty issues can be treated.<sup>18</sup> Larry M. Vogel stated this well when he recently critiqued a small facet of the movement:

Let it be emphasized that no disregard for the work of proclaiming the Gospel to the unregenerate and no questioning of the good motives and intentions of [the Church Growth proponents] are intended.<sup>19</sup>

Disagreements over "the facts of a situation" are a little more significant to the Church Growth situation. Church Growth proponents seem to say to those critiquing the movement: "If you really understood Church Growth, you would agree with it!"<sup>20</sup> However, all that needs to be done is to appeal to a common source. For example, as the title indicates, common ground can be established between one or more individuals when Understanding Church Growth, by McGavran,<sup>21</sup> is studied. Since many Church Growth proponents freely quote one another,

it is clear that a great deal of common ground does exist between Church Growth proponents. In short, one can fully understand the movement, and at the same time, disagree with its emphases. In fact, it is possible that some who disagree with Church Growth may understand it better than some proponents of the movement.<sup>22</sup>

The heart of the issue for the Confessional Lutheran is the question of "the method, or means." While the movement asserts "the end justifies the means,"<sup>23</sup> the Lutheran responds, "the Means of Grace - the Gospel, Baptism and the Lord's Supper - are God's gifts, the "means," which are to be used to achieve the "end" of the growth of His Church (AC IV, V, VII)." For this reason, in addition to those sections which treat this concern directly (One: "The Harvest Principle," and Three: "A Pragmatic Reformation"), the entire paper will keep the Means of Grace in sharp focus.

Once the nature of the conflict has been defined, an approach to the problem needs to be developed. Aristotle's Rhetorica<sup>24</sup> provides four classical approaches. Under the heading "refutation," which seems to fit the nature of this paper, objections may be raised in four ways: (a) by putting forward another statement; (b) by quoting previous decisions; (c) by directly attacking your opponent's own statement; or (d) by putting forward another statement like it.<sup>25</sup>

Since Scripture is the ultimate authority for the Christian, putting forth "another statement," or "quoting

previous decisions," should not be the primary focus. While this paper will closely scrutinize the very words ("own statements") of Church Growth proponents, this approach should not be labeled an "attack" for two reasons. First, as stated above, direct quotes are used so that the reader will become familiar with primary source material.

Second, much of the LC--MS acceptance of the Church Growth movement came during a time when the Church was just recovering from the effects of its synodical controversy. Like a deep, open wound, treatment was needed. Although, stitches were needed, to some, Church Growth seemed to be the correct bandage. (Let the needle represent the Word and the thread represent the Sacraments.) But a temporary bandage is no substitute for necessary surgery (stitching). At best, the bandage becomes a part of the wound (congealment), and consequently, a part of the problem. (Let the wound represent modernism and the bandage represent Reformed theology.) However, the solution to this complication is not to rip off or "attack"<sup>26</sup> the bandage - this will only make the wound deeper. The combination of soaking the wound and bandage in disinfectant, and a series of gentle tugs, will remove the bandage without causing the wound to become more serious. (Let this option represent the goal of this writer throughout this paper.) Yet, there is pain even in this process. Stitching a wound also involves pain. In moments of pain, one might wonder whether it is really necessary to remove the

bandage. However, bandages become dirty, and as such, can actually become the sources of infection. Therefore, the bandage must be removed gently, not "attacked." Once the bandage has been removed, there is no alternative, the wound must be stitched or the entire process will have to be repeated. (Let these final points represent this writer's commitment to asserting the importance of understanding and properly applying the Means of Grace as set forth in the Lutheran Confessions; knowing full well that there will some "pain" involved in this determined effort.)<sup>27</sup>

Engelder sheds light on this illustration through his recollection of the words of C.F.W. Walther. What was true at the birth of the LC--MS, is true today.

Do you want to reach men's hearts, win them for Christ? "In accordance with God's will it should be the preacher's aim to proclaim the Gospel to his hearers till their hearts are melted" (The Proper Distinction, etc., p. 406). . . . Is the Church in need of a reformation? Is her spiritual life at a low ebb? What then is the remedy? There is only one. All other remedies may galvanize a Church into temporary activity. But this is what puts life into the Church: "The weakest graduate [from one of the LC--MS colleges or seminaries], if only he has grasped the doctrine that the grace of God in Jesus Christ has appeared to all men, to be received freely, by faith, can preach to men in such a way that they are assured of their salvation, and that is worth more than all the wisdom and all the possessions and treasures of the world (Proc. Syn. Conf., 1872, p. 28)."<sup>28</sup>

Throughout this paper "contrary statements" will be employed in the analysis of Church Growth emphases. These statements are primarily drawn from Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions which provide an absolute standard of judgment.

This is not to say that this paper has all the answers to all the questions which might be raised. For example, rather than discuss the manner in which the behavioral sciences (and "valid" Church Growth principles) may be used,<sup>29</sup> which many others are doing, an overall alternative to the Church Growth movement is presented in the analysis of Chapter Seven ("Theology"). (This section should nevertheless aid the reader in determining whether significant amounts of time and energy should be spent focusing on the behavioral sciences.) An appeal to an absolute standard is important because "a refutation is something that cannot be otherwise than as we say it is."<sup>30</sup> In short, Scripture needs to be placed side-by-side of Church Growth "statements" to determine their correctness and usefulness.

According to Leas, conflict within groups can actually have positive results. Therefore, three questions were considered which helped determine the overall direction of this paper: Will Church Growth empower the LC--MS? Will Church Growth aid the LC--MS in establishing its identity? Will Church Growth unify the LC--MS?<sup>31</sup> Several sections are particularly important to these concerns. In response to the first question, since much of the movement is built upon the behavioral sciences, Part II was developed to see whether this emphasis will "empower" the Synod in the strictest sense. A special attempt to answer the second question was made in Chapter Seven ("The Need"). The third question is

probably the most important because it considers the long-term effects of the movement on the LC-MS. While the movement may "empower" the Synod in the area of providing some tools for evangelism, and while the movement has placed a positive stress on the word "evangelical," (as in "Evangelical Lutheran Church") it has caused controversy- not unity. Throughout this paper, emphasis will be placed upon true unity which is centered in the doctrine of the Gospel purely taught and the correct administration of the Sacraments (AC VII).

These insights have been provided here so that the scope of the argument can be narrowed down, common ground can easily be established ("the facts of the situation") and the main issues can begin to be placed under close examination ("the methods, or means"). Should any difference exist in the perception of what is the primary consideration (example, that "values" or "the end" are the main issues, not "means"), then individuals can easily discuss this difference and work to develop a common understanding of the central issue(s). It is hoped that Church Growth proponents not feel "attacked," but realize that "contrary statements" from Scripture must be considered. It is also hoped that this paper will work to empower and unify the LC--MS as it strives to assert its true Confessional Lutheran identity within the world-wide Christian Church and to the world.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Wagner, Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church (Ventura, CA: GL Publishers, 1976), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Church Growth has already made an impact on the LC--MS. For example, at the past two "Great Commission Convocations" a great deal of emphasis had been placed upon the "pragmatic" (through Church Growth), while it seems the "theological" had not been emphasized. This is partly due to the "how to" nature of the event. However, very few workshops had been devoted to developing key theological issues among the convocation's participants. While there could (and should) be a "both/and" emphasis, in regard to the first Convocation (1980), this writer could not find one workshop dedicated to the theological understanding of evangelism. (See "'Discipling in the 80's'. . ." The workbook of the 1980 Great Commission Convocation.) There was a slight improvement in 1984; but it was not substantial. Only four of the 116 workshops were placed under that heading of "Theology." Eight were listed under "Church Growth," and several of the other workshop "brief descriptions" quoted Church Growth proponents or reflected Church Growth concepts. The priority which the convocation gave to Church Growth is probably best demonstrated in that of the five "extended workshops" and four "mini-courses," two and three respectively were related to Church Growth. Clear exceptions to this were: Rev. Robert Schroeder's "The Great Commission Presents Credal Evangelism" and Dr. Samuel Nafzger's "Theological Concerns in Evangelism and Church Growth." ("Great Commission Convocation '84 (October 25-28, 1984): Workshops," pp. 14 and 18.) The LC--MS would do well (perhaps at the next Great Commission Convocation) to devote a substantial amount of time to concerns raised by Nafzger dealing with Church Growth which include (pp. 17-18 of his manuscript): (1) decision theology; (2) the emphasis on what happens within the individual over and above what happened on the cross; (3) the belief that there are three categories of people (unrepentant, believers, and disciples); (4) the view that spiritual growth is always visible to the human eye; (5) that acceptance of the Gospel is attributable to a program [rather than the message of the Gospel itself]; (6) the view that lack of results are attributable to the manner in which a program is implemented [rather than left to the gracious will of God; AC VI]. These concerns will be covered throughout this paper.

<sup>3</sup>Matthias, Elmer W., "This Lutheran Sees Value in Church Growth" (In Concordia Journal, March 1984), pp. 54, 56, 57, 62.

<sup>4</sup>One reason why there is a need for this study is because there has been very little written on the subject; especially in proportion to space devoted to Church Growth in official LC--MS publications (such as The Lutheran Witness; The Evangelgram; and particularly, as seen in this paper, The Reporter). Part of the reason for this is that these publications, like the Great Commission Convocation, are "pragmatically" oriented. The LC--MS would be wise to print more articles such as "How Does One Become a Christian" (In The Lutheran Witness, Jan., 1984, p. 25) by Mr. Mark Saunders; and "The Witness Workshop Manual--A Critique" (In Concordia Journal, Nov. 1984, pp. 217-224) by Larry M. Vogel.

<sup>5</sup>Wagner, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup>This definition is offered by the writer for the sake of brevity and to provide the reader with a general definition.

<sup>7</sup>Wagner, pp. 11-12; 41.

<sup>8</sup>For example, see: Kent R. Hunter's, Foundations for Church Growth (New Haven, MO.: Leader Publishing Company, 1983), pp. 9-10.

<sup>9</sup>Miller, John H. "Theses Toward a Biblical Theology of Church Growth." A paper prepared for the Church Growth Task Force; Texas District, LC--MS, Aug. 30, 1983, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup>Wagner, pp. 38-44; Hunter, pp. 23-24.

<sup>11</sup>Wagner, cited above.

<sup>12</sup>Wagner, p. 136.

<sup>13</sup>Wagner, p. 91.

<sup>14</sup>It has been the experience of this writer that a great deal of time, energy can be saved if the scope of the problem has been narrowed down to the most appropriate and important variables. The insights from Leas, and others, also aid in understanding what is a proper argument. Let one example suffice. Upon almost convincing Lutherans of (at least) the Reformed weaknesses inherent in Church Growth, it is not uncommon for someone to ask: "Do you have an alternative?" Whether the Confessional Lutheran has an alternative or not is not the issue at all! Either the Nature of the movement and its principles are consistent with Confessional Lutheranism or they are not. If they are, Church Growth is acceptable. If they are not, Church Growth is unacceptable. Using Leas categories, this discussion can easily be shifted from "the facts of a situation" (which can be said to reflect the

question above), to a discussion of "the methods, or means" which are at the heart of the issue. The reader should also note: (1) this writer does present an alternative (Chapter Seven: "Theology . . ."); and (2) this alternative is not presented so that some will feel the critique of the movement's nature is valid. The analysis of the movement should be considered with or without the alternative presented. Let Scripture determine the validity of this paper's analysis. The alternative given in this paper simply demonstrates the strengths of the Lutheran context and how solid, Christ-centered practice flows from its Biblical and Confessional theology.

<sup>15</sup> Leas, Speed and Paul Kittlaus, Church Fights (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973).

<sup>16</sup> Leas, pp. 30-31.

<sup>17</sup> Leas, pp. 32-35.

<sup>18</sup> Since these two points ("value" and "the end, goal") seem to be primary arguments of Lutheran Church Growth proponents, they had to be treated in this paper. In a sense, the analysis of Chapter Seven is a reaction to the assertion that Lutherans are "value deficient" in not emphasizing "the end, or goal." See also the analysis of One: "The 'Means' and 'End' Distinction."

<sup>19</sup> Vogel, p. 217.

<sup>20</sup> Hunter, p. 182.

<sup>21</sup> McGavran, Donald, Understanding Church Growth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978).

<sup>22</sup> Kurt Marquart provides an example of how common ground can be easily achieved in Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 313-314. In this case, not only does he strive to define the "historical critical method," but he must establish it exists before discussion can begin (with some individuals). Much the same procedure must be used with some Church Growth proponents by appealing to common sources.

<sup>23</sup> Wagner, p. 136.

<sup>24</sup> Mckeon, Richard, The Basic Works of Aristotle (New York: Random House, 1941).

<sup>25</sup> Mckeon, pp. 1322; 1432-1434.

<sup>26</sup> Some may feel that this writer is "attacking" the Church Growth movement. This is often the case when one writes a polemical paper. However, it will be seen throughout this paper that Confessional Lutheranism has been put on the defensive: (1) by those that view the [Lutheran] liturgical form of worship as not being "fun" (Wagner, p. 98); (2) by those that view the Lutheran heritage and liturgy as a problem (see: Win Arn's comments in "Evangelism Convocation Focuses on Convocation" In Reporter, July 23, 1984; Wagner's comments in "What's Your Answer? Can Lutheran Churches Grow?" In Lutheran Pastor's Bulletin, July/Aug., 1980; Six: "Church Growth as a Friend."); and (3) by those that view Lutheran theology as a growth hinderance (see "Individual Christian Responsibility Said to be Basic for Church Growth," In Reporter, Dec. 14, 1981; and Hunter, pp. 63, 150, 152-153; and the analysis of Seven: "Theology.") While not attempting to minimize any evangelistic shortcomings the LC--MS might have (either in its history or today), this writer is merely responding to the need to defend Confessional Lutheranism.

<sup>27</sup> During the period of time in which this paper was written, this writer suffered from a wound which required numerous, painful stitches. This injury provided renewed feeling and appreciation for both the illustration, (which had been used months prior to the first draft of the thesis), and the emotional issues behind it.

<sup>28</sup> Engelder, Theodore, "Walther, A Christian Theologian" (In Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. 7, 1936. In Select-ed Articed on Objective Justification. Compiled by Dr. Robert Preus. Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, n.d.), 812.

<sup>29</sup> See endnote number one under Conclusion.

<sup>30</sup> Hett, W. S., ed., Aristotle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 339.

<sup>31</sup> Leas, pp. 35-41.

**PART I:**

**THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

## CHAPTER ONE

### CHURCH GROWTH'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONVERSION OF MAN

#### Discussion Points

##### The Doctrine of Man

Church Growth proponents teach that man is a fallen creature.<sup>1</sup> As a result of the fall "sin became a very part of the nature of people."<sup>2</sup> Hunter believes that due to "original sin, [men] tend to resist the Holy Spirit" and, for this reason, "only the Holy Spirit can prepare people for the Gospel and cause them to be receptive."<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Robert Schuller (Garden Grove, California) believes "the crisis facing the church now is a crisis of theology that centers on the doctrine of the human being."<sup>4</sup> However, it is through science that Church Growth claims the Church has found help. Through the behavioral sciences "man has learned much about himself that helps . . . develop effective strategies for growth."<sup>5</sup> The movement encourages its proponents to think scientifically.<sup>6</sup> Through "science" and "a theological conviction," the movement "uses what is known about the nature of man to allow God's message to get through" to these same men.<sup>7</sup> One key science in this process is anthropology.

McGavran states:

Anthropology, one of the sciences of man, describes how men act, how they innovate, how they govern themselves, what restraints they set up for their societies, and a thousand other matters of note. . . .

The Christian . . . who believes that in Jesus Christ God has revealed a way of life rewarding for all men, also uses anthropology for directed change. . . . The authority for disciplining the nations, seen in the Bible, fits so extraordinarily well with what his reason tells him is essential for the maximum welfare of the maximum number of men. The Christian then turns to anthropology with a good conscience. 8

McGavran discusses man's nature within his "Sociological Foundation" section. In his chapter "The Receptivity of Men and Societies" he states:

Sometimes men hearing the Word do nothing. . . . Sometimes, however, men hearing the Word leap to obey it.

Fluctuating receptivity is a most prominent aspect of human nature [my emphasis]. . . . It vitally affects every aspect of missions, and must be studied extensively if church growth is to be understood.

The receptivity or responsiveness of individuals waxes and wanes. No person is equally ready at all times to follow "the Way." The young person reared in a Christian home is usually more ready to accept Jesus Christ at twelve than at twenty. The sceptic is often more willing to become a disciple after serious illness or loss than he was before. This variability of persons is so well known that it needs no further exposition. 9

#### The Harvest Principle

One principle many Church Growth proponents agree upon is the "harvest principle" (based on their interpretation of Matthew 9:37-38).<sup>10</sup> For the Church Growth movement, this principle stresses the "imperative" of the Church amidst a vast spectrum of internal and external opportunities for missions. While there are many tasks which the Church could

be doing, McGavran states:

Today's supreme task is effective multiplication of churches in the receptive societies of earth.<sup>11</sup>

Based upon his research, McGavran states (in another place):

More winnable people live in the world today than ever before.<sup>12</sup>

The harvest principle is based on the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Wagner states:

Some things God does by Himself; some things He does by using human beings.

It seems the difference between fertile and barren soil is basically a matter of divine providence. The ripening of certain harvest fields at certain times can be attributed only to the sovereignty of God. "I have planted, Apollos watered," writes Paul, "but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6).<sup>13</sup>

By realizing that "there is a time when God's Spirit is peculiarly active in the hearts of men,"<sup>14</sup> it is possible to concentrate on places where the "harvest is ready." When these places are found a church will not "spend a lot of time and energy with those who are resistant to the Gospel."<sup>15</sup> It has been suggested that the Missouri Synod must start their new missions in the places "showing the best prospect of rapid growth."<sup>16</sup> George G. Hunter III describes God's role in the harvest principle this way:

God's Spirit works through the events and circumstances of some people's lives to create receptivity, to 'warm the heart' for the gospel. . . . Our gracious God goes before us into the hearts and consciousness of people, preparing for an evangelical harvest.<sup>17</sup>

Kent Hunter reflects this perspective as follows:

They [Christians] ask the Lord to arrange what some have

called "divine appointments" in which the Lord leads them to people with open hearts, people whose life situations have made them open to the Gospel - people in whom the Holy Spirit has begun to cultivate the ground for the miracle of faith.

18

### The Great Commission

Church Growth proponents see the Great Commission as the starting point for understanding the harvest principle.

Although Matthew 9:37-38 is frequently cited (See Appendix C where Matthew 9:37-38 is used instead of Matthew 28:19-20),

Wagner states:

The place to start is Matthew 28:19-20, the most detailed and complete summary of the Great Commission. A proper understanding of these verses will provide us with the key needed to understand the others in context. . . .

Going, baptizing, and teaching are means to be used toward accomplishing the end [of making disciples]. They are also necessary components of mission strategy, but they are not ends in themselves.

The other four appearances of the Great Commission do not expand on the right goal. They do add to the list of the means available to reach it. Mark 16:15,16 repeats baptizing, but adds preaching. Luke 24:47,48 repeats preaching, but adds witnessing. John 20:21 mentions sending. Acts 1:8 . . . repeats witnessing and adds the geographical aspects.

19

Matthias reflects these insights when he states:

Reading literature of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and listening to sermons from Lutheran pulpits, the conclusion can be drawn that Lutherans prefer to express the Great Commission in Mark's terms of preaching the Gospel. . . . In recent years the emphasis has switched in some circles, particularly church growth circles, to the expression "make disciples." Some churchmen suggest that the Great Commission can be viewed as an ellipse with two foci. The one gets its emphasis from Mark, preach the Gospel, and the other from Matthew, make disciples.

It appears that a conscious effort ought to be made to

use Matthew's expression "make disciples" more often [in Lutheran circles] . . . because it is more Scripturally accurate in revealing the full intent of all the Great Commission passages. Just a quick glance at them again will reveal that all forms of the Great Commission have one goal: to bring those who are out of relationship with Christ into relationship with Him.<sup>20</sup>

### The "Means" and "End" Distinction

The Church Growth understanding of the Great Commission leads them to their understanding of means and ends. Wagner states:

Now I will make a rather bold statement. In my judgment, the greatest error in contemporary missionary strategy is the confusion of means and end in the understanding of the Great Commission.

In other words, some . . . have set up their programs as though some of the means were ends in themselves. They have not adequately articulated what they are doing in terms of making disciples. Some for example, have contented themselves with preaching the gospel whether or not their preaching makes disciples. Some have very meticulously counted "decisions," but they make no corresponding effort to count and report disciples. . . . The Lord of the Great Commission, in the final analysis, is interested in disciples, not simply decisions.<sup>21</sup>

It is in this spirit that Matthias states:

Finally, then, the question needs to be asked: "Are we [LC--MS Lutherans] fulfilling the Great Commission? Customarily many answer: "Yes, we are faithful in preaching the Gospel - we are getting the Word out to those who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior." This gives the impression that the Great Commission is concerned about nothing beyond the proclamation of the Gospel. However, this is only a part of the commission. . . . Goals and means are not to be confused. Preaching the Gospel is never an end in itself. In an evangelistic setting it always has as its purpose the making of disciples.<sup>22</sup>

Hunter, as a Lutheran Church Growth proponent, points out the importance of the Means of Grace.<sup>23</sup> Based on Luther's

understanding of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, Hunter states: "It is the Holy Spirit who calls people to faith"<sup>24</sup> and causes "them to be receptive."<sup>25</sup> As the Christian goes into the world, it is his witness that "sets the stage for the power of God's Spirit to change people's hearts. It provides the context ["atmosphere,"<sup>26</sup>] through which God causes people to repent."<sup>27</sup> The result of this Church Growth emphasis is "disciples multiplying disciples by the power of the Word through the presence of the Spirit."<sup>28</sup>

#### Diagnosing the Receptivity of Man

It is at this point that Church Growth places substantial emphasis on the Christian's job of diagnosing the receptivity of man.<sup>29</sup> Empirical research is one key responsibility of the Christian in God's conversion process. Commenting on "The Parable of the Sower" (Luke 8:4-15) Wagner states:

I often jestingly suggest that being a farmer is more helpful in interpreting the [rural-oriented] parables than knowing Greek! No farmer works his field for the fun of it - he works for the payoff, which is the fruit. . . .

The Parable of the Sower . . . tells of a farmer who sowed seeds on four different parts of his farm, but got fruit on only one.

According to Jesus' interpretation, the variable factor was not the sower, nor was it the seed (which is described as the "word of God"), nor was it the method. It was the soil.

The obvious lesson for missionary strategy is that the seed of the Word must be concentrated on fertile soil if fruit is to be expected. Some people of the world are receptive to the gospel while others are resistant. The world's soils must be tested.<sup>30</sup>

For "unresponsive people" Wagner suggests

someone should be there who is expert enough to tell when they are becoming ripe for the gospel. In one sense you need the very finest workers in the unresponsive fields. . . . The [massive labor force of] laborers are needed for the ripe harvest fields.<sup>31</sup>

One way to analyze when people are "becoming ripe for the gospel," is through modern marketing's "audience analysis."<sup>32</sup>

Through these studies, one can measure "the degree of resistance/receptivity." Here are five suggested questions:

- (1) Have they visited our church?
- (2) Are they like the rest of the people of the church?
- (3) Are they new arrivals [in the community]?
- (4) Do they have needs the church can meet?
- (5) Are they friends of new Christians?<sup>33</sup>

#### The Quest for a Relevant Gospel

Church Growth considers the fourth point above important in determining how the Gospel is to be preached. (Point two will be discussed under "The Homogeneous Unit Principle" below.) Wagner states:

As to the basic principle for discovering the proper method, though, I would have a hard time improving on Robert Schuller's maxim: The secret of success is to find a need and fill it. The methods used in growing churches, diverse as they might be, have all done this. They have offered something that will meet the needs of the kind of people they are ministering to.<sup>34</sup>

Wagner continues:

Chances are that within a short driving distance of your own church are thousands and thousands of people who need the Lord and who would become faithful disciples if they heard the gospel in terms they could understand and relate to.<sup>35</sup>

Hunter says it this way: "Research is the key. . . . The Gospel must be placed in the context of relevant needs or the

message will not get through."<sup>36</sup> Only through research will it be possible to "know which methods God has blessed and which He has not blessed."<sup>37</sup> Edward R. Dayton expands upon this point:

The point is that we need to discover God's strategies, his best way for reaching . . . people. . . . How do we reach them? Through their need. . . . By attempting to meet their need as they see it.<sup>38</sup>

Church Growth proponents find Biblical proof for this principle. Hunter states:

The very fact that God would send His Son into the world is a demonstration of the extent God will go to seek the salvation of man in a relevant way. . . .

When the faith is irrelevant, the fire of the Spirit only smolders and the smoke of unintelligible religiosity just stinks up the church. . . . When (the Gospel) is presented in a relevant way, [it] touches unbelievers as the ". . . power of God for salvation to every one who has faith. . . ."

The church must be constantly asking, "Is the message getting through? . . . What is working? . . . What churches are growing? Why?"<sup>39</sup>

Schuller's possibility thinking has been applied to the quest for a relevant gospel through the concept of "self-esteem."

Schuller began by trying to sell unchurched Californians on the promises of an afterlife and other-worldly "fantasies." Californians seemed preoccupied with their inner hurts and the loss of esteem sustained in the here and now. Taking cues from his potential "customers" and rethinking the "sales" approach Jesus used, Schuller decided some product modification, or at least the psychologized sales strategy, were in order.<sup>40</sup>

Schuller believes Christianity has failed

to proclaim the gospel in a way that can satisfy every person's deepest need - one's spiritual hunger for glory.

The church has survived through these centuries by assuming that every person's ultimate need was "salvation

from sin." It has held out "hope for forgiveness" as the ultimate answer.

What's wrong with this interpretation today? Nothing, and yet, everything, if in the process of interpreting sin and repentance the gospel is presented in substance or spirit in a way that assaults a person's self-esteem.<sup>41</sup>

Schuller argues, if the Church is to be successful, it must

meet

every person's deepest need - his hunger for self-esteem, self-worth, and personal dignity. . . . When persons lose their dignity, they lose their humanity. . . . So the self-esteem of every human soul must become the healthy core of our humanity-helping religion. . . .

Christians may discover a positive power in a theology that is centered on Christ - the Ideal One, the Ultimate Person, the Universal Human Standard. . . . As we focus on Jesus Christ, we shall discover a new theology, one that offers salvation from shame to self-esteem. [my emphasis] We shall discover that self-esteem rooted in Christ's love finally satisfies every person's thirst for glory.<sup>42</sup>

There are several reasons why Schuller has developed this emphasis which he calls a "new reformation."<sup>43</sup> First, "people today are biblically illiterate."<sup>44</sup> Second, he believes

psychiatry has dared to ask the all-important question: What is the ultimate nature and will of the human being? Pitifully, theologians have abandoned an essentially theological question to other disciplines and professions.<sup>45</sup>

Third, he believes

. . . most, if not all, of the social, political, and religious problems facing our world reflect theological defects. The imperfect theology of the Protestant Reformation was really interested primarily in the "salvation of shameful, sinful, wicked, rebellious souls from eternal hellfire." Salvation was offered, very correctly, by divine grace, not by human works. When our theology started with the salvation of a human commodity called "a soul" from "hellfire," we found ourselves sincerely unable to relate that doctrine of salvation to the other human conditions that demanded theological answers.<sup>46</sup>

These emphases are reflected in Schuller's message.

Wagner states:

Robert Schuller rarely preaches an expository message. His topical messages communicate "possibility thinking" to unbelievers who know nothing about the Bible and care little whether they do.<sup>47</sup>

This is why Schuller's possibility thinking has been described as: "a marketing modernization of the Christian 'faith concept.'"<sup>48</sup> Through this emphasis Schuller hopes to "synergize scientific and spiritual truth."<sup>49</sup> But the greatest strength of possibility thinking is that it is supposed to enable individuals to put their faith into action. In fact, it "boils down . . . to a synonym of what the Bible calls 'faith.'"<sup>50</sup>

#### The Homogeneous Unit Principle

The movement believes the Church should concentrate on "homogeneous units". McGavran defines homogeneous units as

a section of society in which all the members have some characteristic in common. Thus a homogeneous unit might be a political unit . . . a culture or a language . . . a tribe or caste. . . . The homogeneous unit is an elastic concept, its meaning depending on the context in which it is used.<sup>51</sup>

The "elastic concept" of this principle can mean "economics, world view, education, likes and dislikes."<sup>52</sup>

Like the nature of man, the harvest principle, the receptivity of man, and the methods which are used to proclaim a relevant gospel, the truth of the homogeneous unit principle is supported on the basis of empirical research. Wagner

states:

Of all the scientific hypotheses developed within the church growth framework, this one as nearly as any approaches a "law." A decade and a half of research dealing with numerous cultures in virtually every corner of the world confirms that the churches most likely to grow are those which bring together in the local fellowship those of a single homogeneous unit.

53

Church Growth claims the homogeneous unit principle is helpful in detecting needs because "every different homogeneous unit has a different set of needs."<sup>54</sup> (This principle is reflected in number two of the "resistance/receptivity" list above.) McGavran states:

Unless churchmen are on the lookout for changes in receptivity of homogeneous units within the general population, and are prepared to seek and bring persons and groups belonging to these units into the fold, they will not even discern what needs to be done in mission. . . . An essential task is to discern receptivity and - when this is seen - to adjust methods, institutions, and personnel until the receptive are becoming Christians and reaching out to win their fellows to eternal life.

55

This principle is seen as a providing "cultural sensitivity" in which "the Gospel can most effectively be communicated."<sup>56</sup> This is because people within a homogeneous unit

. . . consider each other to be "our kind of people." They have many areas of mutual interest. . . . They socialize freely. When they are together they are comfortable and they feel at home.

57

McGavran states:

If they hear the Gospel from their own folk, they are winnable; but from strangers they are resistant as ever.

58

The homogeneous unit principle is reported to have pragmatic value for congregations situated in culturally

(racially, etc.) changing communities. The "diseases" associated with this problem are called "ethnikitis" and "people blindness." Churches facing these challenges are victims of metropolitan ethnic migration, otherwise known as a changing neighborhood . . . [which] may well be . . . the chief killer of churches in the U.S.A. today. 59

Hunter describes the process of ethnikitis:

People of one culture make up the community and the church. A new group of people representing a different culture begin to move into the community. The first group begins moving out. They begin to represent an isolated Sunday morning island of the old cultural group in a sea of new people who are different. Some people from the new culture eventually join the church, and the people from the old culture begin transferring out. The members leave the church for some of the same reasons they left the community. People like to be with their own group of people. 60

Hunter links ethnikitis with people blindness:

When the church in the changing neighborhood refuses to be sensitive to the people of the new culture who are moving in to the community, they suffer from people blindness. The members will explain that the new people are welcome to come if they want. However, there is no recognition that these people might like to worship God according to their own cultural forms. The subtle but deadly message that the church gives is this: "If you want to worship, why can't you be like us?" 61

Church Growth views the homogeneous unit principle as the answer to these problems. In fact,

ethnikitis is caused by a failure . . . of the church leadership to understand and apply the homogeneous unit principle to their planning in time. . . .

People blindness comes from a failure to recognize the homogeneous unit principle. . . . In its severe forms, it can become cultural chauvinism. In its milder forms it simply results in a low view of cultural integrity. 62

Hunter notes the proper course of action for ethnikitis:

At the first sight of change, the congregation should begin plans to plant a new church that is made up of people like those of the new culture. This type of sensitivity for the new culture will be highly respected by the new people in the community. . . . By setting up a new church of their culture, the new people will be more responsive and feel open to worship with their own kind of people. 63

Hunter also notes the course of action for people blindness:

The answer to people blindness in the church is to open the eyes of Christians to see that there are ethnic groups in the so called melting pot of society who refuse to melt. In fact, many people are becoming more ethnic oriented. . . .

Being able to see the world as a mosaic of cultures will enable the church to reach out within each segment of society, rather than trying to force everyone into the mold of the majority. The result is that more people will be won to Jesus Christ. 64

### The Analysis

#### The Doctrine of Man

The Church Growth view of man is contrary to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Graebner summarizes the Scriptural teaching of man in his book Outlines of Doctrinal Theology. (Note: Although many Scripture references are cited in Graebner's book, only the first reference will be cited below.)

In his original state, man was . . . sound in body and soul, without (Gen. 2:17) . . . taint of sin (Gen. 1:31), but endowed with . . . the image and likeness of the Triune God (Gen. 1:26-27). . . .

Before the conception of their first offspring (Gen. 4:1), our first parents, . . . voluntarily transgressed a commandment of God (Gen. 3:6), and by this sin they fell from their primeval state (Gen. 3:7-10), lost the image of God (Gen. 3:10), became entirely depraved in spiritual death (Gen. 2:17) and obnoxious to temporal death (Gen. 3:19) and eternal damnation (Rom. 5:18). . . .

Not only was the guilt of Adam imputed to his descendants (Rom. 5:12-21), but his children and children's children have inherited from their first ancestor his corrupt nature (Gen. 4:1, 8), being . . . wholly depraved (Rom. 3:23), totally blind of understanding in spiritual things (Eph. 4:18), . . . their will opposed to the will of God (Rom. 8:7) . . . all their faculties enslaved in the service of sin (Rom. 7:14), without any ability in any measure to work their own spiritual restoration (Eph. 2:1; my emphasis).<sup>65</sup>

Therefore the Lutheran Confessions teach:

. . . since the fall of Adam, all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Ghost (AC II).<sup>66</sup>

Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions disagree with Church Growth when they state: "Sin became a very part of the nature of people"<sup>67</sup> and that mankind only "tend[s] to resist the Holy Spirit"<sup>68</sup> To the former, it should be said:

"Scripture and Luther stress the deep depravity resulting from man's fall, yet speak of sin as intruding on the nature of man, not as a constitutive part of that nature itself."<sup>69</sup> To the latter it should be said:

Man and his will were totally corrupted by original sin, so that man was spiritually worse off than a block of stone or a lifeless corpse.<sup>70</sup>

To say the former, is to believe Christ took on sinful human flesh. To say the latter, is to believe man can cooperate in conversion, when in fact, all he does is resist (SA II, I; III, I; "Epitome" I, II).

In light of these Scriptural insights one can agree with Schuller that the Church is facing a crisis in regard to the

doctrine of man. However, there are two main problems with Church Growth's reliance on what "man has learned about himself"<sup>71</sup> through science; especially the science of anthropology. The behavioral sciences cannot aid the Christian in knowing "the nature of man."<sup>72</sup> Only Scripture gives an infallible account of the nature of man. The Brief Statement states:

We teach also that men are unable, through any efforts of their own or by the aid of "culture and science," to reconcile themselves to God and thus to conquer death and damnation.<sup>73</sup>

McGavran's observations regarding man's "fluctuating receptivity" are behavioral in nature and not spiritual. This is demonstrated in his examples of the "variability of persons"<sup>74</sup> where he does not cite Scripture.

While "receptivity" is important in "every aspect of missions," the behavioral sciences should not be placed over Scripture by suggesting they are to be a church's primary focus.<sup>75</sup> Also, if anthropology is to be used, it must be used properly. However, there is some doubt whether Church Growth properly uses this science. One anthropologist, Robert L. Ramseyer, has serious questions in regard to the movement's anthropological approach. He believes it is "unrealistic and based on an implicitly deterministic approach to man and society."<sup>76</sup> If this is the case, then the movement's anthropology is unScriptural and scientifically inadequate. In this case, it is questionable whether the Christian is

truly justified in turning to anthropology "with a good conscience."<sup>77</sup>

### The Harvest Principle

Since man is by nature depraved, spiritually dead, totally blind in spiritual things, enslaved in sin and "without any ability in any measure to work . . . spiritual restoration,"<sup>78</sup> only God can produce faith in an individual, and thereby, a spiritual harvest.<sup>79</sup> This act of regeneration is described by Graebner as

. . . the act of divine grace (2 Tim. 1:9) and power (John 1:13) by which man, born of the flesh (John 3:6), void of all power to think (2 Cor. 3:5), to will (Gen. 5:5), or to do (John 15:5), any good thing, and dead in sin (Col. 2:13), is, through the means of grace (James 1:18), raised from spiritual death (Eph. 2:5-6), born into a new spiritual life (1 Pet. 1:23), and endowed with spiritual power to know and understand (2 Cor. 3:5) spiritual truths, to will and to do (Phi. 2:13) what is spiritually good, and especially, made to accept and enjoy the benefits of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, the Savior of mankind (1 Pet. 1:3).<sup>80</sup>

God's means are established. These are to be used in the "harvest" of the world. Graebner continues:

The means by which the benefits of Christ are offered and appropriated to the sinner (Gal. 3:2, 18, 22), . . . are the means of grace, the written and the spoken word of the Gospel (2 Tim. 3:15-17) and the holy Sacraments (Eph. 5:26). . . .

Conversion (1 Pet. 2:25) in [the strict] sense of the term is the work of God (Jer. 31:18) by which man is, through the Gospel, transferred (Col. 1:12-13) from a state of sin and wrath and spiritual death, . . . into a state of spiritual life and faith and grace (Gal. 4:5).<sup>81</sup>

God alone knows when and where a "harvest" will take place.

However, when the harvest does take place, the Christian knows

it is through the Means of Grace. The Confessions teach:

Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments [mittel] the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God (AC V).

McGavran uses Matthew 9:37ff out of context to support the Church Growth "harvest principle." When Jesus stated that the "harvest is plentiful" he based this statement on the fact that the Gospel had been proclaimed for generations in Israel. Although the disciples were indeed instructed to "shake off the dust of [their] feet" (v. 14), this instruction was not given as a determination of which "receptive" lands to go to or remain in. Unlike the universal mandate of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8), they had been told to "not go in the way of the Gentiles, and . . . not enter any city of the Samaritans" (v. 5). These instructions were for this specific mission of the disciples which would last only for a limited period of time. This limited time frame restricted the disciples to those cities which were "receptive" to the Gospel. Jesus' words of judgment against unreceptive cities (v. 15) reflect the limited extent of this particular mission.

McGavran's harvest principle leads him to an erroneous view of the "winnableness" of mankind.<sup>82</sup> "Winnableness" is something all men have simply because: (1) all men are equally sinful (Romans 3:23), and (2) all men are equally included in God's desire to save all men (1 Timothy 2:4). To describe some as more winnable than others is to misunderstand the

depravity of of man<sup>83</sup> and the universal atonement.<sup>84</sup>

From a human standpoint some people may appear to be more receptive or winnable to the Gospel than others. However, the person who may seem to be unreceptive, may be the very one that is converted by the power of God's Word. This was the case in Jesus' day. Although one would expect the plentiful harvest field (Matthew 9:37) of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6) to be receptive, this was often not the case. Jesus marveled at the great faith of the Samaritans (example, Luke 17:12) and even declared of the Roman centurion: "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith" (Luke 7:9).

Wagner's use of 1 Corinthians 3:6 does not support the Church Growth harvest principle.<sup>85</sup> This passage does not primarily emphasize the sovereignty of God whereby he does "some things" by Himself. Rather, "I have planted, Apollos watered," (v. 6a) reaffirms God's promise to "ripen harvest fields" through the Means of Grace alone, "harvest" them, and thereby "cause the increase" (v. 6b).

Scripture does not reveal a time when the Holy Spirit "is peculiarly active in the hearts of men"<sup>86</sup> apart from the Means of Grace. The Holy Spirit never "warms the heart" by going "before us into [my emphasis] the hearts of people"<sup>87</sup> It is unfortunate that even Lutherans would rely on those ["some"<sup>88</sup>] that teach "divine appointments in which the Lord leads them [Christians] to people with . . . hearts open to the Gospel."<sup>89</sup>

At this point, it is important to note that the harvest principle can be somewhat helpful in the social/political sense as a church sets priorities for missions. In this sense it can be said that a church's "supreme task" is to go to "the receptive societies of the earth."<sup>90</sup> In setting priorities churches can ask the type of questions Edward R. Dayton suggests:

1. What people does God want us to reach?
2. What is this people like?
3. Who should reach them?
4. How should we reach them?
5. What will be the result of reaching them?<sup>91</sup>

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod used these types of questions in determining to open a mission field to Japan (in 1893):

Synod . . . resolved to open a mission field in some foreign field. Japan was the country resolved upon for the following reasons: 1. Japan had opened its doors to the world [i.e., become "receptive"]; 2. There was a strong movement in progress in Japan toward European culture and civilization; 3. Of the 40,000,000 people in Japan, only 33,000 were Christians; 4. No Lutheran body was doing mission work in Japan. Another reason Japan received favorable consideration was that H. Midsuno, a young Japanese won for the Lutheran Church, was enrolled at Springfield, preparing to become a missionary.<sup>92</sup>

When plans for this mission failed, again, similar questions determined Synod's mission shift from Japan to India.

In India two missionaries, Theodore Naether and F.J. Mohn, in the employ of the Leipzig Mission Society, had severed their relations with said society because they could not subscribe to its views regarding the inspiration of Scripture. . . . These men, at home in Indian mission fields and conversant with the language of the country and in full agreement with the doctrinal position of our [Missouri] Synod, . . . continue[d] working in India under the auspices of the Missouri Synod.<sup>93</sup>

Despite the advantages of knowing which peoples of the earth are socially or politically "receptive," Church Growth does not stop here. When this term is applied to man's spiritual "receptivity" to the Gospel (as seen above), the principle can be used to set priorities which are contrary to Scripture. Even some within the LC--MS seem to mix this important distinction when it is stated that "openness or receptivity is a sociological phenomena" and on the other hand that "among these people, the harvest is white."<sup>94</sup> The priority is not to find where the "harvest is ready"<sup>95</sup> because the harvest is never ready before the Christian arrives with the Gospel. (Perhaps the LC--MS should set a precedent by sending missionaries to so-called "unreceptive" lands that are "politically" open to its presence.) The "supreme task," which is true to Biblical theology, is to go to all nations and make use of the Means of Grace (Matthew 28:19). This means all the world, not merely the places "showing the most rapid growth."<sup>96</sup> In this light, Dayton's five points<sup>97</sup> should be strengthened theologically:

1. Since all men need the Gospel, shall we not commit ourselves to those nations which will allow our church to serve them - even if they appear to be "unreceptive"? (Matthew 28)
2. What are the people we have committed ourselves to like? (1 Corinthians 9:22)
3. Since we have committed ourselves to them, who will share in our commitment to reach them as our appointed missionaries? (Acts 13:2-3)
4. Who is equipped to reach out with the Means of Grace? (2 Timothy 2:2; AC IV, VII)
5. Who is willing to be persistent in the use of the

Means of Grace and wait patiently for God to work when and where it pleases Him? (2 Corinthians 4:1ff; Galatians 6:9; AC V)

Sowing is the important aspect of missions. Whenever a Christian "reaps," it is because he or another has sown. Cannon begins his section entitled "Harvest Fields?" by citing John 4:37-38 and stating:

For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor. 98

Cannon bases the following comments on these verses:

It seems that the whole church is in favor of going to the harvest fields. Our young men and women are challenged to go out and reap the harvest. We say, "The whole world is ripe unto harvest!" Well, I'm sorry to say, this is not true. What a shocking experience it is for missionaries to go out under the impression that they are going to a harvest field and find out that it is just a field! Sometimes a rocky, weedy one at that! They find that the people of that country are not "ripe unto harvest." They are faced with the prospect of a life of hard unrewarding labor. They are unprepared for this. There they are with a scythe in their hand when it ought to be a plough, a basket for the fruits instead a bag of seed. It's enough to disillusion many a young person, and many a young person it does.

Everyone is eager for the dramatic, rewarding experience of harvesting, but not the same for the ploughing and sowing. Even some who are considered experts in missionary work advocate putting all of our resources into those areas and countries where we are getting a harvest. Certainly we must reap, but it is contrary to the Great Commission of Christ to reap only. "Go ye into ALL the world and preach. . . ." Sowing always precedes the harvest. We are looking for something for nothing when we are willing only to reap. We are looking for the cream without milking the cow. 99

Cannon has understood the problem of expecting to always harvest. This is why Scripture teaches the importance of

sowing (AC IV, VII) and waiting on God to bring the harvest (AC V). God has not promised to bring a harvest everywhere the Christian goes; but He has promised to be wherever the Christian goes to strengthen him until the day of the harvest (Matthew 28:20; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 6:9; James 5:7).

### The Great Commission

The weaknesses of the harvest principle are reflected in the Church Growth interpretation of The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) Wagner assumes too much when he states that Matthew 28:19-20 provides "the key needed to understand the others [Great Commission texts] in context."<sup>100</sup> Proper hermeneutical procedure requires that all of the Great Commission passages be examined in their context so that a balanced understanding of the "means" and "end" may be achieved (on the basis of the whole).<sup>101</sup> To say that one passage is "more Scripturally accurate in revealing the full intent of all the Great Commission passages,"<sup>102</sup> is to misunderstand the unity of Scripture and that

. . . all passages . . . which deal with the same matter . . . must be considered as being in full agreement with one another.<sup>103</sup>

The only exception to this rule is when one passage is clearer than another.<sup>104</sup> However, all Great Commission passages are equally clear and

. . . take cognizance of . . . Scripture's self-announced purpose--to make men wise unto salvation and to train them in holy living (2 Tim. 3:15-17).<sup>105</sup>

Wagner says, the terms "Going, baptizing, and teaching" are reduced to activities which work "toward" making disciples. They are described as not being "ends in themselves."<sup>106</sup> However, Scripture teaches that baptism and teaching (the Gospel) are means in which disciples are made. "Conversion" and "being made a disciple" are interchangeable terms.<sup>107</sup> They do not refer to two different points in the justification-sanctification process as some Church Growth proponents suggest.<sup>108</sup> Maier states:

The main verb of Jesus' directive is matheeteusata, which we have rendered "make disciples of" (and not "teach," as the King James Version has inexactly translated). This verb is modified by three subordinate participles--poreuthentes, "having gone forth"; baptizontes, "baptizing"; and didaskontes, "teaching"--which indicate how the required disciple-making amongst the nations is to be accomplished. In other words, the principle thrust of the Great Commission is to make disciples all over the world, and to do this by going out to the nations, by baptizing as many persons as possible, and by teaching them.<sup>109</sup>

While "going" is not to be an end in itself, baptism and teaching could be considered such.

According to the teaching of the Lord and His apostles baptism specifically is said to bestow upon it recipients the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38); the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16); salvation (Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21); the new birth (Jn. 3:3,5; Titus 3:5); spiritual death and resurrection with Christ (Rom. 6:3-11); power to overcome sin (Rom. 6:14); membership in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27-28); and other blessings.<sup>110</sup>

Baptism does not merely "validate" conversions,<sup>111</sup> but especially in the case of infants, baptism is the means by which children are made disciples.

The second part of the book on the Babylonian Captivity

begins with a prayer of thanksgiving because God has at least preserved "this Sacrament of the little ones" uncorrupted in the Church and that it has not been defiled by "the wisdom of the flesh."<sup>112</sup>

### The "Means" and "End" Distinction

Wagner makes a significant observation when he states: "the greatest error in contemporary missionary strategy is the confusion of means and end."<sup>113</sup> However, recognizing the problem does not mean that the correct understanding of the "means" and "end" has been achieved. On the one hand, Wagner is correct in observing that counting "decisions" (as a means) is not enough.<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, Church Growth philosophy is greatly slanted toward the "end" ("disciple making") at the expense of a clear presentation on the "means." This is seen in the fact that Church Growth literature contains statements such as this:

It is interesting to note that Church Growth is not primarily centered in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ but it emphasizes the aspect of "disciple-making."<sup>115</sup>

At the same time, the overall emphasis of the Church Growth movement has been summarized as:

The proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in order that people might believe in Him as their Savior and Lord.<sup>116</sup>

It is argued that Matthew 28:19-20, unlike other Great Commission passages, is unique due to its stresses on the "end" of "making disciples."<sup>117</sup> If this method of interpreting the significance of the Great Commission passages is allowed, then one could also argue the opposite. That is, since the

"means" are mentioned more frequently, then these are the most important aspect of the Great Commission. The fact is, an emphasis is needed on both the "means" and the "end." Both "foci"<sup>118</sup> of the Great Commission passages need to share equally in determining theology and practice.

However, Lutherans are more than just "means-of-grace oriented" (my emphasis).<sup>119</sup> The Means of Grace are central to their theology and practice. Therefore, it is questionable whether it would be wise for such a church to become a part of the "switch . . . to the expression 'make disciples.'<sup>120</sup> (This is particularly true, as seen above, if Matthew 28 is viewed as more accurate than the other Great Commission passages.) Engelder recalls the words of Walther:

Do you want to reach men's hearts, win them for Christ? "In accordance with God's will it should be the preacher's aim to proclaim the Gospel to his hearers till their hearts are melted."<sup>121</sup>

Matthias seems to be influenced too greatly by Church Growth thinking when he views the Lutheran's dedication to preach the Gospel as giving the "impression that the Great Commission is concerned about nothing beyond the proclamation of the Gospel."<sup>122</sup> The Brief Statement states that the purpose of the Gospel is to be preached to "the end that [men] may believe it, 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; Rom. 1:5."<sup>123</sup> Cannon also states:

The [Great] Commission says "preach," "teach." . . . but somewhere along the line, a lot of us got off this track and ended up doing every other kind of task imaginable.

When the apostles relieved themselves of the tasks of waiting on tables and organized the work so that they could devote themselves to prayer and preaching, the "number of the disciples multiplied greatly." The key to church growth is found here. When the preaching of the Word of God increases, the number of disciples increases. It is true that the growth of the church differs from place to place, . . . but the basic means that produces growth is the same. "Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ, and how can they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:17, 14).<sup>124</sup>

Put simply, the "goal" of the Church should be to use the "means" which God has promised to work through (AC IV, VII). The act of "making disciples" requires the use of the Means of Grace through which God gives the increase when and where He chooses (AC V). (See Appendix A for further discussion on the Church Growth emphasis of "disciple making.")

In addition to the weakness of the Church Growth distinction between means and end, there are also weaknesses concerning the distinction between means and method. While the movement draws its emphasis on the "end" from Matthew 28:19-20, its selection of methods<sup>125</sup> and strategies<sup>126</sup> are based on empirical research. This is reflected with the fact that most "reasons for growth" are presented in sociological terms.<sup>127</sup> The weak distinction between means and method is caused by, and in turn perpetuates, a continued lack in the distinction between Law and Gospel. (This concern will be treated in more detail below under "The Quest for a Relevant Gospel"; and the analysis of Two: "Motivation.")

Lutheran Church Growth proponents take a step in the right direction through emphasis on the Means of Grace.

However, their presentations should be strengthened. Although Miller's statement that Christ is the only "means of salvation" can be understood correctly, this point is separated by two paragraphs from:

The Word and sacraments are the Spirit's instruments to this end.<sup>128</sup>

This is a weakness because Christ and the Means of Grace must be inseparably connected. That is, Christ is indeed "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). However, Christ is brought to the world only through the Means of Grace. To make this point clear, it is best to retain more traditional terminology by saying: "The means of Grace bring Christ, the only way of salvation, to fallen humanity."

Hunter's presentation of Luther's explanation of the Third Article is also weak. He states:

Martin Luther, in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, points out that it is the Holy Spirit who calls people to faith.<sup>129</sup>

Luther's explanation does not separate the "power of the Spirit" from the Means of Grace. Luther states: ". . . the Holy [Spirit] has called me by the Gospel" (my emphasis).<sup>130</sup> Hunter separates his "The Power of the Spirit" section from his "Means of Grace" section.<sup>131</sup> It is in these ways that the work of the Holy Spirit could appear to be separated from the Means of Grace. This concern is also reflected in his sentence structure:

Spiritual renewal . . . comes through the means of grace. . . . It is the the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>132</sup>

The Church Growth view could reduce the Holy Spirit to a mere presence<sup>133</sup> which works as the Christian "sets the stage" and "context."<sup>134</sup> However, Lutherans must be unmistakably clear in stating that the Holy Spirit works through the Means of Grace alone to bring spiritual renewal. The point of Koeberle is well taken:

If rationalistic moralism deprived Christ of His honor by claiming an active cooperation in the work of salvation, so fanaticism robbed Christ of His power as it separated the Word and the Spirit and denied the continuous, active, objective redemptive power of the means of grace over men's consciences.<sup>135</sup>

#### Diagnosing the Receptivity of Man

While knowing Greek is very important in Biblical interpretation, Wagner makes a valid point in stating that there are advantages in "being a farmer"<sup>136</sup> when interpreting The Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15). However, his presentation of this parable does not support the Church Growth position of man's receptivity. (Note: The following points follow the four paragraphs of Wagner's treatment of Luke 8:4-15 cited earlier on page 22.) First, Moishe Rosen (Director of "Jews for Jesus") treats this parable from the farmer's perspective:

Suppose a man has decided to go into the agriculture business. . . . First, he purchases the hillside acreage and fences off his land. Then he chooses a piece of fruit and . . . eats it. Finally, . . . he plants the fruit pit, covers it with soil and waters it. Then he goes home to wait for the pit to sprout. He plans to wait until the seedling has grown and borne fruit, at which time he will plant other pits that will grow and fill his acreage. . . . In the meantime, however, he does not intend to do any more

planting until he sees the kind and quality of fruit that one pit will produce.

You don't have to be a farmer to tell that man that he is not going to get rich in farming or succeed at all in growing anything.

Yet many Christians carry out their witnessing efforts in that same ineffectual way. They don't sow very much seed, and then they think their scant evangelistic efforts can bear fruit if they only tug hard enough at the sprouts to make them grow faster. When they don't see much growth or fruit, they blame it on a spiritual drought. They don't realize that in order to produce a reasonable harvest, one must plant much seed. That's one of the lessons that Y'ahua taught his disciples in the parable of the sower found in . . . Luke 8.

Real evangelism must take the evangelists where they encounter the most unbelievers. This is what I mean by "broadcasting" in the older sense of the word: casting out much gospel seed, in order that some might take root and grow. In a way, we're like the legendary Johnny Applesseed who traversed hundreds of miles of the American countryside, scattering apple seed as he went. Generations later, the seed that Johnny Applesseed sowed in the highways and byways is still bearing fruit, and many people throughout the region that he traveled are still enjoying apples from apple trees that mysteriously crop up in unexpected places. . . .

People often tell us [Jews for Jesus] that we are sowing our gospel seed on a stony, heart-hardened field. Yet even amidst the stones, we have seen the tender sprouts appear.

Some warn us that our efforts are in vain because many birds wait overhead to catch away the seed that we are sowing. . . . But . . . because we sow . . . in abundance, the birds are not able to snatch it all away.

Others advise us that our efforts will be fruitless because as soon as the sprouts come up, the hot sun of persecution will burn them into stubble. Yet we are not discouraged because we remember that most of us Jews for Jesus are ourselves the fruit of other sowers, who planted the gospel seed with the full knowledge that we would face persecution for our budding faith. Yet they patiently and perseveringly sowed the gospel . . . until God in his grace brought that seed to harvest. . . .

We sow with patience, being willing to wait for . . . results. We sow generously, not sparing time, effort or substance, knowing . . . a portion of it will fall on good soil, where it will take root and flourish.<sup>137</sup>

Second, Wagner, through his bias for the harvest principle, assumes the farmer went and sowed "on four different parts of his farm" (my emphasis).<sup>138</sup> The text does not say: "the sower went out to survey the best part(s) of his field so that he could determine where to sow." Rather: "The sower went out to sow" (v. 5a). (It simply would not make sense to maintain that the farmer surveyed the field, and then despite this, sowed on the infertile ground anyway.) In this one field there were the various kinds of soil.<sup>139</sup> This is why Cannon states:

Missionaries . . . go out under the impression that they are going to a harvest field and find out that it is just a field! Sometimes a rocky, weedy one at that!

The world is the field, but is not just a harvest field. It is a land for sowing, and watering, and waiting, and gathering.<sup>140</sup>

Third, Wagner claims that "according to Jesus' interpretation, the variable factor was not the sower . . . the seed . . . nor the method" but the "soil" alone. However, Milton S. Terry in Biblical Hermeneutics states:

Our Lord attached significance to the seed sown; the wayside and the birds, the rocky places, the thorns, and the good ground. Each of these parts has a relevancy to the whole [my emphasis]. . . . The soil is in every case a human heart.<sup>141</sup>

It should be noted that the "soil" does not refer to "receptive populations,"<sup>142</sup> but rather, individual human

hearts<sup>143</sup> wherever the Gospel seed is sown. This is important because one must attempt to find the main purpose of a parable. Graebner states:

In the interpretation of a parable, the first and chief purpose is to discover its scope or purpose, i.e., the spiritual lesson it is intended to teach.<sup>144</sup>

Fourth, the main point of the parable is not to give direction for missions, but to describe the various effects the Word of God can have on an individual. In this light, the parable cannot be used to support a "soil testing"<sup>145</sup> which replaces - even if temporarily - the preaching of the Gospel. The Great Commission says "Go and teach," not "Go and test." Even if the primary purpose of this parable was to give directions for missions, there is a very important hermeneutical principle which needs to be understood. Surburg explains:

In past generations Biblical theologians followed a rule which stated: theologia parabolica non est argumentativa, that is, that parables very rich in mission thoughts do not furnish a basis for doctrinal conclusions. Parables may be used to illustrate truth but not to prove it. Another rule followed was: omnia similia claudicunt, i.e., all comparisons limp. No doctrinal teaching should be based on figurative language. . . . Doctrinal value of parables is found in this, that they may in accordance with the analogy of Scripture, illustrate truth already clearly expressed elsewhere.<sup>146</sup>

Church Growth confuses man's use of the intellect when it states on the one hand, "the power [in conversion] is not in techniques,"<sup>147</sup> and on the other hand, "the real essence of church growth is found in the practice of principles."<sup>148</sup> While it is commendable that the movement does not feel the

"unreceptive" should be neglected, man's reason becomes the dominant theme when one considers that "experts" are needed in unreceptive fields to tell when they are becoming "ripe for the gospel."<sup>149</sup> The movement teaches that these fields become ripe "for the gospel" (emphasis mine), not through the Gospel. (Note: That this is a spiritual perspective is seen in that this can not be the social/political sense because the "expert" would not be in these fields unless they were politically receptive.)

#### The Quest for a Relevant Gospel

The most relevant need of mankind is the forgiveness of sins. This need never changes. This is an objective need. It is not a subjective need based on the views of society or contingent on research projects.<sup>150</sup> Certainly, the Gospel does not lose its power merely because various "needs" change or one is unaware of each need of another individual. To say "the Gospel must be placed in the context of relevant needs or the message will not get through"<sup>151</sup> is to suggest some inadequacy in God's Word. Passages such as Hebrews 12:4 and Isaiah 55:11 point out that the Word of God has its own objective power. Christians do not add to the power of God's Word in any way.

Since the Lutheran Confessions are centered in the Doctrine of the Gospel, they are always relevant. This is particularly true when one realizes that

our Confessions, like Scripture itself, are always

contemporary and useful. If we share the Gospel spirit, we will see how helpful and exciting our Confessions are and we will read them with avidity and profit.<sup>152</sup>

This is why the "resistance/receptivity axis"<sup>153</sup> and the five questions cited above (p. 23) are not helpful in determining man's need for salvation. (In fact, it will be shown later that since the Gospel is for all people, number two - i.e., "Are they like the rest of the people in the church?" - is contrary to Scripture.) The Church Growth belief that "once proper diagnosis has been made, the Christian Church can get back on course to continue to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a hurting and dying world,"<sup>154</sup> is not based upon Scriptural criteria. This is not to say that research is unuseful. Research can be helpful in determining the physical needs of people. However, no amount of empirical research will uncover man's need for the Gospel.<sup>155</sup>

The proper relationship between serving the physical needs of people and proclamation of the Gospel must be maintained.<sup>156</sup> Dr. Robert Preus says it this way:

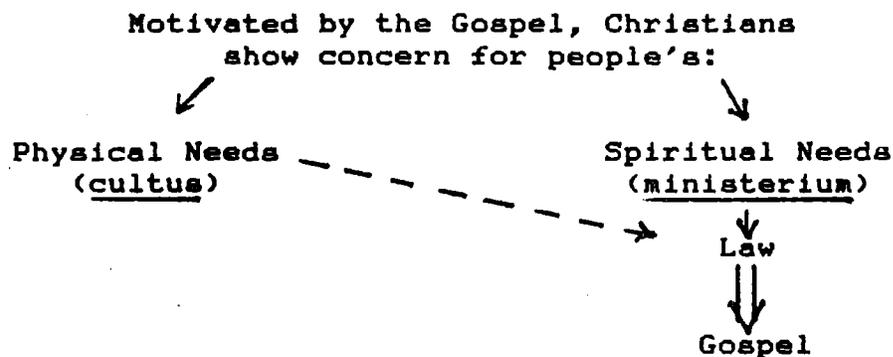
The ministry [ministerium] of the church, strictly speaking, has to do with the Spirit's work in the church through the means of salvation. It is cultus, a service, an activity of response to the Gospel, an activity which is made possible only by the power of the Gospel. . . .

. . . the church's mission . . . is the single ministry of being the Spirit's instrument in proclaiming the Gospel and administering the sacraments. Meanwhile every Christian in his calling has the "ministry" of service both in the church and in the world.<sup>157</sup>

The following figure is designed to illustrate: (1) the Christian's motivation and response to the Gospel, (2) that

the Christian should respond to both physical and spiritual needs, (3) the fact that the Christian responding to physical needs contributes primarily to the presentation of the Law, and only through the Law, to an understanding of the need for the Gospel, and (4) the Gospel causes Christians to repeat the cycle.

Figure 1.1



This figure is also helpful in demonstrating the important distinction between "Law and Gospel" and between "means and method." To the concern of properly dividing Law and Gospel, the Epitome states:

. . . the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is to be maintained in the Church with great diligence as an especially brilliant light, by which, according to the admonition of St. Paul, the Word of God is rightly divided (V, par. 1).

While Church Growth develops methods primarily based upon the physical needs of people (in order to preach a relevant gospel),<sup>158</sup> physical needs are a result of the fall. They are properly a part of the preaching of the Law. Relevant needs have their proper place when they serve as points of contact in which the Word (Law) may convict an individual of his need

for the Savior. (This is shown by the "dotted arrow." Note that Church Growth would draw a "solid, double-ended arrow" between the physical needs and the Gospel. In short, only aspects of the Gospel would be considered in response to the given need.) When this occurs, the Gospel is to be preached "in its full sweetness" (as shown by the "double arrow").<sup>159</sup> In this way, both "means and methods" and "Law and Gospel" are in their proper place.<sup>160</sup>

The Law does not make the Gospel more relevant; it merely serves the Gospel (and not vice versa).<sup>161</sup>

We teach that conversion consists in this, that a man, having learned from the Law of God that he is a lost and condemned sinner, is brought to faith in the Gospel, which offers him forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation for the sake of Christ's vicarious satisfaction, Acts 11:21; Luke 24:46,47; Acts 26:18.<sup>162</sup>

If the Gospel, in the strict sense (Epitome, V par. 6), is to provide comfort for people with physical needs, it must be kept distinct from the Law. The Gospel comforts because it is the nature of the Gospel to comfort.<sup>163</sup> It is relevant to every human need. If anything is done to alter the Gospel, then it is not the Gospel. (2 Corinthians 11:3-4; Galatians 1:8) This is because

. . . the Gospel is . . . properly nothing else than a preaching of consolation . . . which . . . comforts consciences against the terrors of the Law, points alone to the merits of Christ, and raises them up again by the lovely preaching of the grace and favor of God, obtained through Christ's merit (Epitome V, par. 6).

While all people should hear "the gospel in terms they [can] understand and relate to,"<sup>164</sup> this concern should never

lead a church to reduce the Gospel to a mere answer to physical needs. At best, stressing specific physical needs can only emphasize aspects of the Gospel, not necessarily its heart: the forgiveness of sins. (A hungry person fed by a Christian may understand Christ cares for his body, but at the same time, may not know Christ cares for his soul.) The preaching of the Gospel should never be viewed as "just"<sup>165</sup> another activity of the Church among many. If the Gospel is reduced to this, then the method has actually contradicted the means whereby a person's greatest spiritual need is met through the Gospel. The Brief Statement warns:

Whatever activities do not either directly apply the Word of God or subserve such application we condemn as "new methods," unchurchly activities, which do not build, but harm, the Church.<sup>166</sup>

The life and death of Christ teach the Biblical view of "relevancy." In fact, they are the key to the entire issue. That is, God sending "His Son into the world"<sup>167</sup> can be said to be both relevant and irrelevant. The former is emphasized in that God became man. The Christian can rest assured that Christ understands all human problems, temptations and even death (Hebrews 2:18). The Christian faith is relevant. However, "the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness" (I Corinthians 1:18). The world does not understand the message of salvation. The Christian faith, to them, is irrelevant. However, "God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (I Corinthians 1:21).

Dayton's suggestion that the Church "meet their need as they see it" could drift the Church away from man's first and foremost need for the Gospel. The task of the Christian is to meet man's need as God has revealed in Scripture how He sees it. Since it pleased God to work, through His appointed Means of Grace, the Christian should endeavor to use them because they "meet [the most] profound need in man."<sup>168</sup> The Church dare not sacrifice the Means of Grace when asking "Is the message getting through?" "What is working?" or "What churches are growing? Why?"<sup>169</sup>

In light of these observations, Schuller's quest for a relevant gospel lacks a clear Biblical foundation. Schuller's strategy to "sell" his gospel<sup>170</sup> has actually stripped the Gospel of its power (Romans 1:19). Although the world may view Christian claims as "fantasies," or "foolishness,"<sup>171</sup> the Gospel must nevertheless be preached in all its purity. The Christian's wisdom is not to rest in the wisdom of men (1 Corinthians 2:4-5, 14) because "the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1:20, 25; 3:19). In fact, this is why God chose to work through the "foolishness of the cross" to save mankind (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

There is a sense in which man's "deepest need" is "spiritual hunger for glory."<sup>172</sup> However, this is a "hunger" which the Church should not encourage. That is, man's "hunger for glory" can be traced to the fall. The serpent said:

You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be

like God, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:4-5; NASB and hereafter unless otherwise noted).

To be "like God," appealed to Adam and Eve and they ate the forbidden fruit. Ever since this time, man's greatest need is to be freed from the "spiritual hunger for glory." Schuller does not appear to realize that "salvation from sin" and "hope for forgiveness"<sup>173</sup> are the ultimate answer to man's sin. Immediately after the fall God promised the Savior: Jesus Christ (Genesis 3:15). Salvation and forgiveness are not mere concepts (which Schuller places in quotes), they are the heart of the Gospel message. While Christians should not "assault" a person's self-esteem (1 Peter 3:15), if Law and Gospel are to be rightly divided, this will be, in a sense, unavoidable.

To say that "when persons lose their dignity, they lose their humanity" is to misunderstand the nature of man and the person and work of Jesus Christ. The message of Scripture is clear: "There is none righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10; Isaiah 53:6; Ecclesiastes 7:20), and even "all our righteous deeds are like filthy garments" (Isaiah 64:6). All of the great men of faith acknowledged this. (To name a few: Jacob, Genesis 32:10; King David, Psalm 51:5; Isaiah, Isaiah 6:5; Peter, Luke 5:8; and Paul, Romans 7:18a, 1 Timothy 1:15.) These men did not cease to be "human" when they "humbled themselves" (1 Peter 5:6). Rather, through humility - the yielding of "self-esteem" - God was in Christ "reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Jesus, who was the God-man, and not merely "the Ideal One,"<sup>174</sup> "humbled Himself

by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8).

Since Jesus endured the shame of the cross, God has promised:

Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool (Isaiah 1:18).

This is the theology which is needed for mankind today, not Schuller's "new theology . . . that offers salvation from shame to self-esteem."<sup>175</sup> (See Appendix H under "A Comparison of the Theology of Glory and the Theology of the Cross.") Note the contrast between Schuller's model and the Biblical model:

Figure 1.2

	<u>Schuller</u>	<u>Biblical</u>
Gospel	Salvation from Shame to Self-Esteem	Christ has "taken away the sins of the world" (John 1:29)
Deepest Need	Self-Esteem	Salvation from Sin

This also sheds light on the contrast between the Church Growth model and the Biblical model:

Figure 1.3

	<u>Church Growth</u>	<u>Biblical</u>
Proclamation	A Relevant Gospel	The Gospel, and Sacraments administered
Methods	Proven Methods	Means of Grace (must be central)
Needs	Physical Needs (to reach the spiritual)	Salvation from Sin
Man's Condition	Research to find needs	Spiritually Dead, Bound, and Guilty

These insights show that while Schuller (and Church Growth) has (have) valid concerns, his (their) solution lacks Biblical precedent. If people are truly "biblically illiterate,"<sup>176</sup> then they are even more psychiatrically illiterate. (Most people have gone to Sunday School and own a Bible. A much smaller number have had psychology classes and/or own a book on the subject.) Luther, and the Lutheran Reformation, should teach the Church that the answer to biblical illiteracy is Christ-centered instruction in God's Word. (See analysis of Three: "A True Reformation.") However, Schuller seems to downplay Biblical terms and phrases by expressing them within quotation marks: "faith concept," "after life . . . fantasy,"<sup>177</sup> "salvation from sin," "hope for forgiveness," "lost sinners," and "hellfire" to mention a few.<sup>178</sup> The world needs these Biblical terms to be taken seriously. They are the vocabulary of the message of salvation; even those who "care little" about the Bible. This does not mean that the Church should not attempt to address all "human conditions that demand theological answers."<sup>179</sup> However, a theological synthesis with a "scientific truth"<sup>180</sup> can no longer be considered a "theological answer." (See analysis of Four: "Church Growth as a Science.") If theologians have pitifully "abandoned essentially theological questions to other disciplines,"<sup>181</sup> then a synthesis is equally as "pitiful." The world does not need "a marketing modernization of the Christian 'faith concept.'"<sup>182</sup> First, as

seen above, the Christian faith is more than a "concept." It is the faith which saves from eternal punishment (John 3:16). Second, there is more to the Christian faith than an marketing attitude such as: "Try it, you'll like it!"<sup>183</sup> Third, while communication skill can be helpful in evangelism work, those that proclaim the Gospel are more than "used car salesman."<sup>184</sup>

All that has been said above does not equate possibility thinking with "what the Bible calls faith."<sup>185</sup> Note that Schuller defines possibility thinking as:

The maximum utilization of the God-given powers of imagination exercised in dreaming up possible ways by which a desired objective can be attained.<sup>186</sup>

There is a real contrast between the definition of this so-called "synonym of faith"<sup>187</sup> and that of the Biblical teaching. The main problem with considering possibility thinking as a synonym of faith is that it does not mention Christ. Note Graebner's definition of faith:

The chief benefit of Christ's vicarious obedience is the perfect righteousness obtained by Christ for all mankind (2 Cor. 5:19), . . . and inasmuch a faith is the actual acceptance (John 1:12, 16) of this imputation announced in the Gospel (Rom. 3:25), . . . it is justifying faith (Rom. 3:28), and God . . . graciously (Rom. 11:6) and for Christ's sake (Rom. 5:19) holds and pronounces (Rom. 8:33-34) the believer (Rom. 10:10-11) actually and by personal application fully absolved (Col. 2:13) from all guilt (Rom. 8:1) and punishment (Is. 53:5) while in the state of faith (Rom. 5:1).<sup>188</sup>

There are also internal inconsistencies with the claim that possibility thinking is a synonym of Biblical faith. Possibility thinking is identified as one of the "Seven Principles of Successful Retailing."<sup>189</sup> This is placed after

"accessibility," "surplus parking," "inventory," "service," "visibility"; and before, "good cash flow."<sup>190</sup> A choice has to be made. Either possibility thinking is a synonym of Biblical faith, or it is a marketing principle. The former is an eternal concept, the latter is based upon the temporal behavioral sciences. The Church consists of believers in Jesus Christ. Their faith was created in them by the power of the Gospel (Romans 1:19). In contrast, these marketing principles can merely serve the Church - not create it. (See analyses of Two; and Four: "Church Growth as a Science.")

Schuller contradicts himself when he says on the one hand, "the pronouncement form of communication establishes polarization, [and] creates chasms,"<sup>191</sup> and on the other hand: "Possibility thinking makes great pronouncements."<sup>192</sup> While Schuller has a valid concern that the pastor communicate effectively with his people, the concept of "pronouncements" cannot both "establish polarization" and be a positive aspect of "possibility thinking." Yet, Schuller states: "people who want to succeed in communication will avoid the pronouncement approach."<sup>193</sup> It is unclear how possibility thinking can be exempt from the danger of causing polarization through its pronouncements. (See Appendix B for more information on Schuller and possibility thinking.)

### The Homogeneous Unit Principle

There is no doubt that homogeneous units which consist of culture, language, tribe or caste<sup>194</sup> exist throughout the world and in America today. However, the significance Church Growth places on these groups and the "elastic" categories<sup>195</sup> such as "economics, world views, education, likes and dislikes"<sup>196</sup> are determined primarily on the basis of empirical research.<sup>197</sup> Scripture must judge whether something considered a "scientific hypothesis" or "law"<sup>198</sup> has validity in the mission of the Church. (See analysis of Four: "Scripture: The Source of Doctrine.")

While it may be true that "every homogeneous unit has a different set of needs,"<sup>199</sup> these needs should be considered under the category of the service (cultus) of the Church (see again Figure 1.3). The Great Commission mandate still remains to preach the Gospel to all people (Matthew 28:19). Scripture clearly shows that people from a variety of homogeneous units can exist as a local church. The Holy Spirit fell on a variety of homogeneous units on the day of Pentecost:

Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. . . . Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs (Acts 2:5, 9-11)

Not only did the birth of the New Testament Church incorporate a variety of people, but many of these same people

. . . were continually devoting themselves to the

apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. . . . And all [my emphasis] those who had believed were together, and had all things in common (Acts 2:42, 44).

This is not to say that problems are non-existent in churches composed of different ethnic groups. Very soon after the establishment of the church in Jerusalem, "a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food" (Acts 6:1). However, there is no indication that the church divided into homogeneous units. Rather, part of the solution was found in shared leadership among the "homogeneous units" within the one church. One of "The Seven" mentioned is "Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch" (v. 5).

The Jerusalem council of Acts Eleven shows that it was difficult for Jewish Christians to take the Gospel of Christ past the borders of their religious and geographic context. However, this did not stop them. Philip went to Samaria and he preached to the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8). Paul preached to the Gentiles throughout the known world (Acts 9ff). He followed the "Pentecost model" and entered synagogues which probably consisted of more than one "homogeneous unit." The Gentiles believed through the Gospel preached by Peter (Acts 10). In many of these cases, God verified this "strategy" through visions and the gift of the Holy Spirit either directly or through the laying on of hands (Acts 8 - 11).

Despite these insights, McGavran believes receptivity within homogeneous units must be discerned to see "what must be done in mission."<sup>200</sup> Moishe Rosen, as director of Jews for Jesus, is in a unique position to address the concern of working within a homogeneous unit which is traditionally unreceptive - even hostile - to Christianity. He states:

Yes, we Jews for Jesus have learned a great deal about sowing and harvesting. Primarily, we are sowing the gospel message, sowing much seed, knowing that the greater harvest is yet to come. . . . We are confident that if we are faithful in performing our part, God will surely give the increase.

A seed is very small and makes only a small indentation in the soil where it is planted. Likewise, the gospel seed that we plant may at times appear to be so small that it makes a seemingly small impression. . . . Nevertheless, we have learned by experience that those small initial impressions, when multiplied, can germinate and produce abundant fruit in the field of a person's soul. Most of those who have come to faith in Christ have received dozens, hundreds and perhaps even thousands of such small gospel impressions. Then finally just one more seed added to all the others became the catalyst that took root, sprouted and grew to produce a realization of who Jesus is. . . .

All believers, Jewish and Gentiles, who are growing in the Lord and producing fruit in their lives are growing because someone made the effort to sow the gospel seed in their field. Suppose that those sowers had sowed sparingly, or not at all? Suppose that they had been reluctant and had waited to see what would result from their sparse and impatient efforts before they bothered to sow any more? . . . All of us who are believers today should be thankful for the faithful sowers who sowed patiently that we might come to faith.<sup>201</sup>

Although Rosen does not mention the Church Growth harvest (receptivity) principle or homogeneous unit principles directly, his insights show that these principles cannot be "universally accepted."<sup>202</sup> Certainly Rosen is able to be more

"culturally sensitive"<sup>203</sup> and "at home"<sup>204</sup> with his fellow Jews than the average Gentile. Working primarily with the Jewish homogeneous unit enables him to communicate the Gospel message using terminology - especially from the Old Testament - in what could be termed the "most effective."<sup>205</sup> However, this does not mean that the Jews, or any homogeneous unit, is thereby more "winnable."<sup>206</sup> The Word of God needs to always be sown "generously" if there is to be an "increase."<sup>207</sup>

It is because of observations such as these that the homogeneous unit principle has been debated. The debate is not over whether homogeneous churches exist, rather, it is over whether they should exist.<sup>208</sup> Church Growth proponents support this principle for several reasons. First, they see it operating in other countries.<sup>209</sup> Second, the move in America to integrate has slowed considerably since the 1960's, and in fact, most "Americans are progressively becoming more different."<sup>210</sup> Third, although racism is sin, pluralism is "here to stay" in America. Fourth, making cultural changes mandatory for individuals to become Christians is viewed by Church Growth as "Judaizing."<sup>211</sup>

While the debate over this issue can be very complex, the following points are offered as a brief response to the points above. First, there is a fine line between identifying with a culture, and at the same time, allowing the culture - which is being reached for Christianity - to determine Christian principles for reaching non-Christian lands. Put differently,

churches within other lands which are still operating with the homogeneous unit principle may be "spiritual immature." In the Church "there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11). Even Church Growth proponents recognize that homogeneous churches are not the ideal: "the key question . . . is not how . . . Christians react to each other." Since the ideal is to not consider cultural or racial distinctions in the issue of Christian fellowship, their development of this principle centers around one man's inability to accept another.

Second, their primary concern in promoting the homogeneous unit principle is for "how . . . [the] unbeliever . . . will react to the preaching of the gospel."<sup>212</sup> However, all men, of all races, share in the need for the Gospel (Romans 6:23). Research cannot discover, nor adequately address, the Biblical directive to disciple all nations. What is more, statistics and research are temporal, and, if valid, then only for a short period of time. Research must always be updated because facts, figures, conditions, and all variables change.<sup>213</sup> (See analysis of Four: "Church Growth as a Science.") There are plenty of unbelievers who have been influenced by the 1960's emphasis on integration. These individuals need to see churches welcome all people regardless of race or color. The homogeneous unit principle could be counterproductive in reaching these individuals - even if

groupings of them are within the same homogeneous unit.<sup>214</sup> A church or denomination may gear itself to suit the popular trend (if it indeed exists) of people to become "more different,"<sup>215</sup> only to find that in a few short years the trend has swung back to the desire to integrate.<sup>216</sup> Scripture is the only changeless standard of judgment which should be relied upon (Isaiah 40:7-8; Matthew 5:18; John 17:17; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 13:8).

Third, most churches will recognize that there are social/political phenomena such as homogeneous units which need to be considered in the establishment of mission priorities. It is also true that socio-ethnic variables may cause changes in a community to be negative (example, a rising crime rate). These types of observations are objective sociological facts. The homogeneous unit principle could be helpful in focusing attention on them. However, the use of terms such as "unhealthy" or "disease" thrusts the entire discussion into the realm of subjective interpretation of the situation. It is interpretation, not objective research alone, which uses terms such as "disease" to describe sociological data. It is the homogeneous unit principle of the Church Growth movement which actually causes socio-ethnic change (objective variables) to be interpreted (subjectively) as "diseases" (and thus the "kitis" is added to "ethnic").

Not only is this presupposition allowed to interpret the sociological phenomenon, but it is also used to guide the

mission strategy of the movement. However, Scripture must direct the use of sociological research so that a God-pleasing "solution" can be found in the case of the church surrounded by a changing neighborhood. In this light, it is probably best not to approach this challenge by merely saying: "Pluralism is here to stay."<sup>217</sup> This is a purely social response. It is a particularly American attitude which most Americans are not unable to identify or like to admit. Two individuals from Latin America, Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar see the principle as the result of American thinking in which "American Christians cannot recognize their own sins."<sup>218</sup> Padilla states:

The idea is that people like to be with those of their own race and class and we must therefore plant segregated churches, which will undoubtedly grow faster. We are told that race prejudice "can be understood and should be made an aid to Christianization." No amount of exegetical maneuvering can ever bring this approach in line with the explicit teaching of the New Testament regarding the unity of men in the body of Christ."<sup>219</sup>

Escobar states:

To perpetuate segregation for the sake of numerical growth, arguing that segregated churches grow faster, is for me yielding to the sinfulness of society.<sup>220</sup>

These points should be seriously considered. The Church of Jesus Christ should never allow man's sinful prejudice to determine presuppositions for interpretation of sociological data or its priority for missions. This becomes clear when considering the Church Growth solution to the so-called diseases of "ethnikitis" and "people blindness." First, as

seen above, it is only through the homogeneous unit principle that these can be (subjectively) called "diseases." Second, the Church Growth movement does not give the American society credit for making great strides in the idea of integration. Perhaps what was a "disease" twenty years ago, is desirable - if not normative - today. Third, since this principle reflects a mere interpretation of the facts, the Church Growth solution is a mere bandage for a wound which is much more serious. Even if socio-ethnic variables could be labeled "diseases," the main issue is not detecting the "problem," (as was seen in the treatment of the "means and end" concern), but rather, effectively dealing with it in a Biblical manner. The plain (sociological) fact is, once people start to flee changing neighborhoods, the trend is usually never reversed. Therefore, planting "a new church that is made up of people like those of the new culture"<sup>221</sup> will be counterproductive. On the one hand, a new church will be born, and by the grace of God, grow. On the other hand, since the original church membership will continue to flee the neighborhood, only decrease can be predicted. Since very few members of the original homogeneous unit will move in to a changing community, the inevitable result, if the Church Growth suggestion is followed, will be the death of the original church.<sup>222</sup>

These insights show that the homogeneous unit principle can actually cause objective sociological variables to become

a "disease." In fact, "ethnikitis" becomes more severe and contributes to the effects of this "chief killer of churches in the U.S.A. today."<sup>223</sup> What is more, the original group may be perceived as the ones who are part of the "so called melting pot of society who refuse to melt."<sup>224</sup> It is illogical to expect a church "to reach out within each segment of society," and at the same time, not provide a place for those interested (or converted) representatives of various homogeneous units in the overall discipleship strategy of the church. This emphasis will not (and has not<sup>225</sup>) be viewed as "highly respected."<sup>226</sup> Rather, if a Christian can reach another individual (regardless of color or race) with the Gospel, that same person can be made to feel comfortable in the church. This principle is primarily a sociological solution to a problem which is perceived to be sociological or cultural. However, it is a spiritual problem which needs a spiritual answer.

Fourth, the spiritual nature of the problem shows that "at the first sight of change," the solution should not be "to plant a new church."<sup>227</sup> Rather, appropriate seeds should be planted from God's Word which address the spiritual problem of a divided humanity. (For example, compare Genesis 11:1-9 with Acts 2.) This is a challenging alternative. While it will involve the preaching of the Law, this does not mean those that do so are "Judaizers."<sup>228</sup> On the contrary, this Biblical emphasis will serve the goal of preaching the Good News that

Christ has truly paid for the sins of all people (John 1:29; Joel 2:28-32; Revelation 5:9). The fears which people of different races have of each other need to be comforted by the Gospel. If a sociological principle is allowed to determine the mission emphasis of a church, and Gospel comfort is consequently withheld, church members will probably join others in leaving the neighborhood. This alternative to Church Growth's application of the homogeneous unit principle is closer to the vision of heaven that John describes:

I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands (Revelation 7:9).

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> There are as many view of man within the Church Growth movement as there are denominations. However, the discussion begins with Hunter's view to simplify the analysis for Lutherans.

<sup>2</sup> Hunter, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Hunter, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Schuller, Robert, Self-Esteem: The New Reformation (Waco TX: Word Book Publishers, 1982), p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Schuller, p. 27; See also Hunter, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Wagner, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Wagner, pp. 23-25.

<sup>8</sup> McGavran, pp. 106-107.

<sup>9</sup> McGavran, p. 216.

<sup>10</sup> Hunter, p. 82.

11 McGavran, p. 49.

12 McGavran, Donald, "Today's Task, Opportunity and Imperative," In Perspectives on the World Christian Movement (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), p. 550.

13 Wagner, C. Peter, "The Fourth Dimension of Missions: Strategy," In Perspectives . . ., p. 580.

14 Glasser, Arthur F, "An Introduction to the Church Growth Perspectives of Donald McGavran," In Theological Perspectives on Church Growth, p. 38. Edited by Harvie M. Conn (The Den Dulk Foundation, 1976). Quoted by George Hunter, III in The Contagious Congregation (Nashville: Abindon Press, 1979), p. 106.

15 Hunter, p. 82.

16 "Individual . . .," p. 4.

17 Hunter, George, p. 106.

18 Hunter, p. 81.

19 Wagner, "The Fourth," p. 575.

20 Matthias, p. 58.

21 Wagner, p. 575.

22 Matthias, p. 58.

23 Hunter, p. 42.

24 Hunter, p. 38.

25 Hunter, p. 82.

26 Hunter, p. 109.

27 Hunter, p. 76.

28 Hunter, p. 182.

29 Wagner, Your Church, p. 58.

30 Wagner, "The Fourth," p. 577.

31 Wagner, p. 578.

32 Hunter, p. 97.

33 Hunter, pp. 83-84.

- 34 Wagner, Your Church, p. 136.
- 35 Wagner, p. 170.
- 36 Hunter, pp. 99-100.
- 37 Wagner, "The Fourth," p. 580.
- 38 Wagner, p. 589.
- 39 Hunter, pp. 93; 97; 99.
- 40 Singer, David. "The Crystal Cathedral: Reflections of Schuller's Theology," In Christianity Today (Aug. 8, 1980), p. 28.
- 41 Schuller, Self-Esteem, p. 31.
- 42 Schuller, pp. 35; 39.
- 43 Schuller, p. 27.
- 44 Singer, p. 28.
- 45 Schuller, p. 32.
- 46 Schuller, p. 146.
- 47 Wagner, Your Church, p. 29.
- 48 Singer, p. 28.
- 49 Schuller, p. 27.
- 50 Wagner, p. 53.
- 51 McGavran, pp. 85-86.
- 52 Hunter, p. 179.
- 53 Wagner, p. 110.
- 54 Wagner, p. 136.
- 55 McGavran, p. 232; See also pp. 142, #7; 116-118; 142; 213-214; 287-290; 348.
- 56 Hunter, p. 102.
- 57 Wagner, p. 110.
- 58 McGavran, p. 232.
- 59 Wagner, p. 125.

- 60 Hunter, p. 114.
- 61 Hunter, p. 116.
- 62 Hunter, pp. 125; 128.
- 63 Hunter, p. 115.
- 64 Hunter, p. 116.
- 65 Graebner, A. L., Outlines of Doctrinal Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1980), pp. 59-63.
- 66 All quotes from the Lutheran Confessions are from the Concordia Triglotta (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921) unless otherwise noted.
- 67 Hunter, p. 35.
- 68 Hunter, p. 82.
- 69 Klug, Eugene and Otto Stahlke, Getting into the Formula of Concord (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), pp. 26-27.
- 70 Klug, p. 32.
- 71 Hunter, p. 24.
- 72 As Hunter claims, pp. 23-25.
- 73 Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), p. 5.
- 74 McGavran, p. 216.
- 75 McGavran, p. 216.
- 76 Ramseyer, Robert L, "Anthropological Perspectives on Church Growth Theory," In The Challenges of Church Growth: A Symposium (William Shenk, Editor. Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1973), p. 73. Note: Ramseyer is primarily analyzing the work of Alan R. Tippett who is one of the chief anthropologists of the movement.
- 77 McGavran, p. 107.
- 78 Graebner, pp. 57-63.
- 79 An article which sheds tremendous light on the topic at under discussion was written by J. T. Mueller entitled: "Repentance and Faith: Who Does the Turning?" In Concordia Theological Quarterly (April 1981).

- 80 Graebner, p. 176.
- 81 Graebner, pp. 156; 179.
- 82 McGavran, "Today's Task," p. 550.
- 83 Graebner, p. 176.
- 84 Graebner, p. 189.
- 85 Wagner, "The Fourth," p. 580.
- 86 Glasser, p. 38.
- 87 Hunter, George, p. 106.
- 88 Hunter, pp. 88; 81; Matthias, p. 58; See also Graf, Arthur E., The Church in the Community (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company. Reprinted in Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1984), p. 97.
- 89 Hunter, p. 81.
- 90 McGavran, p. 49.
- 91 Dayton, Edward R. "To Reach the Unreached," In Perspectives . . ., p. 594.
- 92 Baepler, Walter A. A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod, 1847-1947 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 179-180.
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- 100 Wagner, "The Fourth," p. 575.

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102 Matthias, p. 58.

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104 Surburg, p. 578, numbers 15 and 16.

105 Surburg, p. 579, number 18.

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108 Eims, Leroy, The Lost Art of Disciple Making (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), pp. 124; 183.

109 Maier, Walter A, A Short Explanation of Matthew 28:16-20 (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, n.d.), p. 8.

110 Maier, p. 14.

111 Wagner, Your Church, p. 132.

112 Koeberle, Adolf, The Quest for Holiness (Trans. by John C. Mattes. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1936), p. 64.

113 Wagner, "The Fourth," p. 575.

114 Wagner, p. 575.

115 Gratz, William, "The Use and Impact of Church Growth Principles as Seen Specifically Among Four Congregations of the Texas District." (A Research Report Submitted . . . for the Master of Divinity Degree, Concordia Theological Seminary,

116 Gratz, p. 10.

117 Wagner, p. 575.

118 Matthias, p. 58.

119 Matthias, p. 56.

120 Matthias, p. 58.

121 Engelder, "Walther, . . .," p. 812.

- 122 Matthias, p. 58.
- 123 The Brief Statement, p. 5.
- 124 Cannon, p. 91.
- 125 Wagner, "The Fourth," p. 580.
- 126 Dayton, p. 589.
- 127 McGavran, pp. 140-142.
- 128 Miller, p. 3.
- 129 Hunter, p. 38.
- 130 A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's 'Small Catechism': A Handbook of Christian Doctrine (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 11.
- 131 Hunter, pp. 38-39; 39ff.
- 132 Hunter, p. 42; see also pp. 39-40.
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- 134 Hunter, p. 76.
- 135 Koeberle, p. 71.
- 136 Wagner, "The Fourth," p. 577.
- 137 Rosen, Moishe. "Bountiful Harvest," In Jews for Jesus Newsletter (vol. 1:5745; 1984), pp. 1-2.
- 138 Wagner, p. 577.
- 139 Terry, Milton S., Biblical Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 282.
- 140 Cannon, p. 22.
- 141 Terry, p. 282.
- 142 Wagner, p. 577; See also McGavran, p. 140.
- 143 McGavran, p. 282.
- 144 Surburg, p. 345 (citing A Dictionary of Biblical Topics, p. 54).
- 145 Wagner, p. 577.

- 146 Surburg, pp. 347-348. (He also cites Schodde, "Parable," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, p. 2244b.)
- 147 Hunter, p. 76.
- 148 Hunter, p. 182.
- 149 Wagner, p. 578.
- 150 Although many of the research programs suggested by Church Growth contain useful exercises, they are very complex and are probably very time consuming. See Facing the Facts for Church Growth (Corunna, IN: Church Growth Analysis and Learning Center, 1982), by Diane Barber and Kent Hunter.
- 151 Hunter, p. 100.
- 152 Klug, Getting into . . ., p. 26.
- 153 Hunter, pp. 82, 97.
- 154 Gratz, p. 21.
- 155 If a church is "off course," then only the Word of God, not scientific research, can restore its "true course."
- 156 Preus, Robert, "The Confessions and the Mission of the Church," In The Springfielder (June, 1975), p. 20.
- 157 Preus, pp. 27; 30.
- 158 See again: Hunter, pp. 93, 97, 99; Wagner, Your Church, p. 170 and Perspectives, p. 580; and Dayton, p. 589.
- 159 Walther, C. F. W., God's No and God's Yes: The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel (Condensed by Walter C. Pieper. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), p. 8; VI.
- 160 Walther, p. 8; VII. Note: This discussion is found in the Confessional Evangelism Resource Manual, pp. 13-16. This writer has found that this discussion has helped a significant number of laypersons put their conversion theology into proper focus, and at the same time, enabled them to better divide Law and Gospel in everyday witnessing situations.
- 161 Nafzger, Samuel H., "Growing . . .," p. 212.
- 162 The Brief Statement, p. 6.

163 When making the Gospel "relevant" there is always the danger of creating "another gospel" (Galatian 1:8) which Paul warns creates "another Jesus" (2 Corinthians 11:3,4).

164 Wagner, Your Church, p. 170.

165 Gratz, p. 90.

166 The Brief Statement, p. 11.

167 See Hunter's discussion, p. 93.

168 Piepkorn, Arthur Carl, What the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church Have to say About Worship and the Sacraments (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952. Reprinted in Fort Wayne . . .), p. 20.

169 As Hunter suggests, p. 99.

170 Singer, p. 28.

171 Singer, p. 28.

172 Schuller, Self-Esteem, p. 31.

173 Schuller, p. 31.

174 Schuller, p. 35.

175 Schuller, p. 39.

176 Singer, p. 28.

177 Singer, p. 28.

178 Schuller, p. 146.

179 Schuller, p. 146.

180 Schuller, p. 27; See also Hunter, p. 24.

181 Schuller, p. 32.

182 Singer, p. 28.

183 Wagner, Your Church, p. 88.

184 Schuller, p. 53; see also Vogel, p. 117.

185 Wagner, p. 53.

186 Wagner, p. 53.

- 187 Wagner, p. 53.
- 188 Graebner, pp. 189-194.
- 189 Schuller, Robert, Your Church Has Possibilities! (Glendale, CA: G/L Publishers, 1974), pp. 25-27.
- 190 Schuller, pp. 19-29.
- 191 Schuller, p. 13.
- 192 Schuller, p. 86.
- 193 Schuller, p. 13.
- 194 McGavaran, pp. 85-86.
- 195 McGavran, p. 86.
- 196 Hunter, p. 179.
- 197 Wagner, Your Church, p. 110.
- 198 Wagner, p. 110.
- 199 Wagner, p. 136.
- 200 McGavran, p. 232.
- 201 Rosen, pp. 1-2.
- 202 Wagner, pp. 111-112.
- 203 Wagner, p. 111.
- 204 Hunter, p. 102.
- 205 Wagner, p. 110.
- 206 Hunter, p. 102.
- 207 McGavran, p. 232.
- 208 Rosen, pp. 1-2.
- 209 Wagner, p. 111.
- 210 Wagner, pp. 112-113.
- 211 Wagner, p. 118ff.
- 212 Wagner, pp. 118-119.
- 213 Selltitz, Claire, Research Methods in Social Relations (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1959), pp. 341-342.

214 One might suggest that this type of person might constitute another form of homogeneous unit, i.e., based upon "likes and dislikes" (Hunter, p. 179). However, Wagner in his treatment of the Circle Church (pp. 93-134) sees this as a proposition which has not been demonstrated as having pragmatic value. In fact, he states: "This might be one reason why it [the Circle Church] is not growing" (p. 129). If the homogeneous unit principle includes "likes and dislikes," then this should include those that like to "racially mix." However, the inconsistency mentioned above is never explained.

215 Wagner, p. 113.

216 The emphasis on "integration" was a positive step of progress in the 1960's. Surely the Church should promote the Biblical aspects of the same.

217 Wagner, p. 114.

218 Wagner, pp. 22-23.

219 Padilla, René, "Evangelism and the World," Cited by Wagner, Our Kind of People: "The Homogeneous Unit Debate" (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), p. 23.

220 Escobar, Samuel, "Evangelism and Man's Search for Freedom, Justice, and Fulfillment," In Let the Earth Hear, Cited by Wagner, Our Kind of People, p. 23.

221 Hunter, p. 115.

222 Several insights within this section are based on the personal observations of this writer while on vicarage in a multi-cultural, changing community. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Inglewood, California, is one example of a church which has effectively served a variety of "homogeneous units" without separation or division.

223 Wagner, p. 125.

224 Hunter, p. 116.

225 Padilla and Escobar demonstrate this (217, 218 above).

226 As claimed by Hunter, p. 115.

227 Hunter, p. 115.

228 Wagner, p. 119.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CHURCH GROWTH'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY

#### Discussion Points

The Church Growth "renewal" is seen by some as God's eternal plan for the Church<sup>1</sup> which is effecting entire denominations.<sup>2</sup> It is claimed to be nothing less than (1) "Spirit of life penetrating whole denominations,"<sup>3</sup> (2) God revolutionizing "every part of the Church,"<sup>4</sup> and the instrument of God "to help build His church, internally and externally."<sup>5</sup> Wagner states:

It would be a mistake to claim too much, but some enthusiasts feel that with church growth insights we may even step as far ahead in God's task of world evangelization as medicine did when aseptic surgery was introduced.<sup>6</sup>

The movement has influenced some Lutherans to the extent that it has been said:

Seminaries and colleges which train church workers will get practical, or they will find God raising up meaningful avenues for preparation for ministry that ignore so called hallowed halls.<sup>7</sup>

Lutherans should also be serious about Church Growth insights because "the reformers, of course, spend more time on the nature of the Church than on its purpose."<sup>8</sup>

## The Church Growth Understanding of the Nature and Purpose of the Church

### The Nature of the Church

Lutheran Church Growth proponents like to reflect on the understanding of the Church's nature which the reformers possessed. They feel that the "church growth philosophy of ministry is built on the means of grace (Word and Sacraments) and on prayer."<sup>9</sup> Therefore, Lutheran Church Growth proponents will be "constantly reminded of the need for the sacrament."<sup>10</sup> Hunter points out that

the teachers of the Reformation . . . said it this way:  
"The church is wherever the Word is proclaimed and the  
Sacraments are administered."<sup>11</sup>

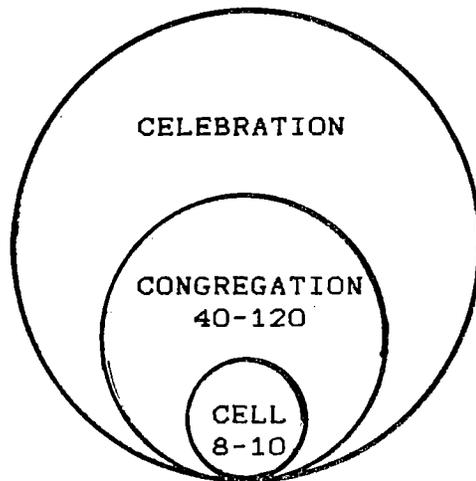
An understanding of the nature of the Church is important to many Church Growth proponents because "God is always concerned first with what the church is, not what it does."<sup>12</sup> (See Appendix C for a Church Growth Bible study on the nature of the Church.) Based upon this emphasis, it is claimed that the insights of the Church Growth movement have "begun to re-establish" the Church's nature.<sup>13</sup> Church Growth is "bringing renewal to the very nature of the church."<sup>14</sup>

### The "Celebration + Congregation + Cell = Church" Concept

The "Celebration + Congregation + Cell = Church" concept (hereafter, "the concept") is viewed as a significant contribution of Church Growth to the understanding of the nature of the Church.<sup>15</sup> (Note: In this sub-section, and that in under "The Analysis," emphasized terms will be those

referring to "the concept.") It is pictured as follows:<sup>16</sup>

Figure 2.1



Celebration is "a special kind of worship experience."<sup>17</sup> It is identified as one thing a large church can do well. This concept is based upon sociological and psychological factors which stress group size.

. . . Size has something to do with the quality of a celebration. As every sports fan knows there is something about a game played before 75,000 spectators that makes it superior to the same game before 1,500. As every sociologist knows, certain laws of collective behavior operate differently in small groups. As every psychologist knows, mob psychology has certain effects on people's emotions and their reaction to stimuli which would not be the case at all if the person were alone or in a small group.<sup>18</sup>

Biblical parallels are drawn to the Temple as the focal point for Old Testament worship were many people could gather together for the Sabbath and yearly festivals. The goal is to provide a setting in which people will say to their unchurched friends: "Hey, how about coming to church with me - you'll have a great time!"<sup>18</sup> Wagner states:

The great camp meetings of a century ago Finney's revivals, [and] Billy Graham crusades . . . were and still are functional substitutes for the Jewish festivals. Christians love to go to them. They are a lot of fun!

Some Sunday morning worship services in our churches are fun, too. Unfortunately, however, in a large number of our churches, the Sunday morning service is more like a funeral than a festival. There is nothing unauthentic about that kind of worship service - true, committed Christians can and do get through to God under such circumstances. But it is not the kind of experience that they are enthusiastic in inviting their unconverted friends to. Why not admit it? It's no fun!

This is probably one reason why many churches have remained small over the years. Most of them, especially when a new pastor has arrived, have tried to beef up their worship service from time to time so it would be more attractive to outsiders. But in many cases nothing seems to work. The problem could very well be that the churches are simply too small. Good celebrations need lots of people to make them fun and attractive.<sup>20</sup>

The congregation concept is an attempt to stress Christian fellowship. These groups include the Sunday School, a charismatic prayer meeting, evangelism teams, social committees, and softball teams.<sup>21</sup> This is the level where "anonymity is lost" and "people know each other's names."<sup>22</sup> For smaller churches the "congregation" is the same as the membership. For larger churches, each "congregation" should not exceed 250 people. One key feature of this concept is that it calls for a degree of self-government. Wagner states:

I would like to see our Mariners Class become Mariners Congregation. We should have our own deacons and name our appropriate committees. Even more, I think we should be able to call our own pastor, who would of course be added to the pastoral staff of the church as a whole. . . .

I feel so strongly about the need for combining the membership group with the fellowship group that I think joining a congregation ought to be a membership requirement

for an adult joining a church. . . . and, by the time they are taken into membership, decide which congregation they want to join. If this were done it would strengthen a church as steel rods strengthen poured concrete.<sup>23</sup>

The cell completes the fellowship circle begun by the congregation concept. It stresses interpersonal relationships and meeting human needs. This concept is defined as:

Eight or twelve believers gathered to minister to each other, to grow in their sensed love and unity, and to encourage one another to full commitment to Christ.<sup>24</sup>

Wagner states:

The cell, . . . is a very special relationship. It is so close to a family situation that I like to call it a "kinship circle" to contrast it from the membership circle and the fellowship circle.

My pastor . . . has told me more than once: "You're a fine Christian, but you'll be a much better one if you let God get a hold of you in a small group."<sup>25</sup>

The Purpose of the Church:  
Health and Growth

The Church is expected to be "healthy" and "growing."<sup>26</sup> Since "growth is an essential characteristic of the church,"<sup>27</sup> Church Growth speaks of "vital signs" (see Appendix D) or "diseases" which effect the "health" of a church. Church Growth diagnosis of a healthy church is possible because "the mark of a healthy church is growth."<sup>28</sup> The movement has isolated eight "diseases" which can be determined. Two of these "are terminal and six can be cured."<sup>29</sup> They are a combination of sociological and spiritual considerations which can be easily summarized. Ethnikitis is one terminal disease which was described in the last chapter. It is terminal because members of the same homogeneous unit move out of an

area.<sup>30</sup> Old age is another terminal disease "which is found in churches located primarily in rural areas. "The disease of old age is best described as the condition of a church that runs out of people."<sup>31</sup>

Social strangulation, a "curable disease," reflects the church which suffers from over-crowded conditions. This can mean an over-crowded nursery, parking lot, or "even the lavatories that are inadequate to handle traffic."<sup>32</sup> People blindness is one disease that is not terminal unless it results in ethnikitis later on in time. It was seen in the last chapter that this disease deals with the inability to recognize "the distinctiveness of various groups of people."<sup>33</sup>

Hyper-cooperativism is the result of too much emphasis on ecumenical endeavors. This is not to say that cooperating in Christian crusades is wrong, but doctrinal integrity should be observed.<sup>34</sup> Koinonitis is the result of a church putting too much stress on social activities and becomes turned inward.<sup>35</sup>

St. John's syndrome is based on Revelation chapter two where the church at Ephesus had lost its first love. This occurs usually after a church has been in existence for several generations. Since their original enthusiasm for their life in Christ, or their deep love for one another, has died,

each generation must be evangelized. . . . and needs to be involved in the process of making disciples. . . . Furthermore, once new people start joining the church, their first generation enthusiasm can rekindle the joy of a dynamic church. <sup>36</sup>

Arrested spiritual development is probably the disease which Lutheran Church Growth proponents stress the most in

relation to Lutheran churches. It is a disease of the church where (1) members never grow up and mature spiritually, (2) people are not involved in Bible study, (3) people are actually pre-conditioned by a philosophy of ministry that does not include the goal of making disciples. The last point becomes apparent in Christians who see confirmation as an end in itself or when the pastor is put on a pedestal.

#### The Nature of the Christian and His Role in Evangelism

Whenever a Church is unhealthy - that is, not growing - Church Growth proponents believe something is wrong with the people in the Church.<sup>38</sup> "Wherever people have followed God's commission, growth has resulted."<sup>39</sup> The body of Christ has to be "healthy and all the members . . . functioning"<sup>40</sup> if the commission is to be successful. "Growth cannot happen without spiritually renewed people."<sup>41</sup> "When growth does not occur, the fault is not God's commission. It is man's omission."<sup>42</sup>

The Christian must understand his role in the task of evangelism. Wagner states:

The right person is the person entirely filled with the Holy Spirit. He abides in Jesus. He is fully committed.

<sup>43</sup>  
Since the Christian's role in "harvesting" is so important, the movement places great stress on understanding the nature of the Christian. Church Growth proponents first point out that there are approximately "one billion nominal

Christians" whom "need to be evangelized."<sup>44</sup> This is the view of "persuasion evangelism" which says that "a person is not evangelized until he has been persuaded to become a mature member of the body of Christ."<sup>45</sup> These "nominal Christians" cannot effectively evangelize, because, "as someone has said, 'you can't give away what you haven't got.'"<sup>46</sup> The fact is, "the Word must somehow speak to us personally before we can teach it meaningfully and with spirit to others."<sup>47</sup> After all, "evangelism is not just presenting a body of knowledge to another person. It is introducing Jesus Christ Himself."<sup>48</sup> Sometimes a church grows "in spite of the people in it,"<sup>49</sup> but usually "growth results . . . if man does not interfere" with God's plan.<sup>50</sup> The following are ways in which "man frustrates God's plan" by frustrating "God's Spirit":

- (1) When the spiritual dynamic is secularized.
- (2) When the Word becomes a low priority.
- (3) When preaching becomes irrelevant.
- (4) When the Lord's Supper is viewed as a ritual.<sup>51</sup>

#### Motivation for Evangelism through Obedience to Christ?

For a church to become renewed and fulfill the Great Commission, it is important to motivate its members. "The only proper motivation for church growth is obedience to Jesus Christ."<sup>52</sup> "The church growth principle of obedience to Jesus Christ is central to the movement."<sup>53</sup> It is God who does the motivating of His people. "They are motivated by obedience to His command."<sup>54</sup> It is vital therefore that the situation in every parish be "sized up."<sup>55</sup> It is important to measure the

"fruits of faith" in the congregation. Here statistics can be useful.

Statistics should never be used as the sole source of judging the faith of an individual. Church growth measurement and analysis is not intended for use in singling out of an individual for judgement. . . . But when statistical information is employed to note the general trends of groups of Christians, the information can be revealing, stimulating and very useful for measuring effectiveness and developing strategies.<sup>56</sup>

The result of these statistics may indicate that individuals, and/or, entire congregations may have to "repent . . . [and be] willing . . . to live with the Lordship of Jesus Christ."<sup>57</sup> This means "God's people" must "stick with God's plan for His church" if the church is to continue to grow."<sup>58</sup> "On-the-job training" is essential.<sup>59</sup> For "the truth to come alive, Christians must be trained in the skills of mission."<sup>60</sup>

#### Church Growth Consultants: God's Gift to the Church?

It is claimed by the Church Growth movement that most denominations and pastors have been unfaithful in the training of the laity.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, God has raised up, even for Lutherans, the "church growth consultant."<sup>62</sup> They are the vital link between success and failure.

Professional consultants are now available to the church . . . [who] are highly trained in theology, biblical principles of church growth and the techniques of diagnostic research.

The decade [70's] has also seen emergence of Christian leaders who have been specially gifted by God for a broad ministry of church consultation.<sup>63</sup>

These consultants are particularly important to Lutherans because, as Lutheran Church Growth proponents claim, the "traditional concepts of the Office of Public Ministry" are "barriers among clergy" in relation to the growth of the Lutheran Church.<sup>64</sup> The goal is to shift the role of the pastor from "Herr Pastor" ("Mr. Pastor") to co-laborer with the laity. For example, this is done when the pastor acts as a Church Growth "resource person."<sup>65</sup> Schuller recommends a shift from "pronouncements" to "witnessing" on the part of the pastor.<sup>66</sup> The Apostle Paul is identified as an "exciting example of a first century church planter" which is to be followed today.<sup>67</sup> Paul is unique because after he got churches "on their feet, he appointed elders and left [my emphasis] them!"<sup>68</sup> This illustrates how lay involvement is important in the evangelistic task of the Church today.

The Interpretation of Ephesians Four:  
The "Gift of Evangelist" and The  
Priesthood of ALL Believers

Much of the Church Growth emphasis is based upon their interpretation of spiritual gift passages, especially Ephesians 4:11. This passage reads:

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers (NASB).

Church Growth teaches that this verse refers to five "offices" or "gifts." (Note: This paper shall be concerned primarily with the "gift of the consultant" and the "gift of

evangelism." See Appendix F for a more detailed analysis of how Church Growth views the other Ephesians 4:11 "gifts.") To the Church Growth proponents, "it is obvious that the one gift above all others necessary for church growth is the gift of evangelist."<sup>69</sup> This is a gift which approximately 10% of the laity supposedly possess.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, the movement attempts to recapture the spirit of the early church where evangelism was spontaneous, natural, unstructured and happened automatically.<sup>71</sup> This is probably best identified as "The Role of Witness."<sup>72</sup>

Whatever a person's gift, he can have a part in the "priesthood of all believers"<sup>73</sup> by seeking and using his "spiritual gifts."<sup>74</sup> Since a passage like 1 Corinthians 12:31 encourage individuals to seek spiritual gifts, "spiritual gift inventories" have been developed to measure which gifts listed in in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 the individual possesses.<sup>75</sup>

#### The Analysis

There is no doubt that the Church Growth movement is effecting entire denominations.<sup>76</sup> However, in Chapter One it was seen that the Church Growth movement does not have a clear theological stance in which to "retool" (or equip) the church.<sup>77</sup> The last chapter demonstrated that the movement relies on the behavioral sciences to aid in determining the doctrine of man, his receptivity to the Gospel, and mission

strategies. The Biblical view was asserted in which the Holy Spirit works through the Means of Grace alone to effect change both outside (conversion) and inside (sanctification) the Church.<sup>78</sup>

The insights above make it questionable whether the Church Growth movement can be considered God's eternal plan in which the Holy Spirit is "penetrating whole denominations,"<sup>79</sup> or "revolutionizing every part of the Church."<sup>80</sup> It is also debatable whether the movement can be compared to the advance in medicine when aseptic surgery was introduced. Wagner is correct: "It would be a mistake to claim too much."<sup>81</sup> Any "advances" in the Church which sacrifice the Word and Sacraments is actually no advance at all.<sup>82</sup> (See the analysis of Four: "A Pragmatic Reformation.")

While the colleges and seminaries of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod are not perfect, to suggest God may be raising "up meaningful avenues for . . . ministry that ignore so called hallowed halls,"<sup>83</sup> is to overstate the concern for practical theology. It must be pointed out that these schools are supported by a church which adheres to the Lutheran Confessions. As such, these schools promote something that the Church Growth movement does not - a correct understanding of the Means of Grace. This becomes more obvious when one considers the division made between the nature and purpose of the Church. (See Appendix C for an example of a Church Growth Bible study on the nature and purpose of the Church.)<sup>84</sup>

The Church Growth Understanding of the  
Nature and Purpose of the Church

The Nature of the Church

Hunter's emphasis on the Means of Grace is a welcome addition to Church Growth theology. However, (as in Chapter One: "The 'Means' and 'End' Distinction"), his presentation needs to be strengthened. For example, his statement that the "church growth philosophy of ministry is built on the means of grace (Word and Sacraments) and on prayer,"<sup>85</sup> needs clarification. First, it has been demonstrated that Church Growth does not build their emphases on the Word and Sacrament. (The structure of the movement will be discussed in great detail in Part II.) Second, the Means of Grace and prayer have not been put on the same level. The Means of Grace are foundational to the nature, purpose and growth of the Church. Prayer is a response to God's grace working in the Christian's life. Third, discipleship is important. However, statements such as "the church must do more than provide the Word and Sacraments"<sup>86</sup> needs serious clarification. The disciple is made and strengthened through the Means of Grace. There is no other way. In view of these insights, it is questionable how people involved in the Church Growth movement could be "constantly reminded of the need for the Sacrament."<sup>87</sup>

It is important for Lutheran Church Growth proponents to continue to recall the Lutheran Confessions in their

literature. Hunter says, "The teachers of the Reformation said it this way: 'The church is wherever the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered.'"<sup>88</sup> However, that is not what the Lutheran Reformers said!<sup>89</sup> First, note the vague classification of "teachers of the Reformation." Since Hunter goes on to quote the Augsburg Confession, a distinction should be made between the Lutheran and Reformed reformers.<sup>90</sup> Second, what the Lutheran Reformers did say follows:

That one holy Christian church . . . is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments administered according to the Gospel (AC VII; my emphasis).<sup>91</sup>

The emphasized words are those Hunter has deleted. The German word rein (translated above as "purely") means pure, absolute, undiluted, or unadulterated.<sup>92</sup> The final phrase of the above quote, in the German original ("die heiligen Sakramente laut des Evangelii gereicht werden")<sup>93</sup> definitely points to the importance of understanding the Sacraments in light of the Gospel. It emphasizes content over form or symbolism.

An internal inconsistency exists in the movement's so-called starting point. They claim that "God is always concerned first with what the church is, not what it does."<sup>94</sup> However, the preoccupation of the movement concerning the "end" is an emphasis on what the church "does" in the present. (See the analysis of Four: "Church Growth as a Science," especially figures 4.1 and 4.2.) The nature and

purpose of the Church are inseparably related. Weinrich states:

To reflect upon "mission" [the purpose] or upon "evangelism" is to reflect upon the Church itself [its nature], for the act of mission or of evangelism is not accidental or coincidental to the Church--like the activity of golf, tennis or horseback riding is to this or that individual--but the act of mission belongs to the very "core" of what it means to be the Church. 95

The Word of God alone teaches the Christian about the nature and purpose of the Church. Frail human beings certainly do not "re-establish" or "renew" the nature of the church. % God's Word is clear. Jesus Christ - the cornerstone - "is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Sasse states:

The only thing which is essential to its nature as the church of Christ is that it is the place, the only place in all the world, in which the blessed tidings of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake are heard. 97

Along with the gift of forgiveness, the Church receives four attributes. Klug states:

To the essence of the church belong these attributes: it is una, . . . sancta, . . . apostolica, . . . and catholica. 98

It will be shown that one important aspect of the analysis of the Church Growth view of the Church is that the Church is sancta and that this was accomplished through Christ's substitutionary atonement. (See the analysis below of: "The Purpose of the Church: Health and Growth.")

The "Celebration + Congregation +  
Cell = Church" Concept

The "Celebration Concept" (Figure 2.1) primarily presents a sociological and psychological outlook of the Church, not the Scriptural teaching. This is not to say that these insights are unuseful. For example it is helpful to understand how various size groups interact (i.e., group dynamics).<sup>99</sup> However, the concept should not be a substitute for the Scriptural teaching about the Church.

In addition to sociological and psychological factors, the separation of "church" and "congregation" is based upon the consideration of numbers. The former being the overall "membership".<sup>100</sup> and the latter being various "fellowship circles"<sup>101</sup> comprised of no more than 250 people. However, Scripture uses the terms "congregation" and "church" interchangeably. When a distinction is drawn between these terms, it is not done so on the basis of numbers, but often in terms of geography. Thus, "Church" often refers to all true believers.<sup>102</sup> while "congregation" usually refers to a local<sup>103</sup> gathering of believers. Pieper states:

. . . The one universal Church, [is] scattered over the whole globe, which is expressly called "one fold," μία ποιμήνη (John 10:16). . . . In quite a number of texts, however, the Scriptures speak of churches in the plural, of churches which are confined to particular and definite localities on earth. Thus 1 Cor. 16:19 . . . 1 Cor. 1:2 . . . Acts 8:1 . . . Rom. 16:16 . . . 1 Cor. 11:16.

What, however, is the relation of the local churches to the Church Universal? The Church Universal and the local churches are not two different churches or two kinds of churches, but the Church Universal consists of all the

local churches plus those believers who are prevented by circumstances from joining some local church.

Also all the functions with which the congregations are charged in every case presuppose faith in Christ, e.g., teaching and admonishing one another (Col. 3:16-17); the practice of church discipline (1 Corinthians 5; Matth. 18:17); the supervision of the teaching and the teachers (Rom. 16:17; Col. 4:17); the proclamation of the Gospel (1 Pet. 2:9); Christian conduct (1 Pet. 3:8-17). . . . This, then is the definition of a congregation: A congregation is the assembly of believers who congregate about Word and Sacrament at a particular place.

104

While a detailed word study is beyond the scope of this paper, it will be helpful to review a few Scriptural examples of how the terms "congregation" and "church" are used interchangeably.<sup>105</sup> In the Old Testament the term "congregation" (KJV<sup>106</sup>) can mean all of Israel (qahal, Leviticus 16:17; edah, Leviticus 4:13) or a local gathering of believers (qahal, 1 Kings 8:55; edah, Numbers 14:1). The Old Testament Church was the "congregation of the saints (chasid)"; (Psalm 149:1; see also 85:8) "purchased of old, . . . redeemed to be the tribe of . . . inheritance" (Psalm 74:2; see also Psalm 37:28). In the New Testament the term "church" (ekklesia) can mean all believers (Matthew 16:18; 25:34,46; Revelation 3:17) or a local gathering of believers (Matthew 18:17; Ephesians 1:1; Revelation 3:18ff). Therefore, it is proper to speak of the Church or congregations as consisting of "the saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Corinthians 14:33).

These insights are the basis of the Lutheran perspective which states: "The Church is . . . the congregation of saints and true believers" (AC VIII). The Scriptural teaching

stresses this same "congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered" (AC VII). This is an objective definition of the nature of the Church. The "congregation of saints" is present where personal faith in Christ is present (fedes qua creditur). The correct teaching of the Gospel and the Sacraments emphasizes a church's desire to teach the Biblical doctrine upon which its faith is established (fedes quae creditur). For both aspects of the Church to be a reality, great numbers are not needed, but rather, only two or more believers (Matthew 18:20). Klug cites the Large Catechism (III, 48ff) as follows:

The word kirche (church) means really nothing else than a common assembly, . . . (that is) a Christian congregation or assembly (eine Christliche Gemeinde oder Sammlung), or, best of all and most dearly, holy Christendom (eine heilige Christenheit). . . . The word communio ought not to be rendered communion (Gemeinschaft), but congregation (Gemeinde). It is nothing else than an interpretation . . . by which some one else meant to explain what the Christian church is, eine Gemeinde der Heiligen (a congregation of saints). . . . I believe that there is upon earth a little group [my emphasis] and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ.

107

The Biblical teaching is so simple that even a child can understand it.

For, thank God, [today] a child seven years old knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd (SA, III, XII).

Here again is the emphasis on personal faith and Biblical doctrine. In contrast, sociological, psychological and/or numerically based definitions of the Church, as suggested by

Church Growth, are a weak reflection of this God intended simplicity. A brief review of the three aspects of "the concept" will make this clearer.

The celebration emphasis of Church Growth exchanges the objective nature of worship (Word and Sacraments) for subjective criteria such as having "fun."<sup>108</sup> In relation to many of the modern evangelical trends in music, in "Rock: Music or Mockery," Merritt states:

It is well worth noting that most high liturgical churches place the choir loft and organ in the upper rear of the sanctuary in order that attention be drawn to the message and music rather than the artists and musicians.<sup>109</sup>

Merritt also includes a statement from a "former Christian rocker" who looks back and states:

I realize now that they [young people] were responding to the music, not the Holy Spirit.<sup>110</sup>

After citing similar references, Merritt concludes: "The end plainly does not justify the means."<sup>111</sup> (See the analysis of Three: "A Pragmatic Reformation.") The insights of Buszin are also important:

The very objectives of Christian corporate worship help impel the Christian to regard the Church as the holy Christian Church. In her services of worship man appears before the very throne of the one God, who is truly holy and who demanded of his children already in the Old Testament times: "Ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44).

However, in Christian services of worship men are reminded not only of the holiness of God and of the Christian's duties as a saint, but also of the father-son relationship which exists between God and His children. This relationship has been established, of course, through the atoning work of Jesus Christ and is stressed with great emphasis in the ideal and typical Lutheran service of

worship, which shies away from legalism and imperialistic ecclesiasticism as from a vicious beast or viper.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to supporting this emphasis on sociology and psychology, the movement is also weak in attempting to prove this concept on the basis of the Old Testament Temple. The Christian Church no longer needs the symbolism of the Temple because Christ, the true Lamb of God, has paid for the sins of the world (John 1:29). The Book of Hebrews begins:

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Much of the Book of Hebrews goes on to explain the blessings of the New Testament. Among these blessings are the knowledge of who the Christ is (2:3-13; 10; 13:8) and that He is the great and perfect High Priest (3:1; 7; 8) who understands the Christian's suffering (4:15-16).

Although gathering together in large groups can be uplifting, this certainly is not mandatory as it was in the Old Testament. Wagner is correct in pointing out that "something good happened to God's people during those [Temple] celebrations that would not have happened without them."<sup>113</sup>

However, the primary benefit of these gatherings was not to have "fun."<sup>114</sup> Under the Old Covenant, it was a necessity for the people to gather together. Without the Temple, the required sacrifices for the sins of the people couldn't be performed. Any joy these people experienced was a result of knowing their sins were forgiven - not the necessity to

gather. Today, the Church has a new covenant.

And as they were eating [the Old Covenant Passover meal], Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you."

"For this is My blood of the new covenant [my emphasis], which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28).<sup>115</sup>

The New Covenant is centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His Sacraments. Christ's true body and blood are available to the Church throughout the world, whether there be two or two thousand souls gathered together. The objective nature of the Word and Sacraments stresses God getting through to man, not man "getting through to God" as Wagner suggests.<sup>116</sup> Preus states:

The greatest possible comfort comes from this doctrine that the highest worship in the Gospel is the desire to receive forgiveness of sins, grace and righteousness (cf. Ap. IV, 49, 154; AC XXI,3).<sup>117</sup>

While camp meetings, revivals and crusades may be "fun,"<sup>118</sup> their nature is contrary to the Biblical emphasis on Word and Sacrament which is essential to a true concept of "celebration." In this light, they cannot even be considered "functional substitutes for Jewish festivals"<sup>119</sup> because the Old Covenant also emphasized the forgiveness of sins over emotions. (See analysis of Six: "Church Growth as a Friend.") While Wagner's kind of celebration is suppose to be more "attractive"<sup>120</sup> than more traditional forms of worship, the church which centers its ministry around the Word and

Sacraments has something more valuable than "fun"<sup>121</sup> to offer: it offers and dispenses the forgiveness of sins. Eternal life, which is the Christian's through forgiveness, is really worth getting excited about.

Lack of growth cannot be explained away by the lack of "fun" in a worship service. Growth comes through the Means of Grace when and where it pleases God (AC IV, V). To say that "many churches have remained small," and then to conclude "the problem could very well be that the churches are simply too small,"<sup>122</sup> is to suggest a plan for growth which is logically impossible to achieve. That is, Wagner seems to be suggesting that if a church is not large enough to celebrate, it will never be large enough to celebrate. This type of thinking is reflected in a church's ability to fill the needs of its community. Hunter states:

The healthy church must be large enough to conduct the various ministries needed by the community. The healthy church will discover the felt needs of the people around it and grow big enough to meet those needs. The congregation must be large enough to extend the Gospel to the people in a relevant way.<sup>123</sup>

This seems to suggest that if a church is not large enough to meet all the needs of the community, it will never be large enough to meet the needs of the community. Wagner even suggests that a church of 3,000 is not enough for a "highly effective singles ministry," but rather, 5,000 are needed.<sup>124</sup> Churches which center their ministry around the Word and Sacraments do not have to deal with these logical

impossibilities. This is because these churches are centered around the Means of Grace - God's answer to man's ultimate need for forgiveness of sins. The simplicity of the liturgical worship service is (usually) carried out by the called pastor. It proclaims the Gospel - "the power of God unto Salvation" (Romans 1:16). There is no need for the spiritually gifted experts which the movement claims are essential if the celebration is to be fun, spiritually uplifting and successful.<sup>125</sup> It is true that individuals should leave a church spiritually uplifted. However, this must be based upon a balance of Law and Gospel - not fun.<sup>126</sup>

While the congregation concept stresses the importance of fellowship, in the final analysis, it is a further drift away from the Scriptural ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Shifts from worship to the central role of special interest groups, (e.g., Bible study groups;<sup>127</sup>), and the subsequent suggestion that these groups be able to call their own pastor, reveals this.<sup>128</sup> The suggestion that the congregation's "pastor" be added to the staff of the local church, is a weak suggestion. If the church does not reflect the objective worship nature found in the Word and the Sacraments in celebration, it is doubtful whether the special interest group will emphasize the Word and Sacraments either. (This would be untrue only if there were to be a special interest group called: The Word and Sacraments Society. However, this is highly unlikely.) Furthermore, if joining one of these

congregations was a requirement for membership in the church as a whole, then the individual would, in a way, be forced to focus on the (even more) subjective and narrow emphasis of that congregation. This is not to say that some of these special interest groups would not have edifying and useful emphases. However, this type of requirement would not "strengthen"<sup>129</sup> the church's understanding of the Word and Sacraments. While it is good to be with other Christians and have physical needs met, this does not guarantee that one's ultimate need for conversion or a strengthened faith will be met.

The cell concept stresses the importance of interpersonal relationships and meeting human needs. While it is true that people have learned from the behavioral sciences how to show human concern in small groups,<sup>130</sup> Christian love and "ministry" must be centered in the person and work of Christ (1 John 3:1, 18; 4:18-19). It is unclear how God, in small group situations, "gets a hold" of individuals and makes "better Christians"<sup>131</sup> apart from the Work of the Holy Spirit in the Means of Grace.

When these cell groups begin to be called "house churches,"<sup>132</sup> the definition of the Church, which is centered in the Means of Grace, is confused. Klug states:

Called pastors are certainly "reservoirs of the church" in whom "alone is kept the Word of God"; and the preaching of the Word of God is a mighty force against Satan's assaults. Luther very firmly upholds the position that the administration of the Lord's Supper should be done by the

called pastors, not by every housefather, for that would "in the long run do much harm causing divisions and creating sects."<sup>133</sup>

The believers who gather around the Word rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered are alone called "the Church" or "congregation" (AC VII). No other group within the Church can properly claim either title. The fact that early Christians met in homes, (as valuable as this was and can be),<sup>134</sup> is not sufficient proof to suggest that small groups may function as the church.

First, some of these homes were probably quite large. Michael Green in Evangelism in the Early Church speaks of a man named Theophilus who "with all eagerness of desire made over the great palace of his house as a church . . . and the whole multitude, assembling daily to hear the Word, believed."<sup>135</sup> Second, the smaller the house church was, the less likely it would have been for smaller groups within it to perform the functions of the called minister. This would have been particularly true of the celebration of the Lord's Supper which the apostle Paul was particularly concerned about (1 Corinthians 11). The "house" or family was, in ancient cultures, "the fundamental unit of society."<sup>136</sup> This is reflected in the conversion of entire households which could be understood in a broad sense "as consisting of blood relatives, slaves, clients and friends."<sup>137</sup> This concept of the family carried over to their understanding of the Church.<sup>138</sup> These households were converted together, and

remained closely united in the Christian life and practice. (Sasse identifies individualism as a problem of the twentieth century.<sup>139</sup> This is particularly true of the American society.) No matter what size a church may have been, the church alone, (and not small groups within the church), were to administer the Sacraments.<sup>140</sup>

The Purpose of the Church:  
Health and Growth

While all Christians desire their church to be "healthy,"<sup>141</sup> they must say more than "the purpose of the Church is to grow."<sup>142</sup> Two immediate questions that need to be asked are: (1) What determines whether a church is "healthy"? and (2) How does a church grow? The answer: The Word and Sacraments are marks of a healthy church and "it is the Word of Forgiveness, the Gospel, that builds or creates the church."<sup>143</sup> God promises to work through the Word and Sacraments alone (AC IV, VII). Since the growth of a church is also contingent on when and where God chooses (AC V), it is incorrect to say that "growth is an essential characteristic of the church."<sup>144</sup> This is a mixing of the nature of the Church and the result of what the Church accomplishes by the Grace of God. Graebner states:

Since, wherever the Gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered (Acts 2:42), the invisible Church of Christ is sure to be (Is. 55:10-11), the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments are the unfailing [my emphasis] marks of the existence of the invisible Church [AC VII].<sup>145</sup>

The Word and Sacraments are the only marks of the Church,<sup>146</sup> not growth.<sup>147</sup> The former are objective marks, the latter subjective, uncertain, and not a matter of empirical research. Sasse states:

According to Calvin there are no marks by which the presence of the true church of the elect can be determined. Reformed doctrine counts the Word and the Sacraments as marks of the true, visible church. . . . But in the very nature of things this belief must lack the definite finality and the joyful certainty which a Lutheran has when he sees that the means of grace are rightly administered. A Lutheran can say: "Here, beyond a shadow of doubt, even if it seems otherwise, is the true church, the people of God, the Body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit." A Reformed Christian must question a statement of this kind. He must regard the finality and certainty of this assertion as an encroachment upon the sovereign rights of God, who has not only preserved His freedom of election, but has also reserved, for Himself alone, the right to know where and who His elect are.<sup>148</sup>

Through the Word and Sacrament the Church is both identified and sinners are brought to faith.<sup>149</sup> Because of the marks of the Church, it

is called the pillar of truth (1 Timothy 3:15) because it retains the "pure Gospel" (Ap. II, 20). Without the true doctrine (die reine Lehre) concerning Christ and the righteousness of faith there can be no church at all (Ap. IV, 377 German).<sup>150</sup>

In this light, what Church Growth considers "diseases" are not necessarily reflections of a church's spiritual condition. If the Gospel is being rightly taught, and the Sacraments are being rightly administered, then the true Church - the one without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27) - is present there. This is true even when sociological factors challenge a church. This was seen in the last chapter with

"ethnikitis" and "people blindness." It was seen that these concepts could be helpful to a church in evaluating their unique situation. On the other hand, it was also seen that the homogeneous unit principle could complicate the "problem" for a church facing these challenges. What could aid in sociological evaluation, can become detrimental to Scriptural outreach (Matthew 28:19-20). It is one thing to teach a church which has people blindness, (in the wake of ethnikitis), that Christ loves and died for the sin of all mankind (John 1:29). It is another to do so with the intent of preparing that church to accept people of all races. The Gospel is the "cure" for these so-called "diseases," not the creation of homogeneous churches. (See analysis of One: "The Homogeneous Unit Principle.")

Churches in rural areas which suffer from old age are not necessarily "diseased." Judging diminishing churches in declining areas as "diseased" is the result of asserting growth as an essential part of the Church's nature.<sup>151</sup> This judgment is untrue. Many fine churches exist in these rural areas which gather for worship of the Savior and center their ministries around the Means of Grace. Their status before the Lord, and before all other churches, does not change simply because they are unable to "grow" in a manner some consider essential.<sup>152</sup>

While there may come a time when a rural church considers "death with dignity,"<sup>153</sup> it must first be described, and view

itself, in a dignified manner. The term "disease" does not lend itself to the building up of the saints (Ephesians 4:12). Dignity for a church does not come about by stressing subjective growth criteria, but rather, through the Biblical teaching that even the declining church is part of the holy Christian Church (Ephesians 5:27; 1 Peter 2:5). While subjective opinions may consider these churches "diseased" in a sociological sense, God's view of all churches must be the primary emphasis. Individuals in this situation can truly say: "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31b).<sup>154</sup>

Social strangulation could be analyzed in much the same way. It is obviously the most sociological of all the "diseases." It is very helpful in determining sociological needs of a church such as nurseries, parking lots and lavatories.<sup>155</sup> However, calling these churches "diseased" emphasizes secondary concerns. That is, this church, like the old age church, is also holy (Ephesians 5:27). There may be some churches which can do little or nothing about these conditions. Perhaps it is a mere Americanism to call over-crowding a "disease." It could actually be a sign of a church which has been richly blessed by God and can truly "celebrate." This is not to say that a church should not attempt to correct problems connected with social strangulation. However, it is improper to emphasize the "disease" of crowded nurseries, parking lots and lavatories over the holy church gathered around the Word and Sacraments.

Perhaps there is a more dignified way of describing this problem.

It is interesting that hyper-cooperation is condemned as a "disease" on the one hand, and yet on the other, "cooperation is not bad as long as doctrinal integrity is observed."<sup>156</sup> The definition of "doctrinal integrity" is as vague as the movement's theological stance. (See the analysis of One; and Three: "A Response.") It is unclear how "doctrinal integrity" can be maintained by stressing the "global strategies of Christian groups around the world" since their theological stances vary widely.<sup>157</sup> The church growth pastor who encourages his people to attend "seminars and workshops" and who "suggest resources for them to read and study"<sup>158</sup> has little to say about the doctrines which will be presented. To say that "God's people are not just a group of believers in ancient doctrines"<sup>159</sup> could cause important distinctions to be considered unimportant. (See the analysis of Three: "A Response"; and Four: "The Roots.")

Because, from God's perspective, we "have been brought into a living relationship with all other Christians,"<sup>160</sup> there must be a correct understanding of fellowship principles. Where this understanding breaks down, the unity all Christians possess in the Gospel is eventually lost. (See the analysis of "Church Growth Consultants: God's Gift to the Church?" below; and Three: "A Response to Modernism.") This is why the Handbook of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

states:

Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are:

1. Acceptance of the confessional basis of Article II. [Acceptance of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions without reservation.]

2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:

a. Serving congregations of mixed confessions, as such, by ministers of the church;

b. Taking part in services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confessions;

c. Participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities. [my emphasis] 161

Although the movement has "a high respect for the Word,"<sup>162</sup> there seems to be more concern for letting "growth determine the priorities"<sup>163</sup> and discovering the "principles which God is blessing for growth."<sup>164</sup> In keeping with the ecumenical nature of the movement, it has been said: "The church growth pastor . . . has the common sense to know that his own denomination isn't God's only gift to the world."<sup>165</sup> These insights show that Church Growth attempts to base much of its fellowship principles upon the behavioral sciences. However, this is not a sufficient basis for Christian fellowship. It is actually based in the Law, not in the Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the essential element for true Christian fellowship (AC VII). (See analysis of "The Proper Place of the Two Kingdoms" in Chapter Six.) Even the belief in inerrancy is not a sufficient basis for unity of mission. (See analysis of Three: "A Response to Modernism.")

These insights become particularly important when one considers the movement's acceptance of "crusade evangelism." To assume that "a well known evangelist" will of necessity "preach the Gospel" is presumptuous. For example, most Reformed evangelists preach a gospel, but this gospel is usually synergistically based, i.e., not the Gospel at all, but the Law.<sup>166</sup>

Another important insight is that Lutherans who participate in these practices often sacrifice theology for no practical reason. For example, crusade evangelism, which is widely praised, constitutes only .001% of all conversions to Christ according to Church Growth calculations. Out of eight possible categories, crusade evangelism is the most ineffective style of evangelism.<sup>167</sup> It is ironic that the leading crusade evangelists, as leaders of the most ineffective evangelism style today, would be quoted as authorities of effective evangelism. This becomes even more ironic when Lutherans quote them or even adopt their emphases!<sup>168</sup>

Koinonitis and St. John's syndrome are both real problems. On the one hand, a church can be so concerned with social activities that they do not reach out with the Gospel. On the other hand, a church can lack even the emphasis on Christian fellowship among its members. However, it is unclear how koinonitis can be cured without adversely effecting future fellowship. The suggestions to start a new service or plant a "daughter church"<sup>169</sup> may not be possible.

What is more, there exists an internal inconsistency for the Church Growth proponent in that the former could affect the Church Growth's own concept of celebration (analyzed above). Those challenged by St. John syndrome may need to try some "koinonitis" for a while. Christian fellowship centered around the Church's "first love," Jesus Christ, should be a top priority. The claim that "once new people start joining the church, their first generation enthusiasm can rekindle the . . . church,"<sup>170</sup> can only happen if the fellowship is centered in the Means of Grace. In fact, if this fellowship is not based upon the Word and the Sacraments, the inevitable results will be counterproductive. The old members and new members must have an objective standard upon which to base their unity. The cure of these "diseases" would be more obvious if they were to be clearly centered in the Means of Grace. In both cases, fellowship must be centered around the Word and the Sacraments in order to truly motivate individuals to witness (Matthew 28:19-20).

Arrested spiritual development is probably the clearest example of a "disease" which is purely spiritual. This "disease" affects Lutherans who believe confirmation is a form of graduation.<sup>171</sup> This is an obvious problem which needs careful attention among Lutherans. However, this is not a problem with "a philosophy of ministry that does not include the goal of disciple making."<sup>172</sup> Rather, it is, like koinonitis and St. John syndrome, a problem on the part of

individuals to understand the Means of Grace. First, Christians must be motivated by the Gospel if they are to "mature spiritually" and be "involved in Bible study." Second, although they are important, one cannot measure the "health" of a congregation by the number of Bible studies. The study of Scripture is the fruit of faith which flows from the foundations laid in regular Sunday worship (where the marks of the Church are working). Third, to emphasize "making disciples," without stressing the means of making disciples, is to frustrate Christians, not motivate them. Fourth, to highlight the "end" of making disciples, is to confuse Law and Gospel. (This point will be expanded later.) The desire to proclaim the Gospel, and thereby make disciples, is the result of spiritual development, not the cause. (See also "Church Growth Consultants . . ." below for further discussion of the Lutheran concept of the ministry.)

The problem with the Church Growth treatment of these "diseases" can be summarized by observing: (1) they are primarily sociological in nature, and therefore, cannot measure the "spiritual health" of a church (see "Soc." column below); (2) the "cure" for the more theological oriented "diseases" lack the proper understanding of the Means of Grace (see "Theo." column below); and (3) while some overlap can exist between the sociological and theological, this does not necessarily reflect the "health" of a church (see parentheses under "Theo." below). The following figure (2.2) summarizes

what has been said thus far. (Note that "sociological" and "theological" have been abbreviated).

Figure 2.2

<u>"Diseases"</u> articulated by Church Growth	<u>Nature</u> of the "disease"		<u>Notes: Where Church Growth</u> falls short on measuring the "health" of a congregation.
	<u>Soc.</u>	<u>Theo.</u>	
Ethnikitis	X		Weak cure through homogeneous unit principle (h. u. p.).
Old Age	X		Old does not equal unhealthy.
Social Strangulation	X		Crowded conditions do not necessarily equal unhealthy.
People Blindness	X	(X)	Cure influenced by h. u. p.
Hyper-Cooperation		X	Weak fellowship distinction; need Means of Grace.
Koinonitis	X	(X)	Weak solution; could shift to St. John's Syndrome.
St. John's Syndrome	X	(X)	Determined largely by age of congregation.
Arrested Spiritual Development		X	Need emphasis on Means of Grace; even Lutherans weak.

In addition to these insights, the Church Growth movement places too much burden upon churches to produce growth results. The church which is not "growing," yet is faithfully using the Means of Grace, can be compared to the days of Noah. That is, "something [was] wrong,"<sup>173</sup> but the "fault" was in the hearers. The results of the use of the Means of Grace are in God's hands. Also, it is unlikely that any church can motivate "all [my emphasis] members" to function as Church Growth suggests.<sup>174</sup> In this light, the church growth

emphasis which requires all members to function sets up an impossible goal for any church to achieve. Ultimately, the church cannot "do more than provide the Word and Sacraments"<sup>175</sup> in order to "grow." Furthermore, the suggestion that "growth cannot happen without spiritually renewed people"<sup>176</sup> is to say too much. Growth occurs through the power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16). Note the contrast between Noah and Jonah. Jonah is an example of one who God used to produce great "growth," yet he was not "spiritually renewed." God worked through Jonah's preaching in just one day to convert the city of Ninevah (which was a three day's walk; or 120,000 souls according to 4:11) (Jonah 3:3-5). Jonah was so unspiritually renewed that his great success, and God's mercy to the people of Ninevah, "greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry" (4:1). The point of this example is that God "gives the increase" through the power of His Word (Hebrews 4:12) regardless of the proclaimer (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). While man's "omission" of the Great Commission hinders the spread of the Gospel, his right heart ("obedience") does not necessarily guarantee its success (AC V).

#### The Nature of the Christian and His Role in Evangelism

It is believed that Christians can be "entirely filled with the Holy Spirit," and "fully committed."<sup>177</sup> However, as long as the Christian is in the flesh, he is never totally free from the effects of sin (Romans 7). Although the simul

justus et peccator doctrine is one of the greatest accents in Lutheran theology,<sup>178</sup> even some Lutherans believe Christians must be "fully committed" before a church will grow.<sup>179</sup> From the viewpoint of the Lutheran Confessions, a Christian is one who has faith in Christ. Faith saves (John 3:18,36). Whoever said, "You can't give away what you haven't got,"<sup>180</sup> did not understand this important fact. Even a "nominal Christian"<sup>181</sup> (whatever that is), by virtue of his faith, has got what is necessary to give away. (See the example of Jonah again.)

Drickamer states:

It is important for us to preach that the Holy Spirit is in everyone who believes in Christ. Otherwise he would not be a believer. If we call into question whether or not a believer has the Holy Spirit--whether we do it explicitly or by implication--we are preaching doubt about salvation, that is, we are working contrary to the proclamation of (universal) grace, to the Gospel, to the actual working of the Holy Spirit through the Word.<sup>182</sup>

All Christians, by virtue of their baptism and their faith in Christ, are "spiritually renewed" and "alive in the Spirit."<sup>183</sup> Faith is the result of the operation of God's Word. To stress action over faith is to confuse faith with its by-product, good works. When a Christian is able to teach others "meaningfully and with spirit," such a good work is the result of faith. Works are not conclusive in determining who has faith.

The message that creates faith concerns Christ. The Person of Christ is proclaimed through "a body of knowledge."<sup>184</sup> Preus states:

In its form the Gospel is an external, oral proclamation

(LC IV, 30; SA III, IV). Often the Gospel is simply called "the promises" (promissiones, Verheissung Gottes, Zusage). The promises are concerning free remission of sins and concerning reconciliation through faith in Christ (Ap. IV, 188. See also Ap. IV, 60, 388; XII, 53; SA III, 3,4). The Gospel offers us God's own promises that He will be gracious to us and justify us for Christ's sake (Ap. IV, 43), or that He will no longer be angry with us (Deum nobis propitium esse) for Christ's sake (Ap. IV, 345), so that He forgives us for Christ's sake (Ap. VII, 35).

So there is a very explicit and definite content to this Gospel proclamation. Throughout our Confessions (especially in Ap. IV and FC V and SA II, I) we observe the burning desire to retain and proclaim this Gospel content unimpaired and unadulterated. . . .

Doctrine is stressed all through the Confessions; and the church of the Lutheran Confessions with its burden to proclaim Christ's Gospel believes, teaches (lehren), and confesses the true doctrine (Lehre). In fact, the Gospel IS doctrine (Ap. XII, 10); the doctrina evangelii is the doctrina apostolorum (Ap. VII, 38). And so he who teaches opinions contrary to the Gospel teaches contrary to the truth of the church (Ap. IV, 400).<sup>185</sup>

Since the Church is made up of sinners it grows "in spite of the people in it."<sup>186</sup> That is why the Means of Grace are necessary; because man does "interfere with God's plan."<sup>187</sup> Interestingly, the four points of how "man frustrates God's plan,"<sup>188</sup> can actually be used to describe the Church Growth movement. That is, (1) the spiritual dynamic is secularized through concepts such as "possibility thinking" (see analysis of One: "The Quest"; Appendix B); (2) the Word takes a "low priority" to the behavioral sciences (see analysis of Four); (3) Church Growth preaching supplants the Gospel by stressing more "relevant needs" than eternal salvation (see Two: "The Quest"); and (4) the Lord's Supper is not adequately emphasized.

Motivation for Evangelism Through  
Obedience to Christ: The Need for the  
Distinction Between Law and Gospel

The movement errs in teaching Christian motivation<sup>189</sup> via "obedience."<sup>190</sup> Weinrich states:

The Church evangelized because it had to. This is to be understood in the strictest possible sense. The early church did not begin the work of evangelism simply because Christ commanded it (cf. Matt 28:19); mission was not simply obedience to a higher authority. Nor did the Church evangelize out of a sense of gratitude for God's love, out of a sense of responsibility in light of the last judgment, or out of a sense of concern for fallen man's destiny--although these may be considered "emotive causations" for the Church's mission activity, . . . Rather, the Church evangelized because it could not do otherwise, and it could not do otherwise because in the Holy Spirit the Church had been taken up into the very activity of God in Christ whereby the final purposes of God are fulfilled.

The early Church did not understand mission as a merely human action done in response to the good things God had done. Mission was perceived christologically--as God acting for the salvation of fallen mankind, but God acting only in union with mankind. The early Church understood mission to be the very expression of the Lordship of Christ in the Holy Spirit. But it is important to note where that Lordship of Christ is manifested and where that Lordship is instituted. Christ is Lord in his coming in lowly servanthood to sinful man, a servanthood culminating in and summed up in his atoning death and ushering forth in the life of resurrection. . . . In light of this we may say two things: (1) Jesus' ministry is not contained temporally or geographically but rather contains in itself universal mission, and (2) the mission of the Church is nothing other than Jesus' mission in its universal proportions.<sup>191</sup>

The Church Growth emphasis on "obedience" is a further consequence of the Reformed definition of the Church and its marks (discussed above: "The Purpose of the Church: Health and Growth"). Sasse states:

Since the Reformed Church, proceeding from its presuppositions, regards the preaching of the Law as

equally essential to the nature of the church as the proclaiming of the Gospel, it is quite conceivable that, in listing the marks of the church, it prefers to speak of the Word of God rather than of the Gospel, or else includes the notion of Law in the concept of the Gospel. And this is an important consequence. The Gospel requires faith, the Law obedience. The congregation which grows out of the preaching of the Word, the congregatio sanctorum, is, according to the Lutheran view, a congregation of believers; according to the Reformed view it is a congregation of believers and obeyers. Of course, the Lutheran Church also teaches that those who have received the faith, those who are justified sinners, should walk in the way of the new obedience. But their sanctity depends on their faith alone, not on their obedience. If there are any marks in addition to those by which the presence of the church can be determined objectively (that is, the Gospel and the Sacraments); if, in other words, there are what might be called subjective notae ecclesiae, marks by which a man might determine whether he belongs to the church; then, besides the mark of being baptized, the Lutheran Church would point to faith and the profession of faith, while the Reformed would point to faith and obedience. . . . But the Reformed must always add obedience, . . . to faith. In distinction from faith, which always remains hidden, even when it is confessed with the lips, obedience becomes visible, since it manifests itself in an observance of God's command.

This accounts for the fact that, . . . Reformed doctrine recognizes still another nota ecclesiae. This is church discipline. And church discipline reveals whether a church is obedient to its Lord. . . . Such discipline is essential to the nature of the church . . . for if a church lacks the correct disciplinary practice it is an indication, according to the Reformed view, that the first mark of the church, the preaching of the pure Word of God, is not all that it should be. . . .

Still another mark of the church must be added, . . . this additional mark is correct organization of the church.

. . . 192

The Reformed emphasis on "obedience" has crept into Lutheran literature.<sup>193</sup> Some believe that the Lutheran Church will not grow without some drastic changes. These changes reflect an obedience or Law motivation:

No change in direction will occur [in the LC--MS] without increasing the dissatisfaction of all members with their performance in bringing people to Christ. <sup>194</sup>

To present the Biblical view, it is helpful to review the role of the Law and the Gospel in conversion. Preus states:

What is repentance? Our Augsburg Confession (XII, 3-5) answers the question concisely and in strict accordance with the Biblical teaching: "Properly speaking, repentance consists of these two parts: one is contrition, that is, terror smiting the conscience with a knowledge of sin [through the Law], and the other is faith, which born of the Gospel, or of absolution, believes that sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, comforts the conscience, and delivers it from terror." . . .

The Holy Spirit . . . works contrition through the Law, and exclusively through the Law; and He works faith through the Gospel, and exclusively through the Gospel. <sup>195</sup>

The Law never motivates, but, rather always tears down. The Gospel alone builds up and motivates the Christian. <sup>196</sup> Far from motivating the Christian, if the function of the Law is confused with that of the Gospel, this "undermines the Good News of what God has done for us in the suffering, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ." <sup>197</sup> While Church Growth proponents recognize the importance of the Holy Spirit in witnessing (Acts 1:8), their motivation through "obedience" or the Law is contrary to the way in which the Holy Spirit works. Luther, commenting on Galatians 3:2, (i.e., ". . . Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?") states:

You cannot say that you received the Holy Spirit by the Law. As long as you were servants of the Law, you never received the Holy Ghost. Nobody ever heard of the the Holy Ghost being given to anybody . . . as a result of the preaching of the Law. In your own case [the Jew], you

have not only learned the Law by heart, you have labored with all your might to perform it. You most of all should have received the Holy Ghost by the Law if that were possible. You cannot show me that this ever happened. But as soon as the Gospel came your way, you received the Holy Ghost by the simple hearing of faith, before you ever had a chance to do a single good deed." 198

This is why Nafzger states:

The mere preaching of the Law may occasionally produce a momentary change in behavior and perhaps cause a spurt in the growth charts and graphs, but it will not, because it cannot, change human hearts. The Law cannot produce spiritual growth, not even when it is couched in the language of love. This only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can accomplish. Therefore, the corrective to indifference, to apathy, to cheap grace in the church [and all of these things Church Growth is concerned with - see footnote] is always and only the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Would we have our congregations to be zealous for good works, on fire for Christ, good stewards of God's gifts to them - then . . . learn to preach the Gospel in all its unconditional sweetness. In Christ - that's where the power is. 199

It is the Reformed influence of leading Church Growth proponents that hinders the movement from making the important distinction between Law and Gospel. For example, McGavran describes coming to faith as "hearing the Gospel and gladly obey[ing] it." 200 It is "through obedience that [new converts] are baptized." 201 Sasse reflects the Biblical concern over these beliefs:

Both communions [Lutheran and Reformed] wish to distinguish the Gospel from the Law and yet indicate the relation which subsists between them. Both acknowledge that the chief article of the Christian faith is the forgiveness of sins: the Lutherans consider it the whole content of the Gospel, while the Reformed consider it the principle content of the Gospel.

At first glance these differences seem to be insignificant. . . . But the nearness is only an apparent one. These views of the relation of Law and Gospel stand side by side at first, like two railroad tracks that lie

next to each other and seem to be headed toward the same place, until it turns out, later, that they are going in entirely different directions.

. . . As soon as the Gospel is no longer understood exclusively as the gracious promise of the forgiveness of sin for Christ's sake, the concept of faith is altered. No longer is faith simply the response of man to this promise, his trust in the pledge of divine mercy; it is at the same time a response to the commandment which accompanies the promise in the Gospel. Thus the idea of faith approaches the idea of obedience. [my emphasis]

The Westminster Confession of 1647 defines "saving faith" in such a way as to include, first, the acceptance as true of "whatsoever is revealed in the Word," and second, a conduct which conforms with "each particular passage thereof," "yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God" [Chapter XIV, in Schaff, cited by Sasse, III, p. 630]. . . . Saving faith is defined as something quite different from trust in the promise. The same conclusion must be drawn from the treatment of Justification in this confession. It asserts that God does not justify men "by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ." [Schaff, p. 626. The rejection of imputed faith (compare AC, IV: "This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight") is accounted for by the fact that faith is conceived of as an act of obedience.]<sup>202</sup>

If these important distinctions are to be maintained, then the Gospel, not the Law, is the only proper motivation.<sup>203</sup> The certainty which Christians have in the Gospel of their loving Creator and Savior motivates them to do good works and especially to preach the Gospel.<sup>204</sup>

For those who live under the Law, man is the center of attention and therefore what he does makes the difference. However, for the Christian believer who lives in the Gospel, the center of attention is God and what God does makes the difference.<sup>205</sup>

To "size up the parish"<sup>206</sup> in an attempt to measure the congregation to determine whether individuals or the entire

body "need to repent,"<sup>207</sup> is to further commingle Law and Gospel. The fact is, the "fruits of faith" are not always measurable.<sup>208</sup> Further, not only should "statistics never be used as the sole source of judging the faith of an individual,"<sup>209</sup> but also faith is not for the Christian to judge (1 Corinthians 4:5). Drickamer states:

An old theological axiom runs: de occultis non judicat ecclesia. "The church does not judge about hidden things." This maxim is in keeping with the Bible (Matt. 7:1; 1 Cor. 4:5). The church cannot judge because it cannot see what is in a person's heart (1 Samuel 16:7). We do not know who does and who does not have faith, who is and who is not a Christian. We accept the confession of the mouth.<sup>210</sup>

Each individual Christian needs to know that he is simultaneously saint and sinner, and in addition, that God has provided the Means of Grace for his soul's welfare. The Christian should be interested in doing good works, but, the strength and willingness comes by the Gospel, not the Law.

For those living under the Law, the Church is a human organization which increases or decreases numerically in proportion to the efforts of man. Therefore, success or failure in the Church is to be measured in much the same way as is done in the secular world. Quantity rather than quality is more important when pastors are considered "successful" simply because they have bigger congregations and budgets.

Those who live in the Gospel view the church quite differently. It is God's creation. It is He who opens or closes doors. In His eyes the lack of growth in certain areas may not be because of a lazy pastor but the unbelief of the hearers. . . . Only Word and Sacrament can convert.<sup>211</sup>

This means that if "God's people" are to "stick with God's plan for His church,"<sup>212</sup> then it is not "on-the-job training," (man's efforts) which will make "the truth come alive."<sup>213</sup>

Rather, the Means of Grace, which make the truth come alive, are the motivation for the Christian. They do not only emphasize the "Lordship of Jesus Christ," but present Jesus Christ the Savior. The Gospel of the forgiveness of sins is the Christian's true motivation for mission work.<sup>214</sup>

Church Growth Consultants:  
God's Gift to the Church?

While the Church Growth concern for training the laity in evangelism is commendable, they do not assert a Biblical model of the ministry. The Church Growth model is deficient for reasons which center on the movement's emphasis on methodological success.<sup>215</sup> First of all, much emphasis rests on the Christian, including Church Growth consultants, exercising their faith.<sup>216</sup> In many cases, as was seen in Schuller's "possibility thinking," this so-called "faith" is defined in practical terms, rather than Biblical terms.<sup>217</sup> In short, the emphasis is on some form of fides qua which is presumed to be valid Christian faith (fides quae) without clear qualification.

Second, the Church Growth ministry is centered around "the consultant" who is "specially gifted by God,"<sup>218</sup> in a sense, as having an immediate call. However, there is no "promise that after the apostles God wants to send laborers into His harvest through an immediate [i.e., without means] call."<sup>219</sup> Therefore, outside of God's use of the congregation to issue the valid<sup>220</sup> mediate call,<sup>221</sup> there is no promise

that God will provide specialized ministries - especially without a clear teaching on the Word and Sacraments. Since these individuals have a vague theological stance, (as shown in Chapters One and Six), it is unknown how these individuals are suppose to be "highly trained"<sup>222</sup> in theology. In fact, it was seen that a great deal of emphasis actually lies in the area of the behavioral sciences.<sup>223</sup> In this light, the broader their "ministry of consulation," the less absolute their so-called "biblical principles" and their "diagnostic research" becomes. (See also Chapter Four.)

Third, despite having knowledge of the insights above, it seems that this new emphasis on the "ministry" is preferred among some Lutherans. This is based on the view that "traditional concepts of the Office of the Public Ministry" hinder the growth of the church.<sup>224</sup> However, this concern is the result of an erroneous view of the historic Lutheran ministry. Drickamer states:

This writer has frequently heard the title Herr Pastor used to refer derogatorily to what is believed by some to have been the attitude toward the ministry in the days when the Missouri Synod spoke mostly German. The point was that this title expressed subservience on the part of the laity. . . . This is a myth. It is undeniable that the ministry in the nineteenth century Missouri Synod enjoyed a great deal of respect. But it is a mistake to perceive any subservience in the title Herr Pastor.

The title Herr Pastor was simply a matter of German courtesy. Herr meant no "lord" but "mister" as in "the Reverend Mister." The same formula was used until quite recently in Germany for men in many professions, for example Herr Rechtsanwalt ("Mister Lawyer"). . . . Walther in particular had a reputation for courtesy and politeness. Walther deserved this reputation. Not only

would he refer to a teacher as Herr Lehrer, but he also frequently used formal titles when referring to relatives. The salutation in a letter to Theodore Buenger read "Mein herzlichster Herr Neffe!" (My most beloved Mister Nephew!) . . . At an 1881 pastoral conference where the Predestinarian Controversy was being discussed others referred to "die Gegner" ("the opponents") but Walther spoke of them as "die Herren Opponenten."<sup>225</sup>

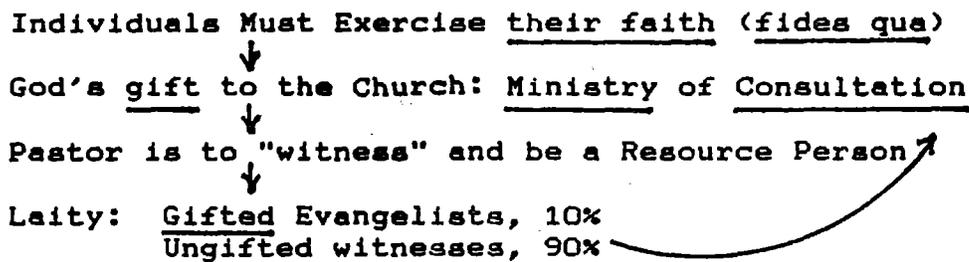
The trend, through Schuller and others, is to emphasize the talent in the man, not the man of the office. Schuller suggests that perhaps one pastor is not the best arrangement for a church. However, one must remember what pastor means: "shepherd." That is, a shepherd can care for only a limited number of sheep if he is to be a quality shepherd. A good shepherd knows each of his sheep and may even call them by name (John 10:11-15).<sup>226</sup> Therefore, the ideal arrangement is for each layperson to have a shepherd who knows them by name and can care for their souls. He is not to merely "witness,"<sup>227</sup> but to guide and teach his flock. For this, absolute "pronouncements"<sup>228</sup> from God's Word - Law and Gospel - are essential.<sup>229</sup> However, this cannot be done if the pastor is reduced to a mere "resource person"<sup>230</sup> who is responsible to be a facilitator of Church Growth emphases - particularly spiritual gifts. It will be seen below that the pastor is supposed to be more than a "resource person." He is to be more than a "witness." He is to preserve the faith (fides quae) through his ministry.<sup>231</sup>

Fourth, the so-called "gift of evangelist" is "the one gift above all others necessary for church growth."<sup>232</sup> It is

claimed that 10% of the laity have this special gift. What is an attempt to motivate the priesthood of all believers actually serves to exclude the other 90% who are simply "witnesses."<sup>233</sup> The following figure (2.3) is designed to summarize these points. (Note: (1) "Consultants" are often those who are "gifted evangelists" and (2) the highlighted words will be important for the comparison made in Appendix E, i.e., Figure E.3.)

Figure 2.3

Church Growth: Emphasis on Successful Methods



In addition to the weaknesses of the Church Growth model cited above, it can be demonstrated that the Biblical model is very different. First, the doctrine of justification (AC IV) is at the very heart of the apostles' doctrine (Ephesians 2:20). This faith is the true faith, FIDES QUEA, the faith that is believed. Second, God instituted the Means of Grace in order to preserve and spread the Christian faith. So "that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted" (AC V).<sup>234</sup> Third, to preserve the Gospel, God has given the Church (Ephesians 4:11) "faithful men" (2 Timothy 2:2) who are "apt

to teach" (2 Timothy 2:24) "sound doctrine" (Titus 1:9).<sup>235</sup> There is a definite "content" to the Gospel which is to be witnessed to.<sup>236</sup> The pastor is to possess "the special aptitude to teach and minister beyond the usual capacity of the believers in general (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:21)."<sup>237</sup> It is the Christian pastor who is to "equip the saints" (Ephesians 4:12-14).<sup>238</sup> Paul did not "leave" the churches he established.<sup>239</sup> Rather, he saw to it that the apostolic doctrine would be taught (2 Timothy 2:2; et al.) He also kept in close contact with them. This is proven in his missionary journeys and his many epistles. Fourth, there are no "classes" among the laity.<sup>240</sup> That is, there is one "priesthood of all believers" (1 Peter 2:9) and all share in spreading the message of the forgiveness of sins.<sup>241</sup> The Lutheran doctrine emphasizes "vocational aspects of loving service" (mother, father, employee, boss, child, citizenship) of which even the baptized infant, the handicapped and the shy person are a part.<sup>242</sup> The following figure (2.3) is designed to supplement the discussion of these points. (Note: Appendix E places Figures 2.3 and 2.4 side-by-side with emphasized words. Figure 2.5 is also included with an important addition. Walther's "Theses on the Ministry" are given to summarize the Lutheran view of the ministry. Particularly important are Theses I and II. The former points out that the pastoral office is distinct from that of the priesthood of all believers, the latter, that the pastoral

office is established by God.)

Figure 2.4

The Biblical Model: Emphasis on Means

Apostolic Doctrine (fides quae):  
The Message of the Gospel (AC IV)



Ministry of the Word and Sacraments:  
The Means of Grace (AC V)



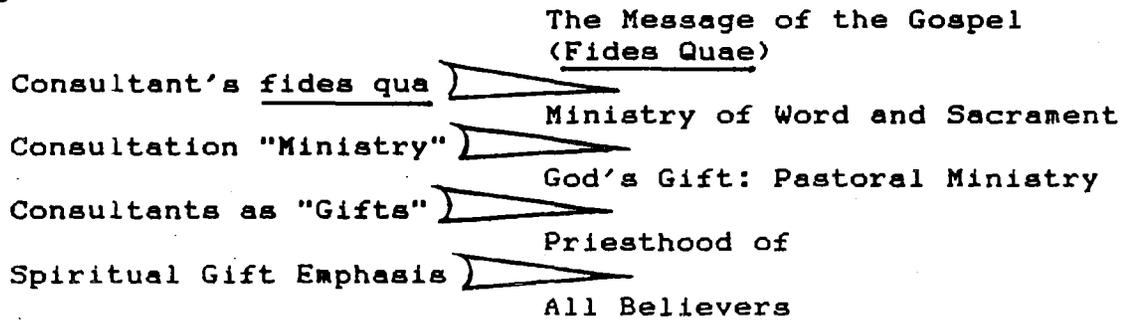
God's gift to the Church:  
The Pastoral Ministry (Ephesians 4:8-14)



The Priesthood of all Believers  
(1 Peter 2:9)

The Church Growth model drives four wedges into the Biblical model of the ministry. The first wedge is the consultant's fides qua which comes between the Gospel (fides quae) and the Means of Grace. The second and third wedge are the so-called "ministry of consultation" itself. The second wedge comes between the Ministry of Word and Sacrament by separating the "ministry" from Means of Grace. The third wedge comes between pastoral office and the laity by viewing the consultant as the "gift" and the pastor as a mere "resource person." The final wedge separates the priesthood of ALL believers into two classes: the gifted and the ungifted. Note the following figure:

Figure 2.5



Lutheran Church Growth proponents, feel that this affords a needed synthesis between the Biblical model (message and means) and Church Growth (methods). However, if a church is unfaithful in carrying out the Great Commission, then the solution is not to be found in (a new class of) "consultants," as Church Growth claims, but in the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments. The former is rooted in man's wisdom, the latter is centered in God's grace and wisdom. (See Seven: "The Lutheran Record" for discussion of the LC--MS's faithfulness in mission work.)

For some Church Growth proponents, fides qua has replaced fides quae. That is, the Gospel has been replaced by a more "relevant" gospel. (See again analysis of One: "The Quest.") Also, pastors have been called, not to stress the message and the means, but to stress the method. That is, they are called to a specific purpose such as "minister of spiritual gifts"<sup>243</sup> or "minister of worship."<sup>244</sup> While there is room for "specialized ministry" in the Church, without the proper emphasis on the fides quae and the Means of Grace, there is no standard by which to judge the individual's fides qua, the

ministry of consultants (or specialists;<sup>245</sup>), or so-called "biblical methods" and "diagnostic research."<sup>246</sup> (See Appendix E for further discussion.)

Confessional Lutherans, on the other hand, are concerned with preserving the apostolic doctrine of Scripture for the sake of spreading that same doctrine. William L. Gast states:

Evangelism is theology in action, and if your theology is out of kilter with the truth of God's Word, then your evangelism efforts are going to be out of kilter with God's purpose.

We are here to pledge ourselves to the Scriptures and the Confessions in order that we might be on the right tract with the task that God has given us--the task of evangelizing the world.<sup>247</sup>

Despite this solid advice, there has been an intentional breakdown in fellowship principles to "further the Gospel." Since God has had to gift individuals outside of Confessional Lutheranism, it is argued, perhaps the doctrine of the Church and Ministry should be "open questions." However, "the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry are not open questions."<sup>248</sup> If the pastor is seen as a mere resource person, then his teaching (equipping function) is secondary, or even bypassed (i.e., his shepherding/protecting function) as individuals follow "anointed evangelists." This was seen to be the case earlier in the movement's acceptance of crusade evangelism. However, many of the heterodox evangelists functioning today preach a synergistic gospel. The laity is confused by these forces. Some lose their Lutheran identity.

(See analysis of Seven: "The Need.") Some even contribute financial resources to their efforts. Yet, Luther called the Church a "tender plant" whose people can easily be led astray, and therefore, "it must be watched."<sup>249</sup>

As seen earlier, the policy of the LC--MS strictly forbids fellowship with these heterodox evangelists.<sup>250</sup> The ministers and congregations of the the LC--MS may participate only in those endeavors in which the doctrine is in agreement with apostolic teaching as correctly set forth in the Lutheran Confessions. Marquart states:

Where these marks [the preaching of the Gospel and administration of the holy Sacraments] are pure (orthodoxy!), fellowship must be granted; where they are impure (heterodoxy!), fellowship must be refused.<sup>251</sup>

It will be the goal of Chapter Seven ("Theology.") to describe a way in which Lutherans can promote evangelism which originates in, flows from within, and remains consistent with Confessional Lutheranism.

#### The Interpretation of Ephesians Four: The "Gift of Evangelist" and The Priesthood of ALL Believers

Much of the difference between the Church Growth model and Biblical model of the ministry has to do with the interpretation of Ephesians 4:11-14. At first glance, the text may seem to indicate that there are up to five "offices" or "gifts" in Scripture. (See Appendix F for further discussion of the so-called "gifts" of "apostle," "pastor" and "teacher.") However, the context of Ephesians four is extremely important. Drickamer states:

Perhaps the most basic error in most modern discussion of gifts is that they totally obliterate the differences between the various Biblical contexts in which gifts are discussed. One simply cannot throw Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12, and Ephesians 4 into the same bag. They were written to very different congregations in very different situations. . . . It cannot be shown, much less can it be assumed, that they are speaking about the same thing. It is very necessary to distinguish between them.

One context which is distinct from the others is Eph. 4. The gifts mentioned in v. 11 are not gifts given to people to use in the church but they are certain (not all!) people themselves--specifically the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers (one group!). Lenski says, "The point is not that some men received the apostleship, others prophecy, etc., but that these men themselves constitute the gift of Christ to the whole una sancta, yea, "to every single one of us (v. 7)." (see Lenski on Eph. 4:11). . . . These personnel gifts are some people in the church, not every Christian.<sup>252</sup>

Since Church Growth proponents do not take the context into consideration, they incorrectly assume that Ephesians Four speaks of God giving the "gift of consultants" and the "gift of evangelist" today. However,

the apostle mentions Christ's foremost gifts. They consist in persons. . . . The apostles were and are the infallible teachers of all Christendom. Their doctrine is the standard for the doctrine of the Christian teachers of all times. Prophets and evangelists were special gifts of the primitive Church [my emphasis]. . . . With pastors and teachers Paul describes the regular ministry of the Word, which at all times in the history of the Church is and has remained the same, public ministry.<sup>253</sup>

The New Testament does not present the roles of the "prophets" and "evangelists" in as much detail as that of the apostles and pastor-teachers.<sup>254</sup> Therefore, one must proceed with caution in defining them - especially when claiming these "gifted" individuals exist today. For example, the apostles were called by Christ Himself and were witnesses of His

resurrection (Acts 1:22). They were present on the day of Pentecost when the Church was born, they taught the Gospel, administered the Sacraments, and directed the Church (Acts 2). The apostles were the continuation of Christ's pastoral office, and in turn, they saw to it that this office would continue. They saw to it that faithful men would fulfill the duties of the pastoral ministry (II Timothy 2:2).

While there is mystery surrounding the exact nature of the "prophet" in the New Testament, the Book of Acts does explain some important things about them. First, when this title was applied to them, they were in direct contact with the apostles (Acts 11:27; 15:32; 21:10). They were sent from the leaders of the church on a specific mission as: (1) a link between the church and the apostles (Acts 11:27), (2) messengers who verified important teachings (Acts 15:32), or (3) those responsible to give guidance to an apostle (Acts 21:10). The emphasis is usually on "forthtelling."<sup>255</sup> The "foretelling" of Acts 21:10 can be linked to the imagery which Jesus uses to explain the fate of Peter (John 21:18). In this light, this "prophecy" was the application of a commonly known illustration which would verify Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles. While God's special leading in this event cannot be denied, perhaps this shows that the manner in which Agabus (Acts 21:10) received this revelation was not so "ecstatic" as some like to describe, but rather, along more natural lines.

Scriptural information on the "evangelist" is extremely

limited. This is because, in addition to Ephesians 4:11, the word is used only to describe Philip (Acts 21:8) and to exhort Timothy in his pastoral ministry (II Timothy 4:5). Timothy clearly honored the apostles' doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3; 4; 2 Timothy 2; 4). Philip also provides a practical example of how the "evangelist" was (and should be) subordinate to the apostles and their doctrine. That is, he called for the apostles to verify his work among the Samaritans (Acts 8:5-13; 14f).

Since Philip was one of the "The Seven" (Acts 6; 8:4ff), of which the martyr Stephen was also numbered, it is possible that he was a pastor.

Serving in the distribution of food did not in and of itself entitle Stephen [or Philip], for instance, to preach or teach publicly. Since [they] clearly did so, our great theologians of the past, like Chemnitz and Gerhard, surmised either that the "seven" of Acts 6 were selected from among the ministers of the Word to begin with, or that some of them were subsequently ordained into the ministry of the Word. However, we are not told in the Scriptures that Stephen [or Philip] either [were] or became . . . elder[s] of the Word.<sup>256</sup>

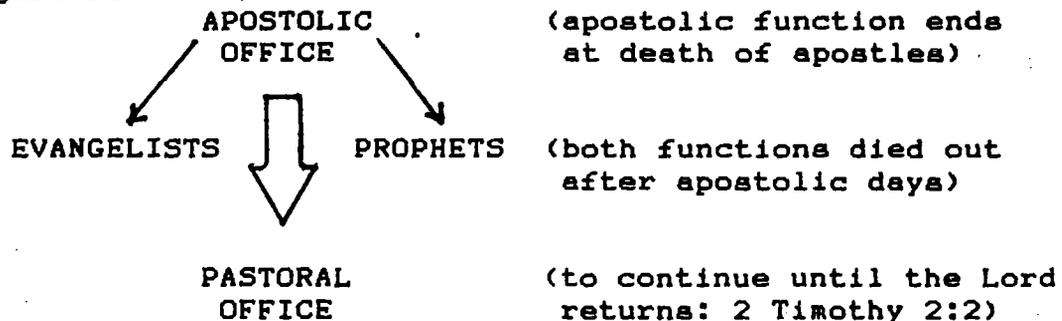
If the evangelists and prophets could also be identified as pastors, then Ephesians 4:11 would, all the more, point to the fact that pastors had special functions as prophets and evangelists. Philip and Stephen, although given the seemingly limited task of "distribution of food," functioned as the apostles did. That is, just as the apostles distributed food and preached, so too, Philip and Stephen distributed food and preached. Perhaps the congregation's selection (Acts 6:5),

bringing these men before the apostles and the "laying on of hands" (Acts 6:6) were equivalent to the call and ordination into the public ministry. But regardless of whether these individuals were ordained or simply "commissioned,"<sup>257</sup> the important point is that the prophets and evangelists were the apostles right-hand men. In every case, they were subordinate to the apostles, apostolic doctrine and were closely supervised by the apostolic church.

Perhaps the use of the term "evangelist" is overused today. Possibly only those that were closely associated with the apostles, who Scripture calls "prophets" or "evangelists," should bear these titles. Since the apostles were not replaced, "prophets" and "evangelists" can no longer be appointed by them. There is no mandate for them to continue. The Church should stress the pastoral office. There is a vast supply of material devoted to directing the "pastoral-teacher" in the Pastoral Epistles. Paul told Timothy and Titus to appoint faithful men as pastors (elders, overseers, bishops, presbyters; Titus 1:5, 1 Timothy 3:1, 4:14). (Note the similarity in requirements in Titus 1:5 and 1 Timothy 3:1 despite the different titles for the same office.) Despite variance in doctrine, the use of this term to describe heterodox evangelists may cause some individuals to feel they are to be taught by these evangelists in addition to their own pastor. (This problem was discussed briefly directly after Figure 2.5 above.) The following figure (2.6) demonstrates how

God maintains and expands His Church:

Figure 2.6



The apostles and their close associates (the evangelists) are still with the Church today through the words of the New Testament. The pastoral office still equips the body of Christ. In this light, the so-called "gifted evangelists" of the Church Growth movement can be summarized as "not promised" and "unnecessary" for the equipping of the saints for evangelism.<sup>258</sup> Vogel states:

Paul's emphasis on the stewardship of God's mysteries (Word and Sacrament) rather than the stewardship of spiritual abilities serves as a clear reminder that the preaching (with catechetics) and sacramental (with liturgics) functions of pastoral ministry may not be displaced by any other functions.<sup>259</sup>

This is not to say that individuals who find it easy to evangelize should not be encouraged. They should. In fact, the movement itself is correct in stressing the spontaneous witnessing of the early church.<sup>260</sup> Every early Christian was equipped to spread the Gospel by "letting their light shine" (Matthew 5:14f; Acts 2) and proclaiming the Word (Acts 8:1-4) as a part of the priesthood of all believers. All those who Jesus sent into the world (John 17:15b, 18b) had, and have,

the promise that they will be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). However, the movement contradicts itself by also stating that those who "have the gift of evangelism"<sup>261</sup> must learn to use it. (This is seen in spiritual gift inventories where evidence of having a gift is measured in terms of whether it has been cultivated in the past. See Appendix H for further discussion.)

One reason that Church Growth proponents cannot seem to understand the insights described above is that they rely on the version of Ephesians 4:11-12 found in the Living Bible:

Some of us have been given special ability in winning people to Christ, helping them to trust Him as their Savior.<sup>262</sup>

Scripture simply says: "some evangelists" (two words, not twenty-one). This passage does not speak of a special gift which a person possesses in one-to-one evangelism.<sup>263</sup> This passage does speak of the gift of the pastoral office in which: (1) the saints are equipped, and (2) the body of Christ is kept from being led astray (verse 14). Vogel sees this view as a move

from an inadequate paraphrase to a deduction to a stressed assertion, but it [is] not proven that only some Christians are evangelists.<sup>264</sup>

The proper context of Ephesians Four, as presented above, also supported by the fact that the so-called "gift of evangelist" cannot be found anywhere in Scripture - including Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. This is significant. If this gift is "the one gift above all others necessary for church

growth,<sup>265</sup> then there should at least be mention of it in Scripture. Since Scripture does not speak of this gift, then it is logical to conclude that seeking after it is unbiblical, not to mention that it is an exercise in futility.<sup>266</sup>

While 1 Corinthians 12:31 is usually used to support the seeking of spiritual gifts, it is doubtful: (1) whether the King James Version translated is accurate, (i.e., "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."<sup>267</sup>); and (2) whether it is even possible to find these gifts. The correct interpretations of this passage hinges on the translation of zeloute which can be translated either as an indicative or an imperative. According to the context, (and other considerations found in Appendix G), this word is probably best translated as an indicative: "You desire (zeloute) great gifts; but I will show you a more excellent way." This would indicate that the Corinthian problem was linked, in part, to the seeking of spiritual gifts. It is highly improbable - if not impossible - for "inventories," developed through the (temporal) behavioral sciences, to discern gifts which are spiritual. (See analysis of Four.) To state the opposite is to mix the theology of the cross with the theology of glory. (See Appendix H for a critique of spiritual gift inventories and a short explanation of how they represent a theology of glory, rather than the theology of the cross.)

While some may seem alarmed that there is no "gift of evangelism" mentioned in Scripture, a brief study of Biblical mission terminology should comfort the individual.<sup>268</sup> That a church has not been totally faithful in evangelism work, should not be surprising because that same church is made up of those who are simul justus et peccator (simultaneously saint and sinner). While this should never be used as an excuse for inactivity in evangelism, it will point to the fact that only the Gospel can transform inactivity to activity. (See discussion on "Motivation . . ." above and the analysis of the nature of the Church, specifically, that it is holy.)

There are two key words which speak of the mission of the Church and the individual: "witness" and "proclaim." Their secular meanings are: "bear witness to the truth" (truths known to the individual) and "announce" (like a town crier). Jesus promised: "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). After the stoning of Stephen, this promise was fulfilled: "Therefore, those who had been scattered went about proclaiming the word" (Acts 8:4). The words "witness" and "proclaim" are used interchangeably with "evangelism," which apply to all Christians equally. They look at the same activity of spreading the Good News from slightly different perspectives whether it be in the wider sense (i.e., "letting the light shine" Matthew 5) or verbally speaking the Gospel story (no matter how simply this may be

done). This is what "evangelism" is, namely, speaking the Good News to those who are in need of its saving power (Romans 1:16). Therefore, there is no distinctive "gift of evangelism," and subsequently, no mention of a "gift of evangelism" in Scripture.

If a distinction in terminology had to be made, then, on purely Biblical grounds, the Church Growth distinction between "witness" and "evangelist" would have to be reversed. This distinction would be based upon the word "witness" which is the most limited of the three words. That is, only a select group of early Christians were "witnesses" of Jesus Christ in the strict legal sense of seeing Him with their own eyes.<sup>269</sup> If this point were strictly adhered to, then all other Christians could only be called "proclaimers of the Good News of Jesus Christ," or "evangelists."<sup>270</sup>

Despite these observations, a very good question is asked by some Church Growth proponents: "If all can evangelize [witness/proclaim], why don't all evangelize?"<sup>271</sup> First, it must be said that Scripture does not answer this question. However, this does not justify the Church Growth use of certain terms (i.e., "evangelist") to describe those who proclaim their faith. There are many questions for which our finite minds do not have an answer. Rather than find finite answers for the questions raised by the finite mind, the Christian needs to look only to Scripture for what God has chosen to reveal. Second, the promise of Christ is sure, "You

shall be My witnesses". Since the term "witness" has two aspects - the wide and the narrow (see above) - it can be clearly shown that all Christians are witnesses (or a synonym may be substituted). Third, what appears to be "the spiritual gift of evangelism" is often simply a natural ability which God has given to a person. (For example, those with "outgoing personalities" who spread the Gospel "with ease" are often called "gifted evangelists.") However, the Christian cannot say more than Scripture does. To do this, would be to exclude those that give a more subtle witness and would instigate problems similar to those of the Corinthians. Our understanding and use of "spiritual gifts" must be submitted to God's Word at all times.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Hunter, p. 20.
- 2 Hunter, p. 150.
- 3 Hunter, p. 181.
- 4 Hunter, p. 17.
- 5 Hunter, p. 14.
- 6 Hunter, p. 41.
- 7 Hunter, p. 150.
- 8 Miller, p. 4; see footnote, p. 6.
- 9 Hunter, p. 27.
- 10 Hunter, p. 74.
- 11 Hunter, p. 25.
- 12 Hunter, p. 78.

- 13 Hunter, p. 181.
- 14 Hunter, p. 151.
- 15 Wagner, Your Church, p. 97.
- 16 Biesenthal, W. Leroy, Dialog Evangelism (St. Louis: Board for Evangelism, LC--MS, n.d.), p. 21.
- 17 Wagner, p. 97.
- 18 Wagner, pp. 97-98.
- 19 Wagner, p. 100.
- 20 Wagner, pp. 98-99.
- 21 Wagner, p. 102.
- 22 Wagner, p. 101.
- 23 Wagner, pp. 106-107.
- 24 Wagner, p. 108 (quoting Larry Richards, endnote #5).
- 25 Wagner, pp. 107-108.
- 26 Biblical Basis for Church Growth, (Fuller Evangelistic Association, Dept. of Church Growth, n.p., n.d.), p. 12.
- 27 Hunter, p. 46.
- 28 Hunter, p. 107.
- 29 Hunter, p. 112.
- 30 Hunter, pp. 114ff.
- 31 Hunter, p. 112.
- 32 Hunter, p. 119.
- 33 Hunter, p. 116.
- 34 Hunter, p. 117.
- 35 Hunter, pp. 117-119.
- 36 Hunter, pp. 121-122.
- 37 Hunter, pp. 119-121.

- 38 Hunter, p. 23.
- 39 Hunter, p. 34.
- 40 Hunter, p. 69.
- 41 Hunter, pp. 41-42.
- 42 Hunter, p. 34.
- 43 Wagner, "The Fourth," p. 580.
- 44 Hunter, p. 183.
- 45 Hunter, p. 80.
- 46 Hunter, p. 84.
- 47 Hunter, p. 97.
- 48 Hunter, p. 76.
- 49 Hunter, p. 110.
- 50 Hunter, p. 36.
- 51 Hunter, p. 39.
- 52 Hunter, p. 43.
- 53 Hunter, p. 21.
- 54 Hunter, p. 84.
- 55 Hunter, pp. 126ff.
- 56 Hunter, pp. 128-129.
- 57 Hunter, p. 27.
- 58 Hunter, p. 29.
- 59 Hunter, p. 63.
- 60 Hunter, p. 64.
- 61 Wagner, Your Church, pp. 47-49; 52-53.
- 62 Hunter, p. 112.
- 63 Hunter, pp. 112; 9.
- 64 "Individual . . .," p. 1.

- <sup>65</sup> Hunter, p. 60.
- <sup>66</sup> Schuller, Your Church, pp. 10-14; 130.
- <sup>67</sup> Hunter, p. 91.
- <sup>68</sup> Hunter, p. 58.
- <sup>69</sup> Wagner, p. 75.
- <sup>70</sup> Wagner, p. 75.
- <sup>71</sup> Hunter, p. 77.
- <sup>72</sup> Wagner, pp. 75ff.
- <sup>73</sup> Hunter, p. 61.
- <sup>74</sup> Hunter, p. 85.
- <sup>75</sup> Hunter, pp. 67-68; See also Baladen, Kenneth W., "Testing for Spiritual Gifts: Sham, or Sure-Fire?"; Nadasdy, Dean, Now Concerning Spiritual Gifts (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982); and Personal Renewal Study, (Austin: The Texas District, LC--MS).
- <sup>76</sup> Hunter, p. 20.
- <sup>77</sup> Hunter, p. 150.
- <sup>78</sup> Graebner, Outlines, pp. 156; 176; 179.
- <sup>79</sup> Hunter, p. 150.
- <sup>80</sup> Hunter, p. 17.
- <sup>81</sup> Wagner, Your Church, p. 41.
- <sup>82</sup> The Brief Statement, p. 11; Koeberle, p. 240 (Cited by Nafzger, p. 213).
- <sup>83</sup> Hunter, p. 150.
- <sup>84</sup> The short quote from Miller, taken from a longer statement, seems to reflect the distinctions made in the last chapter between the Biblical (Lutheran) emphasis of the objective power of the proclaimed Gospel, and the more subjective Church Growth emphasis of "making disciples." Since these issues were discussed in Chapter One, they will not be repeated here. However, these distinctions have probably influenced his view that Lutherans have traditionally understood the "nature" (proclamation) better than the

"purpose" (making disciples) of the Church. As a result, although his statement is better than most Lutheran Church Growth proponents, this distinction greatly weakens his presentation.

<sup>85</sup>Hunter, p. 27.

<sup>86</sup>Hunter, p. 63.

<sup>87</sup>As Hunter claims, p. 74.

<sup>88</sup>Hunter, p. 25.

<sup>89</sup>This same problem was cited in One: "The 'Means' and 'End' Distinction." Hunter notes, under Luther's explanation of the Third Article, that it is the "Holy Spirit that calls people to faith" (p. 38). However, Luther was careful in pointing out that ". . . the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel" (Catechism, p. 11). Here again, Hunter leaves key words out of AC VII which stress the Confessional teaching.

Perhaps it is unfair to expect Hunter to make too much of a distinction with regard to historical differences between the Reformed and the Lutherans. There is a fine line between polemics and tact. However, these distinctions need to be discussed if there is to be true dialog between the two camps, and as a result, perhaps truly strengthen the movement.

<sup>90</sup>Tappert, Theodore G., ed., The Book of Concord (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 32.

<sup>91</sup>New College German Dictionary (Berlin: Langenscheidt KG, 1973), p. 433.

<sup>92</sup>Concordia Triglotta, p. 46.

<sup>93</sup>Hunter, p. 78.

<sup>94</sup>Weinrich, William C., "Evangelism in the Early Church," In Concordia Theological Quarterly (Jan.-Mar., 1981), p. 61.

<sup>95</sup>Hunter, pp. 181; 151.

<sup>96</sup>Sasse, Hermann, Here We Stand (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), p. 121.

<sup>97</sup>Klug, Eugene, "Luther on the Church," In Concordia Theological Quarterly (July 1983), p. 193.

<sup>98</sup>Wagner, pp. 97-98.

<sup>99</sup>Wagner, p. 107.

- <sup>100</sup>Wagner, p. 107.
- <sup>101</sup>Graebner, p. 205.
- <sup>102</sup>Graebner, p. 208.
- <sup>103</sup>Pieper, Francis, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), 3:419-420.
- <sup>104</sup>Helpful in this discussion are Colin Brown's Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. I, pp. 292-293; Bruce Metzger's essay "The Language of the New Testament," p. 55; Alan Richardson's A Theological Word Book of the Bible, p. 46; and Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, pp. 197-198.
- <sup>105</sup>Metzger states: "Ekklesia appears frequently in the Septuagint as the translation of the Hebrew word qahal, and that the qahal of Yahweh is nothing more or less than 'the people of the Lord'" (p. 55). Also note that the passages cited in the next following pages are based upon those listed in Young's Analytical Concordance (which are based upon the King James Version). The term "edah" is cited due to its similarity to "qahal."
- <sup>106</sup>Klug, "Luther on the Church," p. 193.
- <sup>107</sup>Wagner, pp. 98ff.
- <sup>108</sup>Merritt, Glenn F., "Rock: Music or Mockery," p. 59.
- <sup>109</sup>Merritt, p. 58.
- <sup>110</sup>Merritt, p. 63.
- <sup>111</sup>Bauzin, Walter E., "The Genius of Lutheran Corporate Worship," In Concordia Theological Monthly (April, 1950), p. 1.
- <sup>112</sup>Wagner, p. 98.
- <sup>113</sup>Wagner, pp. 98ff.
- <sup>114</sup>The New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979).
- <sup>115</sup>Wagner, p. 98.
- <sup>116</sup>Preus, "The Confessions," p. 26.
- <sup>117</sup>Wagner, p. 98.
- <sup>118</sup>Wagner, p. 98; Also note that the revivalists Wagner mentions were proponents of synergistic theology. Rev. Billy Graham has already been treated in Chapter One and will be

cited later in this chapter. Of Charles Finney, Newman, in his M-Div. thesis "The Holiness Doctrine of Charles G. Finney," states: "His teachings were based on Scripture in theory, but in actuality were based more on presuppositions and reason than anything else. . . . Perfectionism is a doctrine which is not taught in the Bible." Billy Sunday also had a weak understanding of the importance of theology. "One of Sunday's favorite sayings was: 'I don't know any more about theology than a jack rabbit does about ping-pong, but I'm on my way to glory.' Theology changes (I have no objection to your new theology when it tries to make the truths of Christianity clearer), but Christianity abides." (Ellis, William T., "Billy" Sunday, p. 80.)

119 Wagner, p. 98.

120 Wagner, p. 99.

121 Hunter, pp. 26, 96.

122 Wagner, p. 99.

123 Hunter, pp. 107-108.

124 Wagner, p. 88.

125 Wagner, p. 99.

126 Buszin, p. 1.

127 Wagner, p. 100.

128 Wagner, p. 106.

129 Wagner, p. 107.

130 This writer has received training in, and therefore, understands the benefits of becoming familiar with the science of inter-personal communication and group dynamics. Two books which are extremely helpful in this are: Basic Attending Skills (North Amherst, Mass: Microtraining Associates, Inc., 1974) and Basic Influencing Skills (1976) by Allen E. Ivey and Norma B. Gluckstern.

131 Wagner, p. 108.

132 Warren, Max, I Believe in the Great Commission (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 68. See also discussion in I Believe in Evangelism (1976) by David Watson, pp. 147ff.

133 Klug, Eugene, "Luther on the Ministry," In Concordia Theological Quarterly (October, 1983), p. 300.

134 Green, Michael, Evangelism in the Early Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 207.

135 Green, p. 326.

136 Green, p. 208.

137 Green, p. 210.

138 The New Bible Dictionary (J. D. Douglas, ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 417-418.

139 Sasse, p. 92.

140 For the duties of the church, see again Pieper, 3:420.

141 Philip Schamehorn in his M-Div. thesis stated: "We all know programs of evangelism and assimilation are necessary in a church if it is to be "healthy." While it is not exactly known what Schamehorn means by the term "healthy," several observations need to be made here. First, churches can be "healthy," as it has and will be stated in this paper, without "programs" if they are properly proclaiming the Gospel and administering the Sacraments. Second, "growth" does not necessarily equal "health" if the Means of Grace and Confessional Lutheran theology are compromised. Third, the main issue is not whether programs are helpful. They are. However, the nature of the program is the issue. Although Schamehorn sets forth a wonderful "personal testimony" (pp. 1ff) throughout his thesis, and his data seems to "prove" his hypothesis (p. 75), he does not demonstrate that the nature of his findings were consistent with Confessional Lutheranism; or whether his Church Growth strategy promotes a context which will accomodate and perpetuate the same. Theses such as these can be greatly strengthened by going beyond a "x = y" formula (i.e., programs = health/growth). What is needed is an analysis of what the nature of "x" and/or "y" is/are. Only in this way will one be able to speak of the "health" of a church and know whether programs truly build the Church. (See also endnote #1 under Chapter Seven.)

142 Hunter, pp. 55; 107.

143 Klug, "Luther on the Church," p. 201.

144 Hunter, p. 46.

145 Graebner, pp. 209-210.

146 Sasse, p. 121.

147 Hunter, pp. 106-107.

148 Sasse, p. 128.

149 Piepkorn, p. 21.

150 Preus, p. 26.

151 Hunter, p. 46.

152 Buszin, p. 1; note especially how he describes worship.

153 Hunter, p. 114.

154 Based upon personal observation, this writer is concerned with how the Church Growth emphasis on "old age" has begun to affect pastors and candidates for the pastoral office. There seems to be frustration with "lack of numerical growth" for pastors in rural areas. Partly due to the influence of Church Growth literature, some, with whom this writer has spoken, do not feel like they are really "faithful" ministers. Some candidates of a recent graduating class (of Concordia Theological Seminary) expressed deep disappointment in being sent to rural churches - not for reasons of geography - but because of "zero opportunity for growth." In light of these brief comments, it is imperative that a more rounded view of the ministry be reinforced in the hearts and minds of the clergy and laity of the LC--MS. Where there are the Means of Grace, no matter how small the gathering, there is a "healthy" church and the comfort of the Gospel for the task of ministry.

155 Hunter, p. 119.

156 Hunter, p. 117.

157 Hunter, p. 29.

158 Hunter, p. 164.

159 Hunter, p. 48.

160 Hunter, p. 48.

161 Handbook of the LC--MS, (1983), p. 13.

162 Hunter, p. 169.

163 Hunter, p. 24.

164 Hunter, p. 18.

165 Hunter, p. 164.

166 Drickamer, John M., "Building Carefully" (A Response to the Modern Conception of Spiritual Gifts and Its Application to Church Work, n.p., n.d.), p. 20.

167 Arn, Win and Charles, The Master's Plan for Making Disciples (Pasadena: Church Growth Press, 1982), pp. 43-44.

168 Hunter, p. 77; Biesenthal, p. 1.

169 Hunter, p. 118.

170 Hunter, pp. 121-122.

171 Hunter, pp. 119-121.

172 Hunter, p. 119.

173 Hunter, p. 25.

174 Hunter, p. 69.

175 Hunter, p. 63.

176 Hunter, pp. 41-42.

177 Wagner, "The Fourth," p. 580.

178 Koenker, Ernest B., "Man: Simul Justus Et Peccator," In Accents in Luther's Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), pp. 98ff.

179 Miller, pp. 4-5.

180 Hunter, p. 84.

181 Hunter, pp. 80; 183.

182 Drickamer, p. 10.

183 Hunter, pp. 41-42; 97.

184 Hunter, p. 76.

185 Preus, pp. 24-26.

186 Hunter, p. 110.

187 Hunter, p. 36.

188 Hunter, p. 39.

- 189 "Motivation" in Christian usage does not mean simply "getting a person to do something." Rather, it denotes the activities of the Christian which are done in response to the Gospel. When this is emphasized, Christians who are caught up in doing good works understand that their good works flow for their justification and are not the cause of it. Since this has direct implications for one's eternal salvation, motivation by the Gospel alone should be strictly taught, even in times of frustration. (See Nafzger, p. 212; Walter, p. 11, Thesis XXV.)
- 190 Hunter, pp. 21; 43; 84.
- 191 Weinrich, p. 62.
- 192 Sasse, pp. 129-131.
- 193 Wagner, "What's Your Answer?", p. 1.
- 194 "Individual . . .," p. 4. See also the add for Kent Hunter's organization in the 1984 Lutheran Annual, p. 18.
- 195 Klug and Stalke, Getting Into, pp. 62-63.
- 196 Walther, pp. 29-31.
- 197 Nafzger, p. 212.
- 198 Luther, Martin, A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 102.
- 199 Nafzger, p. 212.
- 200 McGavran, "Today's Task," p. 548.
- 201 McGavran, p. 540.
- 202 Sasse, pp. 121-123.
- 203 This is contrary to Hunter's statement, p. 43.
- 204 Pieper, 3:85.
- 205 Baker, Tom, "The Unique Approach of the Lutheran Church," In Affirm (May, 1984), p. 4.
- 206 Hunter, pp. 126ff.
- 207 Hunter, p. 27.

- 208 Hunter, p. 128.
- 209 Hunter, p. 128.
- 210 Drickamer, p. 9.
- 211 Baker, p. 4.
- 212 Hunter, p. 29.
- 213 Hunter, pp. 63-64.
- 214 See again, Nafzger, p. 212.
- 215 McGavran, "Today's Task," p. 551.
- 216 Wagner, Your Church, pp. 52-53.
- 217 Wagner, pp. 47-49.
- 218 Hunter, p. 9.
- 219 Chemnitz, Martin, Ministry Word and Sacraments (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), p. 31.
- 220 Chemnitz, p. 31.
- 221 Engelder, Theodore, Handbook of Lutheran Theology (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press), p. 108.
- 222 Hunter, p. 112.
- 223 Wagner, p. 41.
- 224 "Individual . . .," p. 1.
- 225 Drickamer, "The Doctrine of the Church in the Writings of Dr. C. F. W. Walther." (A Thesis . . ., May 1978), pp. 287ff.
- 226 Two book which might be helpful in this discussion are A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), and A Shepherd Looks at the Good Shepherd (n.d.) by Phillip Keller.
- 227 Schuller, Your Church, p. 130.
- 228 Schuller, pp. 13-14.
- 229 It seems that Schuller nullifies his own "no pronouncements" principle by stating: "Possibility

thinking makes great pronouncement." (Your Church, p.86) This inconsistency is never explained in any of his writings.

230 Hunter, p. 60.

231 See Vogel, pp. 218; 222.

232 Wagner, Your Church, p. 75.

233 Wagner, pp. 75-76.

234 The CTCR document, "The Ministry" states: "It is not enough to say that God commands that the Gospel be preached and that the sacraments be administered. God has ordained a specific office" (p. 15). In this light, those that neglect to include the Sacraments into their mission emphases, be they Reformed or Lutheran, are doubly "not saying enough."

235 The Brief Statement, pp. 14-15.

236 Vogel, p. 220.

237 Klug, "Luther on the Ministry," p. 194.

238 Vogel, pp. 218; 222.

239 Hunter, p. 58.

240 Nafzger, p. 211.

241 Grace for Grace, (Mankato MN: Lutheran Synod Book Co., 1943), p. 157. See also: Allan, Roland, The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church (London: World Dominion Press, 1956), p. 140; Klug, "Luther on the Ministry," p. 293; and Preus, "The Confessions," p. 27.

242 Vogel, pp. 219-223.

243 Hunter, p. 69.

244 Wagner, p. 99.

245 McGavran, "Today's Task," p. 551.

246 Hunter, p. 112.

247 Gast, William, "Evangelism," In Evangelical Directions for the Lutheran Church, p. 111.

- 248 Brief Statement, p. 21.
- 249 Luther, Martin, A Commentary, p. 23.
- 250 Handbook of the LC--MS, p. 13.
- 251 Marquart, Kurt, Church Fellowship: Its Nature, Basis and Limits (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, n.d.), p. 11.
- 252 Drickamer, "Building Carefully," p. 16.
- 253 Stoeckhardt, George, Ephesians (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, n.d.), p. 81.
- 254 This writer recommends a thorough study of those topics which are presented in this discussion in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, by Gerhard Kittel, ed.
- 255 The interpretation of Romans 12:6 is important to this discussion. This writer holds that the "analogy of faith" (analogia) refers to fides quae, and not fides qua as Terry holds (against "Philippi, Hodge and others," p. 579).
- 256 "The Ministry" (CTCR), p. 17.
- 257 "The Ministry," p. 17.
- 258 Engelder, pp. 110-111.
- 259 Vogel, p. 222.
- 260 Hunter, p. 77.
- 261 Hunter, p. 84.
- 262 Biesenthal, p. 7.
- 263 Vogel, p. 218.
- 264 Vogel, p. 218.
- 265 Wagner, p. 75.
- 266 The Church Growth error of seeking for the gift of evangelist helps explain some personal observations of this writer. That is, this emphasis has caused some lay people and pastors to feel inadequate, defeated, and depressed in regard to personal evangelism. Some feel superior to others because they believe they possess this "elite" gift. Others rejoice in this

so-called gift because they think: "I'm not responsible to spread the Gospel. I don't have the gift!" In short, in the past ten years, and after "training" dozens of people in various evangelism methods, this writer has observed that depression, false piety and inactivity - not to mention overall confusion - have been caused by this Church Growth emphasis.

267 The New Analytical Bible and Dictionary of the Bible: Authorized King James Version (Chicago: John A. Dickson Publishing Company, 1973).

268 There are those who feel that the lack of the word "evangelism" in official LC--MS writings is one major historical flaw of the Church (Biesenthal quoting Weisheit, p. 1). (This will be treated again in Chapter Seven.) However, "missions" was the preferred term. Also, it seems that when the term did arrive in the books, at the same time (although not directly related), many of the "modernist" problems started in the LC--MS. Could it be that the the Church was better off without the word? A very interesting thought!

269 Vogel, p. 220.

270 Before these comments cause any reader to opt for "three distinctions," (i.e., "witness," by this illustration; "evangelist," by the Church Growth emphasis; and "proclaimer," as the only option available to the layperson today), let the reader be assured that this writer does indeed believe these terms to be used interchangeably. Besides, the word "proclaim" could possibly be restricted to the pastoral function of preaching. This would mean that the laity cannot be expected to spread the Gospel at all! However, this is one aspect, as seen throughout this paper, of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9) as demonstrated by Acts 1:8 and 8:1ff.

271 This question was asked several times of this writer by moderate to very committed Lutheran Church Growth proponents.

**PART II:**

**STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS**

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE CONTEXT SURROUNDING THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT: SOLID GROUND OR SANDY SOIL?

#### Discussion Points

Church Growth proponents speak a lot about "the foundations" of the movement and its principles. However, to fully understand the Church Growth movement, an understanding of the context surrounding its development is essential. This chapter will begin to examine the "soil" upon which the "foundations"<sup>1</sup> 13, 23-24) (Chapter Four) and "framework" (Chapter Five) of the movement are built. Jesus' parable of the "Two Builders" will be presented here, and recalled periodically, to aid in this discussion and analysis. The parable reads:

Everyone who comes to Me, and hears my words, and does them, I will show you whom he is like:

he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood arose, the river burst against that house [framework] and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

But the one who has heard, and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house [framework] upon the ground [not a "rock"] without any foundation; and the river burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great (Luke 6:47-49). (my emphasis)

There are only two options. Either Church Growth is represented by the first man, or it is represented by the second. This parable should provide the reader with a mental image of which "builder" represents the Church Growth "structure" as Chapters Three through Five are presented. The context surrounding the movement is summarized in this chapter as: (1) "A Response to Modernism" and (2) "A Pragmatic Reformation."

#### A Response to Modernism

An understanding of the "the modern ecumenical movement"<sup>2</sup> is central to understanding the development of the Church Growth movement. This movement came about as missionaries in the field perceived traditional denominational distinctions as a hinderance to their work.

The missionaries sensed the absurdity very quickly. Knowing there should be only one mission because there is only one Lord, they began to question Scripture and tradition to find why there were many churches and whether the many could again become one.

Inspired by a vision of a unity that transcends their separate traditions, they began to search together for the tradition behind the traditions - the church behind the churches.<sup>3</sup>

Finding common ground to establish unity for the sake of missions was not easy. Since the teachings of Scripture and traditions were still being debated, a "radical shift in focus"<sup>4</sup> occurred which emphasized the necessity of the Church being outwardly united. However, agreement could only be reached on the social role of the Church in the world.<sup>5</sup> This

general consensus caused a new perspective to evolve through three phases (which parallel the assemblies of the World Council of Churches). First, the churches looked inward - to "the tradition behind the traditions"<sup>6</sup> - in an attempt to find unity. Later, this was viewed as "too 'Christendom' conscious" and "mission was added as an essential mark of the church."<sup>7</sup> This was an attempt to stress the importance of cooperative missions. The second phase "moved ecclesiology out of the center of theological concern." The Church was viewed as a part of the world. The final phase was the acceptance of universalism.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of God's concern for the world, the church is a segment of the world, a postscript, that is, added to the world for the purpose of pointing to and celebrating both Christ's presence and God's ultimate redemption of the whole world.<sup>9</sup>

"Modern theology" continued to drift away from the Reformation's emphasis on the authority of Scripture because this new perspective stressed the "here and now."

Christ has many things to tell us now which could not be spoken in the days of his flesh but had to wait until the questions of today could be addressed to him. The Spirit gives us these further truths as truths already hidden within Christ's past revelation. (John 16:12-15).<sup>10</sup>

This optimistic view caused the truth and virtue of non-Christian religions to be exaggerated.<sup>11</sup> McGavran states:

Some, heavily influenced by a pluralistic society and freeing themselves from the authority of the Bible, opt for the view that God has revealed much in other religions and consequently the only attitude Christians can take toward them is to learn from them. Joint search for truth through dialogue with adherents of other faiths is, they proclaim, the contemporary mode of "mission." That the Bible as a

whole is opposed to this view does not trouble these Christians.<sup>12</sup>

The following is an example of this philosophy of mission:

The World Council of Churches has sponsored a six-day symposium of anthropologists who called for "suspension of all missionary activity" among South American Indians. The attack was based on these scientists' belief that it is wrong to destroy native religions and to replace them with faith in Christ.<sup>13</sup>

The Church Growth movement is a reaction to the effects of the modern ecumenical movement and the type of modern theology briefly described above. As part of American Evangelicalism, which has its roots in early twentieth century Fundamentalism, Church Growth affirms three major theological principles as necessary for unity in missions:

(1) The complete reliability and final authority of Scripture in matters of faith and practice; (2) the necessity of a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior from sin and consequent commitment to Him as Lord; and (3) the urgency of seeking actively the conversion of sinners to Christ.<sup>14</sup>

Church Growth has attempted to translate the emphases of Evangelicalism into action. It is believed that "evangelism is the one great password to evangelical unity today."<sup>15</sup>

McGavran believes that this "evangelical awakening" gives "tremendous power to Christ's will."<sup>16</sup> Harold Lindsell

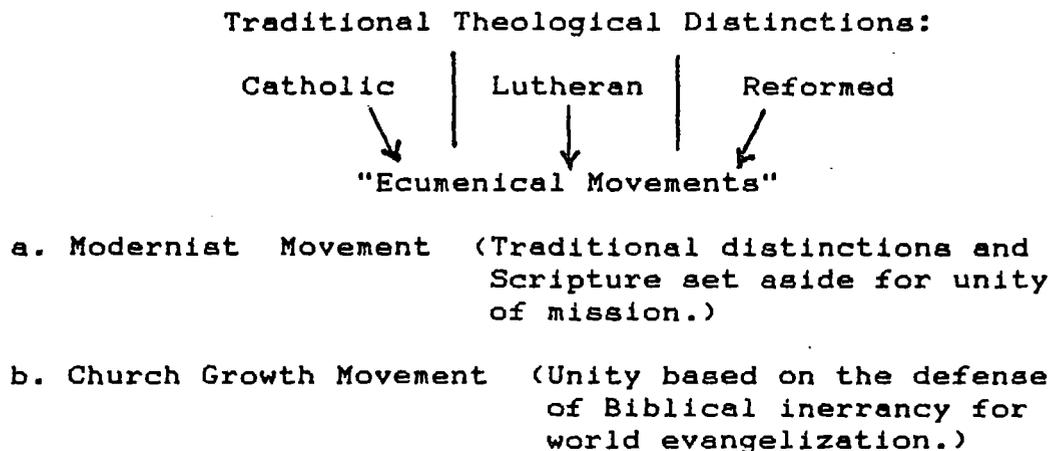
states:

I do not doubt that if evangelicals in concert with each other would stand firm and tall for biblical inerrancy and the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, a new day would dawn and the blessing of God would follow. I can foresee, in that event, a new surge of spiritual power, a new advance in the task of evangelizing the world, and the establishment of churches around the world where Christ is honored, the true gospel preached, and the kingdom of God

manifested in holy power before the eyes of unconverted men.<sup>17</sup>

The following figure compares the modernists and the Church Growth movement. One similarity is that the modernists and the Church Growth movement alike draw proponents from each traditional theological position. The difference is that the modernists discard Scripture for unity and Church Growth unites to defend Scripture.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 3.1



Particularly through the leadership of McGavran, the movement is loyal to the "Lausanne Covenant" which affirms belief in divine inspiration. Matthias states:

The covenant speaks out forcefully against all universalism; it stresses the priority of evangelism over social service, and the section on the Scriptures says in part: "We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written Word of God, without error in all that it affirms, the only infallible rule of faith and practice." Lutheran confessional statements express it differently, but this remains a remarkably strong statement on the Scriptures as the basis for all evangelism,

especially when compared to the statements of theologians from mainline Protestant churches that are representative of the National Council of Churches and the theology propounded by the World Council of Churches.<sup>19</sup>

The Church Growth movement is proclaimed as a reformation of God in reaction to distortion caused by the devaluing of the Bible today in the American society and churches. Just as the Reformation was God's reaction to deterioration in the life of the church of the Middle Ages, so too, the Church Growth Movement is said to be the most significant reaction on the part of God to modernism.<sup>20</sup>

#### A Pragmatic Reformation

Part of the reformational nature of the Church Growth movement is its emphasis on pragmatism. The phrase "the end justifies the means" is widely used and accepted as a principle. This is one reason why Schuller's "self-esteem concept" is considered to be the foundation of a new reformation: Schuller has gotten results.<sup>21</sup> Building on the emphasis of McGavran,<sup>22</sup> C. Peter Wagner states:

When we imply that evangelistic methods are up for grabs, we are unashamedly recommending a fiercely pragmatic approach to evangelism. . . . The Bible does not allow us to sin that grace may abound or to use means that God has prohibited in order to accomplish ends He has recommended.

But, with this proviso, we ought to see clearly that the end 'does' justify the means. What else possibly could justify the means? If the method I am using accomplishes the goal I am aiming at, it is for that reason a good method. If, on the other hand, my method is not accomplishing the goal, how can I be justified in continuing to use it?<sup>23</sup>

Hunter reflects this philosophy when he states:

Everything [the church does should be] based on the premise of growth. Internal and external growth determines the priorities, the programs, the worship, the policies, the budget and the life of the congregation. . . . Growth is an essential characteristic of the church. . . . St. Paul demonstrates the principle that the end justifies the means. His end, or goal, is to reach people with the Gospel. That end justifies the use of any strategy, as long as it is not sinful. St. Paul was flexible in his communication for the sake of results. . . . The end justifies the means!

24

Matthias asserts that the movement has a link with Pentecost and the concern for growth that "down through the centuries"<sup>25</sup> has "expressed itself in a variety of ways at various times." In fact, church growth is the most "forceful" expression of the Church's concern for growth in our day which has come in "the fullness of time."<sup>26</sup> Hunter states:

God used Martin Luther and the reformers who followed to direct the attention of the church back to the Bible . . . With the renewal of a Bible-based theology, the churches of the Reformation began to come alive . . . Many people believe that the Reformation set the stage for the Church Growth Movement. . . .

Whereas . . . the Reformation . . . brought about a reformation of theology, many . . . believe that the . . . Movement is bringing about a reformation in practice. If this is correct, the church is in the midst of another reformation.

27

### The Analysis

#### A Response to Modernism

The analysis of this background information has both positive and negative aspects. First, the emphasis of the Church Growth movement on the integrity of Scripture is to be commended. Many Lutherans have been involved in the "battle for the Bible" and have rejoiced that they have not been alone

in this defense. Confessional Lutherans maintain that Scripture is inspired by God and totally reliable in matters pertaining to the Christian faith (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16). Scripture is defended so that the truths of God (John 17:17) which are vital to the salvation of many (Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 55:11) may be preserved.

Second, the Confessional Lutheran shares the concern of the Church Growth proponent over the radical shift in theology on the part of modern theology. Christ's Church is not a part of the world, but "the salt and light of the world" (NASB) responsible for the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments (Matthew 5:13-16; 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Christ was not "of this world" (John 8:23). The Christian is therefore told not to be "conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2). The whole world will not be ultimately saved as universalism claims. It is therefore imperative that the Gospel must be preached so that those who believe may be saved (Mark 16:16; Romans 1:16). Church Growth's loyalty to Scriptures and its fundamental teachings finds acceptance among Confessional Lutherans.

However, McGavran misunderstands God's role in the task of evangelism when he asserts that Christians can do anything to "give tremendous power to Christ's will."<sup>28</sup> Christ is mighty and powerful in and of Himself. Even Lindsell's view that a shared belief in Biblical inerrancy will lead to the unity of the Christian Church is overly optimistic.<sup>29</sup> For

example, traditional Calvinists and Lutherans - regardless of whether they believe in Biblical inerrancy - disagree on the cardinal doctrine of the atonement for sins by Christ's vicarious satisfaction. The former believes the atonement was limited to the elect, the latter believes Christ died for all people.<sup>30</sup>

Common agreement on Biblical inerrancy does not insure correct teaching concerning the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. One must take into account the content of the inerrant text. It is the content of Scripture - the treasures of God's Word (2 Timothy 1:13-14) - that is to be taught and "entrusted to faithful men" (2 Timothy 2:2). In this distinction true unity either stands or falls - cardinal doctrines either are affirmed or denied - the true Gospel is proclaimed or substituted.

J. Robertson McQuilkin in Measuring the Church Growth Movement correctly states:

. . . Loyal adherence to the doctrine of an inerrant Word does not guarantee that one's mission activities or program has actually been brought under the authority of that Word.<sup>31</sup>

One prominent example of this is found in the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah's Witnesses). The Society teaches respect for the Bible, yet, very few Evangelicals would hold that they have brought their teachings or mission activities under the authority of Scripture.

In addition to this exceptional case, there are examples

within Evangelicalism which demonstrate that a shared belief in inerrancy does not insure unity. For example, controversy is beginning to surround even the emphasis of Evangelical gatherings dedicated to evangelism. In an article entitled "The [Billy] Graham Conference [Amsterdam 1983] Promoted Ecumenical Not Biblical Evangelism," one observer states:

Instead of warnings concerning the dangers of ecumenism, liberalism, communism, catholicism, worldliness or the charismatic movement, these inexperienced, untrained evangelists were given the false impression that differences should be overlooked in order to accomplish the task of world evangelism.<sup>32</sup>

The emphasis in Amsterdam seems to closely parallel that of the Rev. Tom Forrest, the chairman of the International Council for Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In a recent speech he states:

When we become one in Christ, we will be like God, and, looking like God, we will see God, but not before. We cannot see God until we become one. . . . The real proof that Christians have the spirit of Christ is our oneness. If the world is not being converted, the reason is we are not yet united enough. . . . If we remain faithful to our real mission, the Holy Spirit will give us a strategy for making us one.<sup>33</sup>

In view of insights similar to those cited above, some are asking serious questions about the nature and quality of Christianity on the mission field. In an article entitled "But What Kind of Christianity?" Professor Wendland of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary states:

It has been said that Christianity is growing at a faster pace in Africa than anywhere else in the world. This makes us happy. But there is a reason to ask at times what kind of "Christianity" is being referred to.

Zimbabwe's Shona tribe, for example, has a traditional belief that the spirit of a dead person wanders through the forest, seeking to communicate with his living relatives. The relatives therefore organize a Kuchenera ritual, in which a pot of beer is poured on the grave of the deceased so that his spirit will "be happy and no longer trouble them."

Although most Christian churches until recently wrote off Kuchenera as "ancestor worship as a sin against the First Commandment," it has now been officially "Christianized" by the Catholic Church. The ritual itself remains the same, except that the dead person's spirit is now "told" that the beer is poured on his grave "as a token of Christian fellowship."

One can't help wondering which god the Shona people will continue to think they are serving in this ritual - the god of their ancestors or the God of Scripture. . . . How important that we continue to reach out to Africa with the unconditioned and unconditional gospel of Christ on the basis of the Holy Scripture. 34

These insights demonstrate that a belief in Biblical inerrancy alone has not stopped great diversity from existing among those who hold a traditional view of Scripture. This ever widening diversity makes it necessary to examine the views of even those calling themselves Evangelical. In fact, on the basis of these quotes, Evangelicals could well make the same mistake on the foreign mission field as the modernists - the very thing the Fundamentalists (the forefathers of the Evangelicals) reacted against. This trend has already developed in some Evangelical circles. Richard Quebedeaux in his book The Young Evangelicals states:

Liberals and Evangelicals are closer to each other today than either camp realizes. . . . A good reason for hope [in relation to unity] . . . is the increasing convergence of values and priorities held by Evangelicals (the emerging generation, at least) and those espoused in principle by mainstream Ecumenical Liberals. . . . Evangelicals are

beginning to realize that their attempts at purely spiritual unity [unity based upon Biblical inerrancy?] among themselves alone have been largely unsuccessful.<sup>35</sup>

While most proponents of the Church Growth movement are probably not in agreement with the moderate "New Evangelicalism," it is questionable whether McGavran and the Church Growth movement have the theological base necessary to counter the emphases of the modernists or moderates. Since McGavran does not adequately center his ecumenical goals around the content of Scripture and the nature of the Gospel, his views are not far removed in principle from that of the modernists. While the inerrancy of Scripture is still upheld, on the basis of his background, the content of the Gospel could be increasingly sacrificed for the goal of "missions." Although McGavran summarizes his faith by quoting the First and Second Articles of the Apostles' Creed,<sup>36</sup> his Disciples of Christ background is opposed to "credal statements" and repudiates "the thesis that the opinions of men should be made tests of Christian fellowship."<sup>37</sup> Although his use of the Creed is commendable, it is nevertheless an inconsistency (with his background and primary perspective) which could weaken his effectiveness in asserting the "Lausanne Covenant," (or any other "conservative" statement of faith), as a unifying "statement" against modernism.

Confessional Lutherans know the importance of understanding the nature of credal statements. The creeds, and other confessional documents contained in the Lutheran

Confessions, are not "opinions of men," but rather derived directly from Scripture. Although the "Lausanne Covenant" does have definite strong points in regard to Biblical inerrancy, the case made for its acceptance is built on a weak foundation. While this statement may be better than "modern statements,"<sup>38</sup> the truth of any given statement should be measured in terms of whether it is in line with the truth of Scripture, not whether it is truer than another statement.

#### A Pragmatic Reformation

The Church Growth movement's heavy reliance upon pragmatism needs close examination. McQuilkin states why this aspect of the movement needs to be critiqued:

The movement has not always been self-consciously theological. It is now becoming so, but historically it has been a pragmatic movement with certain theological presuppositions gradually refined. . . .

If a movement arises or is developed through pragmatic innovation, through intuitive insights of a leader with charisma, or through scientific investigation, we have a double responsibility to uncover and examine the biblical foundation. This is true whether or not it appears to be successful.

39

In addition to the quotes on pragmatism cited earlier, the following statement by C. Peter Wagner places pragmatism over Scripture:

Methods must be selected on largely pragmatic factors, since the Bible does not pretend to give twentieth-century instruction. . . . Only by doing this [i.e., measuring success or failure] will it be possible to look back and know which methods God has blessed and which methods He has not blessed.

40

Although "God does not allow us to use means [methods]

that He has prohibited" the real question is whether the movement understands the "means" God has given to His Church and uses them properly. It was shown in the analysis of Chapter One ("The Quest") that Schuller does not understand the Means of Grace. The claim "we ought to see clearly that the end does justify the means" needs a firmer foundation than begging the question: "what else possibly could justify the means?" The answer to this question - and the essential foundation - is Scripture.<sup>41</sup> Of equal concern is the statement "if, on the other hand, my method is not accomplishing the goal, how can I be justified in continuing to use it?"<sup>42</sup> McGavran demonstrates that even the proclamation of the Gospel could be discontinued should it not produce the desired result:

They ["resistant mission fields"] should not be bothered or badgered. Generations should not be reared in schools were - receiving small doses of the Gospel which they successfully reject - they are in effect inoculated against the Christian religion. Resistant lands should be held lightly.<sup>43</sup>

Jesus demonstrates the opposite when he continued to preach the Gospel after he lamented over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37) and after his crucifixion and resurrection. Although often rejected, Jesus continued to preach the Gospel. Although God's Word may have seemed weak, Jesus continued to proclaim the Gospel.<sup>44</sup> In short, "the premise of growth" and "the use of any strategy" should not primarily determine "the priorities, the programs, the worship, the policies, the budget and the

life of the congregation."<sup>45</sup> While the phrase "as long as it is not sinful"<sup>46</sup> is welcome, it does not adequately emphasize the point that Scripture alone should determine these matters. (See analysis of One: "The Harvest Principle.")

### American Pragmatism

The degree of acceptance of classical pragmatism by the movement's proponents is perhaps an open question. However, a special treatment of pragmatism is warranted for several reasons. First, if the movement is going to contend "unashamedly" and "fiercely" for a "pragmatic approach to evangelism,"<sup>47</sup> the Confessional Lutheran should be acquainted with the history and nature of pragmatism in order to critique this approach. Second, pragmatic thinking is a substantial part of the way Americans think. In fact, "pragmatism is the only unique contribution American philosophy has made to the tradition known as Western philosophy."<sup>48</sup> Third, cultural and societal ways of thinking can be hard to recognize, and as a result, can make the Christian's belief and practices uncertain. Joseph L. Cannon gives an honest assessment of his personal missionary efforts:

I always told the native brethren, "I'm teaching you nothing except New Testament Christianity." . . . but I am not so sure that I have always done this. After all, we have been brought up in a materialistic, money-oriented society and it takes a great struggle to shift gears to "setting our minds on things above" (Colossians 3:2).<sup>49</sup>

At first glance, pragmatism may seem to provide a few answers for the Christian desiring to effectively apply

theology in the world.

The term is derived from the same Greek word pragma, meaning action, from which our words "practice" and "practical" come.<sup>50</sup>

It is unlikely that a significant application of pragmatism to Christian faith and life is justified when one considers the fact that William James, the foremost popularizer of pragmatism, "was a free thinker and skeptically disposed toward all forms of orthodox theology."<sup>51</sup> James himself states:

The pragmatic method is primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes. . . . The pragmatic method in such cases is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences. . . . If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle. Whenever a dispute is serious, we ought to be able to show some practical difference that must follow from one side or the other's being right.<sup>52</sup>

Russell summarizes this view by stating:

We really have nothing to go on beyond what James calls pure experience. The knowing process thus becomes a relation between different parts of pure experience. . . . For James, then, pure experience is the stuff all things are made of. Here the radical empiricism of James is marred by His pragmatism, which does not recognize anything that has no practical bearing on human life. . . .

What this method amounts to is roughly that distinctions carrying no practical differences are meaningless. Along with this is the refusal to regard any issue as ever finally closed.<sup>53</sup>

Closely related to James' view is the pragmatism of John Dewey. His view stresses finding the "good" of an action.

His view implies a continuum of means-ends which denies the distinction between them as ultimate, which eliminates ends-in-themselves and substitutes for them ends-in-view, and which declares any absolute moral end or absolute

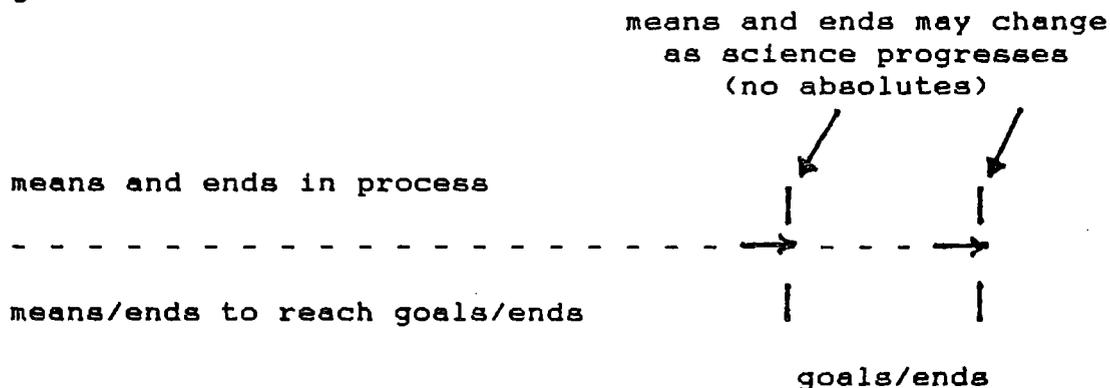
hierarchy of values impossible because of constantly increasing knowledge which makes possible the construction of new ends. . . Ethical hierarchy is avoided by associating ethics with science.

So, far from ethics being separated from science, it can only progress as science progresses. . . . The connecting of value judgments and factual judgments brings all of scientific knowledge to bear on our efforts to resolve ethical problems. It not only brings scientific knowledge but the scientific method to our aid. We experiment. When we fail, we can profit from our failures in our next experiments. . . . Means and ends are two ways of regarding the same actuality. Thus ethics is intimately associated with science and cannot progress beyond it.

All of this means that there are no fixed and final ethical ends. Scientific inquiry has no final and closed end which it is approaching. Inquiry is continuous growth in knowledge, and, as inquiry develops, new ethical ends and goals are discovered and may be constructed. <sup>54</sup>

The following figure (3.2) represents a summary of Dewey's pragmatism.

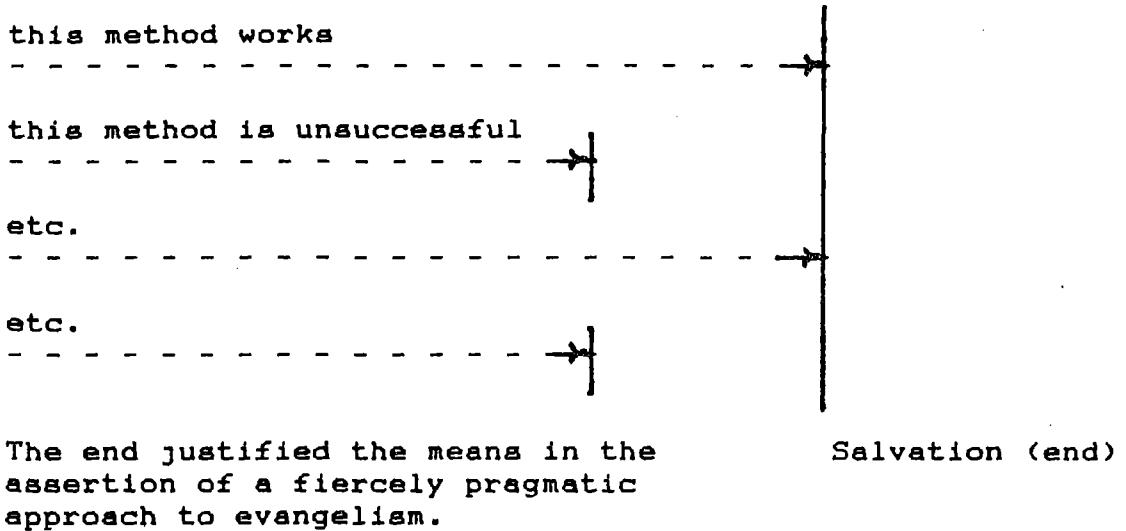
Figure 3.2



Building on the pragmatism presented above, and considering what has been quoted from Church Growth proponents (See again analysis of One: "The 'Means' and 'End' Distinction") the following figure (3.3) summarizes the Church Growth emphasis.

Figure 3.3

<p>Means (methods) are determined by their success and are evidence of God's blessing. They can be either theological or sociological.</p>	<p>Salvation (end) determined by Church's faithfulness</p>
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In response to pragmatism it must be asserted that Scripture alone is the sole authority for the Christian and is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). This absolute, objective standard of truth is a sharp contrast to the subjective nature of pragmatism. Gordon H. Clark in a critique of Dewey states:

It has been hinted that ethics is based on science; but the underlying pragmatic logic, which makes science and truth the results of deliberative action, returns us to practical ends as the humanistic court of last resort. . . . [For Dewey] there is no God from whom man can obtain comfort . . . much less wisdom, instruction, and intervention. Man has only himself.

The more science is stressed as instrumental, the more evident it should be that it cannot establish ends or ideals. . . . Scientific method can produce no ideals whatever. Science is instrumental.

Since this problem . . . engulfs secular theories, such as utilitarianism, it seems to follow that a more sympathetic consideration ought to be given to divine revelation than is customary in the universities of our land.<sup>55</sup>

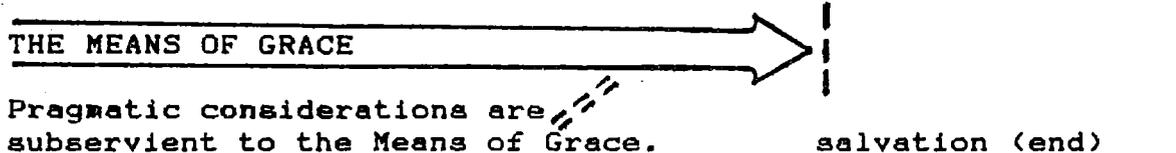
While empirical research is useful to scientists, this emphasis is not useful in determining Christian doctrine. Certain considerations are beyond the Christian's senses or experiences. For example, one cannot empirically test the validity, efficaciousness, or efficacy of the Means of Grace. The pragmatist may see "no practical difference"<sup>56</sup> between their use or disuse. However, only Scripture can reveal to man that the Means of Grace are the channel whereby grace is offered and given to the world. For this reason they are faithfully taught and administered in the Lutheran Church. This is so that the "end" of the building up of the Church and the salvation of souls may be accomplished (AC IV, V, VII). The following figure (3.4) represents the Lutheran view. Note the contrast in this figure and Figure 3.3. (The solid lines depict the primary emphasis of each view. Church Growth's emphasis is on the "end" which determines "means," the Lutheran emphasis is on the "means" which produce the "end.")

Figure 3.4

The Means of Grace are determined by God (AC IV, VII) and are absolute theological truth.

Salvation (end) is determined by God's grace (AC V).

THE MEANS OF GRACE



Pragmatic considerations are subservient to the Means of Grace.

salvation (end)

Due to its empirical nature, pragmatism cannot be the ultimate authority for the Christian - especially in mission methods and strategies. The more pragmatism is stressed, the more evident it should be to the Christian that it cannot establish ends or ideals. To state the opposite is to drift away from a Scriptural foundation.

In addition to these insights, it is interesting to note that the phrase "the end justifies the means" was the slogan the Jesuits adopted during the time of the Counter Reformation. The Jesuits' special mission was to combat the Reformation and "a more formidable foe has never faced Protestantism."<sup>57</sup> This insight, provides another reason to doubt the wisdom of Evangelical Christians' adoption of this pragmatistic slogan.

These insights demonstrate that the Church Growth movement's claim to be a reformation is deficient in three ways. First, McGavran does not provide an adequate theological base. Inerrancy alone is not a sufficient base for unity and McGavran's denominational background will make the consistent application of the "Lausanne Covenant" difficult. Second, pragmatism is a philosophy that has caused some to lose sight of the Means of Grace and their central role in evangelism. Finally, the "end justifies the means" is a phrase which is not consistent with the goals of the reformation, but rather is the slogan of the counter Reformation.

When these things are realized, it simply does not follow that God would give the movement "prominence" nor use it to "stimulate" the entire Church.<sup>58</sup> At best, such a movement will be counterproductive. The Christian firmly believes "God . . . in these last days has spoken to us in His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). It is the Word of God which has the final say in these matters, not the "forcefulness" "prominence" or "stimulation" of a movement - no matter how practical a movement may appear. Since the Church Growth movement lacks a fundamental understanding of a reformation's nature, an examination of Scripture and the sixteenth century Reformation is needed - particularly the role of Scripture and its practical application.

#### A True Reformation: The Sixteenth Century Reformation

Hunter is correct in pointing out that God used Luther in the sixteenth century Reformation and the Bible played an important role. However, Hermann Sasse writes from the birthplace of the Reformation:

The slogan, "Back to the Bible," is heard ever and again in the centuries of the Middle Ages. It is not the slogan only of the "heretics" who were disputing the claims of the Roman hierarchy with an appeal to the Bible; those, too, who were seeking a renovation of the church from within the existing ecclesiastical organization were returning to the Bible. . . . Even in those centuries the church was renewed, was "reformed," again and again through obedience to the Word of God.

And yet a reformation, in the real sense of the word, was not achieved. Why not? Because a return to the Holy Scriptures, an experience of the majesty of God speaking and

commanding in the Scriptures, a resolution henceforth to acknowledge its authority alone and to obey its commandments - not even all this constitutes a reformation. A man . . . [or] a church can acknowledge the sole and absolute authority of the Scriptures . . . without being . . . evangelical at all.<sup>59</sup>

Second, while significant differences exist between Luther, the "heretics," the others mentioned by Sasse, and the other sixteenth century reformers (i.e., the Reformed), Church Growth does not discuss the various theological positions which characterized the Reformation. Hunter's description of the "reformers," "churches" and "a Bible-based theology" clouds these important distinctions by attempting to associate all of these reformers with one cohesive movement. However, the Lutheran Reformers were unique. They never adopted a vague, generic Bible-based theology, but rather, they based their theology on the central doctrine of the Bible, justification by grace through faith.<sup>60</sup> Even Luther could not have been the Reformer of the Church had he not rediscovered the doctrine of justification.<sup>61</sup> Sasse states:

The Sola Scriptura is not enough. It must be supplemented by the Sola Fide which . . . is inseparably bound up with it.

The nature of the Reformation must be sought . . . in the particular kind of return to the Bible. . . . The Lutheran Reformation . . . claims to be something fundamentally different from any of the numerous attempts at reform which have been undertaken in the course of the church's history, and all of which have failed so lamentably.

For the Lutheran Reformation, in its essential nature, is nothing else than a rediscovery of the Gospel. What made it a great even in the history of the church was that an understanding, a comprehension, was then achieved such as had never been reached since the days of the New

Testament. . . . For if [the doctrine of justification] is forgotten, the Gospel must be interpreted as a system of morals or as a theory of religious metaphysics. Consequently this discovery constitutes the reformation of the church. It reveals once again the truth by which alone the church lives. For the church does not live by morals, by the knowledge and observance of God's law. Nor does it live by religion, by lofty experiences of the divine. . . . It lives solely by the forgiveness of sins. Hence reformation does not consist, as the late Middle Ages believed, and as has been believed in wide circles of the Protestant world, of an ethico-religious correction, of a moral quickening and a spiritual deepening throughout the church. It consists, rather, according to its own peculiar nature, of the revival of the preaching of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake.<sup>62</sup>

Third, Hunter does not present a proper distinction between theology and its application when he claims that it is "practice"<sup>63</sup> which is causing a reformation today. The lessons of Scripture (example, Josiah: 2 Kings 22-23; John 8:32) and history (Luther) are that God works first through the proper understanding of the Gospel. Only after this reformation has been born, can Gospel-centered practices follow. Even without the example of Scripture and the sixteenth century, it is inconceivable that God would cause a theological Reformation and wait hundreds of years to work in the area of applying it. Sasse states:

That such a revival of the church's message must have important consequences also in reviving the life of its members and in renovating the external forms of the church is only natural. But these are only consequences. What the world called, and still does call, reformation of the church is only the fruit of the real Reformation, the revival of the pure doctrine of the Gospel.

The new understanding of the Scriptures, we say, came as a result of this new rediscovery of the Gospel. . . . This view alone guards against . . . the false synergistic notion that we could reform the church "according to the

Word of God" by determining precisely what these prescriptions are, and then applying them.<sup>64</sup>

Although the Church Growth movement may appeal to some, it certainly is not a reincarnation of the sixteenth century reformation. Its claim to be the continuation of the Reformation is nullified in both its own misunderstanding of a true reformation, and its stress on pragmatism which places the practical before the theological. The primary focus for the Confessional Lutheran in all evangelism work must be on the Lutheran Reformers and their focus on Scripture doctrine of justification by grace through faith. As in Luther's day, God still brings about reformation through the Gospel, "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). When the true Reformation is preserved, the true mission of the Church is preserved.<sup>65</sup> Since the Lutheran Confessions preserve the pure Gospel, the true Reformation shall continue through those holding to them and be spread throughout the world.

#### Reviewing the Parable

Although the "soil" (context) of the Church Growth movement has a strong point, the promotion of the inerrancy of Scripture, it was seen that this is not "strong enough" in and of itself. A reaction to modernism does not justify all the aspects of a movement. At best, this theology is "conservative," but vague. The Church Growth "soil" is further complicated when American pragmatism is mixed with an "inadequate" theology. In this light, the Church Growth

movement does not reflect the sixteenth century Reformation. With these insights in mind, the "soil" of the movement cannot be considered a "solid rock" (Luke 6:48), but at best, "sandy soil" (Luke 6:49). The next chapter will examine the "foundations" of the Church Growth movement.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Hunter, pp. 13; 23-24.
- 2 Williams, Colin W., New Directions in Theology Today: Volume IV: The Church (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 12.
- 3 Williams, pp. 12-13.
- 4 Williams, pp. 11-26.
- 5 Williams, pp. 14-17.
- 6 Williams, pp. 12-13.
- 7 Williams, p. 15.
- 8 Williams, pp. 12-17.
- 9 Williams, pp. 69-70, (citing WCC report).
- 10 Williams, p. 52.
- 11 Allen, p. 70.
- 12 McGavran, Understanding, p. 79.
- 13 Social Ministry in the Life of the Church (n.p., Nov., 1971).
- 14 Quebedeaux, Richard, The Young Evangelicals (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 3-4.
- 15 Winter, Ralph D., "The New Macedonia: A Revolutionary New Era in Mission Begins," In Perspectives . . ., p. 294.
- 16 McGavran, p. 168.

<sup>17</sup> Lindsell, Harold, The Battle for the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), p. 211.

<sup>18</sup> Figure 3.1 was taken from a lecture in a course entitled "Church Fellowship," Winter, 1983, by Professor K. Marquart.

<sup>19</sup> Matthias, p. 55, (citing J. D. Douglas).

<sup>20</sup> Matthias, pp. 54-55.

<sup>21</sup> Schuller, Self-Esteem, pp. 25ff.

<sup>22</sup> McGavran, pp. 231-232.

<sup>23</sup> Wagner, Your Church, pp. 136-137.

<sup>24</sup> Hunter, pp. 24; 46; 94; 96.

<sup>25</sup> Matthias, pp. 53-54.

<sup>26</sup> Matthias, pp. 53-54.

<sup>27</sup> Hunter, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> McGavaran, p. 168.

<sup>29</sup> Lindsell, p. 211.

<sup>30</sup> Pieper, 3:154.

<sup>31</sup> McQuilkin, J. Robert, Measuring the Church Growth Movement (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> "Eye-Witness Comments on Amsterdam '83," In Christian News (Feb. 27, 1984), p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Thorkelson, Willmar, "Lutheran Holy Spirit Conference," In Christian News (Sept. 10, 1984), p. 25.

<sup>34</sup> Wenland, ". . . but what kind of Christianity?" In Christian News (Jan. 23, 1984 as found in The Northwestern Lutheran, January 1, 1984).

<sup>35</sup> Quebedeaux, pp. 138-139.

<sup>36</sup> McGavran, p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> Matthias, p. 55.

<sup>38</sup> Matthias, p. 53.

- 39 McQuilkin, pp. 16-17.
- 40 Wagner, "The Fourth," pp. 570-580.
- 41 See Merritt, pp. 57-63, for an example of when the end does not justify the means. This discussion will be noted later in this paper.
- 42 Wagner, pp. 136-137.
- 43 McGavran, p. 230.
- 44 Klug, "Luther on the Church," p. 201.
- 45 Hunter, p. 24.
- 46 Wagner, p. 136.
- 47 Wagner, p. 136.
- 48 Moore, Edward C., American Pragmatism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. vii.
- 49 Cannon, p. 32.
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- 51 Russell, Bertrand, Wisdom of the West (London: Rathbone Books Limited, 1975), pp. 276-278.
- 52 James, p. 142.
- 53 Russell, pp. 278-279.
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- 55 Clark, Gordon H., Dewey (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1960), pp. 16; 40-41.
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- 59 Sasse, pp. 56-57.
- 60 Nafzger, "Growing," p. 287.

<sup>61</sup> Marquart, Kurt, Justification - Objective and Subjective: A Translation of the Doctrinal Essay Read at the First Convention of the Synodical Conference in 1872 (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, n.d.), p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Sasse, pp. 57-60.

<sup>63</sup> Hunter, p. 16.

<sup>64</sup> Sasse, p. 60.

<sup>65</sup> Preus, "The Confessions," p. 20.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE FOUNDATIONS OF CHURCH GROWTH:

#### THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE

##### Discussion Points

In the last chapter the "soil" of the Church Growth movement was examined. In this chapter the "foundations" of the movement will be examined. Kent Hunter summarizes these foundations as: science and theology.<sup>1</sup> The former is based upon the pragmatic approach to evangelism which was seen to be rooted in this particularly American philosophy. The latter is a further refining of the movement's assertion of Biblical inerrancy in reaction to modernism. Some insights of Chapter Two ("The Church Growth Understanding of the Nature and Purpose of the Church"; and Appendix C) are expanded in this chapter. The scientific aspects of church growth are primarily concerned with diagnosing the nature of the church. The theological aspects of church growth focus on the purpose of the church. Hunter states:

Church growth can be formally defined as that science which investigates the nature, function and health of Christian churches, as they relate to the . . . Great Commission. . . Church Growth is simultaneously a theological conviction and an applied science, striving to combine the eternal principles of God's Word with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioral sciences.<sup>2</sup>

### Church Growth as a Science

The social sciences are important to the Church Growth proponent.<sup>3</sup> It is asserted that one may arrive at the nature of the church through "measurement, research and evaluation." This strong emphasis on the scientific method is not seen as "ungodly," but rather to be expected of Christians who feel "effectiveness of ministry is important."<sup>4</sup>

The following sciences are used in the investigation of the nature of the Church: modern technology, communications, psychology, sociology, anthropology and modern marketing. What is stressed in each category are the "best insights," the "most recent discoveries," and commonly accepted "axioms."<sup>5</sup> Schuller suggests that an active attempt be made to "synergize" the insights of these sciences with Christian theology.<sup>6</sup> The faculty at Fuller School of World Missions is proud of its broad range of "experts" in these fields. Rather than stress theological or philosophical doctorates, the faculty have their degrees in the behavioral sciences. Wagner states: "The result is a new, and presumably useful way of looking at what God is doing in the world."<sup>7</sup>

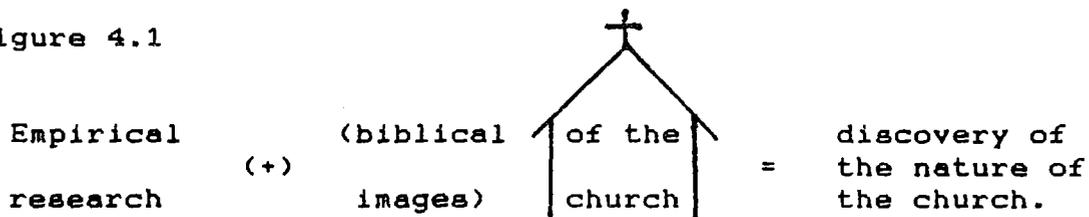
This scientific investigation into the nature of the church is not an end in itself, but "a means to an end." The ultimate goal is to answer complex questions<sup>8</sup> regarding "the effective implementation of God's Great Commission."<sup>9</sup> As was shown in Chapter Two, the Church Growth movement is optimistic in believing that it is renewing "the very nature of the

church . . . from the ground floor up"<sup>10</sup> and re-establishing "its nature as a living organism."<sup>11</sup> Wagner states:

Church growth science provides a new frame of reference from which to interpret old phenomena. Even though it claims no absolute "laws" . . . it provides a new language, new labels and new models for increasing our effectiveness as God's stewards.<sup>12</sup>

Appended to these scientific insights of the nature of the church are "several images" which are "reflected" in the New Testament.<sup>13</sup> The following figure (4.1) depicts how Church Growth proponents believe God is blessing their emphasis on the behavioral sciences.

Figure 4.1



#### The Theology of Growth

The primary expression of the theological foundation of church growth is summed up in one word: "growth." McGavran states:

Statistical knowledge is not enough. . . . The goal is through evaluation of the facts to understand the dynamics of church growth. Only as, on the basis of assured growth facts, we see the reasons for increase, the factors which God used to multiply His churches, and the condition under which the Church has spread or remained stationary, do we understand church growth.<sup>14</sup>

As seen in Chapter Two, to the Church Growth proponent, "growth" is inseparably linked to the nature of the church. "Growth is an essential characteristic of the church"<sup>15</sup> From this emphasis the "theology of growth" is derived. Hunter

summarizes this concept by stating:

It cannot be denied, becoming part of the . . . Movement takes a theological stance. It is a movement in which Christians believe that the main purpose of the church is to grow. . . . Everything the church growth church does is based on the premise of growth. . . . Growth determines the priorities, the programs, the worship, the policies, the budget and the life of the congregation. . . . Church growth requires a deep commitment to the theology of growth. (emphasis mine) <sup>16</sup>

### The Analysis

There is a positive and negative side to the use of the term "foundations" when describing the Church Growth movement. On the positive side, Hunter is correct in pointing out the importance of focusing on the nature of the Church as a "foundation" for the topic of the growth of the same. <sup>17</sup> Also, the term is particularly helpful in simplifying the complexity of the movement. This is done by focusing attention on the two main components summarized by Hunter as: science and theology. <sup>18</sup>

While the term "foundations" can be used in this context, it nevertheless has its negative side. Specifically, the use of this term in the plural form weakens its Biblical meaning. The Lutheran Confession acknowledges only one "foundation" upon which the faith and mission of the Church is based. This was reaffirmed in the Brief Statement:

We furthermore teach regarding the Holy Scriptures that they are given by God to the Christian Church for the foundation of faith, Eph. 2:20. Hence the Holy Scriptures are the sole source from which all doctrines proclaimed in the Christian Church must be taken . . . examined and judged. . . . The rule of faith is not the man-made so-called "totality of Scripture" ("Ganzen der Schrift"). <sup>19</sup>

The great hymns of the Church also speak of only one foundation:

The Church's one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
She is His new creation  
By water and the Word. . . .

Elect from ev'ry nation,  
Yet one o'er all the earth,  
Her charter of salvation  
One Lord, one faith, one birth. 20

Christ is our Cornerstone,  
On Him alone we build;  
With His true saints alone  
The Courts of heav'n are filled. 21

These hymns are based upon Ephesians 2:19-20 which says the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the corner stone." Note that there is only one foundation. Jesus and His followers were united through His teaching. Garcia states:

The office of the apostle was very much needed by Jesus to give a proper foundation to the Church. Jesus selected men to this office for a particular function: to preserve and spread His Word of salvation in the world. 22

These men were faithful in proclaiming "all" (Matthew 28:19-20) of Christ's teaching. More specifically, they were faithful in proclaiming the Gospel and administering Baptism and the Lord's Supper according to Christ's institution (Acts 2). Thus, as it was shown in Chapter Two, in the one foundation are found both the Church's nature and purpose (AC VII). In this light, there is wisdom in opting for the traditional use of the term "foundation." Those Lutherans that adopt the plural form without qualification deprive the Church

Growth movement of an important insight.

In addition to these insights, the parable of the "Two Builders" shows that an emphasis on "foundations" alone is inadequate. This parable emphasizes both the "soil" and the "foundation" (Luke 6:47-49). With this in mind, it becomes clear that Church Growth literature has a built-in difficulty. It begins at the "foundation level," and consequently, does not consider the "soil." Without the acknowledgment of the "soil" and "foundation" distinction, some contextual considerations, like those presented in the last chapter (See Three: "Reviewing the Parable"), are left unexamined and the overall understanding of the movement is hindered.<sup>23</sup>

#### Church Growth as a Science

Any "foundation" found outside of God's inspired Word cannot be considered "foundational" by the Church. The Brief Statement states:

Whatever activities do not either directly apply the Word of God or subserve such application we condemn as "new methods," unchurchly activities, which do not build, but harm, the Church.<sup>24</sup>

While the behavioral sciences aid the Church in understanding aspects of the Kingdom of the Left, they should never doctrinally supplement, the teaching of God's Word. The "best insights" of any secular science change,<sup>25</sup> and are at best a matter of personal (subjective) opinion, not divine revelation. Wagner admits this when he says there are no

absolute "laws."<sup>26</sup> McGavran concurs, yet still places a great deal of stress on man being faithful, especially in research projects.<sup>27</sup> When Scripture as the standard of judgement, and science as that which is to be judged, are considered "simultaneous," "combined,"<sup>28</sup> or "synergized,"<sup>29</sup> the standard of judgement is destroyed.

The use of science is not divinely mandated and there is no Gospel promise that its use will be effective - even in the task of world evangelization. This is precisely why those who feel "effectiveness of ministry is important"<sup>30</sup> should turn to the Scriptures for guidance - not science. Scripture is eternal truth, scientific knowledge is temporal and in a state of flux. One key example of this is the change in science from the Newtonian view of the universe as a closed system to that of Einstein's view that the universe is an open system. Not only does this change show that science is fluctuating, but within Einstein's open universe, there is no real scientific certainty.<sup>31</sup> Hughes writes (in reaction to Bultmann):

Each succeeding generation is tempted afresh to regard the science of its day as having spoken the final word, and therefore as being in a sense static: whereas true science is always in a state of transition: however great its advances, it never ceases to be on the treshhold of new discoveries which may well be of a revolutionary character. Science that is 'modern' today will be outmoded tomorrow.<sup>32</sup>

This should increase the Christian's reliance upon Scripture because

every new (scientific) discovery increases our moral and spiritual responsibility. The truth is: man is now more dependent upon God, not less. . . . He has no answer to the age of power apart from God. . . . Man can only handle this immense gift under God's grace.<sup>33</sup>

Social researchers know the temporal nature of their science because they are always alert to the problems of reliability and validity of their data. They only consider the most superficial kind of methodology and analysis of data (example, simple counting of objects) as being "perfectly reliable."<sup>34</sup> The greater the degree of complexity, the greater the need to take steps to increase reliability.<sup>35</sup> Even the Church Growth proponent's research cannot escape limitations of time, resources, bias or human error.<sup>36</sup> McGavran hints at this problem when he advises that missionaries' writings be scrutinized due to their "promotional bias."<sup>37</sup> Cannon affirms this by stating:

A missionary learns right away that reports must be made to all who contribute to his work. Once in a while missionaries are coached as to how this should be done. . . . "Make them factual. . . . Make them inspirational." . . . I must be a good accomplished author . . . [and] a diligent public relations man.<sup>38</sup>

Since there is so much uncertainty regarding the behavioral sciences, they are not, as Church Growth claims, a "new and useful way of looking at what God is doing in the world."<sup>39</sup> They are not the "only way we understand church growth."<sup>40</sup> Rather, Scripture is the only norm for knowing the way in which God works his plan of salvation. Nafzger states:

The Scriptural doctrine of justification teaches us to be careful in the matter of "Growing in Christ." We must constantly be on guard lest we give the impression that our primary purpose in the church is to achieve empirical results which can be measured on charts and graphs in terms of statistical growth on ecclesiastical rolls.<sup>41</sup>

Positivism and Utilitarianism: Important Influences on the Church Growth Science

In contrast to Scripture, the nineteenth century philosopher Auguste Comte placed science into a central role in religion.<sup>42</sup> While the extreme effects of his "positivistic" thinking are not found in the Church Growth movement's use of science, their use of the behavioral sciences reflects aspects of his philosophy. Like pragmatism, positivism "is exerting a determining influence on how we view things."<sup>43</sup> The background of positivism is helpful in establishing the nature of the behavioral sciences and their use by the Church Growth movement.

Comte saw his philosophy as "a scheme of salvation" for the "mental anarchy of his time" (i.e., post French Revolution) which was brought on by the conflict between science and religion. Since all attempts to reconcile science and religion had failed, and the assertion of Roman Catholic authority would be a step backward, he attempted to turn science into a religion that would "take the place of theology." He believed mankind needed a science of social behavior upon which their faith could be based.<sup>44</sup> Brehier states:

He aimed to reorganize society and, in order to do so, to bring about an intellectual reform. . . . The intellect must first be given new habits, conforming to the state of advancement of human knowledge.<sup>45</sup>

Positivism did not lend itself well to theology in general, and orthodox theology in particular, because it viewed knowledge in a state of progress.<sup>46</sup> Positivism was the final stage in this process.

His "law of the three stages" maintained that human intellectual development had moved historically from a theological stage, in which the world and man's destiny within it were explained in terms of gods and spirits, through a transitional metaphysical stage, in which explanations were in terms of essences.<sup>47</sup>

[The first] stage was criticized by Comte as anthropomorphic, i.e., as resting on all-too-human analogies. . . . No genuine explanations result [from the second stage]; questions concerning ultimate reality . . . are declared to be absolutely unanswerable. . . . and the fruitless rendering of concepts as real things.<sup>48</sup>

[The] last stage was distinguished by an awareness of the limitations of human knowledge. Knowledge could only be relative to man's nature as a species and to his varying social and historical situations. Absolute explanations were therefore better abandoned for the more sensible discovery of laws - the regular connections among phenomena. This deliberately limited, testable way of establishing knowledge was enough for man's practical purposes; it was the only reliable basis for the prediction and, therefore, for effective action. (emphasis mine)<sup>49</sup>

The emphasis on the empirical, or positive, was the key for Comte to unify all the sciences. He ordered all positive knowledge in a "hierarchy of the sciences" with his new science of sociology at the top.<sup>50</sup> Next he asserted "a religion of humanity which [would] unite men better than any other religion."<sup>51</sup> While he did not ascribe special importance to the Christian religion, he did adopt the rituals of the

Roman Catholic Church because some form of order was necessary for progress.<sup>52</sup> Compolo states:

Comte hoped the practitioners of this new science would carry out empirical studies that would provide the knowledge of what norms, societal structures, and economic practices would deliver the most good to the greatest number. . . . Comte believed that the priests of the Christian Church should be replaced by a new breed of moral teachers. These clerics would articulate a morality based on positivism and would empirically demonstrate the validity of every doctrine they taught.<sup>53</sup>

While this positive religion and perfect society have not come to pass, positive thinking has. Compolo cites a key example of how positivism has influenced thinking today:

A survey of changes in beliefs and attitudes towards homosexuality clearly demonstrates the movement from theological thinking to positivistic thinking.

In the first [theological] stage, homosexuality was considered immoral because it violated the will of God, and homosexuals were seen as ungodly. As society moved into the metaphysical stage, homosexual behavior came to be viewed as contrary to the laws of nature . . . Homosexual acts were viewed as "unnatural" . . . As we move into the positivistic stage, however, empirical research has led most social scientists to believe that homosexuality is not necessarily the result of . . . lustful behavior . . . as set forth in the first chapter of Romans. . . . A positivistic approach to homosexual behavior has led, consequently, to a move toward liberalization.<sup>54</sup>

At this point the differences between positivism and the Church Growth movement should be pointed out. First, the movement does not believe that the Bible is part of a bygone era or "stage." Second, the movement would reject the assumption that the rightness or wrongness of something like homosexuality should be determined by positivistic thinking. However, since twentieth century "behaviorism" is the result

of a positivistic way of thinking,<sup>55</sup> like pragmatism, positivism has influenced the movement's use of the behavioral sciences.

In this light, some significant similarities exist between positivism and Church Growth. First, the movement uses the behavioral sciences as part of their "scheme of salvation" for the Church. (See Chapter Three: "A Pragmatic Reformation.") While the movement does not promote "a science of social behavior,"<sup>56</sup> it does promote a science of churchly behavior through the behavioral sciences.<sup>57</sup> Such is found in the positivistic themes of "advancement"<sup>58</sup> and "progress,"<sup>59</sup> through which "the best insights of contemporary social and behavioral sciences" are said to "retool" a church.<sup>60</sup> However, real "progress means to remain standing under the cross."<sup>61</sup> The more the behavioral sciences cause the movement to drift from Scripture, the further the movement causes digression from the Church's mission.

Second, while Church Growth proponents admit that there are limitations in human knowledge,<sup>62</sup> this is no guarantee that a Biblical view will be asserted. Comte's position is a case in point. One can be aware of the limitations of science, and at the same time, allow science to determine "truth." Since Comte disregarded all absolutes, science alone had the answers for "practical purposes" and "effective action."<sup>63</sup> Church Growth follows this type of thinking by asserting the Bible as "absolute," but on the other hand,

still considering the behavioral sciences as a major source of "truth" for the Church's practical purposes.<sup>64</sup>

Third, just as Comte attempted to unite all sciences and society, Church Growth sees itself as capable of unifying the (conservative) churches for missions through its specialization in the behavioral sciences. The movement promotes a form of Comte's concern for developing a science devoted to doing the greatest good to the greatest number of people. This emphasis has been called "utilitarianism" and has its own set of built in difficulties:

Utilitarian relativism implies that the end can justify any means. What if a supposed good end, say, genetically purifying the race, demanded that we sterilize (or even kill) all "impure" genetic stock? Would this end justify the means of mercy-killing or forced sterilization? Surely not. Results alone - even desired results - do not make something good. Sometimes we desire wrong. When the results are in, they must still be measured by some standard beyond them in order to know whether or not they are good. . . . One can compare two things only by a third, unless one of the two is considered the absolute norm.

<sup>65</sup>

While the above quote is perhaps overstated for the purposes of examining the "utilitarianism" of the Church Growth movement, it does present the problem with this type of thinking. This is another case in which Scripture alone must be used to examine the "means" and the "results" of Church Growth. The movement's principles of reaching out to "homogeneous units"<sup>66</sup> and "receptive" people<sup>67</sup> can be identified here as basically utilitarian. The emphasis on these principles is on reaching the "greatest number."<sup>68</sup>

However, this emphasis does not honor the Scriptural mandate to "teach ALL nations," but rather, relies on empirical research to validate these teachings and to effect their implementation.<sup>69</sup> It can be argued that "the greatest number" are not reached - only the "receptive" and "homogeneous units." (See analysis of Chapter One: "The Harvest Principle," "Diagnosing the Receptivity"; and "The Homogeneous Unit Principle.")

These are only a few of the parallels which can be drawn between positivism and Church Growth emphases. The degree to which Church Growth proponents are aware of classical positivism and utilitarianism affecting their thinking is an open question. On the one hand, it is good that they do not boast of being "fiercely positivistic" (as they claim to be "fiercely pragmatic";<sup>70</sup>). On the other hand, the movement would benefit from knowing the similarities between their emphases and positivism. The movement does not, through positivism, make science a god (as Voltaire and Comte did;<sup>71</sup> Fuller, p. 390), but the trend is to let the behavioral sciences determine how theology (God's Word) is to be applied.<sup>72</sup>

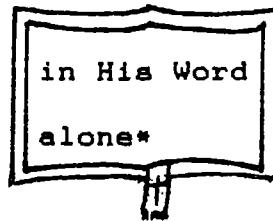
The problem with this is: (1) only Scripture should and can ultimately instruct the Christian in how to apply the Gospel, and (2) the Gospel message can get distorted when sociological (temporal) facts cloud the ultimate (spiritual) need of mankind for a Savior.

Scripture: The Source of  
Doctrine; not Science

Through the Word, God has given the Christian more than mere "images" of His Church. (This was covered in some detail throughout Chapter Two.) It is the Word alone which teaches the Christian about the nature, function, health and purpose of the Church. All other teachings - even the insights of the behavioral sciences - are to be "judged, reprov'd, and corrected" on the basis of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16). Frail human beings certainly do not "re-establish the nature of the church." God has established the nature of the church through His act of redemption. God's Word is clear. Jesus Christ - the cornerstone - "is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). When the movement attempts to "renew" the nature of the Church through the combination of Scripture and the behavioral sciences, and then states that this is taking place from "the ground floor up," it is striking at the very foundation of the church. It is striking at Christ Himself. Note the steps: (1) the behavioral sciences define the nature of the church, (2) the empirical findings are asserted as the nature of the church ("re-establishing" or "re-discovering"), and (3) this process often causes "renewal" in a congregation. The following Biblical perspective (Figure 4.2) is in stark contrast to that of Church Growth (Figure 4.1):

Figure 4.2

God has  
revealed



the nature of  
His Church and  
its mission.

(\*All other research Scripture judges.)

### The Theology of Growth

#### The Internal Weaknesses of the Theology of Growth

The Church Growth movement needs a stronger foundation than the belief that the primary purpose of the Church is to grow. This is because "growth" is not necessarily "a theological stance." Even worldly organizations can and do have growth and expansion as a primary goal. In and of itself, growth is not theological at all. Costas, looking back on the phenomenal growth of protestant churches in Chile,<sup>73</sup> states:

First of all, numerical and organic growth in themselves do not necessarily mean that a church is indeed growing. It may be, . . . that the church is simply getting fat.

Second, without reflection on the faith . . . numerical and organic growth can be . . . limited to infrahuman situations where the option of faith is more an escape mechanism, . . . rather than a genuine call to participate in the new order of life that is proclaimed in the gospel.

Third, church growth is a sign, not an instrument, of mission. A sign is something that points beyond itself, in this case to the mission of God fulfilled in the proclamation and the presence of the kingdom. Multidimensional growth is a fundamental sign of the kingdom, which may open the way for the recognition of other signs.

An instrument, on the other hand, is "a means whereby something is achieved, performed, or furthered" (Webster). In God's mission, it is the church, not growth, that is the instrument by which the mission is furthered and fulfilled.

This distinction between growth as a sign and the church as an instrument of mission needs to be made in the face of those today who, getting their inspiration from "successful" church-growth situations like Chile, have taken the notion of growth and built it into a methodological category. They thus propose church growth as a missional methodology; that is, as an instrument for the study and fulfillment of the church's mission. They bypass the church (its complex nature . . .) . . . and concentrate on its growth. . . . In so doing, however, they defeat their own cause because growth is meaningless without a subject. . . . Growth . . . is an indicator of vitality, not the means by which the body functions. Mission is fulfilled through and by the church, not through church growth. Its fulfillment, however, is made evident and verified in and by the growth of the church.

This leads to my fourth thesis. There is a fundamental difference between the growth of the church and that of a business. The former is the result of the efficacious work of faith; the latter, of the efficiency of applied science, of technology.

The growth of a business is the result of sound marketing analysis. . . . But the church is something else. It is a community of faith.<sup>74</sup>

### The Roots of the Theology of Growth

Despite these observations the movement has developed the "theology of growth." This emphasis is recognized as a unique phenomenon and a point of pride for Church Growth proponents. The "theology of growth" consists of both the scientific and theological foundations.

There is a time when God's Spirit is peculiarly active in the hearts of men. They become "ripe unto harvest." As a result, all evangelistic activity should be in response to an awareness of where God is at work. Down through the

years, as a result of a great deal of . . . field research, we have found that wherever this empirical factor has been deliberately made determinative of strategy, God has abundantly confirmed with good harvest. Indeed we feel we have leaped over the inscrutable mystery that down through the years has provoked endless theological debate and ecclesiastical division, and have put strength where it furthers, not hinders, the ongoing of the Christian mission. In seeking to win those whom God has made winnable we have not unnaturally gained new insights into what it means to be co-laborers with God in the building of His Church.<sup>75</sup>

On the one hand, these insights are bridging the divisions within the Reformed tradition and proponents from other denominations are being drawn into the movement. On the other hand, these are not insights which "have leaped over the inscrutable mystery that . . . provoked . . . ecclesiastical division."<sup>76</sup> They are not new, but rather, are built on the Calvinistic doctrine of election and the Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace.<sup>77</sup> (See analysis of One: "The Harvest Principle.")

One way to understand this phenomenon is to narrow down the "theology of growth" into two categories which measure theological emphases: the "formal principle" and the "material principle."<sup>78</sup> Although Church Growth literature does not describe its theology in these terms, this terminology will be helpful in examining: (1) the difference between classical Reformed and Lutheran theology, and based on this, (2) the development of the modern Church Growth "theology of growth." Figures will be used to trace this development and to stress the involvement of Lutherans in the movement.

To begin to understand this phenomenon the fundamental differences between the sixteenth century Reformers must be examined.<sup>79</sup> Particularly central to this discussion are the differences between Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli. Their personalities should not be the primary focus, but the experiences which influenced their theological orientations are important. First, Luther's theology developed through long years of realizing his sinfulness and subsequent helplessness before God. He found hope only in the objective words of the Gospel. Zwingli, on the other hand, had his start in the concepts of humanism and its emphasis on reforming the corrupt morals of the secular community. He had not come to experience his total hopelessness before God as Luther had. In short, Luther was thrust totally upon the objective promise of God's Word for his assurance of salvation. Zwingli was forced to consider qualities in man as he flatly rejected the objective Means of Grace.<sup>80</sup>

These differences in orientation became differences in approach. This was seen in the debate over the answer to the crux theologorum.<sup>81</sup> The crux theologorum is simply this question: "Why under universal grace are not all men converted and saved?"<sup>82</sup> For the Lutheran theologians this question challenged their reason, yet presented no real problem. They simply taught what Scripture did. That is, they taught that Christ died for the sins of the entire world (John 1:29), and that men are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

By answering this question in this manner the Lutherans did not give in to human reason.

This reflects the Lutheran "formal principle" of "Sola Scriptura" and their "material principle" of "Justification."<sup>83</sup>

Luther's great discovery consisted in the belief that

a new understanding [is] given in the Scriptures, and a new understanding of the nature and will of God [is] derived from this newly understood Word of the Scriptures.<sup>84</sup>

For the Reformed, this question not only challenged their reason, but they felt their reason could find an answer to it. This particularly explains why it is said: "Faith is a gift, but so also is the intellect."<sup>85</sup> Saase states:

This being so, the separation of these two churches must root ultimately in a profound difference in their understanding of the Gospel as the message of the sinner's justification - a difference which is so much the more unfortunate because it is concealed behind an apparent agreement.

Although both churches hold that Justification by Faith is a doctrine without which the church cannot exist . . . the place of this article of faith in the sum of Christian doctrine differs in such a way that Lutherans and Reformed also give it a different meaning. . . . The essential character of the Lutheran Reformation consists of a rediscovery of the Gospel as the message of the sinner's justification. . . . And the Holy Scriptures cannot be properly understood except in the light of the Gospel. . . . The Reformed Church repudiates this.<sup>86</sup>

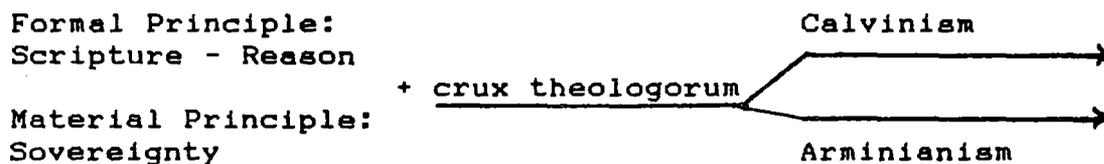
The Reformed chose a rational answer to the crux theologorum because of their "formal principle" of "Scripture - Reason" and their "material principle" of "Sovereignty."<sup>87</sup> The following is a summary of these significant differences:

Figure 4.3

	<u>Lutherans:</u>	<u>Traditional Reformed:</u>
Formal Principle: (authority)	Scripture Alone	Scripture - Reason
Material Principle: (content)	Justification	Sovereignty

While the Reformed theologians agreed upon the formal and material principles, their solutions to the rational difficulty of the crux theologorum caused them to break into two camps: the Calvinists and the Arminians.<sup>88</sup> Note the following figure:

Figure 4.4

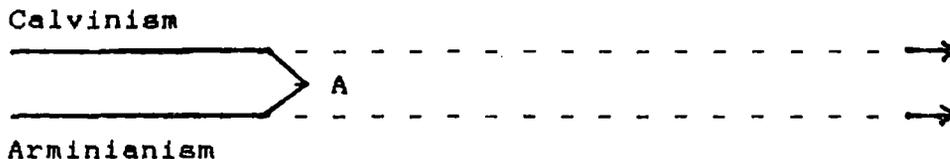


The Calvinists taught the total depravity of man, but that the atonement of Christ was limited to the elect.<sup>89</sup> The Arminians, on the other hand, taught that Christ did indeed die for the sins of the whole world, but that man was merely deprived - he is responsible for using or not using his free will to choose for Christ.<sup>90</sup>

Although Scripture (and therefore Lutherans) do not answer the crux theologorum, it seems that Reformed scholars are still attempting to solve it for the sake of Evangelical unity. In this light, many are thinking it through with a new spirit. The following depicts how proponents of both Reformed camps have come together in regard to Biblical inerrancy and

the possibilities of furthering mutual missions ("A" is point of mutual support):

Figure 4.5



Individuals who had come together began to find that they could agree on two key issues: (1) inerrancy of Scripture, and (2) the necessity for the Church to grow. It was found that the answer to a question similar to that of the crux theologorum could be agreed upon. It was not the exact same question, but close enough to stress the essential issue, and at the same time, preserve unity. Since finite man cannot know the mind of God or who is elect, the crux theologorum was asked from man's perspective. This can be summarized with: "Why are some receptive and others not?" While the answers to the historic crux theologorum generated theological answers which caused division, this modified question stressed the "here and now."

For all practical purposes, the crux theologorum ceased to be an issue. One need only acknowledge the inerrancy of Scripture and be open to the use of reason in empirical research - particularly the behavioral sciences - to see where and how God is now active to cause growth. As time went on, the evidence - empirical data - was produced to substantiate "harvest principle."<sup>91</sup> (See One: "The Harvest Principle") The

theory was field tested. It was "successful."<sup>92</sup> It seemed God was truly blessing these new efforts at Christian unity.

These insights demonstrate a shift in the traditional formal and material principles has occurred. "Scripture - Reason" can now be replaced with "Inerrancy - Behavioral Sciences." "Sovereignty" can now be replaced with that same sovereign God causing "Growth." (Compare this with Figure 4.4.) When these changes take place, the "theology of growth" had been born. The implications extend across denominational lines. Any church can be a part of this new movement which has rediscovered the eternal principles which not only unified the Church, but also furthered its mission.<sup>93</sup>

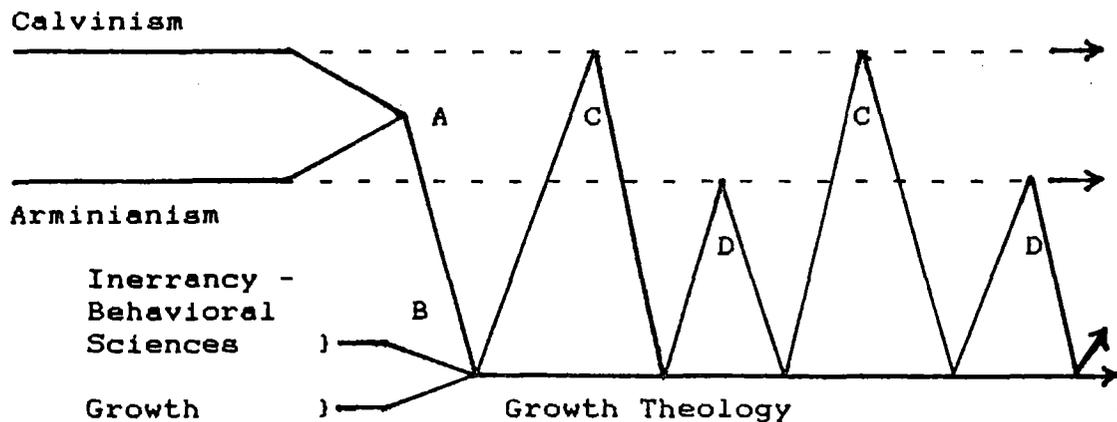
To McGavran, there are times when human reason tells a missionary what "is essential for the maximum welfare of the maximum number of men."<sup>94</sup> Wagner encourages his readers to "think scientifically."<sup>95</sup> However, Cannon states:

I fear that many of the methods, and many of the fancy names given to them by the brotherhood, glorify man's wisdom and not God's.<sup>96</sup>

In this light, there is a definite connection between the Reformed emphasis on human reason and the Church Growth movement's use of the behavioral sciences. The following figure demonstrates the birth of the "theology of growth" and the establishment of the formal and material principles of the Church Growth movement. (I.e., the "theology of growth" is the result of synthesizing the traditional Reformed theological principles ("B"). Notice that the "theology of

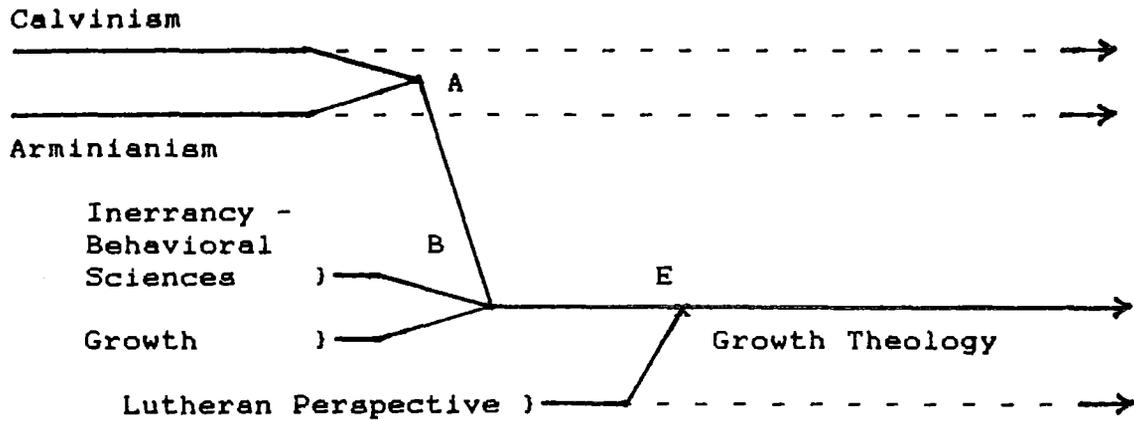
growth," depicted by the solid line, remains the primary emphasis in the remaining figures.) Note that the movement has been depicted outside the traditional sphere of Reformed influence, yet at the same time, there is a great deal of freedom for individual proponents to draw from either traditional Reformed camp. Therefore, any proponent can be found within any range on the figure. (Ranges fluctuate between the Calvinists "C" and the Arminians "D"):

Figure 4.6



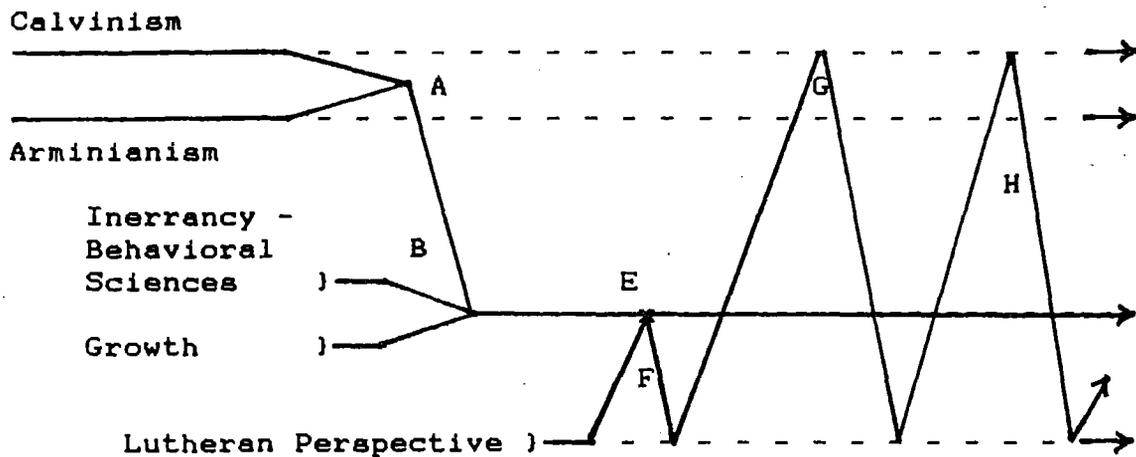
It is into this phenomenon that Lutheran Church Growth proponents enter. Some find themselves in the mainstream of the Church Growth movement. They are attracted to "inerrancy" and "growth" principles, which on the surface do not violate Confessional Lutheranism. The following figure demonstrates the point of contact of Lutherans with the Church Growth movement ("D" is point of contact):

Figure 4.7



Even though Lutherans bring their terminology and perspective to the Church Growth movement, they can adopt certain elements of Reformed theology which are behind "inerrancy" and "growth." The following demonstrates the point that the Lutheran Church Growth proponent may be found: (1) anywhere with in the range of "growth theology" and the "Lutheran Perspective" ("F" = this range), and or, (2) anywhere beyond the range of "growth theology" ("G" = acceptance of Calvinistic doctrines; "H" = acceptance of synergistic Arminiansim):

Figure 4.8



This second synthesis ("E") has happened because Lutheran Church Growth proponents could not see through the first synthesis ("B" - which centered in the "Battle for the Bible"). One merely sees "inerrancy," "research," and "growth." However, the synthesis has gone too far when Reformed theology is adopted or the behavioral sciences determine growth issues. This is particularly true for those that find themselves in the "F" - "H" range. It is impossible to "Lutheranize" Reformed theology or the behavioral sciences. The former must be either accepted or rejected. The latter is a secular discipline. The Church Growth movement, although a new Reformed phenomenon, is nevertheless Reformed. The behavioral sciences, although given a new status by the movement, are nevertheless temporal, inaccurate and non-authoritative for the Church.

#### Concluding Thoughts on the Theology of Growth

The final figure (4.7) demonstrates two things: (1) Lutherans are in danger of accepting Reformed theology through the "theology of growth," possibly without even knowing it; and (2) Lutheran Church Growth proponents have, through the "theology of growth," accepted the Reformed formal and material principles. The former point has been shown to be the case in Chapters One and Two. (See also Chapters Six and Seven; the Conclusion; and Appendicies F - J.) Several more observations need to be made with regard to the latter point.

The "formal principle" of "Inerrancy - Behavioral Sciences," and the "material principle" of "Growth" are not the same as the "formal principle" and "material principle" of Lutheranism, namely "Sola Scriptura" and "Justification" respectively. Church Growth proponents who object to this insight, particularly Lutheran ones, can view the formal and material principles of the "theology of growth" in only one of five ways.

First, the formal and material principles of the movement can be viewed as "Inerrancy - Behavioral Sciences" and "Growth." While this is the most accurate view, these are not the same as the principles of Lutheranism.

Second, other descriptions can be substituted. However, if these substitutions do not consist of "Sola Scriptura" or "Justification," then it is clearly not consistent with Confessional Lutheranism.

Third, Church Growth proponents can say, the formal and material principles of the Church Growth movement are "Sola Scriptura" and "Justification." However, this would mean that McGavran, Arn, Glasser, Wagner, G. Hunter III, and other Reformed Church Growth proponents would have to be called Lutheran. Of course they are not Lutheran, and neither would they care to be labeled such. In view of all that has been presented in this paper thus far, it seems inconceivable that anybody would make this claim.

Fourth, they can assert that there are no formal and

material principles of the movement. If this is the case, then the proponent cannot claim that church growth principles are eternal. If they are not eternal, they not binding on the Church and their significance will be seen to be minimal. This view would also be asserting that church growth principles are not theologically traceable. Either option, and other consequences of this answer, point to the fact that any other "formal principle" or "material principle," or the lack of any, thrusts the Church Growth movement outside of the context of Confessional Lutheranism. As a result, the movement needs to lie under the scrutiny of the Lutheran Confessions, not vice versa.

Fifth, it can asserted by a Church Growth proponent that he is not sure. This view would thrust the so-called Church Growth "expert" into immediate question. The Lutheran "formal principle" and "material principle" stress the certainty of the Scriptures themselves: "These things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). Any theological movement that does not instill certainty is no true theological movement.

#### Reviewing the Parable

The insights on the "soil" (context) of the Church Growth movement (Chapter Three), although not treated by Church Growth proponents themselves, have provided valuable insights

into the "foundations" of the movement. Because the "foundations" of the Church Growth movement are built upon the "soil" presented in the last chapter, they suffer from the same difficulties. Their relationship can be compared to that of sandstone to sand. They are made of the same "stuff." The Church Growth emphasis on pragmatism (Chapter Three) resurfaces in the view that science is central to the movement. In addition to these insights, the "response to modernism" (Chapter Three), and the emphasis on inerrancy, have led to the "theology of growth." This was shown to have serious weaknesses. The formal and material principles of the Church Growth movement, as presented in this chapter, represent the most basic analysis of Church Growth "foundations." They were shown to be rooted in the Reformed tradition. The next chapter will complete the imagery of a building by focusing on the "framework" of the Church Growth movement as manifest in its principles for growth.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Hunter, pp. 13; 23-24.
- <sup>2</sup> Hunter, p. 23.
- <sup>3</sup> McGavran, in Understanding . . ., devotes an entire section to the social sciences, pp. 183ff.
- <sup>4</sup> Hunter, p. 23.
- <sup>5</sup> Hunter, pp. 24; 97; 181.
- <sup>6</sup> Schuller, Self-Esteem, p. 27.
- <sup>7</sup> Wagner, Your Church, p. 41.

- <sup>8</sup> Wagner, pp. 38-41.
- <sup>9</sup> Hunter, p. 182.
- <sup>10</sup> Hunter, p. 151.
- <sup>11</sup> Hunter, p. 181.
- <sup>12</sup> Wagner, p. 41.
- <sup>13</sup> Hunter, pp. 46ff.
- <sup>14</sup> McGavran, p. 103.
- <sup>15</sup> Hunter, p. 46.
- <sup>16</sup> Hunter, p. 24.
- <sup>17</sup> Hunter, p. 78.
- <sup>18</sup> Hunter, p. 23.
- <sup>19</sup> The Brief Statement, p. 3.
- <sup>20</sup> The Lutheran Hymnal, #473, vv. 1-2.
- <sup>21</sup> The Lutheran Hymnal, #465, v. 1.
- <sup>22</sup> Garcia, Alberto, "Spiritual Gifts and the Work of the Kingdom" (A draft of a paper made in preparation for publication in the Concordia Theological Quarterly), p. 4.
- <sup>23</sup> One benefit of these insights is that the "foundations" Hunter describes are actually reactionary in nature - not foundational. Several emphases of Church Growth are simply the reaction to modernism without Biblical qualification. See analysis of Six: "Church Growth as an Ally Against Modernism"; and Appendix A.
- <sup>24</sup> The Brief Statement, p. 3.
- <sup>25</sup> Hughes, P. E., Scripture and Myth (London: The Tyndale Press, 1956), p. 20.
- <sup>26</sup> Wagner, p. 41.
- <sup>27</sup> McGavran, pp. 17; 103.
- <sup>28</sup> Hunter, p. 23.
- <sup>29</sup> Schuller, Self-Esteem, p. 27.
- <sup>30</sup> Hunter, p. 23.

- <sup>31</sup> Hughes, p. 20.
- <sup>32</sup> Hughes, p. 20.
- <sup>33</sup> Fry, "History and Identity," p. 4.
- <sup>34</sup> Selltitz, pp. 341-342.
- <sup>35</sup> Selltitz, pp. 182-186.
- <sup>36</sup> Selltitz, p. 154.
- <sup>37</sup> Selltitz, pp. 131-133.
- <sup>38</sup> Cannon, p. 42.
- <sup>39</sup> Hunter, p. 40.
- <sup>40</sup> McGavran, p. 103.
- <sup>41</sup> Nafzger, "Growing," p. 211.
- <sup>42</sup> Brehier, Emile, The Nineteenth Century (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 279ff.
- <sup>43</sup> Compolo, Anthony, A Reasonable Faith: Responding to Secularism (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), p. 32.
- <sup>44</sup> Fuller, B. A. G., A History of Modern Philosophy (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1960), pp. 384-385.
- <sup>45</sup> Brehier, p. 280.
- <sup>46</sup> Brehier, p. 282.
- <sup>47</sup> "Comte, Augusta," Encyclopedia Britannica, 4:1060.
- <sup>48</sup> "Positivism and Logical Empiricism," Encyclopedia Britannica, 14:877.
- <sup>49</sup> "Comte," 4:1060.
- <sup>50</sup> "Positivism," 14:877.
- <sup>51</sup> Brehier, p. 299.
- <sup>52</sup> "Comte," 4:1060.
- <sup>53</sup> Compolo, pp. 30-31.
- <sup>54</sup> Compolo, pp. 31-32.

- 55 "Positivism," 14:877.
- 56 Fuller, p. 385.
- 57 Hunter, p. 151.
- 58 Brehier, p. 280.
- 59 Brehier, p. 282.
- 60 Hunter, p. 23.
- 61 Koeberle, p. 240; (cited by Nafzger, p. 213).
- 62 Wagner, p. 41; McGavran, pp. 17; 103.
- 63 "Comte," 4:1060.
- 64 McGavran, pp. 17; 103; Hunter, p. 16.
- 65 Geisler, Norman L., Options in Contemporary Christian Ethics (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), pp. 15-18.
- 66 Wagner, pp. 110ff.
- 67 McGavran, pp. 216-232.
- 68 McGavran, p. 107.
- 69 McGavran, pp. 166ff.
- 70 Wagner, p. 136.
- 71 Fuller, p. 390.
- 72 McGavran, pp. 17; 103.
- 73 Costas, Orlando E., Christ Outside the Gate (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982). Note: The Protestant Church in Chile, which Costas studied, is indeed a unique phenomenon which can be noted in its growth figures. The Church grew from 54,800 in 1920 to 425,700 in 1960. Yet, in 1967, due to political changes, stagnation set in and only an increase of 124,204 souls was recorded instead of the Church Growth prediction of 850,000. Costas cites the Chilean example as just one part of his refutation of Church Growth teachings. See his observations, pp. 52ff.
- 74 Costas, pp. 52-53.
- 75 Glasser, p. 38.
- 76 Glasser, p. 38.

<sup>77</sup> Hunter, G., pp. 105-106.

<sup>78</sup> The insights of the remaining pages of this chapter are not meant to be exhaustive. The purpose is to give a general sketch of the nature of "growth theology." This section also serves to aid in defining the nature of the Church Growth movement.

<sup>79</sup> The analysis of Reformed theology is simplified by dividing it into its two primary positions: Calvinism and Arminianism. Since Dr. Francis Pieper thoroughly treats both historic positions, his dogmatic works have served as the basis for much of the discussion in this chapter.

<sup>80</sup> Plass, Ewald M., "Synergism," In The Abiding Word, Vol. II (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 302.

<sup>81</sup> Pieper, 1:95, 175ff; 2:32, 50, 417, 490; 4:203-204.

<sup>82</sup> Pieper, 2:485.

<sup>83</sup> "Gospel and Scripture," (CTCR), pp. 1ff.

<sup>84</sup> Sasse, p. 62.

<sup>85</sup> Hunter, p. 111.

<sup>86</sup> Sasse, pp. 111-112.

<sup>87</sup> Pieper, 1:25. See also: Calvin, John, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 1:468; and Krentz, Edgar, The Historical-Critical Method (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 10.

<sup>88</sup> Pieper, 1:95; 176.

<sup>89</sup> Sasse, p. 138.

<sup>90</sup> Pieper, 2:486. For further discussion on Reformed differences, see: Bangs, Carl, Arminius (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971); and Mayer, F. E., The Religious Bodies of America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961).

<sup>91</sup> Hunter, pp. 24; 82.

<sup>92</sup> McGavran, p. 103; Glasser, p. 38; G. Hunter, p. 105.

<sup>93</sup> Hunter, G., p. 106.

<sup>94</sup> McGavran, p. 107.

<sup>95</sup> Wagner, p. 43.

<sup>96</sup> Cannon, p. 21.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE FRAMEWORK OF CHURCH GROWTH

#### Discussion Points

In the last chapter the "foundations" of Church Growth were seen to be built upon the "soil" presented in Chapter One. In this chapter the principles of the movement will be examined. Since the harvest principle and the homogeneous unit principle have already been examined (Chapter One), their examination will not be repeated in this chapter. The term "framework" is used to describe Church Growth principles in order to continue the imagery of the parable of the "Two Builders."

#### The Description of Church Growth Principles

Like the foundations of Church Growth the movement's principles are simultaneously "a theological conviction" and "an applied science." Put another way, "eternal principles" of God's Word are combined with the behavioral sciences,<sup>1</sup> for the sake of effective evangelism. Matthias indicates that they are most effective in churches with "a strong theological base."<sup>2</sup>

In much of the Church Growth literature (especially in the early days of the movement), the principles that were

cited were presumed to be true and left largely undefined. In addition, the number of principles was and is an open question. Wagner states:

Until recently I could not even guess how many church growth principles had been set forth in the field. But recent study by John Vaughan suggests that there are 146. Donald McGavran, he calculates, has articulated 67, Peter Wagner 51, and Win Arn 28. In the study itself, Vaughan lists and elaborates on 49 of the principles. How accurate his figures are I really don't know, but no one I am aware of has challenged them.<sup>3</sup>

Win Arn lists his principles as "price tags for growth":

The Pastor's Price:

1. He must be willing to work hard.
2. He must be willing to supplement inadequate training.
3. He must be willing to put his leadership on the line.
4. He must be willing to share leadership.
5. He must be willing to have members he can't pastor.<sup>4</sup>
6. He must be willing to stick it out.

The Congregation's Price:

1. They must be willing to provide dollars for growth.
2. They must be willing to follow a growth leader.
3. They must be willing to give time and energy.
4. They must be willing to sacrifice fellowship.<sup>5</sup>

Hunter is an example of a Church Growth proponent who does not provide a list of Church Growth principles. Some he cites as they occur, others the reader must glean them for himself. The following list has been gleaned from throughout his book Foundations for Church Growth.

1. Spritiual gifts are key to Church Growth: (a) Every Christian has a ministry to perform, (b) every person

is given that ministry by the Holy Spirit, (c) every ministry is different, and (d) every gift is for the common good.

2. Obedience to Christ is the primary motivation for the Christian in evangelism endeavors.
3. Requiring eight years of seminary training as the only way to become a minister is a great deterrent to Church Growth.
4. Training disciples is effective because it is God's way to win the world.
5. There are receptive populations in the world which the Church should concentrate on.<sup>6</sup>

#### The Effectiveness of Church Growth Principles

In connection with these principles, it is asserted that "Church growth is based firmly on the Scripture" because "the Bible is God's holy Word."<sup>7</sup> It is asserted that God's promise in the Old Testament "was for growth - a great nation, many children. . . ." <sup>8</sup> This growth promise of God continues in the New Testament with the words of Jesus: "I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). These words prove that "Jesus Christ wants His fishers of men to be successful!" <sup>9</sup> Science aids in this task of being successful. Wagner states:

The scientific aspect of church growth is vitally interested in understanding and describing all the factors which enter into cases of failure and success in evangelistic efforts. One of the factors, of course, is spiritual, but there are many more which also require explanation.<sup>10</sup>

Today the Christian churches can be successful, through the use of the scientific principles of Church Growth,<sup>11</sup> just

as Jesus was successful in His ministry.<sup>12</sup> Hunter states:

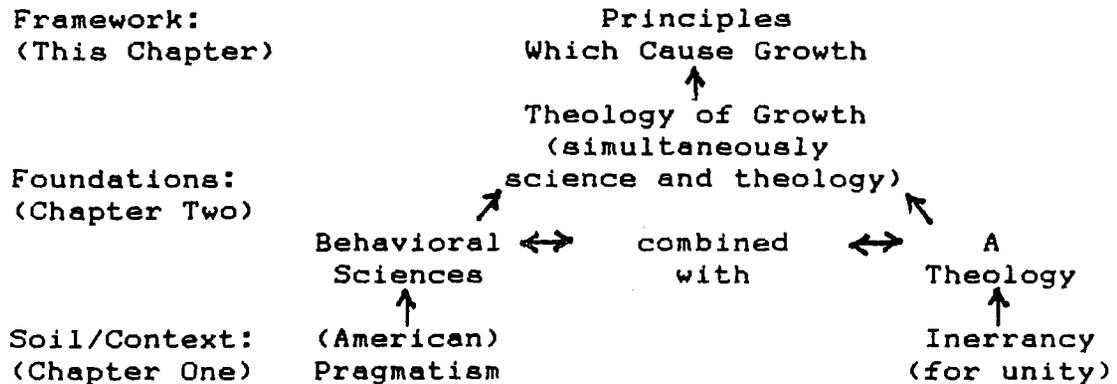
The Church is . . . getting back to the Bible. It is getting back to the biblical principles for comprehensive growth. . . .

What is God doing in the world today? No one knows the mind of God . . . but [the movement's scientific principles] are moving the Church to spiritual renewal.<sup>13</sup>

Some say that when Church Growth principles are applied properly, they will cause "growth in every instance."<sup>14</sup> When a church is built on the foundation of the living Christ growth is to be expected.<sup>15</sup> This is because God is faithful. "Wherever people have followed God's commission, growth has resulted."<sup>16</sup> To the Church Growth proponent, the "only way" the church can grow is through church growth principles (example, "training disciples").<sup>17</sup> "The church must do more than provide the Word and Sacrament." It is essential that Christians receive "on-the-job training."<sup>18</sup> For "if the truth is to come alive, Christians must be trained in the skills of mission."<sup>19</sup>

The principles of Church Growth are summed up by the words "promise" and "imperative." On the one hand, these principles cause growth in connection with God's will and promise, and on the other hand, it is imperative that Christians apply them scientifically. The following figure is a summary of Hunter's definition of the principles given above. To review, the insights of Chapter One and Two are also included. The arrows indicate the progress of emphases which have caused the current Church Growth view.

Figure 5.1



### The Analysis

#### The Description of Church Growth Principles

Since church growth principles are derived from the "foundations" of the movement, they inherit the same difficulties as those cited in Chapter Four. For example, it may be said that a principle is simultaneously theological and scientific in that it may be derived from Scripture and designed for special application in a given (cultural) context. In this way both theology and science can serve the mission of the Church. However, an "eternal principle" which is "combined" with science can no longer be considered "eternal." When drinking water and soil are combined, the result is a third substance: mud. While drinking water, soil and mud have their own special quality and use, "muddy water" is not drinking water. The following points highlight the problem with calling Church Growth principles "eternal."

First the use of the word "theory" to describe some of

these principles is a case in point.<sup>20</sup> This is an accurate term because no matter how reasonable the behavioral sciences may seem<sup>21</sup>, (modern technology, communications, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and modern marketing;<sup>22</sup>), they are not absolute standards which determine Christian beliefs. (See One: "The Doctrine of Man.") For example, anthropology cannot inform the Christian about the spiritual nature of man - only his behavior. Judgement of behavior is theoretical. What is more, the behavioral sciences know nothing of the Gospel. "The Gospel is not to be confused with pragmatic moralism, with psychology or with the conceptions of idealistic philosophy."<sup>23</sup> The divine teaching of the Law and the Gospel becomes distorted when mixed with a scientific view.

"Theory" contrasts the temporal and uncertain nature of the behavioral sciences with the eternal and certain nature of Scripture. With this in mind, the term "theory" is used inappropriately when referring to eternal principles. This is particularly true when the homogeneous unit principle is called a "hypothesis."<sup>24</sup> While these "theories" are always presented by Hunter as needful of eternal principles to function properly, it is never clear whether they can also be considered eternal principles by themselves.

Second, the eternal nature of these principles comes into question when one considers the indefinite number of principles being asserted by the movement.<sup>25</sup> Their number is

not determined by an objective standard, but rather, are in a constant state of being discovered. Their discovery is determined by whatever works.<sup>26</sup> For example, this study revealed seventy of the 146 different principles mentioned earlier.<sup>27</sup> Since their individual evaluation is beyond the scope of this study, only some general observations can be made here. On the one hand, some of the same principles are shared by some proponents. These include: the principle of being willing to pay the price, obedience to Christ as motivation, the importance of evangelism training, and the importance of concentrating on receptive populations. On the other hand, most of the principles cited in one book are not found in another. This is probably because the experienced missionary knows:

It is not easy to find any expressions [of principles] which are universally true, or any which have no exceptions.<sup>28</sup>

Third, the eternal nature of these principles can be questioned further when one considers there are a variety of other terms used in Church Growth literature in addition to "principle." McGavran uses the term "keys" in one section<sup>29</sup> and "principles" in another.<sup>30</sup> It was seen that Win Arn speaks of "price tags for growth"<sup>31</sup> and Hunter uses the word "theory."<sup>32</sup> Wagner refers to them as "hypotheses," "diseases" (See Chapter Two) and "vital signs."<sup>33</sup> (See Appendix D for references to vital signs throughout this paper.) "Presupposition" is another term used which can be:

(1) different from "principles," but somewhat interchangeable since both are assumed to be based on Scripture<sup>34</sup> or (2) guiding "principles" are derived from Scripture which can measure and/or validate the "presuppositions" of the movement.<sup>35</sup> (In Hunter's case, some would use "principles" to measure his "principles.")

Part of the reason for the diversity of principle names and numbers is the fact that when emphasis is desired, something can be called "a church growth principle" with the "eternal" aspect implied. For example, while making a point that the laity needs to be organized, Hunter asserts:

It is a basic church growth principle that to require eight years of seminary training as the 'only' way to become a minister is one of the greatest deterrents to church growth . . . There ought to be more avenues of becoming a recognized member of the clergy besides . . . going] off to seminary.<sup>36</sup>

While seminaries are not divinely mandated, this "principle" endangers the "apt to teach" (I Timothy 3:2) aspect of the pastoral ministry. The main point here is that "eternal principles" need to rest solidly on Scripture. The thoughts of men, no matter how noble, should never be given the status of an eternal mandate. In the case above, Scripture is silent on seminaries, and therefore, the discussion is out of the realm of "eternal principles." If this principle were recognized as a principle by all Church Growth proponents, then it would have to be due to a Reformed view of the Church and ministry - not Scripture or even the behavioral sciences.

McQuilkin's examination of five "presuppositions" (i.e., principles or "theses" - another word) will serve here as a summary of how these principles might be examined to see whether they are Scripturally valid. (Note: Hunter would call these "presuppositions" "principles.") McQuilkin critiques the following as principles:

1. Numbers: Numerical church growth is a most crucial task in missions.
2. Selectivity: The church should concentrate on the responsive elements of society.
3. Conversion: One desirable way for large growth is multi-individual, inter-dependent decision.
4. Science: Anthropological [sociological, etc.] factors affect a people's responsiveness. These should be analyzed and utilized.
5. Prophecy: If these principles are followed, large church growth will often [always] result.<sup>37</sup>

McQuilkin bases his critique on his belief that "not all Scripture is of equal authority in determining the will of God for His people today."<sup>38</sup> Put simply, he claims "principles" exist which are helpful in measuring Church Growth "presuppositions." He observes that some of the church growth "presuppositions" may correspond to 'derived' principles, some to 'clearly mandated' principles, and some may correspond to neither. While "presuppositions" fitting any one of these categories may be usable or acceptable,<sup>39</sup> "only biblical requirements may be used authoritatively."<sup>40</sup>

After discussing these distinctions, he classifies each

presupposition into one of the three categories. In this way, McQuilkin has a fine treatment of each specific presupposition. His overall conclusion, however, is contradictory. That is, two "presuppositions" he considers "divinely mandated," two are "valid [derived] principles," and the last one "lacks both a biblical mandate and clear biblical principle."<sup>41</sup> Yet, on the other hand, he states: "The underlying presuppositions of the Church Growth movement rest on a solid [my emphasis] theological foundation grounded in the Word of God."<sup>42</sup> Left unexplained is how presuppositions which are not divinely mandated, can "rest on a solid theological foundation."

The lasting value of McQuilkin's critique is not his own "presuppositions/principles," his method of analysis, or his conclusions. Rather, it shows what logical and philosophical gymnastics are required to validate the claims of the Church Growth movement in regard to their "eternal/biblical" principles. His conclusions clearly show the dangers of basing "principles" upon the changing "foundations" of the behavioral sciences.

McQuilkin also demonstrates how complex the analysis process is; especially in view of vagueness and varying terminology. This is particularly true for those who have been influenced by Reformed thinking. McQuilkin demonstrates that it is hard to take the advice of Church Growth proponents to "simply discard that which is against conscience or

contrary to [one's] theology."<sup>43</sup> The Confessional Lutheran must assume nothing and base any analysis of the Church Growth movement on the clear word of Scripture.

#### The Effectiveness of Church Growth Principles

In addition to these insights, the movement lacks a distinction between "eternal principles" and their application. Eternal principles must be derived solely from Scripture. The application can come about with or without the use of scientific research. Matthias claims that "church growth tends to be more effective in church bodies that have a strong theological base" (i.e., probably meaning belief in inerrancy).<sup>44</sup> Since theologically conservative churches are already growing, then the contribution of the movement may not be as significant as first imagined.<sup>45</sup> Also, it must be understood that the movement opposes the modernist's view of the Bible, and as a result, cannot be expected to be readily applied in these churches.<sup>46</sup>

Church Growth proponents disagree in regard to the effects of principles. Hunter claims that they cause "growth in every instance."<sup>47</sup> While there may be some truth in "universal axioms" (although Hunter leaves them unexplained), these certainly do not have the promise of God to work even "when properly applied."<sup>48</sup> It is significant that Wagner contradicts Hunter on this important point.<sup>49</sup>

A substantial number of leaders have studied church growth principles and applied them to their local situations . . . Church growth is not some magic formula which can produce growth in any church at any time. It is just a collection of common-sense ideas that seem to track well with Biblical principles which are focused on attempting to fulfill the Great Commission more effectively than ever before. The principles, I am glad to report are usually helpful. 50

Reacting to the impracticality of some who propose "automatic" methods, Cannon responds in a humorous and thought provoking way:

"You're not working like the Apostle Paul. Why don't you use the Pauline method?" said my missionary friend, and for a lack of a better answer, I said, "Because I married Rosa Belle and not Pauline (my wife's sister), and I'm not a methodist."

I can be encouraged to follow the grace of Christ in a weak man like Paul, but I am mightily discouraged if I have to measure up to a strong, perfect Paul. Following a strong man like the Paul I've read about in some missionary books would wear me out, but I have a chance with the Paul of the New Testament. . . . You see, the methodologists are missing the boat here - they are after a formula that will guarantee missionary success, but there is no such thing! (They seem to want a strong method of operation but won't use it.) Paul's life shows what can be done with a weak, sinful vessel when it is filled with the grace of Christ! This is the METHOD that Christ uses, and it brings good news to the ears. It means in spite of our stupidity, or great intelligence (take your choice), Christ can use us to accomplish His mission in all the countries of the world. I'm not trying to justify failure or ignorance, but I am saying that real success . . . depends more on the grace of Christ than all methods we use. 51

Reacting to the visit of "experts" on the mission field,

Cannon states:

An expert toured the mission fields of the world and gave a written analysis of the good points and the bad points of the work he saw. . . . Let us admit (for the sake of argument) that the expert's month-long insight was greater than the thirty years' insight of the missionary; still, his judgments must be humble, temporary, and subject to revisions. How does he know what God might use

[methodologically], and how He might use it? What has he felt with a broken heart there? What has he experienced there with his own sweat and blood? What vision of hope has God given him there in the dark, frustrating days? <sup>52</sup>

The insights of missionaries such as Cannon are important because the Church Growth movement could well be addressed by his comments. Proponents like Wagner claim "something is wrong" with "little or no fruit" and growth principles are the (automatic) answer.<sup>53</sup> However, the norm is not that missionary work is quick or easy. "It is more often the opposite."<sup>54</sup> Cannon states:

Being brought up in the tradition that success is the measure of a man, missionary work has proven to be full of frustrations. . . . I've tried the highpowered executive type, but always end up doing everything myself. I've tried being the non-direct, all-knowing psychologist type, and ended up accomplishing nothing.

Again we read in our religious papers about the great successes of missionaries . . . and I find myself wishing I was there. How come the work is hard going in the place where I am? Why are the nationals where I am not flocking to hear the gospel? Why do the people I love remain indifferent and cold? Maybe those papers do what I do and only print the good stuff. . . . It is possible that behind it all others are not roaring successes either? . . . Wouldn't it be comforting to read, "Preacher Returned from Overseas Admits Very Little Accomplished," or, "Baptized One Hundred Yesterday; Can't Find Ninety Today."

One thing about the Bible - it tells the whole story. If the lives of men of God recorded there were put into headlines you would read, "After a Lifetime of Hard Work and Suffering Jeremiah Passes into Obscurity with Nothing to Show for it." Or about Christ before Pilate, "After Three Years' Work Not One Convert Remains Faithful."

Success isn't everything, but doing the will of the Lord is. . . . successes . . . are not always obvious. Success in the sight of God could mean enduring failures in the sight of men. Overzealous advocates of Pauline methodology who promise success if Paul's "formula" is followed, need the headlines which would read, "Paul Fails

to Establish Church in Rome, the World's Most Strategic Center; Misses by Twenty Years; Methods Considered Unsuccessful."

The fruit of success . . . may not be experienced in his lifetime. His faith may be a testimonial and not his success. . . . Some churches will back only a work fulfilled, but faithful churches will back a work unfulfilled.

55

The admitted complexity of the Church Growth process<sup>56</sup> could hinder the already difficult task of world evangelization. In its wake, the spontaneous and simple expansion of the Church could suffer. Allen states:

I know not how it may appear to others, but to me this unexhorted, unorganized, spontaneous expansion has a charm far beyond that of our modern [1927!] highly organized missions. . . . But men say that such belief can only be for dreamers, that the age of that simple expansion has gone by . . . that in our age such spontaneous expansion is not to be expected; that elaborate and highly organized source employ elaborate and highly organized methods, and that it is vain now to sigh for a simplicity which while it existed had many faults . . . and, however attractive, can never be ours. . . .

If it is really true that our elaborate machinery is a great improvement on ancient practice . . . I must acknowledge that to sigh after an efficient simplicity is vain, and more than vain. But if we, toiling under the burden of our organizations, sigh for that spontaneous freedom of expanding life . . . because we see in it something divine, something in its very nature profoundly efficient, something which we would gladly recover, something which the elaboration of our modern machinery obscures and deadens and kills.

57

Allen does not doubt that science is helpful. However, already in 1927 he expressed concern over the degree to which science had invaded the mission of the Church. To the degree the Church Growth movement considers the simple and spontaneous expansion of the Church an era "gone by," to this

degree they reflect a harmful view of the positivistic emphasis on the progress of science. (See analysis of Four: "Positivism.") To any indication that "spontaneous expansion is not to be expected," the Confessional Lutheran asserts the Scriptural truth that God works through the Means of Grace (AC IV, VII) where, when and to what degree He chooses (AC V).

Luther stressed the "simple" in his Small Catechism. At the beginning of each chief part are the words: "As the head of the family should teach in all simplicity to his household."<sup>58</sup> It is possible that a congregation boldly using Church Growth principles, could find them actually hindering numerical growth. In a pamphlet entitled "A Summary of Qualitative Research of the Unchurched" (Foreword by Dr. Martin E. Marty; and Preface by Dr. George Gallup, Jr.), the organization Religion in America, Inc.,<sup>59</sup> found that the negative attitudes toward organized religion included the view that churches are too materialistic and too powerful. Particularly the Church Growth movement's emphasis on modern marketing could seem to make it appear like "big business." This is one of the major reasons why people perceive churches as too materialistic. Schuller's view points to the truth of this:

Your church needs visibility. People who need what you have, need to know you are in business and that you have the product.<sup>60</sup>

People's attitudes and fears are probably justified. The average American knows that the early church renounced

materialism (Acts 2:42-46), and, due to being persecuted, was not very powerful. The shift in the attitude of some churches from "servant" to "master" in the modern era is easily perceived by society and has turned many people off.<sup>61</sup>

The method is not the means whereby people are added to the Church; the message is. In regard to the promises in the Old Testament, it must be said that God did indeed keep His promises. His people have always been "a great nation." God did give Abraham "many children."<sup>62</sup> However, to make quantitative growth a condition of God's promise is tantamount to calling God unfaithful. At one time Noah and his family were the only faithful people left on earth. In Elijah's day there were only 7,000 faithful left in Israel. Only a "remnant" returned from the Babylonian captivity. Jesus did say, "I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17), however the emphasis, is on fishing, not catching! One should fish using the right equipment (the Means of Grace) but the "success" in "catching"<sup>63</sup> - the results - are in God's hands. The emphasis should not be on success, but the proper administration of Word and Sacraments which are based upon the promises of God.

Church Growth principles can be presented as "imperative" for the Church to use. However, they are based upon non-Biblical "foundations." While God promises to be with His children, and bless them when they carry His Word to non-believers, it must be stressed that it is the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). While

training and equipping people may be important, the growth of Christ's Church is dependent only on the correct use of the Means of Grace. If it were dependent on the "health of all" congregational members,<sup>64</sup> nobody would ever come to faith. God can and does use people who are not "spiritually renewed" to cause His Church to grow. This is based upon the nature of God's Word (Hebrews 4:12) and His promise (Isaiah 55:11). In fact, one of the greatest examples of "church growth" in the Bible is the story of Jonah. This story summarizes two important points: (1) the results are not contingent on the attitude or faith of man, and (2) God's Word has the power, in and of itself, to convert sinful men.

The church which is not "growing," although faithfully using the Means of Grace, can be compared to the conversion rate after Noah's preaching for 120 years. Many times in the Church, "something is wrong,"<sup>65</sup> but the results of properly using the Means of Grace are in God's hands. Ultimately, the church cannot "do more than provide the Word and Sacraments"<sup>66</sup> in order to "grow." The faithful church can take comfort knowing it pleases God to work through His appointed Means of Grace. This is the key for those concerned with the "effectiveness of ministry."<sup>67</sup> It is more important than constantly "researching" and asking "pragmatic" questions.<sup>68</sup> While practical strategies have their place,<sup>69</sup> the primary concern of the Christian should be the proper use of God's appointed Means of Grace.

The Proper Place of  
The Two Kingdoms

The figures which follow, show how Church Growth's emphasis (represented in Figures 5.1) is counter productive. Figure 5.2 depicts the proper position of the natural knowledge of God (Law) under the Kingdom of the Left (the secular) and the revealed knowledge of Salvation (Gospel) under the Kingdom of the Right (the Church).<sup>70</sup>

Figure 5.2

<p>The Secular: Kingdom of the Left</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Natural Knowledge (of the Law)</li> </ul>	<p>The Church: Kingdom of the Right</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Revealed Knowledge regarding Scripture and the Gospel</li> </ul>
--	---

Modernism replaces revealed knowledge (Gospel) with natural knowledge (Law). Note that this shift, as depicted in Figure 5.3, leaves sciences to exist in the secular realm; in a vacuum (devoid of the knowledge of God). Also, revealed knowledge regarding Scripture and the Gospel is no longer regarded as valid or important.

Figure 5.3

<p>Kingdom of the Left</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sciences remain (temporal)</li> </ul>	<p>Kingdom of the Right</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Natural Knowledge (the Law)</li> </ul>	<p>No Longer Valid</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inerrancy</li> <li>● the Gospel</li> </ul>
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The Church Growth movement attempts to correct this situation by drawing the teaching of inerrancy back into its churches. Pragmatism also plays a key role in the application of the fundamentals of Christianity. Simultaneously the



The Lutheran responds differently by maintaining the distinction between the two Kingdoms. First, the inerrant Scripture, the Gospel, and the Means of Grace are brought back under the Kingdom of the Right. Walther states:

The Church possesses two great treasures: the Gospel of saving grace and the inspired Word of God. . . . They go together.<sup>72</sup>

Without the Gospel there is no Church - and without the Church, there is no Gospel (AC XXVIII; LC, Creed, 55).

Second, the behavioral sciences remain under the Kingdom of the Left as optional servants of Scripture - not its master.

Preus states:

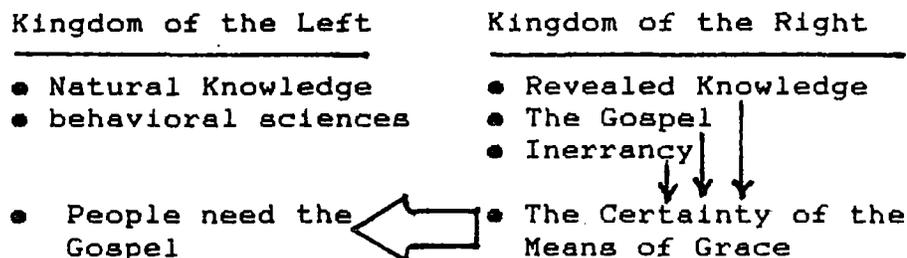
The work of the church is the work of the Spirit; and anything which is not clearly the Spirit's work is not the work of the church. . . . Needless to say the preaching of the Christ is fundamental to the Spirit's (and church's) activity (LC II, 45; FC, SD 56).<sup>73</sup>

It is more important to think theologically - because this subjects the reason to Scripture - than it is to "think scientifically."<sup>74</sup> Klug states:

God's Word may seem like a feeble instrument for building, but it is not. However quietly God the Holy Spirit works through the Word, He will have His children. Yes, "God desires to have children," even though at times it appears as though God were "sterile" and unable to beget Children, Luther observes in [his] commentary on Isaiah 66. . . . Those who think that the church consists of certain usages, ceremonies, and orders, are placing "I believe" with "I see," Luther states.<sup>75</sup>

The arrow in Figure 5.6 depicts the Gospel-centered message with which the Lutheran enters the world.

Figure 5.6



In light of these observations the Lutheran model is rooted in the "soil" (context) of Scripture. The "foundations" of the Lutheran model are also the Scripture. The "framework" consists of the Means of Grace which determine what methods, or other principles, are valid. The Means of Grace are God's provision for sinful mankind. They are the "power of God unto salvation" (effective) when and where it pleases God (AC V).

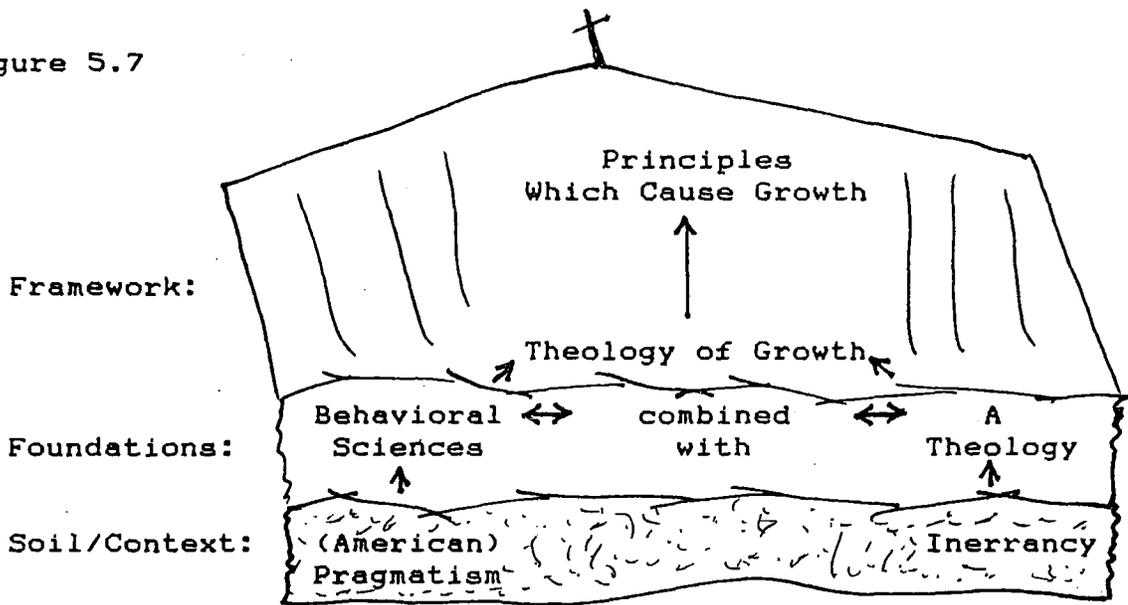
#### Reviewing the Parable

The description and effectiveness of Church Growth principles, because they flow from the "soil" and "foundations" of the movement, are a sharp contrast to the Biblical model. They have been created in a mixing of the Kingdom of the Left and the Kingdom of the Right by a "simultaneous" use of science and a vague theology. While inerrancy needs to be "drawn back into the Church," Church Growth makes the same mistake as the modernists by utilizing "natural knowledge" as a formal principle (behavioral sciences) along side "revealed knowledge" (Scripture; the material principle). (See analysis of Four: "The Roots.") The

end result is principles that have no Gospel promise of being "eternal" or "effective." Since Church Growth mixes the two Kingdoms in this manner, the effectiveness of their goal to combat modernism (Chapter Three) will be minimal.

Although the two houses described in the parable of the "Two Builders" probably looked very much alike from the outside, when the rains came, the first house could not be shaken. On the otherhand, the second house, built on sandy soil and without an adequate foundation, collapsed "and the ruin of that house was great" (Luke 6:46-49). It seems that the second house depicts Church Growth. The following figure (a modification of 5.1) depicts a "sandy soil," crumbling "foundations" and a "framework" ready for collapse.

Figure 5.7



The only way to strengthen this "building" is to build on the foundation of the "apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:19-20). However,

the structure of Church Growth does not allow for this because it mixes the Two Kingdoms and Law and Gospel. (See the analysis of Two: "Motivation") These weaknesses subvert the Means of Grace and hinder the mission of the Church. (See analysis of One: "The Harvest Principle.") On the other hand, Confessional Lutheranism, with its correct understanding of the nature and function of the Two Kingdoms, the Law and the Gospel, and the Means of Grace, is the answer to Church Growth structural deficiencies. (See the analysis of Seven: "Theology.")

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Hunter, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Matthias, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Wagner, Leading Your Church to Growth (Glendale: Regal Books, 1984), p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> While it is not the intention to critique each "principle" separately, this statement deserves special attention due to its gravity. That is, a pastor (shepherd) is responsible to "pastor" all of his members (sheep). This is done through the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Since Church Growth does not emphasize the Means of Grace, the pastor's shepherding function is determined by other criteria. This concern is reflected in Two: "Church Growth Consultants"; and Appendix E. (See Keller's: A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23 and . . . the Good Shepherd.)

<sup>5</sup> Arn, Win, The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook (Pasadena: Church Growth Press, 1982), pp. 78-90.

<sup>6</sup> Hunter, pp. 68; 21; 59; 62; 181-182.

<sup>7</sup> Hunter, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Hunter, p. 34.

- <sup>9</sup> See Hunter, pp. 30; 34.
- <sup>10</sup> Wagner, Your Church, p. 39.
- <sup>11</sup> Wagner, p. 43.
- <sup>12</sup> Wagner, pp. 169ff.
- <sup>13</sup> Hunter, pp. 181-182.
- <sup>14</sup> Hunter, p. 24.
- <sup>15</sup> Hunter, p. 47.
- <sup>16</sup> Hunter, p. 34.
- <sup>17</sup> Hunter, p. 62.
- <sup>18</sup> Hunter, p. 63.
- <sup>19</sup> Hunter, p. 64.
- <sup>20</sup> Hunter, pp. 73; 91-92.
- <sup>21</sup> McGavran, Understanding, pp. 106-107.
- <sup>22</sup> Hunter, pp. 24; 97; 184.
- <sup>23</sup> Koeberle, p. ix.
- <sup>24</sup> Wagner, p. 110.

<sup>25</sup> It is interesting to note that Wagner did not know the number of Church Growth principles. It seems that if these were truly eternal, and as effective as proponents report, then their number would be more clear. These concerns become more apparent in Wagner's inability to measure Vaughan's accuracy.

<sup>26</sup> McGavran, Donald and Win Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1977), pp. 15ff.

- <sup>27</sup> Wagner, Leading, p. 43.
- <sup>28</sup> Allen, p. 5.
- <sup>29</sup> McGavran, pp. 285ff.
- <sup>30</sup> McGavran, pp. 269ff.

- 31 Arn, The Pastor's, pp. 78-90.
- 32 Hunter, p. 73.
- 33 Wagner, Leading, pp. 35-39.
- 34 Werning, Waldo J., Vision and Strategy for Church Growth (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1977), pp. 15-16.
- 35 McQuilkin, pp. 11ff.
- 36 Hunter, p. 59.
- 37 These points represent major portions of McQuilkin's analysis of the Church Growth movement. The word "always" in brackets represents Hunter's perspective (p. 24).
- 38 McQuilkin, p. 11.
- 39 McQuilkin, p. 12.
- 40 McQuilkin, p. 14.
- 41 McQuilkin, pp. 73ff.
- 42 McQuilkin, p. 76.
- 43 Hunter, p. 164.
- 44 Matthias, p. 63.
- 45 See: Kelly, Dean M., Why Conservative Churches are Growing (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).
- 46 Just as modern theology will not fit into Lutheran theology and practice, since Church Growth theology consists of inerrancy without an emphasis on the Means of Grace, then it too is incompatible with Lutheran theology and practice. In this light, the Confessional Lutheran must remain objective when examining the claims of Church Growth. This objectivity can be compared to that objectivity needed in marriage counseling situations. A pastor cannot side with the wife merely because he prefers women. (Let the pastor symbolize the Confessional Lutheran and the wife symbolize the preference for those, like Church Growth proponents, who believe in inerrancy.) This is particularly true when the wife has been unfaithful and is "at fault." The faults of both parties must be objectively recognized, discussed and dealt with. In the same way, both modern emphases and Church Growth must be addressed in the light of Biblical/Confessional theology.

- 47 Hunter, p. 24.
- 48 Hunter, p. 19.
- 49 If these principles are truly "eternal," then there should not be such a wide gap between Church Growth proponents in regard to interpreting their nature.
- 50 Wagner, Leading, pp. 42 - 43.
- 51 Cannon, pp. 27-28.
- 52 Cannon, p. 39.
- 53 Wagner, "The Fourth," p. 579.
- 54 "Twelve Case Studies of Pioneer Church Planting," In Perspectives . . . , Ralph D. Winter, ed., p. 681.
- 55 Cannon, pp. 11-12.
- 56 Wagner, Your Church, p. 29.
- 57 Allen, pp. 10-11.
- 58 A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's 'Small Catechism': English-German Edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1912), pp. 9, et al.
- 59 A Summary of Qualitative Research of the Unchurched (A Booklet . . . ), pp. 1ff.
- 60 Schuller, Your Church, p. 24.
- 61 This observation is based upon a personal interview with Dr. W. Degner, Exegetical Department Chairman, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, June, 1984.
- 62 Hunter, p. 34.
- 63 Wagner, pp. 169ff.
- 64 Hunter, p. 69.
- 65 Hunter, p. 25.
- 66 Hunter, p. 63.
- 67 Hunter, p. 24.
- 68 Hunter, pp. 30; 99-100.

69 Hunter, p. 169.

70 Figures 5.2 and 5.3 are based upon diagrams used by Professor K. Marquart in a course entitled "Systematic Theology Today," at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, October, 1984.

71 Hunter, pp. 181-182.

72 Engelder, "Walther," p. 815.

73 Preus, "The Confessions," p. 21.

74 Wagner, p. 43.

75 Klug, "Luther on the Church," pp. 201-202.

**PART III:**

**A RESPONSE TO CHURCH GROWTH AS  
AN ALTERNATIVE FOR LUTHERANS**

CHAPTER SIX  
A RESPONSE TO THE LUTHERAN DEFENSE OF  
THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT

Discussion Points

Recognition of Church Growth  
Doctrinal Weaknesses

That is, there is general agreement among Lutheran Church Growth proponents that the movement is fundamentally Reformed. Many of the insights of the last several chapters would not surprise many of the movement's proponents (although the degree of significance ascribed to some conclusions would most certainly be questioned). Miller states:

We must be careful about espousing a theology of glory with regard to specific programs. We Lutherans need to focus on our strengths (pastoral care, worship, the sacraments, etc.) in implementing church growth principles and not discarding valuable traditions. <sup>1</sup>

Matthias focuses upon five basic theological assumptions found in C. Peter Wagner's book Church Growth and the Whole Gospel.

Matthias correctly concludes, "the terminology itself indicates a Reformed tradition."<sup>2</sup> Matthias describes the Reformed influence as: "weak," "inadequate"<sup>3</sup> and "deficient."<sup>4</sup>

### The Perceived Strengths of Church Growth

While Lutheran Church Growth proponents point out the theological weaknesses of the movement, they also are quick to point out its strengths. Matthias attempts to be as "fair" as possible.<sup>5</sup> For example he states that there have been "minor improvements"<sup>6</sup> such as a "new and positive emphasis on Baptism."<sup>7</sup>

Since Church Growth stresses the inerrancy of the Bible, there is the view that theology is a strong point of the movement. Hunter states:

Church Growth is a theological conviction. It cannot be denied, becoming part of the Church Growth Movement takes a theological stance.<sup>8</sup>

Some Church Growth proponents see the strength of the movement as being in its methodology. Miller writes for the Church Growth Task Force of the (LC--MS) Texas District:

Church Growth literature reflects a thorough, biblical orientation.

[Yet], we do not see it as a theological movement. . . . Church Growth . . . [is] a methodology which aims to help any given congregation or denomination analyze their manner of doing ministry.<sup>9</sup>

Hunter takes a very direct approach in attempting to clear up any misunderstanding about the movement. His five points of "Church Growth: What It Isn't" are:

1. Church growth is not a program . . . but a process.
2. Church growth is not a "numbers game."
3. Church growth is not something new.
4. Church growth is not man centered.
5. Church growth is not the easy way out.<sup>10</sup>

Church Growth as Friend  
of the Missouri Synod

Every attempt is made to show that Church Growth proponents, regardless of their theological tradition, are friends of the Lutheran Church. They seem to have a respect for the Lutheran tradition. Wagner states:

A number of Lutheran pastors have asked me whether Lutheran distinctives, such as the liturgy, might be an obstacle to growth among Anglo-Americans. I do not think so. They might not be conducive to transfer growth on the part of Christians from non-liturgical traditions. But most unchurched people will rapidly and warmly adopt the traditions of the church where they first meet Jesus Christ in a personal way. 11

Win Arn recently wrote very optimistically of the LC--MS:

LC--MS: The sleeping giant is awakening. Districts are taking the lead. A denomination to watch in the 80's and 90's, if three key obstacles are overcome. 12

The Reporter covered the story of Arn's prediction and the reaction of the LC--MS Board for Evangelism Services:

The board discussed the significance of [the] article. . . . In a column, Dr. W. Charles Arn predicts the growth of the Missouri Synod by 20 percent in the coming decade, more than most other churches of comparable size. That prediction, however, depends on three things happening:

- Commitment to planning and building new churches;
- development of an evangelism strategy that suits Missouri Synod theology; and
- becoming open to new "kinds" of people and overcoming problems of heritage and history, e.g., extreme liturgical styles that might be of little interest to, or may even alienate, nonmembers. 13

Church Growth as an Ally  
Against Modernism

Several insights have been given in Chapter Three in relation to the Movement being started in reaction to

modernism. Since the LC--MS has recently "turned the tide of liberalism," there is much interest and approval within the LC--MS of any movement which is concerned with combating modernism. Therefore, LC--MS Church Growth proponents place a lot of emphasis on the fact that the "liberal segment of Protestantism" is very outspoken in its opposition of the movement.<sup>14</sup> Matthias addresses several concerns of Ralph E. Elliot, which appeared in an article entitled: "Dangers of the Church Growth Movement" in The Christian Century. Among Elliot's concerns are the movements emphasis on success, possibility thinking (Schuller), predudices caused by the homogeneous unit principle, the missing of "the major Gospel note of reconciliation," and it is "dooming the city to hopelessness because the Biblical concern for the powerless is overlooked."<sup>15</sup> Matthias' concern with regard to Elliot can be summarized by his stating:

Elliot's charges [of the Movement] flow primarily from a basic theological difference that he has with the church growth movement on the doctrine of the church.<sup>16</sup>

#### The Analysis

##### Recognition of Church Growth Doctrinal Weaknesses

A certain degree of irony exists in the study of the "Lutheranization" of Church Growth. On the one hand, it is good that Lutherans are aware of some theological problems. This includes the distinction between the theology of glory and the theology of the cross.<sup>17</sup> (See Appendix H under "A

Comparison of the Theology of Glory and the Theology of the Cross.") On the other hand, there are many more doctrinal problems associated with the movement which do not seem to be put into the proper perspective.

While Matthias says "some [my emphasis] of the theology of the . . . movement is in conflict with our confessional viewpoint,"<sup>18</sup> he goes on to mention key articles of the Christian faith. Among these important teachings are: the doctrine of conversion, the Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit's work in the Means of Grace, the office of the ministry, evangelism and social service, resistance and receptivity to the Gospel, and the use of social and behavioral sciences.<sup>19</sup> Two things need to be said here. First, these are not merely "some" abstract considerations, but rather, key articles of the Christian faith. Second, these errs are just that: erroneous. To say of these teachings: they "lack clarity and precision," "their terminology suggests a synergism," "the Sacraments are neglected consistently," "Baptism continues to be denied to infants," "both Sacraments are regarded as symbols rather than means of grace," "the lack of emphasis on the means of grace is also apparent in discussions of the work of the Holy Spirit," and "the . . . movement has much to say about the role of pastor in a congregation, some of which is inconsistent with our understanding,"<sup>20</sup> and to then assert that "the movement uniquely meets the needs of Synod" is to

separate sound theology from sound practice. (See Appendix I for an analysis of Matthias' "A Sampling of Church Growth Benefits.")

#### The Perceived Strengths of Church Growth

Clarification of the church growth position is useful, but ultimately Scripture must decide concerning the Movement's truth and ability to serve the LC-MS. If sound Confessional theology is not to be compromised, one must be as precise as possible. If the Confessional Lutheran is to "reject that which is contrary to conscience,"<sup>21</sup> then there must be a definite understanding of, and distinction between, truth and error. (See the analysis of Seven: "Theology.") Therefore, it is simply too vague to describe the Reformed influences as "weak," "inadequate," or "deficient."<sup>22</sup> Unless the truth of Scripture is accepted, one should not refer to heterodox teachings as "minor improvements."<sup>23</sup> This is particularly true then the so-called "improvement" is reduced to a statistical measurement. Upon closer examination, the only change which Church Growth has made in its view of baptism records are "imposed on a graph of growth."<sup>24</sup> No essential change has been made in the movement's Reformed teaching and understanding of baptism. It is also illogical to assume that "inadequate" concepts can be made "adequate according to the doctrines emphasized" by a specific denomination.<sup>25</sup> It seems McGavran is a bit desperate to defend his teachings. However, an inadequate teaching is frivolous.

The concept of levels of truth has no place in Christian theology. This is reflected in the Lutheran Confessions as they know nothing of "weak and inadequate," doctrines. For example, the Augsburg Confession (alone) sternly "condemn" the following false teachings of the:

Trinitarian Errorists (I)  
 \*Pelagians (II, XVIII)  
 \*Anabaptists (V, IX, XII, XIV, XVI, XVII)  
 Donatists (VIII)  
 \*"All" (X, XII- XIII)  
 Novations (XII)  
 Rome (XXI-XXVII)

(The "\*" indicates those articles which are most appropriate to the present discussion.)

It is unclear why Matthias does not make this important distinction. Matthias rather asserts that Church Growth has arrived "in the fullness of time."<sup>26</sup> (See analysis of Three: "A Pragmatic Reformation.") Matthias also believes that Lutherans are proficient at "internal growth" but not "expansion growth"<sup>27</sup> In addition, Lutherans are increasingly expressing "indebtedness,"<sup>28</sup> to Reformed evangelists and Church Growth leaders. (See analysis of Seven: "Theology.") Apparently some in the Missouri Synod no longer condemn false doctrine, but feel "indebted" heterodox theologians. However, Johnson states:

The point is simply that error must be called by that name and must be corrected, checked, subjected to loving discipline, and never tolerated in the sense that it is granted the right of existence equal with proclamation of truth. St. Paul was an obedient servant of Christ who loved his Lord, but he also stressed the significance of truth over error (2 Tim. 1:13-14; Titus 2, etc.). Does that render him a legalist? Certainly not. He was totally

evangelical, motivated wholly by the Gospel. And so is the church whose confession both articulates the Gospel and is formulated for the sake of the Gospel.<sup>29</sup>

Disagreement among Church Growth proponents in regard to the significance (and/or role) of theology demonstrates a major weakness of the movement. Difficulties arise in both Miller's and Hunter's positions. Because Church Growth is primarily "methodology," then it cannot bind (be mandatory) on the Church. If it were primarily theology, it would be mandatory for the Church. In the case of Miller, it is not clear: (1) how the movement could reflect a "thorough, biblical orientation" and at the same time, not be considered a theological movement; and (2) how Church Growth as a "methodology" could analyze a Lutheran congregation's "manner of doing ministry" (Miller, p. 1) apart from sound Confessional theology. Only Scripture is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:10). To simply say that Church Growth requires "a theological stance" is not enough. A vague, generic theology must not measure a congregation's or denomination's ministry. A Lutheran congregation must analyze its ministry on the basis of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:10) and the Lutheran Confessions.

At first glance Hunter's view point seems accurate because McGavran states:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ His Son. . . . I am not free to indulge my prejudices or to slight any of the evidence. . . .

Therefore I cannot consider church growth merely a sociological process. . . . It is what happens when there is faithfulness to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 30

However, Miller's observations have validity when one considers that the movement requires a heavy reliance on the behavioral sciences. This is particularly true because:

As a matter of curiosity, none of the members of the faculty of the Fuller School of World Missions - where church growth theory has been generated to date - has his doctorate in theology or philosophy as such. Rather, faculty members combine . . . academic fields . . . where scientific methodology is a prominent part of the training. . . . The result is a new, and presumably useful, way of looking at what God is doing in the world. 31

One finds McGavran's treatise of "The Receptivity of Men and Societies" (in Part IV of his book Understanding Church Growth), the heading: "The Sociological Foundation". 32 (See analysis of One: "Diagnosing the Receptivity of Man.") Both Miller's or Hunter's view ultimately rely heavily on the scientific nature of the movement. 33

A few observations concerning Hunter's "Church Growth: What It Isn't," should help here. First, the difference between a "program" and a "process" remain unclear. Upon careful study of these words, one will find that they differ only slightly. Note the similarities as found in Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms:

PROCESS is particularly appropriate when progress from a definite beginning to a definite end is implied and something is thereby made, produced, or changed from one thing into another; the term usually suggests a division of the entire sequence of events into steps or stages. [my emphasis]

PROGRAM, schedule, timetable, agenda denote a formulated

plan listing things to be done or to take place, especially in their time order. Program is the term of widest application. It may refer to a mental plan or to one that is written or printed; it may be applied . . . to a plan . . . made by a group that has certain ends in view and proposes their orderly achievement.  
[my emphasis]

34

Church Growth fits either definition. It is a "process" in that it suggests "a definite beginning to a definite end" so that a church can be "changed."<sup>35</sup> Church Growth is a "program" or "a formulated plan," which consists of a "time order," "has certain ends in view" and "proposes their orderly achievement." It seeks to "give a different direction" to the church.<sup>36</sup> Note the similarities the definition of "process" and "program" given above, and the wording of an add for Hunter's Church Growth Analysis and Learning Center:

Change..."to make different in some particular; to make radically different; transform; to give a different position, course or direction to..." (Webster's Dictionary).

The Church Growth Analysis and Learning Center is a ministry for change. . . . within the Christian Church.<sup>37</sup>

The differences between these definitions ("process," "program," and "change") are almost indistinguishable. In short, differentiation of terminology, to make a concept or activity seem more attractive, does not change the nature of the concept or activity. (If a differentiation must be made, then Church Growth can be described as a "process" which implements various "programs" so that the nature of a church can experience "change.")<sup>38</sup>

Second, it is probably not best to call Church Growth "a

numbers game" in a derogatory way. However, numbers are very essential and central to the movement. McGavran states:

The numerical approach is essential to understanding church growth. The Church is made up of countable people and there is nothing particularly spiritual in not counting them.

It is common to scorn church statistics. . . . Sometimes . . . God was displeased with King David for taking a census of the people (II Sam. 24:1-10), [however,] many chapters of Numbers . . . God commands a meticulous numbering of all Israel and every part of every tribe.<sup>39</sup>

These insights show that there is a time when numbering is appropriate and when it is unacceptable. In the analysis of "The Harvest Principle" (Chapter One) it was seen that a census may be helpful in a social/political sense. However, when it distorts sound theology or becomes an end in itself, it breaks down the Church. (See One: "The Harvest Principle"; and "Diagnosing the Receptivity of Man.") When "counting" and "research" determine when the Gospel is to be preached, then the work of the Church shifts from proclamation to "a numbers game." Determination of the "nature" of the Church based upon statistics, rather than Biblical terminology, reduces the Church to "a numbers game." If growth alone determines the "health" of a church, then the Church involves itself in "a numbers game" by placing quantity over quality. (See the analysis of Two: "The Concept"; and "The Purpose of the Church.")

A massive impression is made with statistics on American Christians, A recent add for a Billy Graham telecast stated:

1.2 million people came and 100,000 responded to Billy Graham's invitation during his forty-one "Mission England" meetings in six major British Cities. Don't miss these three special programs. Experience what a leading British churchman calls "the miracle of the century!"<sup>40</sup>

The quality of these crusades rarely receives mention. (See analysis of Two: "The Concept" under "Celebration," "The Purpose . . ." under "Hyper-cooperation"; and Appendix C.) The Gospel, not numbers, needs to be the primary motivation for the Christian. (See analysis of Two: "Motivation.")

Third, Church Growth contradicts itself when they claim the movement is "nothing new." While the growth of the Christian Church is not new, Wagner states: "The [Church Growth] movement itself is 20 years old." Statements like the following are common:

Down through the ages the Christian Church has grown, but it has only been within the last 25 years that particular attention has been given to church growth.<sup>41</sup>

This statement is accurate in describing the "newness" of the movement. This newness is seen in the influence of American Pragmatism (Chapter Three) and the reliance on science and research.<sup>42</sup> (See Chapter Four.) The mixing of Scripture and the behavioral sciences was seen to be due, in part, to the influences of Positivism (Chapter Four). Clearly, these influences, which comprise much of Church Growth, do not "date back to the New Testament."<sup>43</sup> Church Growth principles are not "biblical principles which, for one reason or another, some churches have lost."<sup>44</sup> Several of the principles are contrary to Scripture. (See the analysis of One: "The Harvest

Principle," and "The Homogeneous Unit Principle"; the analysis of Five; and Appendices B; D; G; and I)

Fourth, it is hard to analyze the statement: "Church growth is not man centered." Putting the best construction on the movement, one would have to grant that it is not man centered. However, there are some valid concerns which might make some individuals feel it is man centered. It was seen that the doctrine of man is synergistically based (Chapter One). Synergism puts man in the center of conversion rather than God's gracious work (Ephesians 2:8-9). The ministry of the Word and Sacraments is endangered by the emphasis on God's endowing a few individuals or a few consultants for evangelism work. (See analysis of Two: "Church Growth Consultants"; and Appendices E - H) The more that science is relied upon to determine growth strategies (see Four: "Church Growth as a Science"), the more man is placed into the center of mission work.<sup>45</sup> In Scripture, the Christian proclaims the Gospel and administers the Sacraments so that God may work the miracle of conversion. Man is merely the instrument God employs in the work of conversion. In Church Growth, man is center stage. Accordingly, Church Growth asserts that God has the role of "going before"<sup>46</sup> the Christian, but man is primarily responsible to do the real work of researching, diagnosing and reaping. (See analysis of One: "The Harvest Principle.")

Fifth, "Church growth is not the easy way out." However, this is a major weakness. It was seen in Chapter Five that

there is much concern over the so-called "expert,"<sup>47</sup> and that the "success" orientation of American society complicates the simple, spontaneous expansion of the Church.<sup>48</sup> Simplicity was the model of the New Testament (Acts 8) and the Lutheran Reformation. Luther's Catechism was effective in spreading and reinforcing the Christian faith through its emphasis on the head of the family teaching it "in all simplicity to his household."<sup>49</sup> It seems that of the Church Growth movement preoccupies itself with complexity in growth.<sup>50</sup> However, one may question why "complexity" is necessary for the growth of the Church. (See analysis of Seven: "Theology.") Apparently this emphasis guarantees the continued employment of their "experts" and "consultants," as well as, their literature and other services.

#### Church Growth as a Friend of the Missouri Synod

It is hard for an individual to "condemn" false doctrine when he is using heterodox methods. This is particularly true when the heterodox make what appear to be positive statements about the Missouri Synod.<sup>51</sup> Wagner, for example, does not feel it is necessary for Lutherans to give up their liturgy. On the other hand, Wagner also suggests that Lutherans must become "less European."<sup>52</sup> While it is not explicitly stated in that article, it was shown earlier in this paper that Wagner does not consider the liturgical form of worship to be very much "fun." (See Two: "The Concept.") This same concern

is voiced by Win Arn. He considers the liturgy a "problem" that the Missouri Synod must overcome.<sup>53</sup> To assert that the Missouri Synod needs "an evangelism strategy that suits Missouri Synod theology," and that it must also "overcome problems of heritage and history, e.g., extreme liturgical styles [whatever they are]," is to misunderstand the nature of Confessional Lutheranism. In the Lutheran Church, theology and worship go hand-in-hand. They cannot be separated.<sup>54</sup>

While the prospect of a twenty-percent growth rate is exciting, the LC--MS dare not lose sight of the importance of Word and Sacraments in the growth process.<sup>55</sup> The Means of Grace must remain central in Christian worship. Piepkorn notes:

"The worship and divine service of the Gospel is to receive gifts from God. . . . The chief worship of the Gospel is to wish to receive remission of sins, grace, and righteousness" (John 6:40; Matthew 17:5). (Ap III 189; compare Ap III 33; IV(II) 49-53; SA III 44). . . .

There is a close connection between the means of grace and worship. "Among the sacrifices of praise . . . we include the preaching of the Word" (Romans 15:16)(Ap XXIV(XII) 33-34). Corporate reception of the Sacrament of the Altar "increases the reverence and devotion of public worship" (AC XXIV 5). "(The right) use of the Sacrament nourishes true devotion toward God" (AC XXIV 8). "(The right) use of the Sacrament . . . is New Testament worship" (Ap XXIV(XII) 71). . . .

To realize these values fully, ceremonies must be explained and understood. This is a responsibility fo the Christian family, of the Christian school, and of the Christian church. <sup>56</sup>

This has always been the primary concern of the Lutheran Church. Luther

showed his understanding of the Gospel while removing Rome's liturgical chaff from the wheat, and it took an

evangelical mind and spirit to appreciate fully the intrinsic value of the great liturgical and hynological heritage of the pre-Reformation days, to purify it, saturate it with chaste, unadulterated Gospel, and to perpetuate as well as encourage its use. <sup>57</sup>

While it is not "necessary that human traditions, . . . instituted by men, . . . be everywhere alike" (AC VII), Piepkorn states:

The basic ceremonial and ritual principle of the Reformers is liturgical conservatism: A maximum of traditional rite and ceremony is to be retained. The criterion in each case is: Can this specific item be retained [or added] without compromising [my emphasis] evangelical truth? If so, it is to be kept [or may be added]. . . .

"(Let) no one create disorder by unnecessary innovations" (LC I 85). . . .

"We teach that in these matters (abrogation and retention of ceremonies) the use of liberty is to be so controlled . . . that without reasonable cause nothing ini customary rites be changed, but that, in order to cherish harmony [my emphasis] such old customs be observed as can be observed without sin or without great inconvenience" (Ap XV(VIII) 51-52) <sup>58</sup>

Luther avoided the extremes of individualism and ceremonialism. <sup>59</sup> He initiated congregational singing. <sup>60</sup> He brought the Word back into the worship service. Luther knew that the liturgy would provide for Biblical preaching. Had it not been for preaching, "Luther's other reforming activities would have been fruitless had he not continually preached the Gospel."<sup>61</sup>

In contrast, there is the Reformed tradition of which the Church Growth movement is a part. Combining the Reformed and Lutheran traditions results in a "chaotic . . . hybrid . . .

and non-assertive neutrality replaces positive and heroic confessionalism."<sup>62</sup> In addition,

Theology and doctrine are too often hamstrung by . . . subjective and highly sensitized emotionalism. The attitude of these people [Reformed revivalists] toward the church as an institution, toward the office and call of the holy ministry, and toward high education and cultural standards is too often negative and antagonistic. [my emphasis] . . . It is not surprising, therefore, that the so-called Gospel hymn of our day often defeats its own purpose; it is too anthropocentric and not as Christocentric as some want to believe. . . .

A liturgy should clearly . . . bespeak the spirit as well as the philosophy of worship of the Church it represents; when this is not done, the liturgy is weak and insipid. . . .

America is to a very great extent Calvinistic and Protestant. It is not surprising to note, . . . that Lutherans are constantly exposed to Calvinistic thoughts. . . . Many Lutherans see no danger in such developments. . . . We find among such Lutherans an antipathetic attitude against sound liturgical practice, . . . and a distainful attitude towards great and genuine church art. These attitudes by no means bespeak the spirit of unadulterated Lutheranism. They are basically unevangelical and at times "teach for doctrines the commandments of men."<sup>63</sup>

The church bodies which have faired the best are those that conducted worship which stresses respect for a holy God in worship. This is the history of the Lutheran Church.

Buszin concludes:

The Lutheran Church will best serve her exalted purpose and objective is she will adhere to the Word of God and likewise make diligent use of the rich and unique liturgical . . . heritage God has given her. . . . Our worship life suffers when, Sunday after Sunday, we are exposed to heterogeneous types of worship expression. . . . A service of worship must be homogeneous in spirit and expression. . . . The moment this fact is ignored, obstacles are thrown into the path of the Holy Spirit, worshippers become confused, and serious problems arise.

Here lies a great challenge for the Lutheran Church in America today: to integrate her services of worship and

not borrow from every imaginable source, but use, rather, the better means God Himself has given to our Church . . . through the course of the four centuries of her existence. . . . If we make diligent use of our own heritage and permit our own heritage to set our standards, then will we also know where to draw the line and what type of materials to use which are not really a part of our own peculiar heritage.

64

These insights indicate that the Lutheran Church is capable of worshipping God and proclaiming the Gospel without the help of Reformed influences. (See analysis of Seven: "Theology.") In fact, this is how the Missouri Synod became a "giant." A giant does not grow to be its size by "sleeping."<sup>65</sup> The LC--MS "giant" has always been "awake" - especially in its worship. It will continue to be "awake" through its sound theology and worship practices which are centered in the Means of Grace (AC V, VII). (See analysis of Two: "The Concept.")

#### Church Growth as an Ally Against Modernism

While the Confessional Lutheran will not agree with the modernist view of the Church, the repeated citing of Augsburg Confession (Articles V and VII) throughout this paper should adequately demonstrate that he cannot agree with the movement's view of the Church either.<sup>66</sup> The danger in Matthias' handling of the "liberal segment's" criticism is two-fold. First, it might appear that all those who criticize the movement are liberal. However, the movement has been critiqued in as many denominations as the movement has penetrated - both liberal and conservative.<sup>67</sup> In short, while

the Confessional Lutheran will agree with the movement on inerrancy, many of its teachings are erroneous. Secondly, church growth proponents assume that the "liberal segment" does not have the capacity to correctly analyze any aspects of the movement. However, the fact is, that Elliot does cite some important points that even Matthias might agree with upon taking a second look.

First, Elliot discusses the movement's reliance on pragmatism. As seen in this paper, (Chapter Three) there is a sense in which the movement is a product of American "ingenuity" (i.e., pragmatism). Many individuals have actually adopted church growth, not on the basis of solid theological research, but rather, as Elliot says: "if it succeeds, it is all right" (Chapter Five).<sup>68</sup> Second, Elliot is correct again in seeing that church growth stresses "segregation" to a certain extent. It would have been very helpful had Matthias dealt with Elliot's alleged misunderstanding of the "homogeneous unit concept," but instead, left it for "another time,"<sup>69</sup> (See One: "The Homogeneous Unit Principle.") Third, Elliot is correct in calling "possibility thinking" (an emphasis of Robert Schuller) a "pseudo-gospel."<sup>70</sup> This paper clearly showed that Schuller's message lacks Law-Gospel content. (See One: "The Quest"; and Appendix B.) Fourth, Elliot could be correct again in saying that the homogeneous unit concept "encourages sinful prejudice."<sup>71</sup> Matthias even quotes Wagner as saying:

"The congregation plants new churches in its own general area and among its own kind of people [in "extension growth"]."<sup>72</sup> While the terminology "sinful prejudice" may be a bit strong, it is clear that the New Testament Church knew nothing of this type of "extension growth." Jesus said, the Gospel is for "all nations." (See the analysis of One: "Homogeneous Unit Principle.")

Scripture alone should determine what is theologically acceptable and what is not. Lutheran Church Growth proponents are being inconsistent when they readily accept Reformed emphasis, and at the same time, rejects important insights from others - even from members of the "liberal segment" like Elliot. This becomes even more clear when, as was seen earlier, Matthias correctly states "some of the theology of the church growth movement [as being] in conflict with our confessional viewpoint."<sup>73</sup> The Church Growth movement needs to take all critiques from others seriously - even those from the "liberal segment." In the end, however, Scripture must remain the final authority.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Gratz, p. 77.
- 2 Matthias, p. 54.
- 3 Matthias, p. 54.
- 4 Matthias, p. 59.
- 5 Matthias, p. 56.

- 6 Matthias, p. 57.
- 7 Matthias, p. 56.
- 8 Hunter, p. 24.
- 9 Miller, p. 1.
- 10 Hunter, pp. 18-22.
- 11 Wagner, "What's Your Answer?", p. 1.
- 12 Arn, Charles, W., "Ten-Year Denominational Growth Forecast," In The Win Arn Growth Report (n.d.).
- 13 "Evangelism Board Focuses," p. 3.
- 14 Matthias, p. 62.
- 15 Elliot, Ralph H., "Dangers of the Church Growth Movement," In The Christian Century (Aug. 12-19, 1981), pp. 799-801. Cited by Matthias, p. 62.
- 16 Matthias, p. 62.
- 17 Gratz, p. 77.
- 18 Matthias, p. 62.
- 19 Matthias, pp. 62-63.
- 20 Matthias, pp. 62-63.
- 21 Hunter, pp. 164; 182.
- 22 Matthias, pp. 54; 59.
- 23 Matthias, p. 57.
- 24 Matthias, pp. 56-57.
- 25 Matthias, p. 55.
- 26 Matthias, p. 54.
- 27 Matthias, p. 60.
- 28 Biesenthal, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Johnson, John F., "Confession and Confessional Subscription," In Concordia Journal (Nov., 1980), 240.

<sup>30</sup> McGavran, p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> Wagner, Your Church, p. 41.

<sup>32</sup> McGavran, pp. 183-234.

<sup>33</sup> Note that Miller says of Hunter: "Kent Hunter, a Lutheran, has written a Bible Study, 'A theology for Church Growth,' which has many helpful Scripture references but is neither concise nor systematically organized" (Miller, p. 5).

<sup>34</sup> Gove, Philip B., Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms (Springfield, Mass: G. and C. Meriam Co., 1968), pp. 640; 643.

<sup>35</sup> The Lutheran Annual, p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> The Lutheran Annual, p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> The Lutheran Annual, p. 18.

<sup>38</sup> While the word "program" is upsetting to some, this writer does not favor any of the terms under discussion. The most important aspect of this discussion is that the terminology accurately describe the nature of the activity. However, in regard to the concern over terminology, this writer has found that the term "strategy" is the most helpful; particularly because it does not necessarily suggest the "change" aspect asserted by the Church Growth movement.

<sup>39</sup> McGavran, p. 83.

<sup>40</sup> TV Guide, (Sept. 1-7, 1984), p. A-64.

<sup>41</sup> Gratz, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Hunter, pp. 23-24; Wagner, pp. 31; 38-42.

<sup>43</sup> Hunter, p. 20.

<sup>44</sup> Hunter, p. 20.

45 That the trend of putting man in the center of the Church Growth emphasis is real can be seen in the writings of Schuller. For example, see Self-Esteem, p. 150, for a diagram where his man-centered emphasis is actually placed in the center.

46 Hunter, G., p. 106.

47 Cannon, p. 39.

48 Cannon, pp. 11-12; Allen, pp. 10-11.

49 'Small Catechism,' (1912), pp. 9, et al.; (1943), pp. 5, et al. This phrase emphasizes both the role of the head of the household as well as the simplicity of the Christian witness.

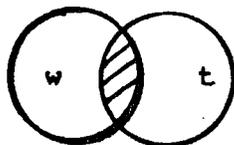
50 Wagner, Your Church, p. 29.

51 Wagner, "What's Your Answer?", p. 1.

52 Wagner, p. 2.

53 "Evangelism Board Focuses," p. 3.

54 The view that some have of worship (w) and theology (t) can be described as two over-lapping circles:



I.e., there is some correlation (shaded area), yet they are basically different in nature, function and purpose. However, their interrelation is more like the relationship of a jar and its top. Just as a jar and its top fit tightly together to preserve its contents, so too, worship and theology fit tightly together to "preserve" the Means of Grace.

55 For a background of how American Christianity has developed much of its worship emphasis, see discussion in: Douglas, Ann, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Naropff, 1977).

56 Piepkorn, pp. 3; 6; 11.

57 Buszin, p. 3.

58 Piepkorn, pp. 10-11.

59 Reed, Luther D., The Lutheran Liturgy (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), p. viii.

60 "Thank Luther for Congregational Singing," In Christian News (Oct. 24, 1983).

61 Bass, George M. The Renewal of Liturgical Preaching (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967), p. 3.

62 Buszin, p. 2.

63 Buszin, pp. 2; 3; 5-6; 7; 11-12.

64 Buszin, pp. 13-15.

65 Arn, Charles, p. 1; Biesenthal, p. 1.

66 See endnotes #46 under Chapter Five.

67 McQuilken, who has been cited several times, is an example of a conservative Reformed scholar who has valid reservations with regard to the Church Growth movement.

68 Elliot, see Matthias, p. 62.

69 Matthias, p. 62.

70 Elliot, see Matthias, p. 62.

71 Elliot, see Matthias, p. 62.

72 Matthias, p. 60.

73 Matthias, p. 62.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### A RESPONSE TO THE LUTHERAN ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT

#### Discussion Points

Lutherans defend the Church Growth movement in the hope that it will be influential in molding a positive mission emphasis in the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod).<sup>1</sup> Often, Lutheran proponents of Church Growth base their acceptance of the movement on three main points: (1) Lutherans are deficient in understanding evangelism (and growth); (2) pragmatic answers are needed - and many are found outside of Lutheranism; and (3) theology can actually hinder growth. Many Church Growth lectures and much of the movement's literature, follow these points in an effort to sell the services of the movement.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Lutheran Record of Evangelism: Deficiency or Faithfulness?

Apparently some statistics point to Lutheran inactivity in evangelism. Fry states:

Let me be honest, brethren. We are not doing a good job in this area [i.e., missions]. It is sad to read that in 1971 the total membership of world Lutheranism dropped by two percent and that it takes 287 members of the American Lutheran Church to add one adherent to their communion.<sup>3</sup>

There are other sobering statistics. Every hour the population of the United States increases by 180 people and the Lutheran Church decreases by three souls.<sup>4</sup> Only ten percent of all Lutherans do considerable witnessing while 40% witness sometimes and 50% do not witness at all.<sup>5</sup>

It seems that statistics such as these are increasingly being used as a starting point in motivating Lutherans to witness. This is also true in the LC--MS which "takes between 50 and 60 [members] one year to 'win one for the Lord.'"<sup>6</sup> The following statistics are supposed to "indict"<sup>7</sup> members of the LC--MS, and thus, motivate them to support the mission effort of the Church.

Figure 7.1

Ratio of communicant members to missionaries <sup>8</sup>	
Christian and Missionary Alliance	180/1
Seventh-Day Adventists	440/1
Church of the Nazarene	930/1
Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.	3,000/1
Southern Baptist Convention	4,700/1
Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod	13,000/1

These statistics are quoted mainly because it is believed no change in direction [for the LC--MS] will occur without increasing the dissatisfaction of all members with their performance in bringing people to Christ.<sup>9</sup>

One Church Growth proponent suggests:

It finally comes down to this, . . . if we don't catch fish, we can't call ourselves fishermen. And can we really be following Jesus if we're not fishing?<sup>10</sup>

The Church Growth model can be summarized as:

Figure 7.2

"fishing" + "catching" = "following Jesus"

These insights seem to have caused a widespread perception of Lutherans as unknowledgeable and inactive in evangelism. McGavran notes:

Dr. Bader commented, "One would scarcely expect the Lutherans to grow. They are not an evangelistic Church. The Christian Church [i.e., the Disciples of Christ], on the contrary, have always been intensely evangelistic." He was surprised when I told him that Lutherans in Africa have grown far better than the Christian Churches.<sup>11</sup>

These perspectives become increasingly significant because Church Growth places a lot of emphasis on understanding history.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Raymond Surburg, in an article entitled "Did Luther and the Lutheran Reformers Neglect Foreign Missions,"<sup>13</sup> notes:

In the past there has been considerable criticism directed in some circles and some books to the missionary activity of the Reformers, especially against Luther.<sup>14</sup>

Surburg goes on to quote several individuals who criticize the Lutheran Reformers' mission emphasis. One of the most significant quotes is that of Robert Glover:

Despite their clear conceptions and statements of the fundamental doctrines of the evangelical faith they sowed a remarkable ignorance [my emphasis] of the scope of the divine plan and of Christian duty in relation to the Gospel. Great mission-fields lay around about them. . . . Yet for these they did nothing and apparently cared nothing.<sup>15</sup>

Lutheran Church Growth proponents echo this historical perception. Matthias summarizes:

Lutherans understand internal growth very well and are good at it. . . . However, it is another story for Lutherans in the area of expansion growth.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most significant examples of this trend is that of the starting point of Dialog Evangelism.<sup>17</sup> The first sub-section in this book is entitled: "How We Look to Others."<sup>18</sup> Here Billy Graham is quoted as calling the LC--MS "the sleeping giant." Ted Raedeke (former Secretary of Evangelism for the LC--MS) is quoted as saying: "Would to God it [LC--MS] would also become an evangelistic church."<sup>19</sup> Finally, Eldon Weisheit (former associate editor of The Lutheran Witness)

discovered that the word "evangelism" does not appear in the official writings of the church body until the 1950's. . . . Very interesting!<sup>20</sup>

#### The Need for Lutherans: Pragmatism or Continued Practical Theology?

On the basis of these perceived shortcomings, Lutheran Church Growth proponents assert the movement "uniquely meets the needs of the Synod in two problem areas, namely, a low rate of conversion growth and a high rate of backdoor losses."<sup>21</sup> As a result, some have frequently cited Church Growth proponents<sup>22</sup> and even expressed "indebtedness" to non-Lutherans in the area of evangelism and church growth. For example, Rev. W. Leroy Biesenthal, the current Associate Secretary for Evangelism Services, states the following:

In 1969 we [uncertain who "we" is] accepted a position with the Missouri District . . . as Director of Stewardship and Evangelism. . . . Evangelism - well, we didn't know very much about that . . . but we felt we could rise to the level of everybody else's incompetency - so we accepted the

position. Soon the Lord led us to Coral Ridge, Dr. D. James Kennedy and "Evangelism Explosion". I am indebted [my emphasis] to to that experience . . . for a basic understanding of what we wanted to share in Dialog Evangelism. As a result of our last Coral Ridge experience, we became a certified EE trainer. . . . We are truly indebted then, under the Spirit, to our experience at Coral Ridge.

23

The important thing is that "people have a high respect for God's Word and for strategies that make disciples."<sup>24</sup>

Since "nobody knows the mind of God,"<sup>25</sup> the movement suggests one simply look around and let "growth determine the priorities, programs, worship, policies, the budget and the life of the congregation."<sup>26</sup> In this way, the Church Growth philosophy of ministry will aid the church in taking "the whole Gospel to the whole person in the whole world."<sup>27</sup> Rev. Stephen Wagner states: "You either go with church growth or you don't. Commitment to church growth is based on the conviction that God wants the church to grow."<sup>28</sup>

#### Theology: A Growth Hinderance Or the Proper Starting Point?

Lutheran Church Growth proponents recognize the need to "lead with a theological basis to get the Synod to accept innovation or change in practice in the church growth area."<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, they often place emphasis on the insights of the movement rather than giving a thorough treatment of its theology. Biesenthal does not go "into a deep exegetical presentation," but rather, merely presents what is "commonly accepted" in regard to certain Church Growth concepts.<sup>30</sup>

Matthias is not concerned with

many deviations from Scriptural truth can be identified, but rather to set forth the broad theological presuppositions which form the broad theological presuppositions which form a basis for the movement and highlight insights and methods that fit our confessional stance.<sup>31</sup>

The general attitude is one of ecumenicism. Hunter states:

Evangelism does not seek to make people Baptists or Methodists or Lutherans. . . .

The church growth pastor has the wisdom and insight that he does not know everything about ministry. He also has the common sense to know that his own denomination isn't God's only gift to the world. The church growth pastor is not so narrow as to think he cannot learn from others. He learns what he can from all of God's people. He accepts what he can use and simply discards that which is against conscience or contrary to his theology.<sup>32</sup>

Lutherans are also encouraged not to "resist change,"<sup>33</sup> but rather, to assert their theology, so that "they will help refine and strengthen the strategies and the principles"<sup>34</sup> of the movement. The "re-tooling" which is taking place via Church Growth will "not require a change from sound theology."<sup>35</sup> In fact, it will "smash the meaningless nonsense of some theological debate" and expose them for what they are: "insidious gobbledegook."<sup>36</sup> Some of the barriers which need to be overcome include: "institutionalization of the Holy Spirit," and "traditional concepts of the Office of the Ministry."<sup>37</sup>

It is the concern of the movement that people not be so "hyper-concerned with correct doctrine that they have no energy left for reaching out with the Gospel."<sup>38</sup> When

individuals get to this point, their doctrine is no longer "proper doctrine,"<sup>39</sup> but rather "dead orthodoxy."<sup>40</sup> This type of preoccupation is identified as "pharisaical gnat straining (Matt. 23:24)."<sup>41</sup>

### The Analysis

#### The Lutheran Record of Evangelism: Deficiency or Faithfulness?

In accepting the emphases of Church Growth the main issue is not whether Lutherans have been faithful or not to the Great Commission. All churches could do a better job of spreading the Gospel because they consist of individuals who are simultaneously saint and sinner (simul justus et peccator). Therefore, the main issue is what will motivate and equip them in witnessing.<sup>42</sup>

Quoting statistics will have limited motivational results because the interpretation of statistics can be an open question. For example, while statistics seem to indicate "it takes 287 Lutherans to convert one individual,"<sup>43</sup> this does not necessarily indicate evangelistic inactivity or unfaithfulness. Statistics only measure evangelistic results; and these are in God's hands (AC V). (See analysis of Four: "Church Growth as a Science.") For example, Noah's statistics are very unimpressive; yet he was both evangelistically active (for 120 years) and faithful (Genesis 6-9).

When the quality of a church's missions is given due

consideration, then quantitative statistics can be viewed in a different light. The proper understanding of theology becomes the key issue - especially the correct understanding and use of the Word and Sacraments. In this light, the LC--MS should be placed at the top of any list comparing the missions of different denominations. The ordering of the "Ratio of Communicant Members to Missionaries" (Figure 7.1) should be reversed in consideration of the quality of LC--MS missions.<sup>44</sup>

### Figure 7.3

#### Quality of the Mission

Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod  
 Southern Baptist Convention  
 Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.  
 Church of the Nazarene  
 (Seventh-Day Adventist)  
 Christian and Missionary Alliance

Measuring a church's faithfulness in missions by means of the number of missionaries is also restricted in other ways. First, these statistics do not reflect internal church politics which may affect missions. For example, Figure 7.1 reflects statistics from 1975 which was a time of internal turmoil for the LC--MS. There cannot be an exact or fair correlation between the LC--MS and other denominations which did not have (at least) similar variables affecting their mission emphasis and the number of missionaries being sent out or being recalled. Second, these statistics do not indicate the other types of evangelistic outreach which a church may be performing. A large denomination may not generate as many

missionaries as a smaller one because its resources and energies are diverted in many different directions. There seems to be a point of "equilibrium" beyond which it is unrealistic (humanly speaking) to assume a larger denomination will necessarily have a larger number of missionaries than a smaller one.<sup>45</sup> This is significant when one considers that Figure 7.1 reflects the LC--MS as having a membership of 2,796,594, and at the same time, the top four denominations have an approximate average of only 687,000 members. Third, different denominations have different ways of counting their missionaries. This is both a practical and theological difficulty. Cannon addresses the practical problem:

Someone said we now have over 200 missionaries. . . . One good brother has almost doubled the number by counting the wives of missionaries. . . . I work more or less directly with twelve national preachers. . . . So we could increase the statistics at least ten times, and if we included their wives it would be twenty times. This would give us a more solid number to consider.<sup>46</sup>

Theologically, the less formal the denomination's definition of the office of the ministry, the broader their classification of overseas workers as "missionaries." Since the Lutheran Church has a formal and traditional definition of the ministry, less overseas workers are classified as "missionaries."

Since statistics are open to question and revision, they are an insufficient starting point for motivating individuals to witness. This is not to say that they are not useful. However, when they are used, they must be placed into the

context of proper Law and Gospel distinction. Negative statistics, designed to "indict"<sup>47</sup> a church body for lack of missionary zeal, belong under the preaching of the Law. While this has its place, it seems that the Gospel rarely follows the presentation of these law-oriented statistics (See analysis of Two: "Motivation"). Only the Gospel can truly motivate Christians to witness. Nafzger states:

Frustrated church leaders of all ages, and ours is no exception, have been tempted to want to put some "teeth in the Gospel," . . . and to shape up the people of God by the power of the Law.

But it will not work. The mere preaching of the Law may occasionally produce a momentary change in behavior and perhaps cause a spurt in the growth charts and graphs, but it will not, because it cannot, change human hearts. The Law cannot produce spiritual growth, even when it is couched in the language of love. This only the Gospel of Jesus can accomplish. <sup>48</sup>

Relying upon "dissatisfaction of all members with their performance in bringing people to Christ" will not bring about a lasting or positive "change in direction" for the LC--MS. (This will be shown in "The Need for Lutherans . . ." below.)

Defining "following Jesus" in terms of "catching fish" is a further mixing of Law and Gospel which will not be effective motivation. "Following Jesus" is a synonym of "faith in Christ." By God's grace all Christians are witnesses or "fishers of men" as the fruit of faith. The result of witnessing, by God's working through the Word and Sacraments, is the "increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6) or the "catch." In contrast to Figure 7.2, the Biblical model looks like this:

Figure 7.4

<u>God's Gift</u>	<u>The Fruit of Faith</u>	<u>Results are from God</u>
faith or "following Christ" →	witnessing or "fishing for men" →	God gives the increase or the "catch"

This is not to say that all Christians are "good witnesses" in word and deed. On the other hand, "catching" is not synonymous with "good." A fisherman is a fisherman because he fishes - not because he catches. The dictionary definition for fisherman is "one who fishes."<sup>49</sup> Jesus knew the fishing profession well. He knew fishermen had to use the correct equipment, but that the catching of fish was out of their hands. (See Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 13:47-49) Therefore, this imagery reinforces the Biblical model. Believers in Christ are to "fish" using the correct "tackle" (the Means of Grace), but the "catching" is in God's hands (AC V).

By primarily asserting the positive aspects of the Lutheran history of missions, one is able to stress the Gospel as motivation for witnessing. But the question can be asked: "Are there any positive aspects to the Lutheran history of missions? How does the LC--MS measure up?" These are good questions. It is good to see that Church Growth is interested in getting "at the facts of history"<sup>50</sup> because much of the case for accepting Church Growth into the Lutheran context seems to hinge on the interpretation of history. If Lutherans have been unknowledgeable of missions, then Church Growth may have something significant to offer. If the opposite is true, then the significance of the movement is greatly diminished.

The fact is, the LC--MS has a fine tradition of growth which stems from Martin Luther's emphasis on missions. This is not often mentioned. However, if there is to be true Gospel motivation for missions, LC--MS laity must view Luther's understanding of missions in a positive light. Late in 1983, Dr. Eugene Bunkowske gave a lecture at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, entitled: "Was Luther a Missionary?" The following are major points which every Lutheran should be aware of:

1. Luther was well aware of the "new islands" being discovered in his day and the need for the Gospel to be spread there.
2. Luther reminded the armies of his Emperor of the need to be good witnesses if ever captured by the Turks.
3. Luther and his contemporaries regarded their writings as means of world-wide missions.
4. Luther is the father of Bible translations in the vernacular throughout the world. Dr Bunkowske, as a Bible translator, recognizes Luther's influence particularly in his method which took content over form.
5. In Luther's day the Bible, the Catechism, hymns, and pamphlets were spread widely in many languages. This emphasis of the Reformation continues even today. The Bible alone has grown from 33 languages in Luther's day to 1,763 languages, 279 full Bible translations, 551 additional languages had New Testaments, and 933 had a portion of Scripture.
6. Finally, from 1520 to 1560 16,000 theological students enrolled at the University of Wittenberg. "Like no other university, this one trained missionaries for home and overseas services. The enrollment list at Wittenberg showed that one third of the students came from other lands. This means that no fewer than 5,000 students who had learned from Luther's sermons and lectures and from Luther's successors went out to spread Luther's deep desire

that all should be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ even to the very end of the earth"<sup>51</sup>

Based on observations such as these, Surburg states:

That Luther was not interested in missions or missionary work is simply not true. In connection with the celebration of the Epiphany and Ascension festivals, Luther preached on texts and pericopes, which presented him with the opportunity to expound on missions. . . . In a sermon delivered September 25, 1538 on Matthew 23:15, . . . Luther said: "The very best of all works is that the heathen have been led from idolatry to the knowledge of God." According to Luther missionary work should be at home: "The noblest and greatest work and the most important services we can perform for God on earth is bringing other people, and especially those who are entrusted to us, to the knowledge of God by the holy Gospel."<sup>52</sup>

Surburg notes Luther's concern "that mission work is an indispensably necessary work"<sup>53</sup> and "that the Gospel would be proclaimed to foreign lands"<sup>54</sup>. It is also interesting to note that Luther, "the author of the first evangelical hymnal," wrote mission hymns.<sup>55</sup> Surburg cites Elert:

Poor Luther! Instead of founding a missionary society, accompanying Cortez to Mexico, or at least assuring for himself, professorship of missionary science, he devoted himself of all things, to the reformation of the church!

. . . How could Luther, who expounded the Psalms, the Prophets and Paul, [be accused of] overlooking or doubting the universal purpose of the mission of Christ and of His Gospel?<sup>56</sup>

Lutherans have understood the dynamics of all forms of missions. Surburg states:

Many of the critics of Luther have interpreted the word "missions" as meaning only "foreign missions." . . . However, the Bible shows that this was not necessarily the concept of Christ and His Apostles. Jesus, for one, limited His mission most of the time to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, making only a few excursions outside

of Jewish territory.<sup>57</sup>

At this point, one may still object: "If Luther and Lutherans understood missions, then why did they not do more foreign mission work?"<sup>58</sup> Surburg cites Pfeiffer:

With a desire to judge fairly, with no intent of denying weaknesses and blemishes, we need not fear to look facts squarely in the face. The leaders of the Reformation and their successors, the great theologians of the sixteenth century, were human and limited by their environment and the prevailing conditions of their times as men in every age.<sup>59</sup>

Surburg also cites the words of Polack:

We can truly say that the entire Lutheran Reformation was a mission. It brought the Gospel to thousands who had little or nothing of saving Light before. In fact, Luther and his disciples were fairly submerged in the mightiest missionary undertaking since the days of the apostles. They had to instruct the "heathen" who were at their very doors, to gather them into congregations, to preach, to establish evangelical schools, to translate the Scriptures, to write tracts and books in the effort to spread the great, but unknown Gospel-truths. Such labors of these demanded, and greatly drained all the energies and resources of the Church of the Reformation.<sup>60</sup>

Surburg continues to explain the limitations which Lutherans had in relation to starting foreign mission work. These limitations were economic and political. The Thirty Years War had drained the resources of the Lutherans. The Lutherans did not have the manpower which the Roman Catholics had. Also, the Roman Church, through the Spanish and Portuguese, controlled the sea. This meant that they also closed their new discoveries off to the Lutherans. In addition to these insights:

History records a number of attempts on the part of Protestants to establish themselves in South America, such

as the French Calvinists in 1556 in Brazil, which ended disastrously, as well as the adventures of French Huegenots in Florida who were killed because "they were Lutherans." For the Lutheran Reformers to have planned missions under these circumstances would have been folly.

While it is true that during the post-Reformation period some theologians took no interest in missions, . . . others did point out the need of the heathen. As early as 1664 Baron Justinian von Weltz wrote in favor of missions and subsequently went to Dutch Guiana, where he suffered death as a martyr.<sup>61</sup>

In the light of these observations, any mission attempts on the part of early Lutherans is indeed astounding. Surburg concludes his article by citing Charles Porterfield Krauth in his The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology. The following is the "record and interest of Lutherans in foreign missions."<sup>62</sup>

Nor has the Lutheran Church been satisfied with meeting the wants of her own children. She has been, and is a Church of Missions. In 1559, Gustavus Vasa, of Sweden, founded a mission among the Laplanders, which was continued with renewed earnestness by Gustavus Adolphus, Denmark also aiding. Thomas von Western (died 1727) was the apostle of this mission. Heyling, of Luebeck without any aid, labored as a missionary in Abyssinia (1635), and others, of the circle of his friends, engaged in the same cause in various parts of the East. Frederick IV, of Denmark, established the East India mission of Tranquebar (1706), for which Francke furnished him two devoted laborers, Pluetzschau and Ziegenbalg, the latter of whom translated the New Testament in Tamil (1715). The laborers of the mission were also extended to the English possessions. From the orphan-house at Halle went forth a succession of missionaries, among them Schwartz (died 1798) is pre-eminent. An institution for the conversion of the Jews were established at Halle; in 1728. Egede of Norway (died 1758) commenced his labors in Greenland, in 1721. In 1736, he returned and established in Copenhagen a mission seminary.<sup>63</sup>

If there is to be true Gospel motivation for missions within the LC--MS, it is also important that its laity have

healthy appreciation for the early growth of the Synod. This is quite possible because this growth was truly "astounding."<sup>64</sup>

Note the following summary of growth as recorded in A Century of Grace by Baepler:<sup>65</sup>

	<u>Pastors</u>	<u>Congregations</u>	<u>States</u>
1847	22	12	6
1848	50		8
1849	61		
1850	75		
1854		78	
1872	415	543	26

By 1900 the LC--MS had missionaries in India, to the American Indians and the Jews. Baepler observes that while the LC--MS had supported Lutheran mission societies for decades, the desire of the Synod to conduct its own "mission work . . . grew stronger as the years passed on." As God provided "the means for new [mission] work," the Synod and its Districts "reacted favorably" and were "agreeable" with several plans for foreign missions.<sup>66</sup>

These statistics and insights demonstrate something often forgotten: the zeal for missions that has been present in the LC--MS. Many do not realize that within seven years after the founding of the LC--MS, Walther had to divide the Synod into four districts due to "its expanding home missions."<sup>67</sup> E.J. Wolfe shows in The Lutherans in America, that within one generation the growth rate was phenomenal. Specifically, by 1888 the Synod had 1030 ministers, 617 teachers, 1480 congregations and a communicant membership of 279,150.<sup>68</sup> And

there were many outstanding individuals. Just one man, Pastor S. Keyl, and his assistants were responsible for aiding 27,000 immigrants from 1870-1883. He was responsible for their shelter, relocation, and continued spiritual care on the frontier.<sup>69</sup> When one reads a book like The Distress of the German Lutherans in North America, by F.C.D. Wyneken,<sup>70</sup> (which describes the hardships of pioneer life in this country), it is clear that the growth mentioned above is not only phenomenal, but that the Synod exercised wise stewardship by realistically determining its priorities and goals by the availability of resources.

At this point it might be suggested that this growth merely reflects religious interaction within the German Lutheran "homogeneous unit" or conversion of "nominal Christians." However, in the early years of life in America, there is no evidence that any church representing one European language group made an effort to minister to the needs of any other European language group. (Perhaps Church Growth literature has a point when it observes that America was not a "melting pot," but rather, a "stewing pot."<sup>71</sup> In this light, the LC--MS concern for primarily reaching German immigrants should not necessarily be considered negative. In a sense, this was the way in which churches conducted their missions. The priority was to reach ones own language group. It seems that Lutheran Church Growth proponents contradict themselves when they assert the validity and usefulness of the

homogeneous unit principle, and yet, criticize the predominantly German LC--MS for primarily reaching their own homogeneous unit. Fairness and sound reason should dictate that what is acceptable for twentieth century growth, should also have been acceptable for growth in other centuries.

Second, most of the German Lutherans were not orthodox Christians. They were rationalists. The LC--MS was started when a minority of orthodox Saxon Lutherans immigrated from Germany to Missouri. Even if most German Lutherans were to be considered "nominal Christians," the LC--MS mission emphasis would still be valid. This can be compared to the mission concern of the early days of the sixteenth century Reformation. Preus states:

Whether the apostolic message sweeps through the ancient heathen world or the same message of the Reformation sweeps through its world, the same ministry and mission of the church is in operation. That the Reformation came for the most part to lands and people who were nominally Christian does not negate its missionary character. After all, freeing the Gospel from works is opening the door for all missions.

72

The statistical yearbooks show a positive picture of the LC--MS in its more recent history. In its "English-speaking era," the growth of the LC--MS has been "phenomenal." 73

1920	-	2471	pastors,	3283	congregations,	1,009,982	souls
1960	-	4333	pastors,	5153	congregations,	2,469,036	souls
1974	-	5890	pastors,	6179	congregations,	2,866,481	souls
1982	-	5890	pastors,	6105	congregations,	2,725,623	souls

74

Some important insights should be made here. First, from 1920-1960 there was a doubling of membership. Second, it was the 1974 split in the Synod which caused a marked decline.

Third, the LC--MS has survived the 1974 crisis, and, many positive aspects of the Synod were described in The Saturday Evening Post article entitled: "Lutherans--Missouri Synod [is] Looking Ahead."<sup>75</sup> In May of 1984, 665 were reported to have been "placed into full-time" church-work.<sup>76</sup> In August of 1984, it was reported that Synod had placed its "most missionaries since 1967."<sup>77</sup>

In addition to the Synod's fine statistical record in evangelism and in missions, there are two more important insights to consider. First, there is the record of LC--MS laity. For example, the Walther League in 1926 sponsored one-third of all LC--MS missions. The "LWML" raised the mission consciousness of the entire Synod. The "LLL" has been the pioneer and leader in media evangelism for years. In 55 years, the "Lutheran Hour" has grown to 1026 stations in the United States alone (91 in Canada, 640 in 110 foreign countries in 36 different languages) and the "LLL" offers many other services in many different countries.<sup>78</sup> It was this dedication of the Synod and its laity that allowed them to literally go "into all the world" after World War II.<sup>79</sup>

Second, certain things cannot be measured by statistics because, depending upon circumstances, great sacrifice cannot be measured. Examples of this are the establishment of the Nigerian mission field during the Great Depression,<sup>80</sup> and the great sacrifice in American Indian missions - which included martyrdoms. Nelson states:

Neither zeal nor sacrifice were lacking in the Indian mission enterprise. Rather, the mobility of the Indians resulting from governmental policies, the demoralizing association with unprincipled white people.<sup>81</sup>

If every Confessional Lutheran could see the significance of the points above, it is extremely doubtful whether many would see the need to opt for involvement in popular movements and theologies which are not grounded in the Christ-centered theology of the Lutheran Confessions. It is also doubtful whether: (1) Bill Graham would call the LC--MS "the sleeping giant," (2) Raedeke would still question the evangelistic concern of the LC--MS, and (3) the word "evangelism" itself would be viewed as crucial to a full and effective understanding of the mission of the Church. It is interesting to note that numerical decline did not take place any time in Synod's history until after the word "evangelism" was commonly used. It is the content of the witness which causes growth, not the mere terminology.

#### The Need for Lutherans: Pragmatism Or Continued Practical Theology?

Lutherans must be concerned with applying the Gospel in practical ways. However, there will always be differences of opinion as to how Synod should do this. Examining the history of Lutheranism in America can help to put the task of evangelism into proper perspective.

The solid Biblical and Confessional nature of Lutheranism has been under attack all throughout its history. In this

country too, there have been modernist and Reformed emphases which have threatened the existence of Confessional Lutheranism. While there can never be exact correspondance, there is significant correlation to the past and factors affecting Lutheranism today. Those that drifted from solid Biblical and Confessional theology and practice, bemoan this fact with great clarity.

The ecumenical trend which is seen today took place also in the middle of the 19th century. For example, "The American Recension"<sup>82</sup> was written as an attempt to replace the "Augsburg Confession" of 1530 for unionistic purposes. Joseph A. Seiss (1823-1904), an advocate of the "Recension" and president of the General Council, reflected:

A happy thing would it have been for our Church, its usefulness and success in this country, if their successors and descendants [colonial Lutheran leaders] had all and always remained steadfast to the true confessional basis on which the Lutheran Church in this new world was started. But a long period of defection came - a period of rationalistic and then Methodistic innovations - a period of neglect of the confessions and of the doctrine of the church as Luther and Muhlenburg taught them - a period of self-destructive assimilation to the unsound and unchurchly spirit of surrounding sects, by which the life and vigor of our churches were largely frittered away - a period from which the Lutheran Church in America is only now beginning effectually to emerge.

83

Even Samuel Sprecher, one of the co-authors of the document, wrote just prior to his death:

It is true that I did once think the Definite Synodical Platform - that modification of Lutheranism which perhaps has been properly called the culmination of Melancthonianism - desirable and practical, and that I now regard all modification of our creed as hopeless . . . In the meantime an increased knowledge of the spirit, methods and literature of Missouri Synod has convinced me that . . . the elements of

true pietism - that sense of the . . . importance of personal assurance of salvation - can be maintained in connection with a Lutheranism unmodified by the Puritan element.<sup>84</sup>

Abdel Ross Wentz states the following in his biography of Schmucker:

It was the registered conviction of the great host of Lutherans in America that Lutheranism can live and flourish in this country without giving away its own spirit or adulterating its own original life and character.<sup>85</sup>

Many of the Reformed emphases of today also were confronted by Lutherans in the early 19th century. More specifically, the age of "revivalism" confronted the Lutheran Church with negative implications. Note the following important insight:

Where revivalistic techniques were employed consistently, the central doctrine of justification by faith in Christ was endangered and the theological complexion often became Arminian. The denial of original sin followed and the sinner was granted the ability to cooperate with God in the act of justification. Luther's catechism fell into disuse.<sup>86</sup>

These emphases of the Reformed manifested themselves in "the anxious bench" (which was a bench in the front of the church where one would "get the spirit" and "be saved" through much emotion-related activity), and the "new measures" (see Bauslin quote below for definition).<sup>87</sup> One individual, Benjamin Kurtz, stated:

The Catechism, highly as we prize it, can never supersede the anxious bench, but only, when faithfully used, renders it more necessary.<sup>88</sup>

In the following evaluation by David H. Bauslin note particularly how the problem was eventually resolved:

That it was an abnormal and unhistorical importation from extra-Lutheran sources, that it was an alien in our midst, will at this day hardly be denied. The phrase "New Measures" stood for a type and as representing a system of religious activity which in some sections of the church largely supplanted an antagonized method which had been from the very beginning of its life associated with the genius and development of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. . . . It was associated with solemn tricks for the sake of effect, decision displays at the bidding of the preacher . . . mechanical conversions, justification by feeling rather than by faith, and encouragement to all sorts of fanatical impressions . . . many of our people were swept along with the current until they found the Catechism and all other historical belongings of the Church supplanted by the "anxious bench" and other human and mechanical revivalistic appliances. 89

Several necessary observations need to be made here.

First, it was seen earlier that statistically the LC--MS has had a commendable rate of conversion. Thus, the LC--MS has not had a "low rate of conversion."<sup>90</sup> Second, Church Growth will not end Lutheran "back door losses." History records the fact the Reformed and ecumencial emphases do not stop individuals from leaving the Lutheran Church. In fact, these emphases cause back door losses in the Lutheran Church. American Lutheran history is full of those that lost their Lutheran identity by merging with those of other denominations.<sup>91</sup>

History seems to be repeating itself. The Reformed emphases of Church Growth have alienated some within the LC--MS. Others have accepted Reformed doctrine to the point that they have left the LC--MS and joined Reformed churches.<sup>92</sup> Although it is not known how many individuals fall into these categories, to date, the influence of Church Growth has not been able to end LC--MS "back door losses."<sup>93</sup> In 1983, the

LC--MS recorded a slight drop in membership. "Back door losses" were cited as "the most significant factor cutting into membership increases."<sup>94</sup> Even after a decade of involvement with Church Growth, top officials are still asking why the LC--MS has not recorded "a decided growth."<sup>95</sup>

The attempt to merge Confessional Lutheranism with a Reformed theology and practice in evangelism will not build a strong Lutheran Church. Thus, the "indebtedness" of some Lutheran Church Growth proponents to the pragmatism of the movement should be a point of concern. This is particularly true when Church Growth emphases are considered to cause "awakenings" in the hearts and minds of Lutherans.<sup>96</sup> Although the movement has "a high respect for the Word,"<sup>97</sup> there is more concern for discovering the "principles which God is blessing for growth"<sup>98</sup> and letting "growth determine the priorities" rather than sound theology.<sup>99</sup> (See analysis of Two: "The Concept"; and Six: "Church Growth as Friend.") The fact is, the Lutheran does "know the mind of God"<sup>100</sup> in that he knows God has given His Church the Means of Grace. In the history of the Church, Raymond Lull (died 1316) was a brilliant example of one who maintained the delicate balance between theology and practice. Fry in Raymond Lull: Apostle to the Muslims writes:

He [Lull] was persuaded that theology was the mental appropriation of God that made possible the public impartation of him to others. Theologians are missionaries; missionaries are theologians. Both have the same task. . . . [For Lull], theology was practical, . . .

contextual, . . . [and] spiritual. . . . Lull affirmed that every Christian is to be a theologian.<sup>101</sup>

History shows that the strength of the LC--MS is its own context. This is all that is needed to take the "whole Gospel to the whole person in the whole world."<sup>102</sup> This was the lesson of which Buszin speaks (above). The innovations of history are somewhat understandable because the early years of American history was a "period of tension, [in which] Lutheranism became engaged in one of its most serious struggles for self-identification and reinterpretation in the new homeland."<sup>103</sup> However, it was shown that some looked back and bemoaned the fact that they had lost their true Lutheran identity. Today it can be different for the LC--MS.<sup>104</sup> However, theology must be the starting point. To state that "you either go with church growth or you don't," could indicate that "growth" is dictating practice rather than Biblical truth.<sup>105</sup> If an "either/or" choice is given, then, theologically speaking, the Lutheran will have to reject all aspects of the Church Growth movement.

#### Theology: A Growth Hinderance Or the Proper Starting Point?

It is good that some Lutheran Church Growth proponents recognize the need to "lead with a theological basis to get [my emphasis] the Synod to accept" the movement.<sup>106</sup> However, it is not stated what this theology will be. The phrase "to get" could indicate that Church Growth presuppositions are

accepted without careful consideration. (Again, partly due to the view that Lutherans are unknowledgeable in regard to missions.) The careful exegesis which is needed is often not given due consideration.<sup>107</sup> Concepts, not merely "goals and objectives,"<sup>108</sup> need to be clearly articulated from Scripture.<sup>109</sup> Deviations from Scripture need to be clearly pointed out. If concepts deviate from Scripture, then this says something about: (1) the wisdom of accepting even principles which are "commonly accepted,"<sup>110</sup> and (2) whether the movement "fits our confessional stance."<sup>111</sup>

These insights may help to explain why why Lutheran Church Growth proponents are weak in asserting Confessional theology. More emphasis is placed upon the influence of Church Growth seminars, workshops, and literature,<sup>112</sup> than stressing the theology that the LC--MS pastor has learned, and the subsequent tools he has aquired. While the LC--MS may not be "God's only gift to the world,"<sup>113</sup> at the same time, the world will loose a most significant blessing should the Confessional Lutheran cease to assert Confessional theology. There is a sense in which the LC--MS and its laity should not seek to "make people . . . Lutherans,"<sup>114</sup> and a sense in which they should. Becoming Lutheran means more than taking on a label. Dallman notes:

That sturdy old nobleman, George Margrave of Brandenburg, when challenged for calling himself a Lutheran, has once for all time given a sufficient answer: "I was not baptized in the name of Luther: he is not my God and Savior, I do not rest my faith in him, and am not saved

by him; and, therefore, in this sense I am not a Lutheran. But if I be asked whether with my heart and lips I profess the doctrine which God restored to light by the instrumentality of His blessed servant Luther, I neither hesitate, nor am ashamed to call myself a Lutheran. In this sense I am, and, as long as I live, will remain a Lutheran."<sup>115</sup>

It is because of these precious truths that the Confessional Lutheran should "resist change"<sup>116</sup> which compromise God's clear word. It was shown in the last chapter that for one to "discard that which is against conscience or contrary to [one's] theology"<sup>117</sup> one must first distinguish between truth and error. Since several Church Growth emphases have had to be rejected for Biblical reasons, it therefore follows that Confessional Lutherans will not "help refine and strengthen the strategies and principles"<sup>118</sup> of Church growth. Falsehoods are to be rejected. They cannot be refined or strengthened.<sup>119</sup> Unfortunately, it seems too many Church Growth emphases are accepted, for pragmatic reasons, without any theological evaluations. (See a special example in Appendix J.)

It is unclear how the "re-tooling" provided through the Church Growth movement can be both divinely mandated and yet "not require a change from sound theology."<sup>120</sup> This is particularly true when one considers that the Lutheran doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the office of the ministry are questioned.<sup>121</sup> However, God does not guide the Church apart from His Word. The Gospel itself is theology.<sup>122</sup> Through theology, or doctrine, God guides His people into all truth

and motivates them through the Gospel. The theological "debates" being smashed by the movement's "re-tooling" are never defined. The churches which adhere to the Lutheran Confessions do not need to be "re-tooled" to avoid an "insidious [artfully treacherous] gobbledegook" theology.<sup>123</sup> Although many statements like this are vague in Church Growth literature, those that do not accept these views are unfortunately made to look unwilling to learn, grow or be stimulated.<sup>124</sup>

While the Church should always have enough energy for "reaching out with the Gospel,"<sup>125</sup> the Christian is also told to defend the faith (I Peter 3:15). This includes polemics (Acts 11) and apologetics. Since both are concerned with correct doctrine, the following observations of Weinrich (which primarily apply to apologetics) are significant.

God intends to convert the mind as well as the heart and the body, and therefore apologetic, argumentation, and dialogue were important instruments in the early Church's missionary endeavors. The NT itself gives examples. Philip shows the Ethiopian eunuch the truth of the Gospel from the OT (Acts 8:27-38); it was standard procedure for Paul to enter synagogues in order to prove from Scripture that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 17:1-4); Paul argues with the Greeks in Athens in open-air debate (Acts 17: 16-34). The writings of Justin Martyr exemplify the full range of argumentation. . . . The Octavius of Minucius Felix, . . . is a good example of the way a discussion between an intelligent Christian and an intelligent pagan might be conducted. . . . Eusebius . . . tells of Origen whose teaching had become so well-known that Mammaea, the mother of Emperor Alexander Severus, secured an interview with Origen in order to hear him present the Christian faith.<sup>126</sup>

The amount of time a Christian spends in Gospel proclamation, apologetics or polemics is often out of his

hands. One may actually seem to be "hyper-concerned" at times so that the defense of the Gospel may be adequate, and by the grace of God, have due effect. To say that one's spending a great deal of time engaged in apologetics or polemics is "no longer proper doctrine" is to misunderstand the objective nature of doctrine.<sup>127</sup> Doctrine is proper (or improper) in and of itself. Although not putting correct doctrine into practice may be called "dead orthodoxy," the Scriptural practices of apologetics and polemics are certainly not "pharisaical gnat straining."<sup>128</sup>

True theology never hinders the mission of the Church. Since most Lutheran Church Growth proponents believe that Confessional Lutheran theology is true, they must ask themselves this question: "If Lutheran theology is a true gift from God, then how can it be impractical?" God has not gifted His Church with His inerrant and infallible Word, only to leave it to its own devices. He has given the Church the Means of Grace, and these are "practical." They meet the ultimate need of mankind, the need for the forgiveness of sins.

In this light, it is clear that theology is the starting point for the Church's mission. This has been understood by most Lutheran theologians. Martin Chemnitz, the "Second Martin," helped to keep the Lutheran Reformation alive after the death of Luther. He was a brilliant theologian who never lost sight of the mission of the Church. He said:

The highest favor that can come from heaven to any province, city or people is this, when God kindles and causes to arise the light of his saving Word, by whose splendor all darkness of errors, abuses, superstition, and idolatrous worship are put to flight, and hearts are enlightened by the true and salutary knowledge of God. 129

The LC--MS has stood in direct line to the mission emphasis of the Reformation. For example, John H. C. Fritz believed that the Christian has been left here on earth

for the chief purpose, to wit, to build up the Kingdom of Christ, John 17:14-23; 1 Corinthians 15:58. 130

Francis Pieper also recognized that

the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost had the purpose of equipping the disciples for their calling as witnesses of Christ in the world (Acts 1:8). . . .

It is not a human, but a divine command that Christians perform the works of their spiritual priesthood; accordingly, preach the Gospel not merely in their homes, but also in their interactions with their brethren and with the world. 131

Evangelism is so much a part of Lutheran theology that it is interwoven into every part. After a casual reading of the doctrinal essay set, The Abiding Word, one can see that this is true of almost every essay. For example, Alfred von Rohr Sauer, in his essay "The Doctrine of the Church," expresses the importance of the Lord's commission. 132 He explains the success of the Church's mission in terms of the faithfulness of individuals to baptize and preach. 133 E. L. Wilson, in his essay "Faith," states the mission of the church in very simple terms:

The Church has but one mission to perform and but one message to proclaim. The Church exists for the purpose of directing the world of men to Calvary and to proclaim the

reconciliation of sinners with God through the blood-stained, glory-crowned cross of the victorious and ever-living Redeemer.<sup>134</sup>

Finally, one more example should suffice. Siegbert Becker, in his essay "The Gospel," finds in the term itself, tremendous implications for mission work. More specifically, that the term points to mission work as being necessary.<sup>135</sup> Although these essays are written on different theological topics, they all have direct bearing on the mission of individuals and the Church.

Since the Lutheran Confessions focus on the doctrine of justification, the center of Scripture, these precious documents serve as the best theological tools to aid in establishing proper evangelism methodology. "The Lutheran Confessions . . . articulate the church's confession of praise and thanksgiving to God for his saving work in Jesus Christ."<sup>136</sup> Confessional Lutheranism has plenty of fuel to feed the evangelism fires of the Lutheran Church. When orthodox Lutheranism is asserted in all its Biblical richness, Christians, by the grace of God, will be motivated to witness. Lutheran evangelism principles are Biblical evangelism principles because they take into consideration the universal nature of the mission, the evangelical nature of the mission, namely, that the Gospel will be proclaimed, and the Confessional nature of the mission, namely, that Scripture alone directs the mission of the Church in all its purity.

Immediately, even in Lutheran circles, there might be

some objection to placing too much emphasis on the Lutheran Confessions. It is important that the nature and purpose of dogmatical statements be asserted. Franzmann states:

Our dogmatically exact definitions of faith are intended solely to establish the meaning of faith as the receiving and accepting of the gracious acquittal pronounced by God, to safeguard the dokean, to give the te autou chariti the glory. Thus, even "dry" formulations become a song in praise of God the Reconciler and God the Justifier of the ungodly. 137

Johnson states the following in response to those who reject Confessional statements:

It seems that Lutheran church life in America has been galvanized by a naive Protestant biblicism which is unconfessional or even implicitly anti-confessional in basic orientation. To be sure, we would not often hear the explicit appeal, "Away with the Confessions and back to the Bible!" Yet in actual practice many have become imitators of a non-confessional Protestantism. . . .

The problem in the church with contemporary attitudes toward confessional subscription involves the effort to play off the Scriptures and the Confessions against each other. Unfortunately, such a desire indicates that some have not grasped their true unity in the Christ of the Gospel. . . . To affirm the Augustana because it is the confession of Lutheranism is not justifying faith for our own or any time. Rather, we unite with those confessors because our faith, like theirs, is simply an affirmative response to the claim of divine revelation. . . . Scripture and confession are not two magnitudes which stand outside each other in a relation of mutual indifference. On the contrary, Scripture demands confession and it shapes confession. 138

The LC--MS should emphasize the word "confession" when motivating its members to witness for two reasons. First, the word focuses on the Lutheran Confessions and their center, justification. It is the Gospel which truly motivates individuals to witness. Second, it stresses the act of

confessing the Christian faith (fides quae). (See further discussion in Appendix K.) Johnson states:

In John 6:66-69, . . . Peter responds to the Lord's question, "Who do you say that I am?" with the confession, "We have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God." This is not a confession of faith in the sense that Peter and the others for the first time reach a conviction to which they then give initial expression; it is rather a reaffirmation of faith.

In addition to the verb describing the act of confession, the Greek also has a noun to designate the same act. Significantly, this noun, homologesis, does not appear in the New Testament. Rather another noun, homologia, is used, which implies the act of confession but draws particular attention to that body of truth which is confessed. In 1 Timothy 6:12, the confession (homologia) is confessed (homologeo).

References in early Christian literature utilizing homologia or its verbal form are concerned with the content of the confession and not just with the existentiality of the act. Thus, as J.N.D. Kelly contends in his classic study of early Christian credal formulations, the faith began to assume a hard-and-fast outline towards the end of the first century as regard for the objective body of teaching authoritatively handed down as the church grew. . . . What is said in the New Testament of the Christian proclamation points in the direction of a body of received religious training, a rule of faith, which in turn is to be transmitted further. It is the apostolic Gospel that lies back of the confession as the faith that is to be confessed in the church.

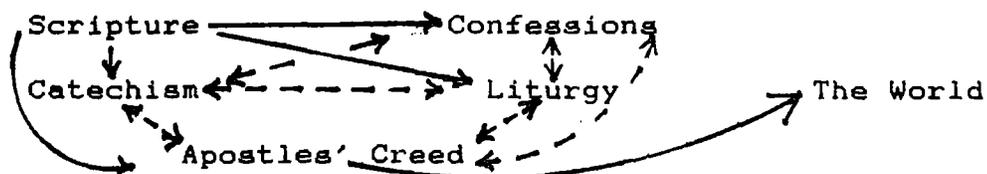
139

In this light, when Confessional Lutherans witness, they are involved in confessional confession, or, confessional evangelism.<sup>140</sup> Confessional Evangelism stresses the strengths of the Lutheran Confessional context. Once this theological starting point is made, it becomes clear that the Confessions become the starting point for action. One of the most basic confessional documents, the Apostles' Creed, equips the Lutheran for confession of his faith. It is drawn solely from

Scripture (See Appendix L) and is reinforced in both the catechetical instruction of the Lutheran Church and its liturgical worship.<sup>141</sup> The following figure (7.5) depicts how the Apostles' Creed interacts within the Lutheran context.<sup>142</sup> The solid lines demonstrate how the Creed is drawn directly from Scripture as also the Confessions, catechism and the liturgy. In addition, the dotted lines demonstrate: (1) how these elements are interrelated, (2) how these elements reinforce one another, and (3) how these elements work together to prepare the Lutheran for witnessing.

Figure 7.5

The Lutheran Context:



By choosing the Apostles' Creed as a primary witnessing tool, the Lutheran is spared from the confusion of being trained in Reformed evangelism methods. The emphasis in Confessional Evangelism is on orientating individuals to apply the catechetical truths which they had to learn as children or as adult member candidates of the Lutheran Church. Vogel states:

The Christian individual is not automatically a witness in the sense that he or she is automatically equipped by Baptism to proclaim the Word. . . . Catechization is the necessary requirement for teaching such people to witness. Good communication techniques are a secondary matter, although not unimportant.

Surely Lutheranism, with its exegetical, confessional, educational, and liturgical heritage should lead the way to authentic witness not by teaching people to consider subjective feelings as the heart of witness, but rather in catechizing people so that the sure witness of the apostolic church would be confessed. . . .

In such a way pastors will genuinely equip the saints. In such a way pastors will equip people to proclaim the Word - ALL of the people.

144

One LC--MS pastor, Robert L. Schroeder, has taken the Confessional emphasis in evangelism seriously. He developed a booklet using the Apostles' Creed. He based this approach on the fact that "the Church had run well all those [centuries] with its expanded Gospel witness, it had stood the test of time."<sup>145</sup> Three Districts of the LC--MS also recently joined forces and developed their stewardship materials using the Apostles' Creed as a primary motivation in Christian giving. They build clearly on Lutheran strengths by posing Luther's question: "What Does This Mean?" as the title of their literature.<sup>146</sup>

The validity of the credal method of evangelism has considerable support in the history of the Christian Church. The Christian Church has always employed credal statements.<sup>147</sup> Although never intended to be complete summaries of the Christian faith,<sup>148</sup> the use of the Creed has plenty to say for the phenomenal success of early Christian evangelism endeavors. Kelly states:

The early Church was from the start a believing, confessing, preaching Church. Nothing could be more artificial or more improbable than the contrast so

frequently drawn between the Church of the first century, with its pure religion of the Spirit and its almost complete absence of organization. . . . Had the Christians of the apostolic age not conceived of themselves as possessing a body of distinctive, consciously held beliefs, they would scarcely have separated themselves from Judaism and undertaken an immense programme of missionary expansion. Everything goes to show that the infant community looked upon themselves as the bearers of a unique story of redemption.

149

In short, the creeds were never viewed in the early Church as dry-as-dust documents, but living expressions of the precious Gospel derived directly from Scripture.<sup>150</sup> Bjarne W. Teigen states:

The Apostles' Creed is not a dry lifeless piece of prose. It confesses great revelatory truths, and by its use as a "Symbol" (a token by which the true Christian can be known from the infidel or heretic), it has great doctrinal significance.

151

Of the First Article Augustine says:

Observe how quickly the words are spoken, and how full of significance they are. He is God, and He is Father: God in power, Father in goodness. How blessed we are who find that our God is our Father!

152

Luther suggests that at the end of each part in the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed, the words "for me" or "for the forgiveness of my sins" should be added.<sup>153</sup> Kelly summarizes the Third Article as "The Spirit in Action." Particularly interesting to note is that this article links the Church with the forgiveness of sins. Kelly states: "Hard on the heels of the mention of the Church comes THE REMISSION OF SINS."<sup>154</sup>

Those Christians who do not believe in using creeds or confessions rob themselves of a valuable summary of Christian faith, and a valuable evangelism tool.<sup>155</sup> The Apostles' Creed

"outlines and preserves, in balanced proportion, Christianity's fundamental beliefs."<sup>156</sup> Building on the understanding of the value of the creeds, Lutherans can use the other Confessional writings. Preus states:

If any layman and laywoman would read these great statements of our faith they would become more knowledgeable and powerful witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ, yes, better evangelists.<sup>157</sup>

It is to the advantage of the Lutheran evangelist to present the Gospel in the credal manner because it is consistent with the public witness of the Church. The credal method also provides continuity for those whom are brought into the Lutheran Church. The callee who has heard the Gospel presented in the Creed will be prepared to be followed up by the liturgical worship of the church. Since Lutherans stress the objective Means of Grace, which proclaim Christ in worship, the visitor on Sunday morning not only recognizes the Creed, but is also pointed to the Means of Grace. Also, because evangelism methodologies seem to influence worship practices, the credal method will emphasize the strengths of Lutheran worship rather than suggest unnecessary innovations. (See analysis of Six: "Church Growth as a Friend.") Since the objective Means of Grace preach the Gospel so clearly, and these are maintained by the Christ-centered liturgy, Lutherans must submit their evangelism methodology to this context. When this is done, states Schroeder, then the "mystery will be" taken "out of personal witnessing."<sup>158</sup>

The wisdom of choosing a credal form of evangelism is also measured in its practicality. The Creed is a natural way to present sin and grace. The First Article speaks of creation and this naturally precedes the story of the fall of man into sin. The Second Article presents Christ and Him crucified -- Law and Gospel are maintained. The Third Article talks of the Church and the Means of Grace entrusted to her. It is concise, simple, and memorable. Schroeder states:

Do we need high-powered seminars? Not for content. This [use of the Apostles' Creed] is a success because everyone knows it. Our need in meetings is to see what we have, see it and appreciate it with the wisdom that the church possesses. But really, such wisdom can only come with experience in calling.

It is a success because it brings church maturity to the callers. We must not forget the callers. They are the workers. They need the best and they need to be honest [consistent]. Given the opportunity, they will use this method more than any other. Point out to them that this is the witness of the church [fides quael! Then watch them grow in it as they use it. 159

Allan stresses the need for a simple witness:

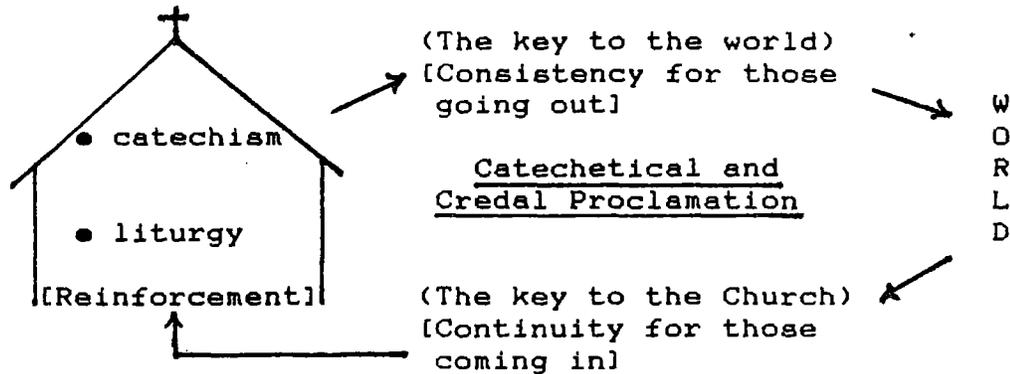
It is not enough for the church to be established in a place where many are coming in and going unless the people who come and go not only learn the Gospel, but learn it in such a way that they can propagate it. 160

The Apostles' Creed provides the Church with a simple witness. The following figure (7.6) demonstrates the fact that confessional and credal evangelism can be the Christian's key to the world, and equally, the non-Christian's key to the Church's message of salvation. 161

Figure 7.6

The Church reinforces the Gospel message in the Apostles' Creed through the:

Consistency between the witness of the Church and the individual Christian - and continuity for the non-Christian - is found in:



When Lutherans find an evangelism method with which they are familiar, and which reflects their own heritage and context, they more readily become active in the task of evangelism. They need to be reassured they are spreading the true Gospel. Confessional evangelism, which features the use of the Apostles' Creed, uniquely meets these needs. In this light, the words of John F. Johnson ring true:

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod ought to be the celebration of a church which knows what it is to be a confessing church in the world; a church that still confesses the Gospel in all of its articles; a church that confesses that justification is sola gratia, propter Christum, sola fide. Such a celebration actually transcends celebration and becomes doxology. 162

May the response to the Gospel, and the "doxology" of the LC--MS motivate its members to assert Confessional theology in reaching out with the Good News to the harvest field of the entire world. May this motivate all within the Church to say

to one another:

We have the Word of God; we have it in its truth and purity; the Word shines like a bright morning star in a dark night, . . . Others around us may still be in semidarkness or in complete darkness, but we have a good light to see the road ahead. Surely, we want to help light up the way for others.

163

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> A Master of Divinity thesis was recently written entitled "The Use and Impact of Church Growth Principles: As Seen Specifically Among Four Congregations of the Texas District" by William Gratz. The thesis seeks to demonstrate that Church Growth can be applied within the Lutheran context without affecting its nature. It expresses adequate insight into the nature of the movement, yet, it lacks clear definition of what it means to be "Lutheran." The nature of the thesis necessitates that the nature of the Lutheran context be asserted first, and then, with these insights in mind, the application of Church Growth within the Lutheran context can be examined. (This is a similar problem to that discussed in Footnote #141 under Chapter Two.) Without these steps, there will not be a clear standard to which the research is being compared, and consequently, the findings of the paper will be inadequate in measuring whether Church Growth can be effectively applied in the Lutheran context. Gratz's paper could be greatly strengthened by following three simple steps. First, assert "operational variables" which will measure specific "concepts" within the Lutheran context. This step defines the unique aspects of Lutheranism in objective terms (examples: the catechism, the liturgy, and the Means of Grace). Second, once "operational variables" have been set forth, then the affects of Church Growth on these same variables can be examined. This step asks key questions: "Do the Lutheran congregations and pastors being analyzed still use Luther's Small Catechism?" "Is the liturgy still the preferred form of worship?" "Have Reformed elements crept in? Why?" "Are the Word and Sacraments still central?" "Does the laity view conversion in terms of monergism or synergism?" Third, the answers to these questions provide the basis for concrete conclusions. For further discussion of this important research approach, see Selltiz, especially pp. 41-42; 47.

<sup>2</sup>This writer has actually seen this type of outline followed while attending numerous lectures by Lutheran Church Growth proponents in the past five years. In many of these

presentations the three points could be summarized as: (1) negative aspects of LC--MS history; (2) pragmatism (Church Growth) as the answer; and (3) theology is considered only in passing or in the closing seconds of the presentation. In response, this chapter will assert the need for Law AND Gospel in response to any negative aspects of LC--MS history (i.e., inactivity in evangelism). Also, that theology needs to be the starting point - not the "negative" or pragmatism.

3 Fry, "History," p. 2.

4 Gast, p. 111.

5 Kolb, Erwin J., A Lutheran Understanding of Evangelism (St. Louis: The Board for Evangelism of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1976), p. 8.

6 Biesenthal, p. 2.

7 Rall suggested this terminology in his presentation.

8 "Ratio of Church Members Per Missionary," (Frontier Missions, Pasadena, California, 1975).

9 "Individual," p. 4.

10 "Evangelism 'Celebration' Draws 375," In Reporter (February 6, 1984), p. 3.

11 McGavran, Understanding, p. 208.

12 Matthias, p. 63.

13 Surburg, Raymond F., "Did Luther and the Lutheran Reformers Neglect Foreign Missions?" In Christian News (Sept. 26, 1983).

14 Surburg, p. 6.

15 Surburg, p. 6 (citing Glover).

16 Matthias, p. 60.

17 Biesenthal has identified himself with the Church Growth movement on p. 8 of this manual. See also "Individual," p. 1; and Vogel, p. 223 Footnote #2.

18 Biesenthal, p. 1.

19 Biesenthal, p. 1. Note: This is probably based upon statements which Raedeke has made such as: "Research

indicates, . . . that it takes 27 years for the average member of our church body to help bring another person to Christ and membership in His church." ("The Fruit of Our Lutheran Witness," In Reporter (March 17, 1964), p. 15.)

20 Biesenthal, p. 1

21 Matthias, p. 63.

22 For an example: see Biesenthal, p. 8.

23 Biesenthal, p. 5.

24 Hunter, p. 169; see also p. 8.

25 Hunter, p. 182.

26 Hunter, p. 24.

27 Hunter, p. 26.

28 Rev. Stephen Wagner, found in "Individual," p. 4.

29 "Individual," p. 4.

30 Biesenthal, p. 7.

31 Matthias, p. 54.

32 Hunter, pp. 76; 164.

33 Hunter, pp. 95-96.

34 Hunter, p. 182.

35 Hunter, p. 150.

36 Hunter, p. 150.

37 "Individual," p. 1.

38 Hunter, p. 152.

39 Hunter, pp. 152-153.

40 Hunter, p. 63.

41 Hunter, p. 152.

42 The insights of this section are not presented to excuse any lack of evangelistic zeal on the part of (LC--MS)

Lutherans. Many of the individuals cited throughout this paper recognize the need for Lutherans and particularly the LC--MS to do a better job. See Preus, "The Confessions," p. 33; Vogel, p. 221; Nafzger, "Theological Concerns," pp. 18-19; Surburg, citing Pfeiffer in "Did Luther?" p. 60 (to be cited later). However, as is shown in the text above, these are secondary considerations. When they are considered primary considerations, they can, at best, promote a law-oriented motivation for evangelism based on an incomplete view of historic Lutheranism. The effect on the laity will be discussed under "Theology" below.

43 Fry, "History," p. 2.

44 Since the main issue is the theological quality of the LC--MS, an attempt has not been made to order the other denominations according to their theological positions. However, since the Seventh-Day Adventists are somewhat controversial, reference to them has been enclosed in parentheses.

45 The question of "equilibrium" is largely a sociological question, for sociologists to consider. In this light, these issues do not measure the "health" of a denomination. Since Church Growth places a great deal of emphasis on "meeting needs" (See One: "The Quest"), it too will lead to the same "equilibrium" of larger denominations. The more individuals who are attracted to a church with "needs," the more energy has to be used by that church to meet those needs.

46 Cannon, pp. 57-58.

47 See endnote #7 above.

48 Nafzger, "Growing," p. 212.

49 The Illustrated Heritage Dictionary and Information Book (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), p. 496.

50 Matthias, p. 63.

51 Bunkowske, Eugene, "Was Luther A Missionary?" (Personal draft of a lecture given Fall, 1983) p. 14.

52 Surburg, p. 6.

53 Surburg, p. 6 (citing Die Worke Martin Luther, 47:466).

54 Surburg, p. 6 (citing, 47:208; LC III: The Second Petition).

- 55 Surburg, p. 6.
- 56 Surburg, p. 6 (citing Elert).
- 57 Surburg, p. 6.
- 58 See endnote #42.
- 59 Surburg, p. 6 (citing Pfeiffer).
- 60 Surburg, p. 6 (citing Polack).
- 61 Surburg, p. 6.
- 62 Surburg, p. 6.
- 63 Surburg, p. 6 (citing Krauth).
- 64 Oesch, William M., An Unexpected Plea (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, n.d.), p. 34.
- 65 Baepler, pp. 113ff.
- 66 Baepler, pp. 179-181.
- 67 Nelson, Clifford E., The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947), p. 181.
- 68 Wolf, E. J., The Lutherans in America: A story of struggle, progress, influence and marvelous growth (New York: J. A. Hill, 1889).
- 69 Baepler, pp. 136-137.
- 70 Wyneken, F. C. D., The Distress of the German Lutherans in North America (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1982).
- 71 Wagner, Your Church, p. 113.
- 72 Preus, "The Confessions," p. 33.
- 73 Oesch, p. 58.
- 74 Statistical Yearbook, 1920, 1960, 1974, 1982 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1983).
- 75 "Lutherans--Missouri Synod Looking Ahead," In The Saturday Evening Post (Dec., 1982).
- 76 "665 Placed Into Full-Time Synod Ministry," In Reporter (May 14, 1984), p. 1.

77 "Synod Placing Most Missionaries Since 1967," In Reporter (August 20, 1984), p. 1.

78 These statistics were quoted at the "LLL Banquet" held for the graduates of the 1984 Class of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana (March, 1984).

79 Meyer, Carl S., Moving Frontiers (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 295; 309; 320.

80 Meyer, p. 320.

81 Nelson, p. 200.

82 Nelson, pp. 221-224.

83 Nelson, p. 226.

84 Nelson, pp. 226-227.

85 Nelson, p. 227.

86 Nelson, p. 216.

87 Nelson, p. 135.

88 Nelson, p. 216.

89 Nelson, pp. 216-217 (citing Bauslin).

90 Matthias, p. 63.

91

See Nelson, especially his treatment of Lutheran-Episcopal relations pp. 83-84, 91-94, 96, 98, 109-10, 536.

92 This writer bases his concerns in view of his own personal experience. Although he knows of a significant sampling of such individuals, time and financial resources would be needed to make an adequate study of the problem. A simple correlation could be made between the number of LC--MS members trained in Reformed evangelism methods, and (1) the number who have left the LC--MS discontentedly (which would be partly due to the view that the LC--MS is "unfaithful" in evangelism); and/or (2) the number who are disenchanted within the Lutheran context. The sub-section entitled "Theology" in this chapter will demonstrate that these difficulties are not necessary because the Lutheran context can meet the challenge of evangelizing local neighborhoods, as well as the world. (See: Scott, Ed, "Farewell Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod," In Christian News, May, 1984.)

93 The Church Growth terminology of "back door" itself is weak. It measures the "results" of people leaving a church, but does not really adequately describe the "why." It does not emphasize the need for the Means of Grace. Adding to the problem is the fact that Church Growth also speaks of the "front door" and the "side door." The movement is running out of "doors" with which to explain evangelism. Perhaps someone will suggest that there is actually a "trap door." This seems to be the next step. (For discussion on the relatively new "side door," See: Towns, Elmer L, "Evangelism in the Eighties," In Church Growth Newsletter.)

94 "Synod Records Slight Drop in '83 Membership," In Reporter (May 28, 1984), p. 1.

95 "Evangelism Board Launches Study to Increase Membership Figures," In Reporter (July 23, 1984), p. 3.

96 The term "awakening" is traditionally applied to the conversion of the sinner to faith in Christ. Pieper points out the importance of knowing "awakening . . . [is a] synonym of conversion" so that "terrified souls" will know "whether they are under wrath or grace" (2:498). Therefore, it is probably not best to use this terminology while referring to the learning of Church Growth principles. This concern becomes even more apparent when one considers the way in which this "awakening" comes about. Biesenthal states: "Some years ago we made an astonishing discovery. We rediscovered one of the things that we knew all along but that had somehow escaped my understanding. We knew it - and we didn't know it. . . . Somehow . . . that [the 10% concept] had not dawned on me before my awakening (p. 6)." It seems that the "awakening" caused by Church Growth has little to do with faith in Christ.

97-Hunter, p. 169.

98 Hunter, p. 18.

99 Hunter, p. 24.

100 Hunter, p. 182.

101 Fry, C. George, "Raymond Lull: Apostle to the Muslims," In Missionary Monthly (Dec., 1982), pp. 9-21.

102 Hunter, p. 26.

103 Nelson, p. 211.

104 It is hoped that the reader will review the quotes cited thus far in this chapter and see how ecumenical and Reformed trends are effectively dealt with; also that a review of the

statistical growth of the LC--MS will aid in developing a renewed appreciation of Luther and Lutheranism as truly missionary minded.

105 "Individual," p. 4.

106 "Individual," p. 4.

107 Biesenthal, p. 7.

108 "Individual," p. 4.

109 Vogel, p. 217. Note: It has been shown repeatedly in this paper that the Church must do more than affirm a belief in the Great Commission and a conservative theology. The content of the Gospel is central; especially the correct understanding of the Means of Grace.

110 Biesenthal, p. 7.

111 Matthias, p. 54.

112 Hunter, p. 164. Note: Perhaps it would be best to direct LC--MS laypersons to books which will build up their perspective of the church (examples, Baepler, Meyer, Wolf). This would "build up" (Eph. 4:12) the LC--MS and provide for a dominant Gospel motivation in evangelism and missions. See endnote #1 under the Conclusion.

113 Hunter, p. 164.

114 Hunter, p. 76.

115 Dallman, William, "Why the Name Lutheran?" (A tract published by resolution of the Northwestern Conference of the English District of the Missouri Synod, n.d.).

116 Hunter, pp. 95-96. See also Hunter's use of the term "change," p. 253 in this paper.

117 Hunter, p. 164.

118 Hunter, p. 182.

119 Johnson, p. 240.

120 Hunter, p. 150.

121 "Individual," p. 1.

122 Preus, "The Confessions," p. 26.

123 Hunter, p. 150.

- 124 Hunter, p. 182.
- 125 Hunter, p. 152.
- 126 Weinrich, pp. 73-74.
- 127 Hunter, pp. 152-153.
- 128 Hunter, p. 152.
- 129 Chemnitz, p. 15.
- 130 Fritz, John H. C., Pastoral Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 284.
- 131 Pieper, 3:289; 443.
- 132 von Rohr Sauer, Alfred, "The Doctrine of the Church," In The Abiding Word (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 3:304ff.
- 133 von Rohr Sauer, 3:308-310.
- 134 Wilson, E. L., "Faith," In The Abiding Word, 1:208.
- 135 Becker, Siegbert W., "The Gospel," In The Abiding Word, 2:350.
- 136 Quanbeck, Warren A., "The Confessions and Their Influence upon Biblical Interpretation," In Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 177.
- 137 Franzmann, Martin H., "Reconciliation and Justification," In Concordia Theological Monthly (Vol. 21, 1950), p. 92.
- 138 Johnson, pp. 235; 240-241.
- 139 Johnson, pp. 237-238.
- 140 This writer has developed a resource manual in evangelism employing this terminology. This stresses both homologia and homologueo. The title of the manual is the: Confessional Evangelism Resource Manual. Partly to aid in the research of this paper, a survey accompanied a review edition which was mailed out in the summer of 1984. On a scale of 1 to 10, it scored a 9.04 in theology and 7.71 in practicality. The use of the Apostles' Creed scored 9.58 (perhaps indicating an overall score of 8.62 in practicality for "Confessional Evangelism"). These simple statistics indicate that the Apostles' Creed is an effective link between the need to remain theologically pure, and at the same time, "be

practical." These surveys also provided many constructive comments which resulted in several minor revisions in the first regular printing.

141 There are two resources which can be used to reinforce the "Confessional Evangelism" concept. They are: Confidently Believing by Warren N. Wilbert (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, n.d.); and Worship in Word and Sacrament by Ernest B. Koenker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959). Both are easy to understand and suitable for the lay level. Both emphasize the catechism, the liturgy and other strengths of the Lutheran context.

142 Confessional Evangelism Resource Manual, p. 21.

143 The term "orientation," rather than "training," is used to emphasize: (1) the simplicity of the Gospel message; (2) reinforcement of the strengths of the Lutheran context; and (3) the "tools" Confessional Lutherans already possess.

144 Vogel, pp. 221; 222.

145 Schroeder, Robert L., "Origins of Recent Creed Witnessing," In Concordia Theological Evangelism Journal (January - March, 1982), p. 9. Also note that Schroeder is the author of a credal tract entitled: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost (produced by the Evangelism Department of Our Savior Lutheran Church, Bettendorf, Iowa, 1979).

146 "What Does This Mean?: Christian Stewardship and the Apostles' Creed" (A Joint Stewardship Project of Minnesota North and South; Wisconsin North and South; and the Northern Illinois Districts of the LC--MS).

147 Kelly, J. N. D., Early Christian Creeds (New York: Longman, Inc., 1972), p. 7.

148 Kelly, p. 165.

149 Kelly, p. 7.

150 Kelly, pp. 131ff.

151 Teigen, Bjarne W., I Believe: A Study of the Three Universal or Ecumenical Creeds (Mankato MN: Bethany Lutheran College, 1976), p. 6.

152 Kelly, p. 134.

- 153 Pieper, 2:539.
- 154 Kelly, p. 160.
- 155 Preus, Robert, "Every Lutheran is a Confessional Lutheran," In Concordia Theological Evangelism Journal (January - March, 1982), pp. 1-2.
- 156 Reed, p. 285.
- 157 Preus, p. 2.
- 158 Schroeder, p. 11.
- 159 Schroeder, pp. 11-12.
- 160 Allen, p. 13.
- 161 Confessional Evangelism Resource Manual, p. 44.
- 162 Johnson, p. 241.
- 163 Zucker, F. R., "The Lord's Supper," In The Abiding Word, 2:423.

**CONCLUSION**

## CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that the Church Growth movement errs in key doctrines of the Christian faith: man, conversion, the Means of Grace, the Church, the office of the ministry, the priesthood of all believers, and the proper distinction between Law and Gospel (Chapters One and Two). It was also shown that the movement has strengths. It asserts inerrancy in reaction to modernism (Chapter Three) and attempts to use the behavioral sciences for the benefit of the Church (Chapter Four). However, these emphases also cause unique problems for the movement. Inerrancy was seen to be an insufficient basis for true unity and a true "Reformation." The behavioral sciences are incorrectly used when they are mixed with Scripture to form the new phenomenon called "the theology of growth." Since Church Growth principles are a result of this mixture, their effectiveness is questionable (Chapter Five). With Christ's Parable of the Builder (Luke 6:47-49) in mind, this entire Church Growth "structure" was shown to be built on "sandy soil."<sup>1</sup>

While some Lutherans have attempted to strengthen the movement with Lutheran emphases, these attempts were shown to be inadequate. The weakness of the Lutheran contribution ranges from improper quoting of the Lutheran Confessions<sup>2</sup> to the acceptance of Reformed emphases. The latter is seen in

that one may quote both Lutheran and Reformed Church Growth proponents interchangeably, in support of emphases which include: the harvest principle (Chapter One); the homogeneous unit principle (One); the stress on relevant needs (One); the Church Growth definition of the Church (Two: "The Concept"); the purpose of the Church as defined in terms of "health" and "growth" (Two); Law motivation in evangelism (Two); the acceptance of heterodox "consultants" as God's gifts to the Church (Two); the interpretation of Ephesians Four which detracts from the office of the ministry and segregates the priesthood of ALL believers (Two); the acceptance of Church Growth as a "pragmatic reformation" (Three); the mixing of science and theology into the so-called "theology of growth" (Four); and the acceptance of temporal principles as mandated, eternal principles (Five). In many instances, the distinction between these views and Lutheran theology have been completely overlooked (Appendix J).

The defense of Church Growth by Lutherans was also shown to be inadequate (Six). Lutheran Church Growth proponents cannot agree on fundamental questions such as the role of theology; especially how theology and the behavioral sciences interact. Although it appears that the movement is a true friend of the LC--MS, a closer examination reveals that the movement would change the nature of the Lutheran Church - particularly its liturgical worship. This was seen to be an unacceptable option for the Lutheran Church whose theology and worship are inseparably connected.

Although Confessional Lutherans and the Church Growth movement share a common concern with regard to combating modernism, this was also shown to be an inadequate defense for accepting the movement. First, regardless of the issue or one's orientation, it seems those that question the teachings of Church Growth, are referred to as liberal. However, many Church Growth teachings, like those of modernism, are contrary to Scripture. Second, liberal scholars have valid concerns with regard to the movement. Some of these include the Church Growth emphases of: pragmatism, the homogeneous unit principle, the harvest principle, and Schuller's gospel of possibility thinking.

The acceptance of Church Growth by Lutherans was shown to be built upon an inadequate understanding of history and an over emphasis on pragmatism - not theology. The following summarizes the findings of Chapter Seven:

The Church Growth View:

Lutherans are deficient in understanding growth and evangelism.

Pragmatic answers are needed - most are found outside of Lutheranism.

Theology has actually hindered the growth of the Church.

Chapter Seven Asserted:

Luther and Lutherans understand evangelism and the LC--MS has had a fine history of growth.

History should teach the Lutheran that pragmatic solutions are not the best answer to inactivity.

True theology never hinders growth - it is the starting point.

Once the theological starting point was established, it was shown that the Confessional Lutheran can emphasize

"Confessional Evangelism" through the use of the Apostles' Creed. "Confessional Evangelism" safeguards the Christian Faith (fides quae) as the Christian puts his faith (fides qua) into action. Using the Apostles' Creed provides a Scripturally concise, simple and memorable witness. It provides consistency between the Lutheran Church and the Lutheran witness in the world. It provides continuity for the prospective church member entering the Lutheran Church. It is reinforced in liturgical worship and in catechetical instruction.

Matthias cites Dr. Ralph Bohlmann's call for a resurgence of a "dynamic confessional Lutheranism."<sup>3</sup> This concern is well taken. In fact, this is precisely why the LC--MS does not need to be part of a Lutheran-Church Growth synthesis. If there is to be a dynamic Confessional Lutheranism, then the Lutheran Confessions must be asserted, in theology and in practice, in all their purity. May "Confessional Evangelism," and its use of the Apostles' Creed, the catechism, and the other strengths of the Confessional Lutheran context, provide the ingredients for "a burning awareness of the mission mandate to make disciples of all nations"<sup>4</sup> through the proper proclamation and use of the Means of Grace.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> A note on the use of the behavioral sciences and (valid) Church Growth principles is in order here. The concern of this writer is over which principles are chosen and taught within Confessional Lutheranism. Expanding on the imagery of a build which was used throughout this paper, perhaps the following illustration will be helpful. Although running water is a wonderful convenience, one does not build a house under a waterfall. Rather, plumbing is carefully built into the structure of a house where the running water will serve the needs of the residents; and not destroy the house as a waterfall would. In the same way, a pastor (primarily) may wish to study Church Growth to glean some valid principles. In this way, his study of Church Growth can be compared to carefully constructed plumbing. On the other hand, the implementation of a congregation-wide Church Growth "process" ("program," "change," "strategy") could be compared to placing a house under a water fall in order to get running water. In this way, the pastor loses control of his didactic and shepherding functions (see analysis of Two: "Church Growth Consultants" and "The Interpretation"; and Seven: "Theology"). The remainder of the conclusion points the reader back to insights of the paper which demonstrate that most efforts of Lutherans to "Lutheranize" Church Growth, or "construct plumbing," amounts to nothing more than "building under a waterfall."

<sup>2</sup>Hunter, pp. 25; 38.

<sup>3</sup>Matthias, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup>Matthias, p. 63.

**APPENDICIES**

APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND MATERIAL FOR  
THE THEOLOGY OF HARVEST

The primary thrust of this appendix is to supplement the discussion of why the Church Growth movement so heavily stresses the harvest principle and the "making disciples" aspect of the Great Commission (Chapter One). Two other helpful points shall also be made here. First, the reader will note that much of the discussion will provide more background into the movement's reaction to modernism (Chapter Four). Second, it will be shown that McGavran and Wagner use of the term "proclamation," in two different senses. In view of the discussion regarding the use of the word "foundations" (Chapter Five), this insight helps demonstrate the concern that the movement's use of biblical terminology does not necessarily reflect the meaning which the words were meant to convey. The remainder of this appendix turns to the main purpose stated above.

One reason the Church Growth movement feels so strongly about "disciple making" is because they differentiate between a mere "search theology" and their "theology of harvest" (Matthias, p. 58). McGavran is reacting particularly to "a relativism which aggressively attack[ed] the doctrine that Christ is the only way of salvation" (Matthias, p. 58). It is this modern concept that sees searching alone as the will of God and asks: "Why try hard to make disciples when proclamation [is] satisfactory?" (p. 58). The "\*" in Figure A.1 below represents the preferred emphasis:

Figure A.1

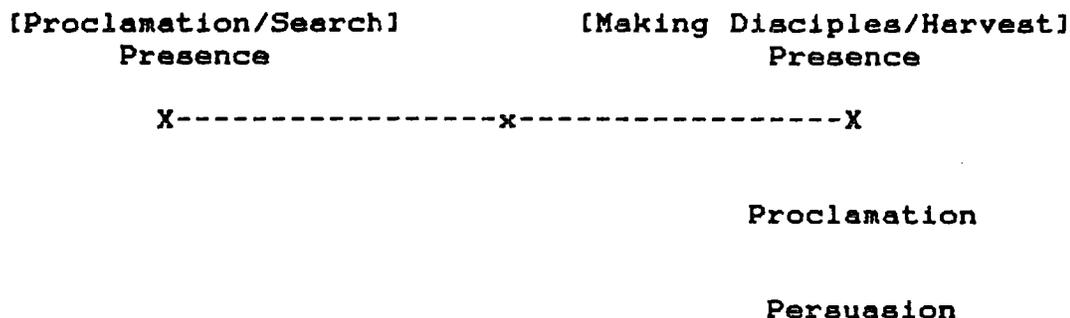
Proclamation/Search

\*Making disciples/Harvest

X-----x-----X

Wagner's view, which uses the terms "presence," "proclamation" and "persuasion," is closely related to McGavran's view (as illustrated in A.1). While Wagner shares McGavran's concern over the effects of modern theology, he is primarily concerned with "the components of effective evangelism" (Matthias, p. 61). This leads him to use the term "proclamation" in a different way than McGavran does. The following figure (A.2) shows this difference (with McGavran's terms in brackets).

Figure A.2



Note that "presence" can be pictured on either side of the line if it is serving the overall Church Growth goal of "proclamation" and "persuasion." Matthias warns the "presence evangelism" and "proclamation evangelism" can be come distorted when they are viewed as ends in themselves (Matthias, p. 61). "Persuasion evangelism" is the key to proper evangelism and is defined by Matthias as:

. . . A form of proclamation evangelism. It is proclaiming the Gospel in a winsome, powerful, and persuasive manner so that disciples are made. Not every instance of a persuasive presentation of the Gospel results in the making of disciples. However, the Gospel is to be presented in as persuasive and powerful a manner as possible (p. 61).

The Confessional Lutheran agrees with McGavran that the Gospel be proclaimed because "Christ is the only way of salvation" (p. 26). However, it is his overreaction to the emphases of modernism that causes him to separate "proclamation" from "making disciples." The dangers of this separation in the name of the harvest principle is seen more clearly when McGavran states:

They [people on the mission field] should not be bothered and badgered. Generations should not be reared in schools where - receiving small doses of the Gospel which they successfully reject - they are in effect innoculated against the Christian religion. Resistant lands should be held lightly (p. 230).

Both Wagner and McGavran err in not reflecting the Scriptural content to their terminology. This can be easily seen in Figure A.2 as McGavran and Wagner place the word "proclamation" in two different places. To a degree, the former views the term in a negative light, while the latter views it as positive. Wagner "reacts" as McGavran does to a given need. In Wagner's case, he reacts to the need for "the

components of effective evangelism" ("Frontiers in Mission Strategy," cited by Matthias, p. 63, endnote #21). (When "proclamation" is separated from "persuasion," the means and the end are also open to confusion. See analysis of Chapter One: "The 'Means' and 'End' Distinction.")

While Matthias claims that "distortion" can occur with "presence" and "proclamation" evangelism, it is interesting that he does not speak of any "distortion" with regard to "persuasion" evangelism. Just as the Confessional Lutheran will agree that "proclamation/search" (McGavran) should never be an end in itself, so too, the Christian "presence" (Wagner) in the world is never to be an end in itself. However, the real difficulties arise in McGavran's distinction between "proclamation" and "presence" evangelism.

Although Matthias cites Billy Graham as a good example of "proclamation" evangelism, traditionally Confessional Lutherans have differed with Graham's synergistic theology. Nafziger describes the dangers of syngerism as follows:

For evangelical Christians . . . the devil has a . . . sophisticated version of work-righteousness or what the theologians call synergism. For us the devil is prepared to allow that, although we can do nothing to earn the reward of eternal life, we can at least make "a decision for Christ." And if this ploy does not work on perceptive and wary Lutheran leaders who can smell out the pelagianistic tendencies inherent in such slogans, the enemy, like the good compromiser that he is, is willing to settle for getting us to think of the receiving hand of faith itself as a good work. He is satisfied if he can get us to offer ourselves a secret compliment for not having said "no" to the Holy Spirit when He came knocking at the door of our heart, or at least to credit our faith with the merit of having turned aside God's wrath against us. . . .

Just as cheap grace or hypocrisy always lurks close at hand when we talk about justification by grace through faith alone, so also synergistic work-righteousness stalks the preaching of sanctification. So long as we retain flesh and blood, we must always remember St. Paul's warning: "Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). The hammer of God's accusing Law must be allowed to shatter all false securities, comforts, and hopes so that sinners may despair of their own ability to win God's favor and thereby be prepared to hear and believe the promise of the Gospel. . . .

All talk about three classes of people - unbelievers, believers, and disciples, or those who are in the bondage of sin, those who accepted Jesus as Savior, and those who accept him as Lord - confuses sanctification and justification and robs Christians of the certainty of their salvation by grace through faith alone for Christ's sake alone (pp. 206-207; 210; 211).

Graham believes conversion consists of three parts; one part of conversion is passive, the other two are active. The passive is regeneration by the Spirit; the active is an individual's willingness to repent and his free decision of faith (Klug, "The Electronic Church," p. 274). This is in contrast to the Scriptural teaching that God works in conversion without human cooperation or decision of his own free will (Pieper, p. 2:437). Dr. John M. Drickamer states:

Shocking [is] the fact that members of the Lutheran . . . Church are learning these ideas from heterodox groups [and asserting] heterodox "evangelists" as examples for the Lutheran Church. Many of these "evangelists" do not present the Biblical Gospel (the only one!) because they demand a response on the part of man, a human decision. This is one of the most pervasive theological errors in our American environment. Lutherans in America always have had a hard time keeping free of this false doctrine. The "response" of faith does not lie within human power any more than Lazarus had the power to walk out of the tomb. In twentieth century America the tendency is to attribute too much to human action (the evangelist leading, the convert deciding). In most modern methods of evangelism the evangelist speaks about his own experience or his own being brought to faith. But that is not evangelism at all. The Biblical Gospel is not about Christians but about what God has done in Christ. . . . Even the Holy Spirit does not primarily speak about Himself but about Christ (John 16:13) (pp. 20-21).

There are practical issues which also trouble Confessional Lutherans in regard to Billy Graham. For example, recently in a televised "crusade" (March, 1984), night after night, Graham only mentioned Christ and the cross in passing (i.e., an average of 15 seconds of his 20-25 minute message per evening). He spent more time speaking of how the United States should be prepared for the judgment of God "like in the days of Noah" (and other related "judgment" themes). Ironically, after his message, thousands of people went forward to "receive Christ." If these individuals truly "received" the Christ of the Gospel, it is doubtful that Graham's "proclamation" could have been the cause. (These people hardly even heard Jesus' name.) It is safer to say that

if anybody was brought to faith, it was because others sowed the seed. Cannon states:

Those who pride themselves in . . . the results of their great meetings, need to bow the knee and thank God for those who sowed. They had better not claim the harvest for themselves (p. 22).

The problem of synergism becomes apparent when one examines Wagner's definition for "persuasion evangelism" (offered above). Granted, the Gospel should never be presented in a sloppy manner which does not give our Savior His proper respect and admiration. However, there is great danger in describing the human side of the presentation of the Gospel as "powerful" for two reasons. First, it is impossible to measure how "powerful" a message is. For example, the exact same sermon, and its delivery, may convert many in one place and nobody in the next - even if presented with the same fervor. Apart from the act of preaching or teaching the correct Gospel content, the Christian contributes nothing "so that disciples are made" (Matthias, p. 61). Second, feeble human beings do not add any power to the Word of God. The Word of God, in and of itself, is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12).

To say that "not every instance of a persuasive presentation of the Gospel results in making of disciples" (p. 61), is to misunderstand the Holy Spirit's work of persuasion. In short, whenever a person comes to faith, this is indeed a "persuasive" presentation of the Gospel, i.e., a presentation that resulted in the Holy Spirit persuading the person. However, the test of faithfulness is not in the number of conversions, but rather, whether the Gospel has been proclaimed in its purity (AC VII).

Matthias states "all persuasion is solely the work of the Holy Spirit," and yet, in the same paragraph, "it is a Christian, usually Paul [in the Book of Acts], who is doing the persuading" (p. 61). That Matthias leans strongly toward the Reformed emphasis of the proclaimer doing the persuading manifests itself in the following:

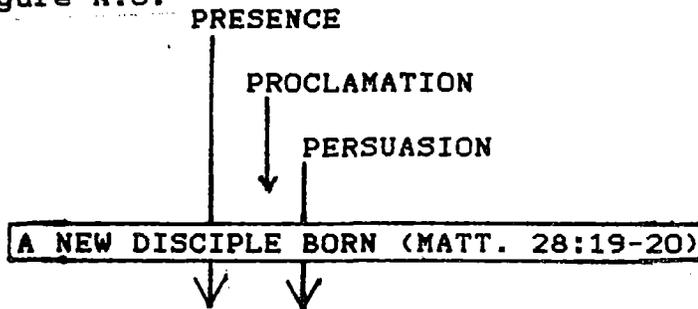
The person is converted by God through the message of the Gospel presented verbally and persuasively (p. 61).

This is even stated more strongly in the following:

Frequently, someone is around to suggest that this [one-on-one evangelism] borders on synergism and that persuasion remains the work of the Holy Spirit (my emphasis) (p. 61).

The main issue is not whether man should present the Gospel "persuasively." Rather, whether God works through the Gospel, without qualification as presented in Romans 1:16. In the following figure (A.3) it is interesting to note, the "proclamation arrow" stops short of "A NEW DISCIPLE BORN" (i.e., making of a disciple by means of proclamation), while the "presence arrow" and "persuasion arrow" continue on through. (Part of a larger diagram as presented in Schamehorn's Spirit of the Dove, p. 58. Another portion of this diagram is presented in Appendix J.)

Figure A.3:



Matthias adds that "frequently the ineffectiveness of the Gospel lies not in the hearers, but in some ineptness or omission on the part of the proclaimer" (p. 59). This statement is uniquely true and false. It is true in that at times the proclaimer does not proclaim the pure Gospel, and as a result, the Holy Spirit is hindered. The statement is false, in that nothing lies "in the hearers" which contributes to his or her conversion. (See analysis of One: "The Doctrine of Man.")

It is interesting to note that Matthias does not mention the need to look at the message - the Gospel itself - to see whether this is being presented correctly. When states: "When the channel for Gospel proclamation is clogged, the Holy Spirit is unable to work upon the heart of the one who is to hear the Gospel," this does not take into consideration the Gospel message. When the message is "clogged," then this statement is true. However, the term "the channel" does not emphasize the Gospel message (Romans 1:19), but rather the need, "first of all, to look at and understand the target audience in order to discover some unique needs or to identify some special resistance to the Gospel (p. 59). Since all men are equally "resistant" to the Gospel, and Scripture reveals no "special" spiritual resistance, then the Confessional Lutheran is correct in noting that synergism is strongly "suggested" (See p. 61). If "persuasion" is not viewed primarily as the work of the Holy Spirit, then one could well be dealing with a synergistic view of conversion. (In addition to taking these observations at face value, there is a need to examine the contents of Kennedy's Evangelism Explosion (example, p. 44) and other Reformed evangelism

methods to clearly find the type of synergism which many Lutherans have assimilated.)

Matthias suggests "a thorough word study of peitho" so that the reader may develop "a conviction that persuasion is a valid part of the evangelistic task" (pp. 61-62). A word study of the references Matthias cites is indeed convincing. However, it reinforces the concern of the Confessional Lutheran in that the word "proclaim" is the primary focus. For example, in Acts 17:1-4 Paul is "proclaiming" (active indicative), and only as a result, some "were persuaded" (passive indicative). Peitho in this case is in the passive voice indicating that the Holy Spirit was active while individuals remained passive in coming to faith (i.e., being persuaded). In each case, Acts 17:1-4; 18:4; 19:8,26; 26:28; 28:23-24), Paul is indeed an eloquent speaker. However, the overall teaching of Scripture needs to inform the reader (particularly when dealing with historical passages). The Word is powerful in and of itself. The Holy Spirit does the persuading (Acts 10 and 11).

## APPENDIX B

### "POSSIBILITY THINKING" AND OTHER EMPHASES OF DR. ROBERT SCHULLER

In Chapters One the possibility thinking of Dr. Robert Schuller has been cited. But possibility thinking is not the only insight which Schuller has contributed to the Church Growth movement. (Wagner refers the reader to Your Church Has Real Possibilities on page 54 of Your Church Can Grow.) It is helpful to describe the influence of Schuller on the movement as a "reciprocal relationship." That is, since Church Growth places great emphasis on the use of successful methods in the growth of the Church, (Wagner, p. 159) Schuller's insights will have an influence on the movement's proponents. In turn, the Church Growth movement had provided an avenue for Schuller's active role. Wagner states:

. . . You don't converse too long about church growth in America these days before you mention Robert Schuller and his Garden Grove Community Church. When . . . Decision magazine, . . . scans the ecclesiastical scene of the U.S. and Canada and compiles a book called Great Churches of Today, the Garden Grove Community Church figures prominently. . . .

When his concepts and principles for church growth had been proven in the laboratory of personal experiences to be successful, Dr. Schuller chose to share his experience with pastors. In 1969 he organized his Institute for Successful Church Leadership in Garden Grove, California, a truly pacesetter support source to pastors. (Your Church Has Real Possibilities, Foreword)

The main point of concern is that Church Growth, in a sense, is obligated to promote Schuller's principles regardless of his theological base or perspective. Some of Schuller's observations like "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail," are neutral. On the one hand, some proponents will say that they do not agree with Schuller on every point, (Wagner, p. 91) yet, on the other hand, based upon pragmatic considerations, many of Schuller's axioms are accepted and "hard [to] improve on." (Wagner, p. 136) It was not the intention of this paper to provide a detailed analysis of Schuller's thought. However, the following list, is taken from his book Self-Esteem the New Reformation (pp. 25-40). It will serve as a summary of key points where Schuller's teachings are present in Church Growth. Notice that under

each point is the location in this paper where this "topic" is discussed.

Schuller's Points:

How do we explain, justify, and tolerate the destructive disunity and suspicions between the various sectors in Christianity?

See analysis of Chapter Two: "Hyper-Cooperativism"; and Chapter Three: "A Response to Modernism."

Are we aware that theology has failed to accommodate and apply proven insights in human behavior as revealed by twentieth-century psychologist?

See analysis of possibility thinking in Chapter One: "The Quest"; also analysis of Chapter Four.

Consider the failure of Protestant Christianity to come up with a dynamic movement to correct social injustices after successfully proclaiming the gospel.

See analysis of Chapter Three.

How do we resolve the perceived conflict posed by advocates of a so-called "theology of comfort and success" versus a "theology of discipleship under the cross"?

See Appendix H under "A Comparison of the Theology of Glory and the Theology of the Cross."

If the gospel of Jesus Christ is the truth that we proclaim it to be, then why is the established church in Europe and America declining, and why is the world not rushing in to accept the "Good News"?

See analysis of Chapter One: "Diagnosing the Receptivity of Man"; also analysis of Chapter Three: "A Pragmatic Reformation." ("Self-Esteem" is considered to be a concept as significant as the 16th-century Reformation.)

## APPENDIX C

### A CHURCH GROWTH BIBLE STUDY OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

#### Introduction

Church Growth claims "renewal" is taking place in churches through Bible studies which discuss the Church's nature and purpose. The purpose of this appendix is to analyze one such Church Growth publication: Biblical Basis for Church Growth, (Fuller Evangelistic Association). It will also supplement the discussion of the Church Growth view of the Great Commission (from Chapter One). One important note in this discussion is that Matthew 9:37-38 is used in this study as the primary text for explaining the Great Commission. This is in contrast to the claim that Matthew 28:19-20 is the true starting point.

#### The Discussion

##### The Nature of the Church

This Bible study suggests Bible passages which "see the church as a living body with its various parts and interrelated members" (p. 7). The first part consists of reading four passages: Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 4:15-16 and 5:25-27. Next, the participants are asked to complete and discuss the following phrases:

1. My first memory of the church is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I then thought of the church as \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I now think of the church as \_\_\_\_\_.

The second part begins with a short commentary on the human body (p. 7). The main point is to restate "the way Paul uses the body as an illustration of how the church is to function." Next, 1 Corinthians 12:14-27 is examined again. This time participants are asked to put various marks in their Bibles (or on paper) which indicate the verses: (1) they understand, (2) they don't understand, (3) that inspire them, and (4) that convict them. Next, the marks are discussed for twenty minutes using "various [Bible] translations for additional insight" (p. 8).

The third part consists of one group discussing " (1) programs . . . that have tried to get everybody doing the same thing," and (2) "how . . . these programs [could] have been

improved using the 'body' concept." At the same time, another group discusses "programs "other types of programs . . . where this could be practiced" (p. 9). The two groups come back together, discuss their findings, and finally, close with a prayer.

### The Purpose of the Church

In addition to the insights above, a Church Growth proponent will not speak long about the nature of the Church without mentioning the growth of the Church. The next section in this Bible study reviews "The Purpose of the Church." Its format is similar to that presented above. The first part consists of reading Matthew 9:37-38, Luke 15:4-32, and John 3:16-17. Next, the participants are asked to complete and discuss the following phrases:

1. The last time I lost my car keys, I quit searching for them when I \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The last time we lost a pet, we quit searching for it when we \_\_\_\_\_.
3. If I had a 10 year old daughter who was lost, I would not quit searching until \_\_\_\_\_.

The second part begins with a short commentary on the fall of man and God's reaction.

The Bible, . . . is an accurate record of how God has faithfully dealt with lost men and women. The Bible narratives tell us that with some He was successful and some were completely resistant. . . . It is always His intention that they be found and saved from their own destruction. . . . The parable of the prodigal son not only shows God as the Father who was not willing to give up until His son was safely home, it also shows the Pharisees and scribes in the position of the older son who really didn't care if his brother was found (p. 11).

The participants are then divided into three groups to study the three parables read earlier in Luke 15.

The third part emphasizes the fact that "the healthy, functioning body as a whole is expected to grow as a direct result of the ongoing process of persuading men and women to be reconciled to God" (p. 12). Next, the group reads 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 and discusses the following questions:

1. How does this passage describe Christians?
2. How did this condition come about?
3. What does this passage say about Christ's work in the world?

4. What does this passage say about our carrying on Christ's work?

Finally, before closing with prayer, this session ends with the following conclusion:

It is of utmost importance . . . that we not belittle the excellent work going on in churches that are not growing. Our Lord Himself stands at the door and knocks, but enters only if the door is opened. On that basis, however, it is not wise to assume that God intends for us to congratulate ourselves on our diligence in searching with no concern over finding.

Jesus said, "I will build My Church." His church includes our local church and He intends for it to grow. If we are not experiencing the growth we would like to see, we should not assume an attitude of failure. The attitude that is accurate is one of incompleteness. A child has not failed simply because he is not of adult proportions. . . . However, if this same child is not exhibiting measurable growth, it is an indication of a lack of health. We would not condemn the child, we would seek out the causes of the diseased condition.

Likewise, if our church is not exhibiting measurable growth, it is an indication of lack of health. This is not a condition to condemn. It is rather a condition which calls for careful diagnosis which will lead to a workable cure being administered (pp. 12-13).

### The Analysis

#### The Nature of the Church

This study covers some very important passages in regard to the nature of the Church (p. 7). The passages stress that all Christians are: (1) "one body in Christ" (Romans 12:4-5); (2) "baptized into" the Church and "placed" into it "just as He [God] desires," (1 Corinthians 12:12-27); (3) "to grow up in all aspects into Him" (Ephesians 4:15-16); and (4) cleansed "by the washing of water with the word." However, it is uncertain how these passages are to be presented. For example, it is not known whether it will be stressed that it is through baptism that individuals and the Church are made "holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:25-27). The life giving Word and Sacraments, which motivate Christians to work and function together, (AC VII, VIII) are not a primary concern.

Indeed, much more emphasis seems to be placed on the opinions of the participant than on the words of Scripture. This is seen through the "fill in" statements (example: "My first memory of the church is . . ." (p. 7)) and the more detailed discussion of 1 Corinthians 12:14-27 (through marking Bibles) (p. 8). The emphasis here is not to gain insight into what the text is saying, but rather, to reach some sort of consensus. The use of "various [Bible] translations for additional insight" (p. 7) would also seem to lead away from an objective understanding of what the text is saying. This could easily happen, for example, with paraphrases such as the Living Bible. Also, the discussion of the past church programs experienced by the individual do not directly relate to Scripture.

Vogel expresses similar concerns. It is interesting to note that even a manual that "avoids 'decision theology'" can be significantly weakened by too great an emphasis on subjective feelings (p. 219) and individualism (pp. 221; 223). This is partly based upon the fact that the Bible "acknowledges that the testimony of one witness is invalid (Deut. 19:15; John 8:14-18)" (p. 221), unless of course an individual is correctly witnessing the truths of Scripture. He suggests that the leader "distinguish between talk about feelings and telling God's truth."

#### The Purpose of the Church

The next section, "The Purpose of the Church," suffers from some of the same difficulties. This includes the emphasis placed on personal opinions through discussion questions (such as: "The last time I lost my car key, I quit searching for them when I . . .") (p. 10). As in the section on "The Nature of the Church" above, it is unclear how the passages in this section will be used. Matthew 9:37-38 was probably used, instead of Matthew 28:19-20, to stress the "harvest principle" of Church Growth. This is unfortunate because the former was for a special mission of the disciples, the latter is still in effect for the Church today. (See the analysis of Chapter One: "The Harvest Principle.")

The parables of Luke 15 were probably used to stress the importance of diagnosing man's receptivity to the Gospel. However, the parables of Luke 15 could actually refute the emphases of Church Growth. The parables emphasize diligent searching. Their focus is not "success" or "resistance" as the study suggests. A shepherd is "successful" if he finds just one missing sheep (vv. 4-7). A coin cannot be "resistant" (although man is worse than resistant; Klug, p. 32) (vv. 8-10). In the case of the Prodigal Son, the point

was not that the brother "didn't care if his brother was found" (p. 11), but rather, that the son was self-righteous and thought himself more worthy of "the fattened calf" (vv. 27-32). (See the analysis of Chapter One: "Diagnosing the Receptivity of Man." Review especially: (1) that parables should not be used "for doctrinal conclusions" (Surburg, p. 347), and (2) the main point needs to be found and taught (Surburg quoting Graebner, p. 345) The danger exists that discussion groups will miss, or drift away from, the main point.) In the light of these observations, no guarantee that posing the discussion questions suggested (example, "What was lost?" p. 11) will lead the group to an understanding of the need to emphasize the effectiveness of the Means of Grace.

The conclusion of this study is weak for several reasons. First, it expresses concern over "searching" and "finding," yet does not mention the means by which one is truly found or converted. The emphasis seems to be on man opening the door of his heart by his own free will (i.e., synergism) (p. 12). Second, ill health is depicted as a lack of growth (in a child) (p. 13). However, the opposite never seems to be taken into account. The movement never seems to realize that growth does not necessarily prove health. For example, a person with a thyroid problem can "grow" to extraordinary proportions, but obesity is not a sign of good health. In the same way, a church can grow, but the harvest produced may consist of a substantial number of tares gathered in with the wheat (Matthew 13:24-43). Third, being aware of a problem and correctly curing it are two different issues. The study does not give a clear example of (1) what "measurable growth" is, and (2) how their "diagnosis . . . will lead to a workable cure being administered" (p. 13). While Church Growth research may detect external (finite) sociological or psychological factors which contribute to "growth," true internal (infinite) faith and growth are matters of the heart (Matthew 22:37; John 14:1). Therefore, they are not empirically measurable (Luke 6:37; 1 Corinthians 4:5) (Drickamer, "Building," p. 10). Since the "workable cure" of Church Growth is primarily rooted in the behavioral sciences, which deals in finitudes, it possesses no spiritual "curing power." (See analysis of Chapter Four for further discussion of the movement's use of the behavioral sciences.)

## APPENDIX D

### THE SO-CALLED "VITAL SIGNS" OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

In addition to "diseases," Wagner speaks of "vital signs" which effect a church's growth. Just as the "diseases" do not necessarily reflect a church's spiritual condition, so also, the so-called "vital signs" do not necessarily indicate signs of a healthy church. This is not to say that these insights are unuseful. Benefits do result from: (No. 1) a pastor who is an optimistic leader; (No. 2) a laity which is mobilized; (No. 3), a church that concerns itself with human needs; (No. 4) an understanding of effective communication skills; (No. 5) sensitivity to various racial and culture groups; (No. 6) methods which communicate the Gospel; and (No. 7) Biblical priorities.

Although there are also valid concerns in regard to these "vital signs," a special section has not been devoted to treat them in the main body of this paper. They were all (indirectly) treated at various points in the paper. For the convenience of the reader, the list which follows provides these "vital signs" and where they are encountered throughout the paper. These "vital signs" suffer from the same unScriptural weaknesses as the "diseases."

1. A pastor who is a possibility thinker and whose dynamic leadership has been used to catalyze the entire church into action for growth.

See analysis of Chapter Two and Appendix B.

2. A well-mobilized laity which has discovered, has developed and is using all the spiritual gifts for growth.

See analysis of Chapter Two: "Church Growth Consultants"; "Ephesians Four"; and Appendices F - H.

3. A church big enough to provide for the range of services that meet the needs and expectations of its members (and "community," Hunter, pp. 106-107).

See analysis of Two, especially: "The Concept" under "congregation."

4. The proper balance of the dynamic relationship between celebration, congregation and cell.

See analysis of Chapter Two: "The Concept."

5. A membership drawn primarily from one homogeneous unit.

See analysis of Chapter One: "Homogeneous Units" and Two: "The Purpose of the Church" (Diseases of "ethnikitis" and "people blindness").

6. Evangelistic methods that have been proven to make disciples.

See analysis of One: "Diagnosing the Receptivity"; Two: "The Purpose" (Hyper-Cooperation); Three: A Pragmatic Reformation; and Four: "Church Growth as a Science."

7. Priorities arranged in biblical order.

This entire paper is concerned with analyzing whether this goal has been achieved.

## APPENDIX E

### A CONTINUED COMPARISON OF THE CHURCH GROWTH VIEW OF THE MINISTRY WITH THE BIBLICAL VIEW

While it is not intended to be exhaustive, the purpose of this appendix is to supplement the Church Growth model of ministry (2.3), the Biblical model (2.4), and the the wedges which are driven between the emphases of the Biblical model by Church Growth (2.5). Citing Walther's theses on "The Ministry" (Dallman, Walther and the Church, pp. 71-86) and the analysis of an illustration adds insight here. Walther states:

I. The holy ministry, or pastoral office, is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers.

II. The ministry, or the pastoral office, is not a human ordinance, but an office established by God Himself.

III. The ministry of preaching is not an arbitrary office, but its character is such that the Church has been commanded to establish it and is ordinarily bound to it till the end of days.

IV. The ministry of preaching is not a peculiar order, set up over and against the common estate of Christians, and holier than the latter, like the priesthood of the Levites, but it is an office of service.

V. The ministry of preaching has the authority to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments and the authority of a spiritual tribunal.

VI. The ministry of preaching is conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of all church power, or of the keys, and by its call, as prescribed by God. The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not by divine institution but is an apostolic church ordinance and merely a public, solemn confirmation of the call.

VII. The holy ministry is the authority conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of the priesthood and of all church power, to administer in public office the common right of the spiritual priesthood in behalf of all.

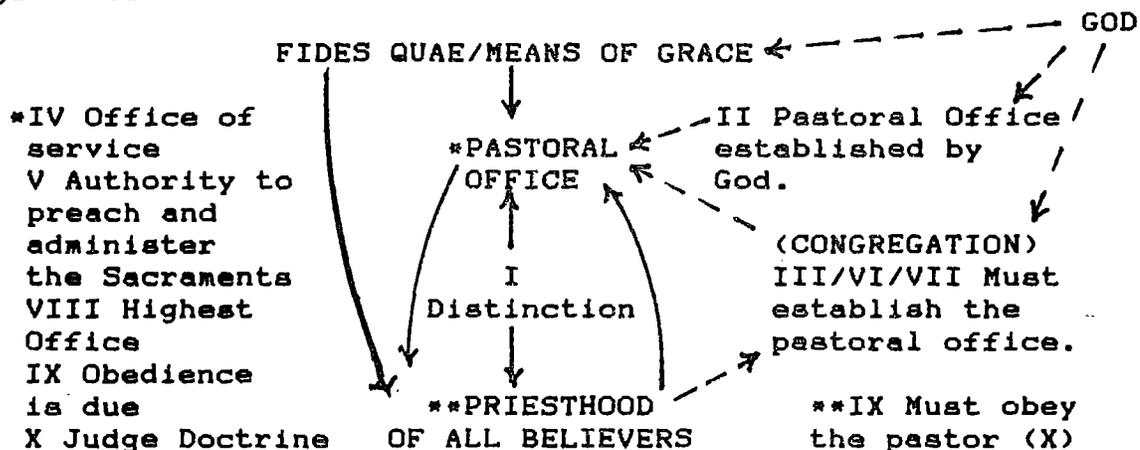
VIII. The ministry is the highest office in the Church, from which, as its stem, all other offices of the Church issue.

IX. Reverence and unconditional obedience is due to the ministry of preaching when the preacher is ministering the Word of God. However, the preacher may not dominate over the Church; he has, accordingly, no right to make new laws, to arrange indifferent matters and ceremonies arbitrarily, and to impose and execute excommunication ALONE, without a previous verdict of the entire congregation.

X. According to divine right the function of passing judgment on doctrine belongs indeed to the ministry of preaching. However, also the laymen have this right, and for this reason they also have a seat and voice with the preachers in church courts and councils.

The following figure (E.1) is designed to show the interrelationship between the pastoral office and the priesthood of all believers. This is done by using the thesis numbers cited above. The distinction between the pastoral office and the priesthood of all believers is shown by "I"; God's establishment of the pastoral office by II; God's call through the congregation by VI and VII; the pastor's "responsibilities" by IV, V, VI, VIII, IX, X; and the "responsibilities" of the priesthood of all believers by III, VIII, X. The dotted arrows indicate the establishment of, and the call into, the pastoral office. The solid arrows indicate the direction toward which the "responsibilities" flow.

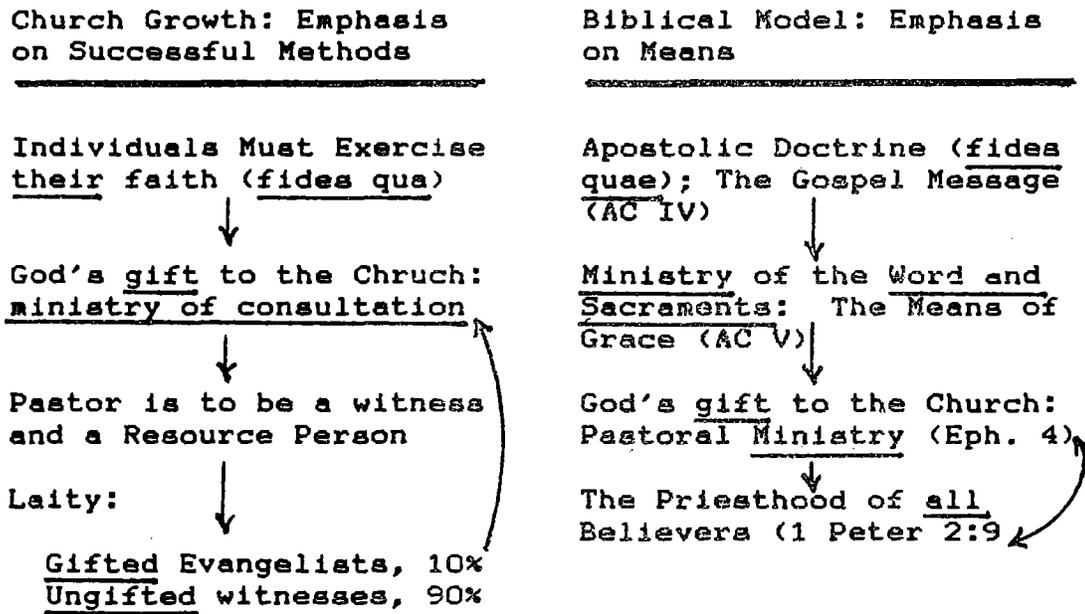
Figure E.1



This figure depicts the concern which Scripture has over the preservation and use of the Means of Grace. The relationship between the pastoral office and the priesthood of

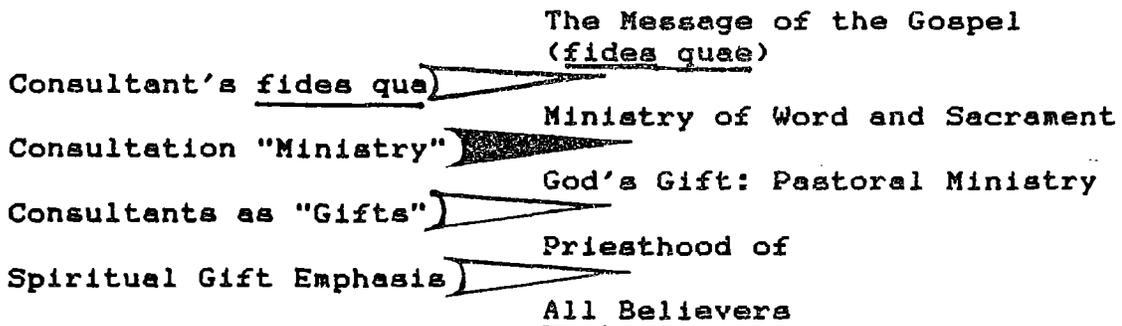
all believers, flows from, yet does not effect, the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. (I.e., this interaction occurs on the last two levels.) In contrast, by noting the Church Growth model (once again) below, the arrow from the "gifted evangelists" has direct bearing on their view of the ministry, and consequently, their non-use of the Means of Grace. Note Figure E.2 (2.3 and 2.4):

Figure E.2



These new insights reinforce the conclusions reached in Chapter Two and depicted by Figure 2.5. The arrows above (E.2) demonstrate that this emphasis (doubly) drives a wedge between the Means of Grace and the concept of the ministry. Note the double wedge in Figure E.3:

Figure E.3



## APPENDIX F

### A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE SO-CALLED GIFTS OF "APOSTLE," "PASTOR," AND "TEACHER"

This appendix serves as a response to the so-called gifts of "apostle," "pastor," and "teacher." It is necessitated by the fact that these "gifts" are even presented in some LC--MS literature (See Nadasdy, p. 28ff.). Although much could be written, the analysis shall be restricted to the well informed insights of Dr. John M. Drickamer (Building Carefully, pp. 16-18; 21-22).

The apostles are clearly seen to be in a different category from any other preachers in many contexts of Scripture. They were called directly by Christ. They are in several places in the Gospels singled out for special mention as apostles, although Christ had more disciples than these. There was a specific limited number of them, and when Judas fell an office was vacant and had to be filled, but filled only by God's choice (Acts 1:12-26).

The uniqueness of the apostles is also seen in the case of Paul. He had a great difficulty proving to some parts of the primitive church that he was truly an apostle. The congregations knew about the limitations of that office. . . . (What Luther Says, #112; W-T, 3, No. 3880).

Some people today maintain that there is a gift of apostleship. There is no such gift mentioned in the Bible. There are certain individuals who were apostles, and they are gifts to the whole church. In fact, they are part of the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) through their Word, which is the Word of God and through which all Christians have come to faith (John 17:20). The word "apostleship" . . . is used four times in the New Testament and is never called a gift (Acts 1:25; Rom. 1:5; 1 Cor. 9:2; Gal. 2:8). It is an office (Acts 1:20, 25), whose occupants are gifts to the church.

The apostleship which some believe to be in the church today is sometimes said to be an ability to begin a new work with authority from God. This definition is terribly faulty and does not fit at all into the Biblical scheme of who an apostle was. The apostolic office does definitely carry authority from God (Luke 10:16). The Word of an apostle is the Word of God. The church is subject to the

Word of the apostles. Their Word is a means of grace (John 17:20) and is infallible, inerrant, and incontrovertible (1Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13). If someone today were an apostle, then we would have to start printing his writings as part of the New Testament. There are no apostles today. The claim to be an apostle would be arrogating divine authority to oneself.

The gift of the apostle was restricted to the first century, unless perhaps St. John might have lived into the first year or two of the second century. Therefore, there can be no objection to the idea that one or more of the other gifts mentioned in Eph. 4 or 1 Cor. 12:28-29 might be restricted in a similar temporal way. Since many of the other gifts confirmed the authority of the apostles (2 Cor. 12:12) they may well also be restricted to the first century. . . .

A serious error in the modern church is a terrible downgrading of the holy ministry. The Biblical doctrine of the Lutheran confessions, for which the Missouri Synod has tenaciously contended, teaches that there is only one divinely instituted office in the church, the ministry of the Word. Even the apostles were in this office, though they held a special place in it as having been directly called rather than indirectly called, as all others are. This office of the ministry is the ministry of the Word only and is distinct from the work of service done by all believers. Some of the most important Bible verses in this context are 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11; Rom. 10:15; James 3:1; Jer. 3:15--all of which clearly teach that only some and not all Christians are in the public ministry. . . . This one office was, in the New Testament, referred to as that of elder, bishop, pastor and teacher. Eph. 4:11 does not refer to pastor and teacher as two offices. There is only one article used for both pastor and teacher, thus indicating that these two names referred to the same persons. These were teachers of the Word, not parochial school teachers. All other offices which the church may from time to time establish are dependent on this one office (Heb. 13:7; Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Tim. 5:17). For further reference it would be good to consult the whole second section of Walther, Kirche und Amt, and the Brief Statement, paragraphs 31 and 32. Incidentally, the word diakonia in Eph. 4:12 does not have the definite article and does not refer to the office of the public ministry but to the more generalized work of spiritual priests (see Lenski, sub loco).

The chief concern here is that the distinction between the pastoral ministry and the priestly work of all believers be maintained and that this not be replaced by some free-wheeling "charismatic" ministry of whoever feels like it today.

Today there is . . . talk of a gift of "pastoring." There is no such gift mentioned in the Bible, though pastors themselves are said to be gifts to the church in Eph. 4:11 (see Jer. 3:15). That this is primarily a reference to the ministry of the Word is clear from all the other titles surrounding pastors in Eph. 4:11, and also from the fact that Christ used pastoral words to refer to the ministry of the Word in John 21:15-17. But the supposed gift of pastoring is defined as an ability to counsel and encourage people in spiritual matters and to nourish them with the Word of God. The ministry of the Word is the only office which has this charge from God. No one should arrogate this office to himself. The implication is being drawn, however, that this gift might be given to some who are not pastors and that some pastors might not have this gift. This idea means that some people in the congregation might conclude that they could do better than the pastor and that this "gift" means a divine right to take over some of his work. That would contradict Heb. 13:7, 17.

. . . The New Testament says nothing about teachers in the church besides those who are in the ministry of the Word, that is, pastors. The Bible does not forbid the church to use other teachers, and so the church has exercised its freedom in this matter. But we must not pretend that Sunday school, day school, weekday school, parochial school and other teachers are mentioned in the Bible. They simply are not. [See also the CTCR document entitled: "The Ministry," pp. 19ff.]

Those who maintain that there is a gift of teaching often want to evaluate or measure this gift on the basis of results. But in teaching the Word of God, the results are up to God. . . . The Holy Spirit, not the teacher, produces the results. The Spirit can be resisted when He works through means (Acts 13:46). But the power of the Word depends on nothing and no one, certainly not on some ability or gift a human being may have. Good spiritual results may be accomplished by a poor teacher who sticks to the Word of God, but nothing (spiritually) good can be accomplished by the most "gifted" teacher who does not teach the Word of God but substitutes for it some humanly contrived notions.

Dr. Drickamer points are well taken. This writer would like to offer one more insight. Some personal interviews were conducted with Lutheran pastors, and future Lutheran pastors, who, in varying degrees, agree with the Church Growth position on these "gifts." One key question put forth was: "If Mr. or Mrs. X, who is your own personal (God-given of course) 'thorn in the flesh' were to be tested through a 'spiritual gifts inventory' as possessing the 'gift of pastor' or 'apostle,' would you yield to their 'office' or 'gift'?" Some refused to answer the question at first because they felt it violated the eighth commandment or they "never had any such person in their congregation(s)." Others had to be prodded: "Think hard. What if Mr. X(!) tested out as an 'apostle,' would you yield . . . ?" One way or another, none of these individuals would yield. However, all agreed that if they did administer a 'spiritual gift inventory,' they would feel somewhat obliged to honor the results. In a basic way, this simple question verified that the pastoral office, not any "gift" that can be measured by human means, is the "gift" which God has given to His Church (Ephesians 4). It also shows the wisdom of teaching the Biblical doctrine of the Church and the ministry so that the laity will understand (1) their true role in the priesthood of all believers, and (2) how this relates to God's "gift" of the pastoral office. (Note: These "interviews" were very informal, yet very much to the point. All involved knew that this writer would set forth the question above in his STM thesis. It was promised that all names would be kept confidential.) (See also Appendix H for more information on "spiritual gift inventories.")

## APPENDIX G

### A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF SEEKING SPIRITUAL GIFTS: THE CORRECT INTERPRETATION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 12:31

Here is a brief analysis of the Church Growth emphasis on seeking spiritual gifts. They claim "the function of Christians depends on their gifts" (Hunter, p. 68). God "expects . . . them to be invested wisely so growth will occur and His work will be done" (Miller, p. 4). More specifically:

People who use their spiritual gifts are the right people . . . The right people for the comprehensive task of making disciples will discover their gifts and use them wherever they fit in the process of evangelism (Hunter, p. 65).

Much of this emphasis is based upon 1 Corinthians 12:31 (See Nadasdy, p. 35). The KJV translates the passage: "But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way." However, it is highly questionable, in the light of the context of this passage whether it has been correctly translated. This question hinges on whether zeloute is to be taken as an imperative or as the indicative. (Apart from context, both are an option for the form.)

A very fine master's thesis has been written on this passage by Mark W. Demel entitled: "The Mood Usage of 'zeloute' in I Corinthians 12:31." Demel summarizes the discussion as follows:

Paul is either encouraging the seeking of spiritual gifts (imperative) or charging that selfish seeking of spiritual gifts (indicative) was going on . . . The evidence, both from Scripture and from the early church strongly favor the indicative. Paul was not encouraging the Corinthians to "seek the greater gifts," but charging that they were doing this very thing, i.e., 'seeking the greatest gifts'" (p. 1).

It is the opinion of this writer that Demel has reached the correct conclusion through solid Scriptural research. While several arguments are objectively set forth in favor of the imperative, the context decides for the indicative. Here are some key reasons for accepting the indicative:

(1) The indicative form is far more common than the imperative (p. 24). (2) The connotation is "self-seeking"

which is what Paul is correcting (Demel citing Gardiner, p. 22).

(3) Saying this is an imperative would separate it from any other imperative by one full chapter (p. 31). Paul up to this point, is describing, not exhorting.

(4) After the apostle showed them their abuse of spiritual gifts, it seems contradictory to suppose he would "unsay all again, and give them contrary advice" (Demel citing Doddridge, p. 17).

(5) It seems unlikely, given the Corinthian situation, that Paul, before he has laid down these guidelines, would urge the Corinthians to be zealous of spiritual gifts (p. 34).

(6) Nowhere in the entire letter does an isolated imperative occur (p. 33).

Demel concludes, "So today this verse stands not as an exhortation to seek the greatest gifts, but as a warning against this type of behavior. . . . We should not, however, limit the warning of this only to various . . . groups, for it applies to all Christians. The old edem within each of us often entices us . . . Each of us should be content with the gifts and position that God has given us within the body of Christ (p. 80).

The Church Growth movement would benefit greatly if it would re-examine its emphasis on "seeking spiritual gifts" - especially in the light of this passage. While Christians need to be about the Great Commission for the sake of the world, the mere seeking of spiritual gifts will not cause growth to occur. Christians will not be truly motivated with a Law approach such as "God expects you to seek spiritual gifts." The Gospel alone motivates and equips the Christian for witnessing.

This examination will also provide a significant insight into the newly developing trend to actually call "a minister of spiritual gifts." (Hunter, p. 69) Assuming that 1 Corinthians 12:31 should be translated as an indicative (instead of an imperative), it is safe to say that the Apostle Paul would not only frown upon individuals "seeking spiritual gifts," but he would most certainly rebuke a called minister who wrongly encouraged or promoted this type of activity. Growth, even "explosive growth," (Hunter, p. 69) must be centered in the Means of Grace (AC VII), and the results attributed to the same (AC V).

## APPENDIX H

### SPIRITUAL-GIFT INVENTORIES: A REFLECTION ON THE THEOLOGY OF GLORY

#### Introduction

Here is an analysis of the "spiritual-gift inventory" (also called "tests" or "questionnaires"). Several sources are quoted to provide additional background material for concerns raised in the analysis of Chapter Two. This writer's comments are set forth as "initial responses" to his research of two spiritual gift inventories. Since the analysis of these inventories is as complex as the inventories themselves, this appendix will be simplified into two parts: (1) the strengths and weaknesses of spiritual gift inventories, and (2) the comparison of the theology of glory and the theology of the cross.

#### The Strengths and Weaknesses of Spiritual Gift Inventories

##### Personal Renewal Study

This writer reviewed Personal Renewal Study: Learner's Guide for God's Gifted People (Stewards in His Service; The Texas District--LCMS). One strength is the section entitled: "What dangers are there in discovering Spiritual Gifts?" Interestingly enough, the more spectacular gifts are left untreated. On the one hand, it is wise that these are not treated. First, because "they are not readily useable in a Lutheran context," and second, because "they are highly specialized" (p. 22). Yet, it is weak because the authors "pick and choose" which gifts are worthy mention (p. 22). However, to be consistent, it would seem that if God gives all gifts, then they are all worthy of being sought.

There are several important concerns in regard to the Personal Renewal Study. First, a very law-oriented view of "needing to study spiritual gifts" is asserted: "God will call us to account for how we have used what He has entrusted to us." (p. 7; Pt. I: #3; see also Miller, p. 4) However, Christians should be motivated by the Gospel. (Appendix G addressed the issue of seeking spiritual gifts, i.e., "zealous" in 1 Corinthians 12:31 is indicative; not imperative.) Second, one of the "prerequisites for discovering . . . spiritual gifts" is very subjective: "That persons must

believe what Scripture says about the gifts of the Spirit" (p. 11; Pt. III: #2). The immediate question: "What does Scripture say about spiritual gifts?" Scripture often cites a gift, yet does not clearly explain it. Unclear passages are not the basis of doctrine or practice (Surburg, pp. 576-579). It is not clear how much one must know about these spiritual gifts. Another question: "If they are gifts, then is their discovery contingent on the work of seeking them?" Third, since the environment in which the test is administered is limited, it is impossible in these settings to "discover what will happen when everyone in the Church decides to discover . . . spiritual gifts" (p. 11, Obj's, #2). Perhaps the Corinthian confusion is the best Biblical warning about what happens when everybody in a church decides to develop his/her gift. (See again Appendix G.)

In regard to the "Spiritual Gifts Discovery Tool" itself, there are also concerns. First, the movement says that spiritual gifts "are not: natural talents" (p. 9), and yet, some of the test questions seek natural talents: "I received excellent grades while in school" (#9); and "God has given me the ability to play a musical instrument and I enjoy it" (#27). One must ask: are spiritual gifts "natural talents" or not? Second, it seems the impossible is asked when, a man-made inventory is used to discern spiritual gifts. The test inquires how others react to (or perceive) the gifts he is attempting to discover whether he has: "People with spiritual problems [why not other types of problems?] seem to come to me for advice and counsel" (#8) or "It seems that people learn when I teach them" (#47). Third, some gifts are contingent on physical blessings: "There is great satisfaction in giving large amounts of money for the Lord's work" (#14). In contrast, Jesus marveled over the widow's mites - not great riches (Mark 12:42). The gift of giving is not confined to the wealthy. Fourth, many of the gifts seem to be described with the word "great," as in "great joy" (#10), "great satisfaction" (#14), and "great compassion" (#15). However, no Scriptural definition of "great" is given. Fifth, many of the gifts are described as possessing (special) "joy." How is this measured? Some gifts must function in difficult situations. In these situations, true empathy may require sadness. The Christian is to "rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). Sixth, some appear paradoxical: "It seems easy to learn difficult truths" (#30) and "I am able to understand difficult portions of God's Word" (#51). This could lead the way for a rational interpretation to Scripture or a presumptuous attitude. Does an affirmative answer refer to a "great" intellectual ability (i.e., a natural ability) or the quiet acceptance of Christian faith? Also, if "difficult truths" are "easy," how could they be they "difficult"? Since most people find at least some "difficult truths" easy to

understand, the inventory must be more specific. (For example, a mathematician may find "eternity" easier to understand than would a farmer. However, the farmer, may be able to better understand the miracle of conversion because he knows that "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). Seventh, some gifts are contingent on circumstances: "I enjoy helping with the emergency tasks around the church" (#32). Eighth, some gifts are made to look unimportant: "I desire to do the tasks which will free others for important ministry" (# 53).

### The Hout's Questionnaire

Kenneth W. Baisden, in "Testing for Spiritual Gifts: Sham, or Sure-Fire?" critiques the Hout's Questionnaire in a very thorough manner. What follows is a small portion of his "Summary Evaluation." One strength of the questionnaire is that it serves "to strengthen interest in the area of spiritual gifts" (p. 29). However, there are several Biblical and scientific weaknesses cited (pp. 29-33):

1. The inventory has an absence of norms and expresses results in "raw form." This actually makes the data "meaningless." More objective standards are needed.
2. The test is administered only to volunteers and causes a "sampling bias." The effectiveness of the test needs to be tested on different groups.
3. The questionnaire does not adequately identify constructs (such as a spiritual gift). Not enough questions are asked to ascertain whether a person has the gift.
- 4-6. The test results are discussed in an atmosphere where the Christian would be reluctant to say bad things about himself. The test is subject to faking.
7. Results will vary depending upon the amount of study an individual has done of spiritual gifts.
8. It is suggested that post-tests, "peer ratings," or the use of more than one test be utilized to validate and correlate the results.

### Other Insights

Klemet Preus in an article entitled "Tongues: An Evaluation from a Scientific Perspective," provides another important insight into the weaknesses of the spiritual gift inventory. He states:

I took a test a while ago called "a spiritual gifts inventory." The test was suppose to determine what spiritual gifts were possessed by those who took it. Happily, I passed, scoring quite high on one particular gift - discerning of spirits. The gift was defined by the inventory as the ability to tell truth from falsehood with relative ease. Excited over my newly discovered spiritual gift I boldly approached the administrator of the test and informed him of it.

"Congratulation," was his predictable reply, "I'm sure that the body of Christ can use the gift of discernment."

I then proceeded to explain to the instructor that the test was replete with false doctrine, based on heterodox assumptions and completely invalid as to its results. "Clearly," I claimed, "you are faced with an insoluble dilemma. If I really do have the gift of discernment, then your test is invalid because I say so. If I do not have the gift, then your test is invalid because it is in error. I either have or do not have the gift. Therefore, your test is invalid."

The administrator looked wryly at me and said, "My experience is that the test works perfectly well."

I began to understand how Alice must have felt in the presence of the Queen of Hearts.

Although Preus shifts to his primary concern, the following could include the attitude of some Church Growth proponents in regard to the search and implementation of spiritual gifts:

Similar frustration is incurred by questioning the supposed Biblical basis of tongues with practicing charismatics. Experience has told them what God's Word has not. Present-day tongues are claimed to be the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. Any critical look at them from an exegetical perspective is considered to be either the work of Satan, a sign of quenching the Spirit, or simply contrary to the experience of Christian people.

Dr. John Drickamer in Building Carefully (pp. 10-11) provides some important insights in regard to the issue of

seeking spiritual gifts:

But if we maintain that every true Christian has received one or more of these gifts, . . . then we will run into two phenomena. Many people in any fair-sized congregation will not have any spiritual gift. There are hypocrites in the visible church (Matt. 13:47-50). . . . [This] leads to the conclusion that we can distinguish between true believers and hypocrites by the presence or absence of spiritual gifts.

This would lead to many bad effects. It would validate the Calvinist/Puritan/Baptist idea of the church, namely, that the visible church is to be wholly holy in this life. But it is not possible for us to see who is and who is not a Christian (1 Cor. 4:5). The result would be a false exclusivism on the part of many congregations or even of synods. It could split congregations just as the Neo-Pentecostal invasion of the Lutheran Church has done. The members could judge one another, and they would!

But the worst result would be the terrible doubts that would arise in the hearts of many who would examine themselves and doubt whether or not they had such a gift--whether or not they were Christians and would go to heaven. . . . A young person even came to this writer . . . with the question: was she perhaps not a Christian . . . since she had none of the gifts? This writer referred her to the Gospel fact that Christ died for her sins.

A Christian may be aware of a gift of God working in his life. However, the main question is whether that same Christian, can develop a "spiritual gift test" which can measure the spiritual gift of another. (One would have to find those who have the various gifts, and, among other things, interview them in order to develop an accurate test. However, how would one know if those he interviewed "have the gift" without an accurate test?) Albert L. Garcia, in Spiritual Gifts and the Work of the Kingdom (pp. 6-8), provides some important insights:

Recently there have been a number of pastors within our theological context that have decided to search for special "spiritual gifts" among the brethren entrusted to them for pastoral care. [See "Identifying, using spiritual gifts keeps members active and growing" in Reporter, October 31, 1983.]

He continues:

But can we really discover the "spiritual gifts" around us through mere human tools? If this was the way that God had intended, most apostles, and certainly King David, would have never been discovered. I honestly think that this approach places into a secondary role, Luther's pastoral model of Word and faith. Also, this approach invalidates or hinders present mission growth.

It was Luther's pastoral concern to search out the spiritual gifts of each and every Christian. However, this approach was theocentric for it was centered in the Word and faith model. Under this model he sought to motivate each and every Christian to live a genuine Christian existence. But how did he search for these gifts? I believe that his treatise "The Freedom of A Christian" provides us with an excellent case study of Luther's pastoral concern. . . .

Luther . . . realizes the very realistic biblical anthropology of "flesh and spirit." He cites II Cor. 4:16 and Ga. 5:17 to support his claim. . . . Notice Luther's approach . . . is completely theocentric. . . . The question is not "what shall we become?" Rather to Luther: "First, let us consider the inner man to see how a righteous, free and pious Christian, that is a spiritual, new, and inner man becomes what he is." . . .

If we understand Christ's daily presence in us through the constant testimony of the Word, the whole dimension of spiritual gifts acquires a different perspective; spiritual gifts become more democratic and at the same time a real and complete source of power. Each of us has Christ in us for the purpose of building His Kingdom. . . . Luther discusses the whole dimension of spiritual gifts in relationship to Christ's office of priest. Christ or our High Priest intercedes for us before the Father. He teaches and communicates the value of this office to each and every believer by means of His Holy Spirit. It is from this vantage point that Luther shares one of his most significant Reformation concepts: the priesthood of all believers (I Peter 2:9).

We . . . possess the Royal Priesthood by our Spirit-filled union with the incarnate Christ. His Priesthood is an intricate part of every Christian, for His living reality under the Word is ours. . . . Luther, then, finds in each believer the possibility to accomplish all things [or what is] needed [at a particular time] for Christ's Kingdom. . . . Thus, in providing for a clear pastoral perspective, I do not think that it is possible to discover spiritual gifts by questionnaires or any other human

pretention. . . . Our only role is to be faithful hearers of the Word. We only need to find the needs and opportunities where God wants to accomplish His purposes. . . . If there are needs, the Gospel shall open many doors mightily. . . . People who might seem weak, and incapable, could be in the Word the very powerful tools of God unto salvation. This is again a proper understanding of our theology of the cross.

A Comparison of the Theology of Glory and  
The Theology of the Cross

Later in his thesis, Baisden discusses the difference between the theology of the cross and the theology of glory - the true understanding of grace and "cheap grace" (pp. 127-133):

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his classic entitled, "The Cost of Discipleship" defines for us what cheap grace is all about. We do well to consider his definition, keeping in the background our need to further evaluate the Test for determining Spiritual Gifts and whether or not it is of "cheap grace" or of a theology which has its roots at the foot of the Cross.

"That is what we mean by cheap grace, the grace which amounts to the justification of sin without the justification of the repentant sinner who departs from sin and from sin departs. Cheap grace is not the kind of forgiveness of sin which frees us from the toils of sin. Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. (Bonhoeffer, p. 47)

Yes, "cheap grace" is the grace we bestow on ourselves and it too appears quite evidently as a product of the test used for determining spiritual gifts. Wagner links cheap grace to the identification of gifts in this way as he describes the benefits one can expect when they decide to discover...and use (their) spiritual gift or gifts:

First of all, you will be a better Christian and more able to allow God to make your life count for Him...Christian people who know their spiritual gifts tend to develop healthy self-esteem (Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts, p. 49).

Wagner asserts this claim even though the Word of God may or may not have been heard and regardless of whether or not the examinee even understands that he has been justified by faith apart from the works of the law through

the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ. In fact this writer has not found even ONE reference in any of the contemporary Church Growth/Spiritual Gifts writers who have connected God's grace in the act of justifying the sinner with the sinner's response to such an act.

Baladen, through Steinke's book Preaching the Theology of the Cross (p. 15), lists the difference between the theology of glory and the theology of the cross:

<u>theology of glory</u>	<u>theology of the cross</u>
visible	invisible
God manifest from his works	God hidden in his suffering
directly	indirectly
God in his naked glory	God clothed in his promise
glory	humility
God found in the bright and the good	God hidden in darkness
empirically obvious	hidden under its opposite
wisdom	folly
sight	faith
ethical achievement	call to suffering
self-confident activism	humility
speculation	trust
what is	what will be
God apart from His Word	God bound to His Word
because of experience	in spite of experience
from below to above	God's initiative
noble thoughts	crucified Christ

A Concluding Thought

The study of spiritual gifts dare not lead the Christian away from the theology of the cross and the central article of the Bible: justification by grace through faith. Yet this could indeed be the case when Scripture is viewed as the "primary source" of knowledge of spiritual gifts, and at the same time, other Christian writings are used as the interpretation of Scripture. (See Personal Renewal Study, p. 11.) Scripture must judge the interpretation of the Christian at all times.

Luther puts the gifts of the Spirit in their proper place by (1) remembering man's hopeless condition without God, and (2) man's need of the continued work of the Holy Spirit. Total reliance upon God, presupposes total reliance upon His Word. Scientific knowledge does not have this same certainty. The explanation to the Third Article says it best:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts [ . . . mit seinen Gaben erleuchtet ], sanctified and kept me in the true faith, . . . and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers [My emphasis] (Synodical Catechism, p. 11).

## APPENDIX I

### REFERENCES TO A SAMPLING OF CHURCH GROWTH BENEFITS

Matthias speaks of "A Sampling of Church Growth Benefits." It is left unexplained how, on the one hand, Church Growth can lack understanding of fundamental Christian doctrines (example, the Means of Grace), and on the other hand, "uniquely meet the needs" of the LC--MS which is a Church built upon Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. The list below will refer the reader to the locations where these "benefits" were treated throughout this paper.

1) Church growth is a process, not a program, which deals with principles . . . which, when properly applied, . . . can contribute significantly to the growth of the church.

See Chapter Five: "The Effectiveness of Church Growth Principles"; and Six: "The Perceived Strengths."

2) Church growth emphasizes the Biblical priorities of making disciples of all nations through effective evangelism and edification.

See the analysis of Chapter One; and Appendix A.

3) Church growth is more than evangelism. It pictures the church as the body of Christ and involves every member . . . for mutual benefit and the growth of the body.

See the analysis of One: "The Harvest Principle" (to see whether it can be "more than evangelism"); Two: "The Nature of the Christian" through "The Interpretation of Ephesians Four"; and Seven: "Theology."

4) Church growth stresses the leadership role of the pastor.

See the analysis of Two: "Church Growth Consultants" and "The Interpretation"; and Appendix E.

5) Church growth recognizes the importance of . . . the priesthood of all believers, and . . . the identification and use of spiritual gifts.

See the analysis of Two: "The Nature of the Christian" and "Motivation"; and Appendices E through H.

6) Church growth places a high priority on diagnostic research to "remove the fog" of rationalizations, [see analysis of Four: "The Roots"] and inaccuracies, in order to get at the facts of the history, present condition, and future possibilities of a congregation.

See the analysis of Four: "Church Growth as a Science"; Five: "The Proper Place of the Two Kingdoms"; and Seven: "The Lutheran Record" and "The Need."

7) Church growth recognizes the marvelous mosaic of the human family with its variety of ethnic, . . . groupings.

See the analysis of One: "The Homogeneous Unit Principle" (because "marvelous mosaic is a pious way of stating this principle"); and Two: "The Purpose of the Church."

8) Church Growth gives evangelism priority over social service without excusing Christians from the divine mandate to help those who are in need.

See analysis of Two: "Motivation"; and Seven: "Theology."

9) Church Growth identifies barriers to . . . growth . . . and endeavors to . . . remove hindrances, but also recognizes that there are conditions preventing growth over which the congregations have no control and which may cause some congregations to die.

See the analysis of Two: "The Purpose of the Church: Health and Growth"; and Appendix D.

10) Church growth tends to be most effective in church bodies that have a strong theological base. The Missouri Synod has the theological strength to make a valuable contribution to the global Christian church by developing a Lutheran theology of growth.

See the analysis of Three: "A Pragmatic Reformation"; Four: "The Roots of the Theology of Growth" and "Concluding Thoughts"; Five: "The Effectiveness of Church Growth Principles"; Six; Seven: "Theology"; and the Conclusion.

APPENDIX J

AN ANALYSIS OF A POPULAR  
REFORMED CONVERSION MODEL

The conclusion of this paper lists some Reformed emphases that Lutherans seem to assimilate through the Church Growth movement. The so-called "Engle Scale," which may seem "neutral" to some, deserves consideration. Here is a special example of how Lutherans can easily, perhaps unknowingly, accept a Reformed emphasis through the Church Growth movement. The acceptance of the "Engle Scale," although it may be helpful in some ways, has direct implications on the doctrine of conversion. (Brackets and dividing lines have been added for the sake of the analysis below.)

Figure J.1

The Engle Scale (Dayton, p. 591):

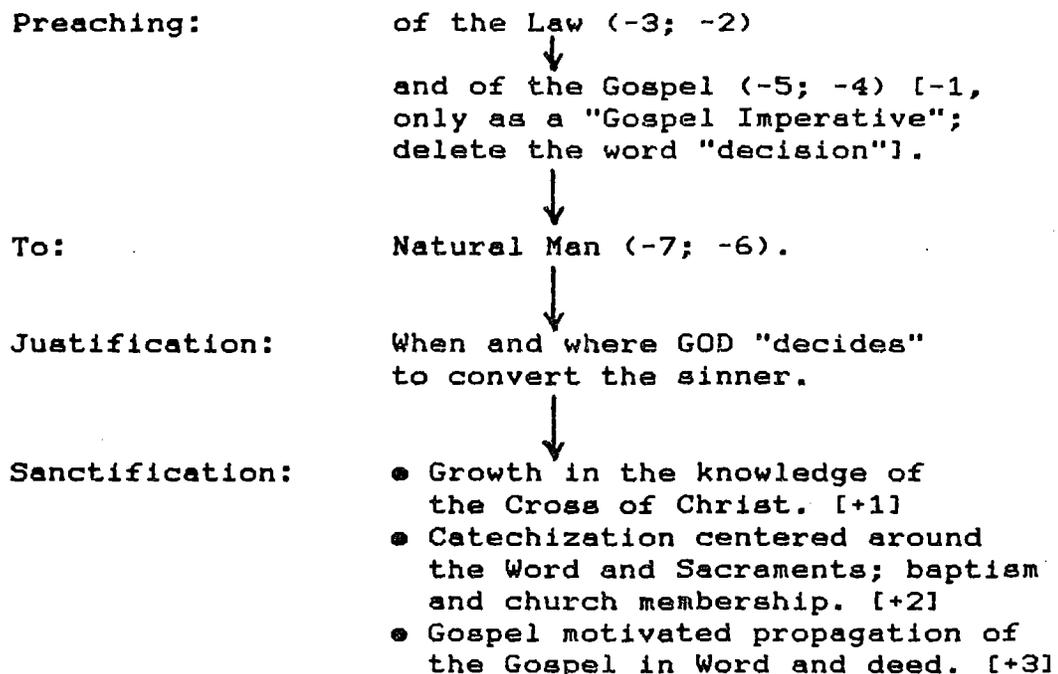
● No Awareness of Christianity; -7	
● Awareness of the Existence of Christianity; -6	[Natural Man]
<hr/>	
● Some Knowledge of the Gospel; -5	
● Understanding of the Fundamentals of the Gospel; -4	[Gospel]
<hr/>	
● Grasp of the Personal Implications; -3	[Probably Law]
● Recognition of Personal Needs; -2	
● Challenge and Decision to Receive Christ; -1	[Law]
<hr/>	
----- Conversion -----	[Justification]
<hr/>	
● Evaluation of the Decision; +1	
● Incorporation into a Fellowship of Christians; +2	
● Active Propagators of the Gospel; +3	[Sanctification]
<hr/>	

Some Lutherans have adopted this model and use it in the instruction of evangelism. (For an example of this, see Schamehorn, Spirit of the Dove, p. 58, whose "Engle Scale"

modification is part of the Figure (A.3) presented in Appendix A. It is not know how he uses this model or presents it within the Lutheran context.) A few brief comments should be made here. First, the variables on the ends of the scale (-7, -6, +1, +2, +3) seem to be in the proper order (save the use of the word "decision," +1). However, Law (-1 and -2; and probably -3) and Gospel (-4 and -5) are clearly mixed. Although some Lutherans have attempted to avoid "decision theology," (Vogel, p. 219) the use of this scale could easily revive this synergistic concept. (See discussion regarding synergiam in Appendix A.) This scale is used to aid in determining the physical needs of non-Christians so that the Gospel can be proclaimed in a relevant manner. (See One: "The Quest"; and Two: "Motivation.") However, conversion is not brought about by an "act" on the part of man (-1), but by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit. Repentance and faith are described in Scripture by stative verbs, not action verbs. (See Mueller, "Repentance and Faith: Who Does the Turning?") Despite this Scriptural insight, after "conversion," the Engle Scale immediately turns the "converted" to his own synergistic "act" of conversion by considering the "decision" (+1); rather than the Cross of Christ.

The following is a suggestion of how this model would have to be modified, based upon Scripture, for use in the Lutheran context.

Figure J.2



With these differences between Figures J.1 and J.2 in mind, the Confessional Lutheran will be able to better determine what type of Church Growth material can be taught within the Lutheran context. In the case of the "Engle Scale," since it is so vastly different from the Lutheran model, it is questionable whether it could have any significant usefulness within the Lutheran context.

## APPENDIX K

### UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLICAL

#### CONCEPT OF CONFESSION

##### Introductory Note

This appendix expands the discussion of the term "confession" found in Seven: "Theology." This appendix is largely based upon personal contact with Dr. Richard Muller (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana), and specifically, his outline entitled: "The Biblical Concept of Confession." (This discussion can also be found in the Confessional Evangelism Resource Manual, pp. 10-12; and 75-76 where modifications were made with the approval of Dr. Muller.)

The terms "to confess" and "confession" have rich Biblical meaning.

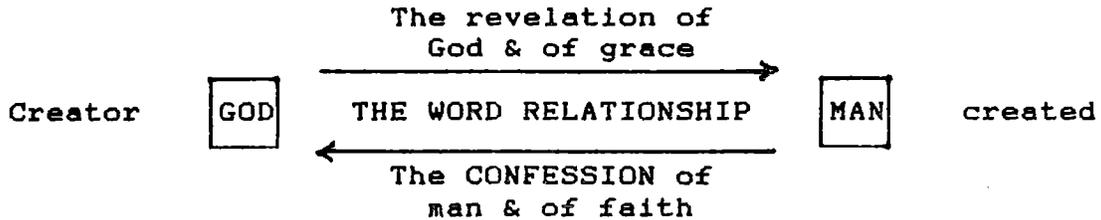
- Matthew 10:32 (Confession is an important part of the Christian's relationship to Christ and response to the same.)
- Acts 24:14 (The Apostle Paul is a fine example of confessing the Christian faith.)
- 1 John 1:8-9 (The confession of sins is an important part of the Christian's everyday life.)
- 1 John 3:2,15 (Confessing Christ as true man and true God is important. Note the wonderful promise connected with this doctrine.)

The Lutheran Reformers recognized the importance of this Biblical term. In the "Epitome to the Formula of Concord" alone the term "confess" (or one of its forms) is used no less than forty times. It either stands alone as a synonym for "teach" (S.A. Part III. I) or is used in the bold and powerful phrase: "We believe, teach and confess" (Epitome Article I - VII and X). In short, each time the term is used it signals the correct exposition of a Biblical truth.

Muller's Outline and Insights

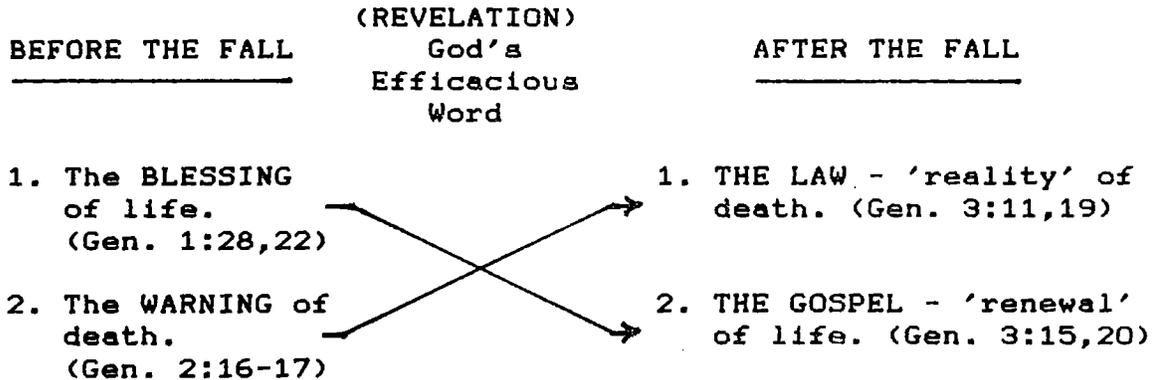
The following is an outline which briefly covers the significance of confession from the Biblical point of view as a human response to divine revelation.

I. THE CENTRALITY OF THE "WORD" AS RELATIONSHIP (Figure K.1).  
(John 1:1-4; Heb. 11:3)



The Principle of Reciprocity -- "(1) I will be your God, (2) you will be my people" -- is inherent in the Biblical motif of "Testament-Covenant". (Hebrews 8:10)

II. THE WORD OF GOD AS REVELATION (Figure K.2).



Observations:

- a. Sin 'inverts' the revelation word order from blessing-warning to Law-Gospel.
- b. Sin 'perverts' the God and man relationship from a 'distinction' to a 'separation'.
- c. God's LAW-WORD works separation to its 'ultimate' -- the curse of 'condemnation'.
- d. God's GOSPEL-WORD re-works separation to its 'opposite' - blessing of 'justification'.

### III. THE WORD OF MAN AS CONFESSION (Figure K.3).

<u>BEFORE THE FALL</u>	(CONFESSION) Man's Responsive Word	<u>AFTER THE FALL</u>
Natural ability for man to understand God - made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26)		Natural inability for man to understand God as blinded by sin (Matt. 16:17) (John 1:5; Rom. 1:21-23; 1 Cor. 2:14-16)
Man identifies the animals made by God (Gen 2:19)		Man identifies the Christ sent by God only through the gracious working of God (Matt. 16:13-16; Eph. 2:8-9)

### IV. SIN AS THE PERVERSION OF THE NATURAL PRE-FALL ORDER. (Gen. 3:17-19)

Since man fell into sin, it is NOW REQUIRED:

- a. Special Redemptive Revelation (Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3)
- b. That faith be worked in the heart and confession flow from that faith (Romans 10:10)
- c. "CATECHISM" - explicit instruction in the true religion (Acts 2:42; Romans 9-17).

See Luther's Small and Large Catechisms for a fine correlation of Revelation (Law & Gospel) and Confession in terms of the renewed God - man relationship.

### V. Concluding Thoughts.

Dr. Muller states:

The prominence given to the word "decision" is unfortunate. It fits in nicely with an Arminian frame of reference [i.e., that people really do the work of conversion] but not with a Lutheran frame of reference. "Confession" is more desirable from a Lutheran point of view. In the matter of "confession" versus "decision" the place of confession in the Biblical world picture and in Lutheran theology must be taken seriously. The following comparison of theological systems may be of some use in thinking out this entire matter.

Figure K.4

LIMITED ATONEMENT	UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT	
MONERGISM*	MONERGISM*	SYNERGISM
<u>CALVINISM</u>	<u>LUTHERANISM</u>	<u>ARMINIANISM</u>
focus on:	focus on:	focus on:
the decrees of God	MEANS OF GRACE as:	decision of man
Divine Sovereignty	1. Divine Sovereignty of Grace (Election) 2. Human Responsibility of the use of means	human responsibility
GOD'S WILL	GOD'S WORD	FREE WILL***
DIVINE DETERMINATION	CHRISTIAN CONFESSION based on and in conformity to Divine Revelation**	HUMAN DECISION

\*"God alone works" in conversion

\*\*1. Confession of sin as response to God's Law  
(1 John 1:8-9)

2. Confession of faith as response to the Gospel  
(1 John 4:2,15)

\*\*\*either with or without Prevenient Grace.

## APPENDIX L

### THE APOSTLES' CREED AND SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

For centuries the Apostles' Creed has been the witness of the Church. Since it is drawn directly from Scripture, the Christian can make use of it with the confidence that he is proclaiming the Gospel: "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). To help study the Scriptural nature of the Apostles' Creed, it has been divided up into its phrases below. Next, corresponding Scripture references from which these phrases are drawn are listed to the right.

#### THE FIRST ARTICLE - THE FATHER

- "I believe in God the Father" (1 Cor. 8:4-6; Phil. 2:11;  
1 Tim. 2:5f; 6:13)
- "Almighty" (Rev. 4:8)
- "Maker of Heaven and Earth." (Gen. 1:1)

#### THE SECOND ARTICLE - THE SON

- "And in Jesus Christ," (Mark 8:30; Acts 8:36f; 4:42;  
Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 8:6; 12:3;  
Phil. 2:5; 1 Tim. 2:5f;  
1 John 2:22; 5:5)
- "His only Son," (John 1:14-18; 3:16-18)
- "Our Lord;" (John 11:27; Acts 2:36)
- "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost," (Luke 1:31,35; Rom. 1:3f)
- "Born of the Virgin Mary;" (Luke 2:7; Rom. 1:3f;  
1 John 4:2)
- "Suffered under Pontius Pilate," (Matt. 27; 1 Tim. 6:13;  
1 Peter 3:18; 4:1)
- "Was crucified," (Matt. 27:35; 1 Peter 3:18)
- "Dead, And buried;" (Matt. 27:50-60; Rom. 8:34;  
1 Cor. 15:4; 1 Peter 3:18)

- "He descended into hell," (1 Peter 3:18-22)
- "The third day He rose again from the dead;" (Rom. 1:3f; 4:24; 8:34; 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:4; 2 Tim. 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:21; 3:18)
- "He ascended into heaven" (Luke 24:50-51; 1 Peter 3:18f)
- "And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;" (Rom. 8:34; 1 Peter. 3:18-22)
- "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." (Rev. 22:20; 2 Tim. 4:1)

#### THE THIRD ARTICLE - THE HOLY GHOST

- "I believe in the Holy Ghost;" (Acts 5:3-4; Matt. 29:19; 1 Cor. 12:4; 2 Cor. 1:21f; 13:14; Gal. 3:11f; 1 Thess. 5:19; Heb. 10:29)
- "The holy Christian Church," (Eph. 1:4)
- "The communion of saints;" (John 1:6-7; 1 Cor. 10:16)
- "The forgiveness of sins;" (John 20:22-23; Acts 2:38)
- "The resurrection of the body;" (John 11:24-26; Job 19:25)
- "And the life everlasting." (John 3:16,36; 6:40,47; 1 Tim. 1:16; Ps. 23:6)
- "Amen." (Rev. 22:20)

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