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A Message From Antioch and Moravia to the West

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Thesis

by

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Abstract: This qualitative thesis study, “A Message From Antioch and Moravia to the West,” explores the North American Church’s role in the global missions arena and seeks to develop a streamlined strategy for engaging in cross-cultural evangelism in the twenty-first century. A qualitative case study of the first-century Christian church and Moravian church of the eighteenth century provides data on actions conducted to spread Christianity from a central geographical location outward to the known world in their respective eras of Christian history. These two case study analyses looked at how the Gospel was spread during each point in history followed by a summation of parallel efforts between the two churches.

An analysis of the data obtained from the two case studies showed parallel characteristics between the two church’s missions models to include fledgling Christian communities facing periods of persecution, reformations against a dominant religious power, direct intercession from the Holy Spirit, the need for strong leadership to cast a missions vision, complete congregational participation, the urgency to take the Gospel to the lost, and the use of tentmaking or vocational evangelism. The identified themes that were present from the first-century and Moravian churches can provide strategies for the North American Church on how to conduct global missions by creating a unified strategy that can be implemented by the local church in light of today’s myriad of approaches to conducting missions.

Additionally, an analysis of the current state of the North American church showed that as a whole, the North American church is in a decline in overall attendance and missions efforts. Based off of current church struggles, what is needed in today’s church is an effective cross-cultural missions strategy as the local church’s role in missions varies from nonexistent to actively planting churches within unreached people groups. Ultimately, a missions strategy can be developed by looking back into the history of the first-century and Moravian churches.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

At the dawn of the Christian Church, as described in the book of Acts, fulfilling the Great Commission through worldwide missions resided and originated from the local church, whether in Jerusalem or Antioch. Seventeen hundred years later, this model of a community of believers being the heartbeat of missionary efforts was again found in the Moravian Church. This small group of disciples is credited for having a hand in spawning the modern-day missionary movement that, in the same way as the first-century Church, implemented missionary action which involved all members of the body of Christ within the local congregation.

Today, church missions takes on various forms of interest and action while there is a myriad of varying approaches to attempt to reach the lost for Christ. With so many different beliefs of the modern Church on how to conduct missions there is a lack of uniformity, clarity, efficiency, and vision for evangelism to the unreached people groups of the world. Ultimately, a qualitative analysis of these two monumental times in Christian history can show the Western Church today how reaching the lost is not a seasonal activity, but should instead course through the veins of every person who calls Christ their Lord.

William Carey's famous words in 1792 to the Baptist Association ministers in Nottingham, England, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God," was the flint that created a spark which ushered in the birth of modern Protestant missions.¹ For Carey, the responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission was not relegated to the first-century Apostles

¹ Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 123.

but was instead a calling to all of God's followers throughout history. Noted pastor John Piper states, "When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity."² Until this glorious day finally arrives, it is the Church that will heed the words of Christ in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."³

The command given by Christ in Acts 1:8 is tactical, it is deliberate, it is geographic, and it is also the initial calling for the spread of the Gospel to the unreached throughout the world. Approximately seventeen-hundred years later, the tiny Moravian Church led a mission movement that opened the eyes of the world to the light of Christ after it heeded these same words from Acts. The Moravian Church followed this literal call and subsequently went to the ends of the earth. The purpose of this paper is to compare the spread of the Gospel during the first-century church and the Moravian missionary movement in the eighteenth-century and how their actions translate to the present-day Church in the West. It is the opinion of this paper's author that when overlaying the Moravians missional activities on top of the actions of the first-century Christians, many similar missional characteristics clearly rise to the surface and can form a blueprint for missions for today's Christian Church.

A vast majority of today's Western churches are inadequately equipped to fulfill the Great Commission and do not take this command seriously while the need for cross-cultural missions has never been more apparent. In 1974, four out of five non-Christians in the world

² John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 35.

³ Unless otherwise notes, all biblical passages referenced are in the New International Version.

were out of reach of same-culture evangelism, while this number has since decreased to three out of five, the need for the Church to send out missionaries into cross-cultural settings remains imperative.⁴ This paper will present lessons for today's Church that can be gleaned from both Scripture and the Moravians which can guide the vision and strategy for cross-cultural missions. Ultimately, the thesis will show how the Western Church can emulate the two historical missional movements and highlight what is required for a unified Church to take the Gospel from our own Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Biblical Mission Strategies

The idea of missions, or the actions partaken by the Church to make available the Kingdom of God to all mankind, takes root in our Creator.⁵ It is in the term, *Missio Dei*, which relays the fact that it is God who is the One who initiates and sustains mission, and not the Church itself that is the central force of mission.⁶ It is the *Church* that is the vehicle that God uses to conduct His mission to His creation. It is the Church that is the hands and feet of God to the lost, but it is God who calls and steers that mission.

It is through missions by which God calls His people to go forth.⁷ Within the pages of Scripture, God shows His *Missio Dei* nature as the one who initiates and sustains mission to His

⁴ Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, "Finishing the Task," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 543.

⁵ Scott Moreau, Gary Corwin and Gary McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss and Timothy Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), xxiii.

people. Beginning with creation and later with the Abrahamic covenant, God is creating a people in whom the rest of mankind will see His glory as stated to Abraham, "...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3b).

Within the entirety of the Scripture, two opposing missional forces are at play; the attractive and the expansive movements of God. Seen in the Old Testament, an attractive or centripetal force is the major theme in which God used the Israelites as the hub to draw the world to Him.⁸ This idea of the world coming to God through the Israelites is seen in His physical presence within the fabric walls of the Tabernacle and ultimately in the Temple, located in Jerusalem. Here, the world could come to and be physically close to God. Soon, this "attractive" strategy would be reversed after the final call of the prophets in 400 B.C. when God would alter the landscape of humanity and come to this world Himself. It was through Jesus where the missional theme shifted from "come" to "go."

In the New Testament, the tide shifted as the missions strategy became one of a centrifugal movement outward to take God to the people, instead of people coming to Him.⁹ The Old Testament's "attractive" force would now become the New Testament's "expansive" force in which the faithful would, instead, go forth to all the nations as seen in the scattering of the Apostles after the stoning of Stephen.¹⁰ The Gospel was now on the move from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and expanding throughout the entire Middle East.

⁸ David Bosch, "Witness to the World," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 78-80.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

The missionary call to enter other cultures in order to spread the message of salvation is one of the prominent themes of the New Testament. As Paul states,

How, then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news (Rom. 10: 14).

It is in the Old Testament that the world sees God through the Israelites while it is in the New Testament where one will see the Gospel being taken throughout the lands by individual missionaries.

Old Testament Mission In Creation

The cultural mandate given by God to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:26-27 establishes the role of His human creation to have dominion over and the responsibility to serve that creation while being made as image-bearers of God.¹¹ As His created beings, we are given our roles very early in the story of creation; to rule over the earth, to increase in number, to spread throughout the world, and to take care of God's creation (Gen. 1:26-30). These new roles for mankind signify how he is called to glorify his Creator.

It is in Genesis Chapter Three where the principle of missions is established as God does not wait for His creation to come to Him, but instead, the *Missio Dei* is first seen as God reaches out to Adam and Eve upon the establishment of their lostness when sin entered the world.¹² Moses writes, "But the Lord God called to the man, Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). In Adam's hiding from God due to his sin, there is a separation between God and His people for the first

¹¹ Moreau, *Introducing World Missions*, 28.

¹² *Ibid.*, 30.

time in creation history. It is at the fall of mankind that the divine drama of redemptive history starts to unfold and the necessity for missions was established.

Old Testament Mission Through the Israelites

The redemptive script continues to unfurl further in Genesis as God calls Abram. Through the Abrahamic covenant, it is declared that God will make a great nation and that all people of the world will be blessed through this new nation of Israel (Gen. 12:2-3). It is in the nation of Israel that God will come to this world in order to save those that are separated from Him. The blessing of Abram shows the love and concern God has for His creation as He tangibly reaches into this world through this chosen nation.¹³

The missional theme of Scripture continues to be written in the pages of the Old Testament as God pursues all people even after they have rejected Him. In God's sovereign plan to bless the nations, Abraham's line is eventually thrust into the cross-cultural land of Egypt in order to show God's power and name to the world. In Exodus 12:32 the world sees His power as Pharaoh finally relents and feels, firsthand, the might of God. Eventually, Pharaoh pleads for a blessing from God whose plan he was trying to stifle after he feels the might of his Creator after the final plague (Ex. 12:32).

The common perception of the Old Testament is that it is primarily a story about God and His relationship with the Israelites. While this relationship is the focus of the first thirty-nine books, God's ultimate plan was outside the scope of only these chosen people. The actual focus of the Old Testament is God's saving plan for all creation and how He was going to use the

¹³ Moreau, *Introducing World Missions*, 31-32.

Israelites to accomplish this plan to all people as explained to Moses in Exodus 19:6a, “you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”¹⁴ It was Israel, as God’s designated *kingdom of priests*, which was set apart and called to missionary service to bless all of mankind.¹⁵ They were called to be the first cross-cultural missionaries in salvation history.

Further, in the timeline of the Old Testament, the sovereignty of God is seen as He used pagan empires of the world as the subjects of His mission. Through times of exile, the Israelites conducted the missionary purpose of God as they were thrust into the new worlds of their captors. It is during the Assyrian exile of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C. and in the Babylonian captivity of Judah in 586 B.C. that the “people of God” would be scattered throughout the Middle East and the word of God would be taken from Palestine to the uttermost regions of the known world.¹⁶

God’s concern for the nations and use of the missionary to take His word to the nations is evidenced when Jonah is called to preach repentance to the soon-to-be Israelite conquerors in Nineveh. Jonah’s reluctance to be a part of the salvation of the Assyrians shows that these chosen people did not understand their priestly role to the world. Contrary to the majority view, the call to “go” to all the nations is not something new only from Acts of the New Testament, but instead, God has been going to His people since there has been a need for restoration. This initial movement of God towards His people that started at creation remains active today. While it was the Israelites in the Old Testament and the Apostles in the New Testament who fulfilled this

¹⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

missionary call, the lifeblood of missions now resides within the Church as the vehicle God uses to go to His creation.

Current State of Missions in the Christian Church

Following William Carey's establishment of the Serampore missionary compound at the end of the eighteenth century, the tidal wave of mission enthusiasm soon flowed from India to the far reaches of the world as Protestant missionaries, first from England and soon from the United States, would lead the effort to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Today, the missionary center of the world has shifted away from the West and reverberates through the streets of South America, the plains of the African desert, and in the vast urban expanses of China and South Korea. According to Pew Research Center's 2011 study on the demographics of the world's Christian population, one hundred years ago about two-thirds of the world's Christian population lived in Europe, but it has decreased down to 26 percent, with 37 percent residing in the Americas, 24 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, and 13 percent in Asia and the Pacific.¹⁷

While Christianity has seen its home in many different places throughout the past two thousand years such as Palestine, Rome, Constantinople, England, and the United States, the heartbeat of the Christian Church continues to move south and east while not being relegated to one specific region or culture. This nomadic fact is one of the distinguishing features of Christianity among all of the world's major religions. While the Western Christian Church has a rich history in the fabric of Christianity, the time period from the post-colonial era to the present

¹⁷ Pew Research Center (web site) <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-exec/> (accessed October 30, 2017).

day has shown the predominance of the growth of Christianity resides outside the walls of the Western world.¹⁸

In Africa, the past one hundred years has seen the number of Christians grow from ten million to nearly four hundred million, in contrast to the thousands that are daily leaving the Western Church.¹⁹ Further to the east in South Korea resides twenty million Christians while the entire continent of Asia has seen exponential growth in the past one hundred years with the continued rise of Christianity into the foreseeable future.²⁰ During the span of one hundred years, from 1910 to 2010, Christianity in Africa has risen from 9 million to 516 million believers, while Asia has seen an increase from 28 million to 285 million believers.²¹ This exponential rise of Christianity in Africa and Asia is not due to Western missionaries coming to save, but instead, it is a direct impact of the indigenous church that is “sending” out its own indigenous missionaries back into its homeland. These missionaries are going first to their own Jerusalem and then to the ends of the earth, as evidenced by the Chinese “Back to Jerusalem” movement.

For the Western Church, Christian population numbers paint a bleak picture. Across the Atlantic in Europe, Christianity is on the decline. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Christians in Europe made up about 70 percent of the world’s Christian population, but this number has decreased to only 20 percent of the current population.²² While not as daunting in the

¹⁸ Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

²¹ Pew Research Center.

²² Jason Mandryk, “The State of the Gospel” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 362.

United States (U. S.), statistics show that the percentage of the U.S. Christian population to the number of Christians in the world has continued a steady decrease in the past fifty years and will steadily continue to decrease throughout this century.²³

While there continues to be a need for Western Protestant missions around the world, there remains a significant lack of vision and organization from the Western Christian Church on how to execute the task of fulfilling the Great Commission. Unfortunately, this lack of organization is seen in that 87 percent of foreign missions funding goes towards work among those already professing Christianity, 12 percent of the money is earmarked for work among those already evangelized but non-Christian people, and 1 percent goes towards work among unevangelized and unreached people of the world.²⁴ According to the website, About Missions, 91 percent of church outreach and evangelism does not target non-Christians but instead targets other Christians.²⁵

While some Christians believe that the Great Commission has been fulfilled, the harsh reality is that since the death of Jesus, approximately 67 percent of mankind has perished never even hearing His saving name.²⁶ From denomination to denomination and church to church, the mission strategy of the local church varies from that of non-interest and non-action on one side of the aisle to the sending out of home-grown missionaries into cross-cultural settings by mission-focused churches.

²³ Mandryk, *The State of the Gospel*, 362.

²⁴ About Missions (web site) <http://www.aboutmissions.org/statistics.html> (accessed September 19, 2017).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ R. Mark Baxter, *The Coming Revolution* (Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing, 2007), 12.

Contemporary Evangelical Mission Strategies

The Christian's biblical call to missions is specifically a mandate to "make disciples of all nations" as summarized in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19). It is here that the Christian must understand what Jesus is talking about when He refers to all nations in Matthew twenty-eight. The concept of the current nation-state was not known to the first-century scholar, but from the Greek language, one can see that "all the nations" is translated to *panta ta ethne*, or a call to the Christ follower to go to all of the ethnic groups of the world.²⁷ The Greek word, *ethne*, is used throughout the Bible when highlighting an ethnic or cultural group. When the Abrahamic covenant was established, God declares that through Abraham's offspring the nations will be blessed. In the Greek, it is the word *ethne*, or ethnic groups, that is originally used to signify the nations who will be blessed by Abraham's descendants.²⁸

Jesus declares, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14). The Christian is called to witness to all people groups, and this understanding of Scripture has shifted the focus of missions in the past century as Christian leaders have refined the idea of people groups into three different and focused groupings of people to reach.²⁹

Major cultural blocs of people, who define unreached people along cultural lines tied to a predominant religion such as Arab or South Asian, is the broadest category of establishing a people group strategy.³⁰ A narrower people grouping is the ethnolinguistic group where people

²⁷ John Piper, "Discipling All the Peoples," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 132.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁹ Winter and Koch, *Finishing the Task*, 534.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

can be distinguished by common descent, history, customs, or language such as the Laz people from the Black Sea region of Turkey.³¹ Within the ethnolinguistic group, a missions focus can reside with a socio-people group, which is a small grouping of like-peers who are connected by shared interests, activities, or occupation.³² Current strategies for missions predominantly focus on one of these three aforementioned blocks of people groupings.

As stated by Albert Mohler, President of Southern Seminary and Boyce College, “The new vision for world missions is directed toward the reaching of people groups rather than nations.”³³ Overall, there are roughly 7.38 billion people in the world, and 3.11 billion of those are unreached, or people who have no access to the Gospel.³⁴ Subsequently, of the 16,594 ethnic groups of the world 6,734 or 40.6 percent continue to have never heard of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.³⁵

Additionally, at the conclusion of World War II, Protestant missions enthusiasm spiked as new innovations brought about by the war ushered in new methods by Western missionaries to reach the lost people groups of the world.³⁶ This period of contemporary Christian history saw the implementation of reaching people groups through new technology and skills learned through fifty years of being a country at war. Avenues to bring the Gospel to the lost could now be

³¹ Winter and Koch, *Finishing the Task*, 534.

³² *Ibid.*, 535.

³³ Albert Mohler (web site) <http://www.albertmohler.com/2014/02/10/christian-missions-in-the-third-millennium-3/> (accessed September 13, 2017).

³⁴ Joshua Project (web site) <https://joshuaproject.net/> (accessed September 19, 2017).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 365.

conducted through medicine, radio, and aviation, all opening up new cross-cultural doors to formally unreached peoples for the first time in Christian history.

Slowly in the 1950s, evangelical mission strategies began to be developed by the Church in order to fulfill God's calling in Matthew 24:14. One such prominent strategy was that of the Church Growth Movement established by Donald McGavran in 1955 through his book *The Bridges of God*, a movement that prioritized both evangelism and church planting.³⁷ In a focus against the funding and upkeep of missions stations established by William Carey some 150 years prior, the Church Growth Movement philosophy looked inside the borders of nation-states and centered in on a specific region of a country with a focus on specific people groups in an endeavor to plant ethnic churches in a specified region.³⁸

Another defining moment in twentieth-century Protestant evangelism occurred at the Lausanne Congress of 1974, which was born out of the evangelistic ministry of Dr. Billy Graham. This movement had a goal of "reemphasizing the biblical concepts of the authority of Scripture, human lostness, salvation in Christ alone, the need to witness in word and deed, and the necessity of evangelism."³⁹ It was at the Congress that the idea of reaching people groups, which is a shift away from ministering an entire nation, came to the forefront of thought through the teachings of Ralph Winter. Winter's new people group focus changed the way that Christians would strategize missions into the future.

³⁷ J. D. Payne and John Mark Terry, *Developing a Strategy for Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 114.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 120-123.

³⁹ Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 297-300.

Another major theme to emerge from the ten-day conference was a pronouncement on the importance of both reaching the lost for Christ while at the same time meeting the physical needs and seeking social justice to those that needed this help.⁴⁰ In the same way that God came to His world in the form of a servant, not as a conquering commander or a wealthy king, His followers are also called to serve in this same way. As Jesus explains, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matt. 25:40).

While it is a scriptural mandate to serve others, especially orphans, widows, and the poor, the missions mindset around the time of the Lausanne Congress shifted, for some, from a Christ-centered focus to a more holistic approach to missions in which meeting physical needs became the priority. This “liberation theology,” made popular by political theologians Jurgen Moltmann and Johann Baptist Metz, introduced the renewed focus on social change, eliminating poverty, and empowering the oppressed.⁴¹

Contrary to social theology were mainline evangelical missions, with a continued focus on evangelism and church planting, while believing that social change was a byproduct of Christian missions and not the priority.⁴² Missions, today, still attempts to find the appropriate balance of bringing people, both, to the cross while also meeting their physical, felt needs as Christ did to so many during his ministry. While the holistic approach cannot be dismissed, from Christ’s example, one can see that the reason for his meeting physical needs was to meet their spiritual needs in the end.

⁴⁰ Noll, *Turning Points*, 302-303.

⁴¹ Ott, Strauss and Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 131.

⁴² *Ibid.*

The 1990s ushered in a refined focus on mission strategy out of the AD2000 missions movement where the term “10/40 Window” was established.⁴³ This geographical portion of the world between the latitudes ten and forty degrees north of the equator and between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans has become the focus of twenty-first-century missions.⁴⁴ Within this portion of the world lies 95 percent of the approximately seven billion people of the world who have never had a chance to hear the gospel along with the additional challenge that within this swath lies 90 percent of the world’s most impoverished peoples.⁴⁵ It is in these regions of North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia where the vision of the Christian Church should peer.

As noted English poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, eloquently stated, "If men could learn from history, what lessons it might teach us! But passion and party blind our eyes, and the light which experience gives us is a lantern on the stern which shines only on the waves behind."⁴⁶ While missions strategies have existed since God made His initial covenant with Abraham to establish the people of Israel, often missions strategies become the current trend to be soon put on the shelf for the next wave of cross-cultural enthusiasm.

Contrary to riding this swell of popular missional thought and forgetting the lessons of those before us, one must look deeper through the pages of the Bible and Christian history to find effective methods of evangelism for the Church that have been tested against time, persecution, and effectiveness. This paper will attempt to show how the missionary methods of the first-

⁴³ Patrick Johnstone, “Covering the Globe” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 548.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 548.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Good Reads (web site) <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/160861-if-men-could-learn-from-history-what-lessons-it-might> (accessed September 15, 2017).

century church and the eighteenth-century Moravian Church are not just methods used at their time in Christian history, but instead, show God's use of the Church as His actual instrument for mission. It is in analyzing these two churches which shows a strategy for missions that calls on the responsibility of the entire Church, and not just a "few" who are called, to be the feet and hands that "go" to the ends of the earth!

CHAPTER II

Christianity in the First Century

In the book of Luke, the historian recounts Jesus' final journey from His home region around the Sea of Galilee, southward, to Jerusalem (Luke 9:52-56). It is here, in Jerusalem, that the climactic death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus takes place as He soon turns over His ministry to the Holy Spirit, who consequently raises up the newly formed Christian Church under the shadow of the blood-stained cross.¹ It was in this region of Jerusalem where the Church was born with its mix of Jewish roots and Greco-Roman culture.

While Jerusalem, with its concentration of synagogues, was the capital of Jewish existence in the first century, ensuing Jewish communities had been established throughout the Roman Empire, primarily in the eastern Greek-speaking regions of present-day Turkey and Palestine.² Prosperous Jewish communities intermingled with their Roman Gentile neighbors and littered the landscape from southern Italy, throughout Greece and Turkey, coastal Palestine, and into the region of Egypt.³ Luke records the movement of these scattered Jews who would yearly return to their Holy City during Pentecost, "Now they were staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5).

Upon Christ's resurrection, He remained with His followers and showed Himself to others for the following forty days until His ascension into heaven. Here, Christianity was born out of the Apostles that remained in the regions around Jerusalem after the ascension. Alister

¹ Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas* (New York: The Israel Map and Publishing Company, Ltd., 1993), 232-240.

² *Ibid.*, 241-243.

³ *Ibid.*, 243.

McGrath concludes, “Christianity saw itself as a continuation and development of Judaism, and initially flourished in regions with which Judaism was traditionally associated, supremely Palestine itself.”⁴ It was in Jerusalem where the spread of Christianity would begin as Jewish disciples of Jesus would be used by God as His vessel to take to the Gospel, outward, to all of His creation.

Three-Stage Spread of Christianity of the First-century church

Originally born as a reform movement spawning out of the Jewish synagogues, Christianity, with roots in Judaism, soon spread from its beginnings in Jerusalem to the Mediterranean world to become the recognized religion of the Roman Empire only three hundred years later.⁵ The spreading of the Christian faith after the death of Jesus can be attributed to a myriad of factors to include public preaching, as evidenced by Paul to the Greeks in Acts Chapter Seventeen, through like-minded underground networks of Christ followers who met in private households, and finally through traveling Christian teachers and preachers who were conducting business in various cities amongst these newly-established Christian communities.⁶ These traveling teachers were able to teach and disciple new believers as they traveled the region, further solidifying their fledgling faith.

At the time of Jesus’ completion of His ministry on earth, it is recorded that the foundation of the Christian faith was comprised of only a few hundred believers (Acts 1:15). It

⁴ Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 5.

⁵ Alister McGrath, *Christian History: An Introduction* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7-9.

was from this small band of believers that the teachings of Jesus would soon spread throughout the world. With Peter as its primary mouthpiece during this early period of the Christian Church, the missional focus was on its Jewish brethren in the first movement of the Gospel to Jerusalem. Evangelism, through the preaching of God's Word, soon became a primary method of mission as evidenced in the second chapter of Acts when the Holy Spirit comes down on the people of Jerusalem. It was in Jerusalem that the three-part expansion of the Church, predicated in Acts 1:8, was established through the contingent of Jewish priests that were converted in Acts 6:7.⁷

During the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to the eager crowd and baptized three thousand new believers to initiate this spread of Christianity (Acts 2:1-41). The floodgates were now open to the advancement of Christianity. With the power of the Holy Spirit opening the ears of individuals from many distinct ethnic groups, these former Jewish believers from different regions returned back to their homelands and established their own culturally-distinct Christian churches.⁸ It was soon after the Pentecost, during this period of local witnessing from thirty to forty-five B.C., that the second portion of Acts 1:8 was fulfilled as the message of Jesus was taken to Judea and Samaria through the martyrdom of Stephen, the Gentile preaching of Peter, and through Paul's impending conversion.⁹

Prior to the time of persecution, starting with the stoning of Stephen, the Christian Church in Jerusalem was comprised of believers who still considered themselves Jews and spoke a native Aramaic tongue. These new believers thought of themselves as the renewed nation of

⁷ Andreas Kostenberger, Scott Kellum, and Charles Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), n.p.

⁸ Robert Baker and John Landers, *A Summary of Christian History* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), n.p.

⁹ Ibid.

Israel while continuing to worship in the Temple and follow the Law, but at the same time followed Jesus as the Son of God and lived for His imminent return.¹⁰ Peace would not last as Greek-speaking diaspora Jews, now residing in Jerusalem, complained about a lack of rations for their widows. Acts 6:1-7 describes the tide of Hellenistic Jews, led by Stephen, who started preaching against the Old Testament Law practices of the Aramaic Jews. For this proud group of traditional Jews, these attacks against their religion would not go unanswered.

From the stoning of Stephen, initiated by his speech to the Sanhedrin, the Gospel was taken outside the borders of Judea and into Samaria.¹¹ Persecution was a factor which drove the outward expansion of the Christian faith as followers of “The Way” ran from Jewish authorities. As documented by Luke, “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the Apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria” (Acts 8:1). Here, in the great Christian irony, Saul was leading this charge against this faith, forcing its spread throughout the area of Palestine, before he would eventually take it westward to Europe following the account of his conversion by Christ, as recorded in Acts Chapter Nine.

Persecution against Hellenistic Christians during its first-century infancy also predicated the molding of the Christian Church, not in the model of the Jewish synagogue, but in the form of the underground group of believers meeting in a house church. While much is not known of these early Christian communities, Luke offers a glimpse into their life as a community as he describes their togetherness as they met daily in the temple and broke bread at each other’s houses (Acts 2:46-47). During the second phase of the advance of the Gospel, there continued to be a split amongst those early Christians, one sect with Jewish heritage which still met in the

¹⁰ Williston Walker, Richard Norris, David Lotz, and Robert Handy, *The History of the Christian Church* (New York: Scribner, 1985), 23.

¹¹ Kostenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, n.p.

Temple and another sect of newly-converted Gentile Christians who normally met in their local underground house churches. It was not until the Jerusalem Council in 48 A.D. that a unification between Gentile and Jewish Christians started to develop.

Finally, the third step of the Christian advance of the Gospel changes scenes as the geographic center of the Church moves northward from Jerusalem to Antioch, located in the province of Syria, which was known as a large cosmopolitan city of the first century.¹² From the Church of Antioch, the Gospel was now primed to move to the ends of the earth as Jesus had originally declared. This multi-ethnic community of believers was the hub of cross-cultural missionary sending as evidenced by Paul's three missionary journeys westward into Europe. Due to its northerly location and proximity to present day Cyprus and Turkey, along with the growing Christian presence, this city became the door through which Paul would leave and return during his missionary endeavors with the support of this newly-established church.

It is with these three distinct layers of the Christian advance of the Gospel, starting with Jerusalem then outward to Judea and Samaria and finally to the ends of the earth, along with its initial Jewish background and expanding Gentile following, that the first-century church should be understood. Through these distinct characteristics and geographical locales of the Church, which helped to subsequently shape the culture and the missional mindset of the first-century Christians, the Gospel was taken from the first few hundred believers in Jerusalem, westward, to Rome in just fifty years as Christians followed Jesus's sovereign foreshadowing from Acts 1:8.

¹² Walker, Norris, Lotz, and Handy, *The History of the Christian Church*, 25.

Paul's Missionary Strategy

The Apostle Paul, widely considered the first cross-cultural missionary in the New Testament Church, was given a direct order by Jesus to go and preach to the Gentiles and bring them out of darkness, as recorded by Christ in Acts 26:14-18.¹³ This revelation led to Paul's missionary journeys, as he spread the name of Jesus throughout much of Asia and Europe. According to Authur Glasser, "Paul laid the foundation for the Gentile church and set in motion a missionary movement that continues to this day."¹⁴

The Apostle Paul was born a Jewish Roman citizen, possibly into a wealthy family, in the city of Tarsus, which is currently located in the southeast corner of Turkey.¹⁵ Tarsus was known as an intellectual center of the Roman Empire and a city of culture and learning.¹⁶ It was through Paul's foundational experiences of living in this Gentile city, his Greco-Roman education, a vocational grasp of his father's tentmaking business, his fluency of the Greek language, his understanding of the Old Testament teachings, and his Roman citizenship that would be used by God when selecting Paul as the primary driver to spread the Gospel to the "ends of the earth."¹⁷ Unbeknownst to this future missionary and devout Jew, he possessed qualities natural for Christian cross-cultural evangelism.

¹³ Jey Kanagaraj, "The Strategies of Paul the Missionary," *Bethel Bible Institute, Danishpet, Salem Dist.: 1*, accessed November 5, 2017, http://www.mhs.no/uploads/SNTS_2008_Kanagaraj.pdf.

¹⁴ Arthur Glasser, "The Apostle Paul and the Missionary Task," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 149.

¹⁵ Adam Hamilton, *The Call: The Life and Message of the Apostle Paul* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015), n.p.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

In Chapter Eleven of the book of Acts, Luke describes the conversion of Paul and the beginning of the cross-cultural spread of the Gospel. Jesus says to Ananias, concerning Paul, “This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15b). After initially preaching in Jerusalem, Paul was brought from his home in Tarsus by Barnabas and started his cross-cultural career as a missionary from the church in Antioch (Acts 11:19-30). With Barnabas by his side, the duo would leave from Antioch to preach the name of Christ from city to city into Asia Minor, focusing initially within the walls of the Jewish synagogue and soon spreading out to the Gentile communities.¹⁸

In bringing the Gospel to nonbelievers, a missionary such as Paul is required to communicate the news of Jesus the Messiah, contextually relay a new way of living that replaces the societal and behavioral norms that were counter to Scripture, and, finally, integrate new believers into a new community of Christ in the Church in a culturally sensitive manner.¹⁹ Today, this theory is seen as Muslims become Christ followers, known as Muslim Background Believers (MBB), and must wrestle with new Christ-centered forms of worship, the appropriateness of keeping former cultural and religious traditions, and a new self-identity shift away from Islam and towards Jesus.²⁰

While most scholars believe that Paul did not have a structured militaristic strategy of how to fulfill God’s plan for his missional calling, there remains a belief that Paul did develop a

¹⁸ Moreau, *Introducing World Missions*, 54-55.

¹⁹ The Gospel Coalition (web site) <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2011/11/21/pauls-missionary-strategies-and-methods/> (accessed October 5, 2017).

²⁰ Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 196.

pattern for his ministry that can still be considered a basic mission strategy.²¹ Paul's vision for mission continues, today, in present-day mission strategies. Through dissecting Paul's missionary tendencies and actions, much can be gleaned about effective methods for reaching the lost.

It is the ultimate goal of the missionary to establish relationships with the non-Christian, tell those new relationships about Jesus, help lead them into communion with fellow Christians, while finally leading them into a local community of followers of Jesus.²² This is the model that Paul followed in his ministry with both the Jewish and Gentile populations. Paul's evangelical method was through the oral proclamation of the Gospel to *all* people, no matter their ethnicity, class, culture, gender, or economic status, in a culturally sensitive manner within the context of a geographical movement as he continually moved from town to town, focusing on urban centers of the population, in which to establish local churches.²³

Paul's vision for his work is clear in Romans 1:5 where he declares, "through Him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for His name's sake." His focus was on the Gentile people groups of the world, but how would he accomplish this task at hand? It was primarily through the proclamation of the Gospel and the planting of churches in the regions of Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia that this task would be executed.²⁴ Ultimately, this task would be completed through a multi-layered strategy of church planting.

²¹ Payne and Terry, *Developing a Strategy for Missions*, 55.

²² The Gospel Coalition.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Payne and Terry, *Developing a Strategy for Missions*, 56-57.

While Paul is known for his cross-cultural journeys, it was his close contact and support from his home church, at Antioch, which laid the foundation of his logistical ministry efforts.²⁵ Once Paul and his ministry team ventured cross-culturally, he focused his efforts on urban centers, specifically in the four aforementioned Roman provinces, in order for the Gospel to spread outward from major centers.²⁶ After a church was established, Paul would remain for a specified amount of time that would allow him to build up and organize the church, but not too long as for the church to become dependent on his leadership.

At the onset in an area, Paul would initiate his efforts amongst his own people, the Jews, as he would first preach in the local synagogue, as seen in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth (Acts 13:15, 14:1, 17:1, 17:17, 18:4). After being rejected by his Jewish audience, Paul would then move on to the Gentile population as his new target of opportunity. As seen from the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, when focusing his ministry on the Gentile, Paul did not believe that the new Christ follower had to succumb to the messenger's own culture or tradition. They only needed a love for Jesus Christ. This is, again, evidenced in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 where he discusses how to become all things to all people in order to win some people to Christ. It was in Paul's ability to contextualize the Gospel, presenting it in a form that was relevant to different cultures and ethnic groups, which made him such an effective communicator of God's Word.

Paul did not set about on this monumental task of reaching the nations, alone. Whether it was Barnabus or Timothy and Silas, Paul did not single-handedly complete his three missionary journeys but instead employed a team approach to cross-cultural missions. Additionally, Paul

²⁵ Payne and Terry, *Developing a Strategy for Missions*, 57.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

requested the support from the Church to accomplish the task at hand. Whether through the Church in Antioch or through the local churches that he established in Asia Minor, it was the Church's role to support this missionary actively. Paul exhorted the help and support of the local church to work with him for short periods of time along with promoting their own indigenous church planting endeavors.²⁷

On numerous occasions throughout Scripture, Paul requested and received prayer from the Church, such as in 2 Thessalonians 3:1, "Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you."²⁸ Paul understood the backing of prayer for conducting successful missions work. Finally, while Paul was able to provide for himself through his tentmaking practice during much of his cross-cultural travels, as described in Acts 18:2-3, he also understood the importance of receiving financial support from the Church, such as in 1 Corinthians 9:7-14.²⁹

It is through the support of the local church, whether hands-on, in prayer, or by financial funding, that Paul envisioned and implemented his relationship with the established community of believers. This vision and strategy implemented by Paul are completed, ultimately, for the sole purpose of bringing sinners into salvation through adoption into God's family.³⁰ It was this goal, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9:23, "I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share with

²⁷ Mark Keown, "Learning From Paul's Vision for the Mission of the Local Church," *Stimulus*, 19, no. 1 (Apr 2012): 28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁰ Robert Plummer and John Mark Terry, *Paul's Missionary Methods: In His Time and Ours* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 34.

them in its blessings,” that drove Paul into violent mobs, hostile governments, and foreign lands in order to spread the name of Jesus Christ.

Formation of the Christian Church

Roots of Christianity and the rise of the first-century Christian Church grew from the soil of Jerusalem. In the face of opposition that ultimately killed their Savior, this fledgling community of Christ followers, who had initially converted from Judaism, had a home in the Jewish capital and felt an obligation to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews in Israel.³¹ This new religious sect maintained their Jewish roots and identity, with a continued belief in the Torah and worship in the synagogue, while believing that they were now living in the time of the predicted Messiah.³² This overlapping belief in Old Testament practices intersecting with Christianity is evident at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 where the Jewish Christians were arguing that “the Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses” (Acts 15:5b).

Initially, Jesus tells Peter in Acts 16:18, “and on this rock, I will build my Church,” which shows that the truth Peter shared about Christ would soon be the foundation for the beginning of Christ’s Church. It was Peter who the Holy Spirit used to open the door of heaven at Pentecost while he preached to the crowd in their own languages. Ultimately, the Jerusalem Christian Church was formed under the leadership of Peter and the Twelve, and as their numbers

³¹ Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influence on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 147-148.

³² *Ibid.*, 161.

grew they administered public meetings in the Temple courts while gathering in local believer's homes for meals and fellowship.³³

What drew people from all walks of life to Christianity was, not only, the eyewitness testimony and preaching of the Apostles, but also the universal appeal of its inclusive membership and exclusive beliefs, a combination uncommon during the first century.³⁴ This fact emanates throughout the New Testament Scripture as all people, young and old, rich and poor, Jew or Gentile, man or woman, all need to receive Christ for their salvation. It was Jesus and not the Old Testament Jewish Law which brought people into communion with God. This non-inclusive teaching of Christianity was a major factor in its early growth.

Baptism, an action symbolizing the forgiveness of sins, also played a vital role in the early Christian Church as a form of initiation and demarcation for these new Christ followers.³⁵ Unlike the Jewish masculine rite of circumcision, baptism was an inclusive act available for all followers of Christ.³⁶ While a distinct symbol for the Christian, the act of baptism, in many ways, represented the Old Testament teachings of ritual purification showing Christianity's continued roots in Judaism.

As the act of immersion became a unifying point in a Christian's life and a belief that Jesus came to fulfill the Law as the new Temple, the Jewish DNA of these new Christ followers soon started to fade as life was taken out of the Temple and soon moved into separate and

³³ Philip Carrington, *The Early Christian Church, Volume I, The First Christian Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 41.

³⁴ Rebecca Lyman, *Early Christian Traditions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 33.

³⁵ Morwenna Ludlow, *The Early Church* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2009), n.p.

³⁶ Ibid.

distinct Christian communities. Baptism, along with community meals in which Eucharistic themes of sharing food and drink to remember Christ's death and resurrection, became the core of the Christian community and soon took place outside of the Temple square and inside the home.³⁷

Jerusalem, the center of Jewish life still today and also the birthplace of Christianity, would not remain the center of the Christian world for much longer. After the execution of James, the brother of Jesus and the leader of the Church in Jerusalem, along with the destruction of the city at the hands of the Romans in 70 A.D., the Christian community in the region of Palestine soon faded away by the end of the first century.³⁸ This characteristic of being a religion with a moving home throughout the past two thousand years makes it unique to all other religions of the world.

The Early House Church

The family played a vital role within the life of Judaism and through the inception of the early Christian Church, as evidenced during the ministry of Jesus when Apostles, sent out by Christ to preach were directed in Matthew 10:11-12 to find the home of a "worthy person" and take up residence in that home.³⁹ Social groupings delineated via kinship and family was at the core of the Christian and Jewish culture of the first century and these small family groups would become the centerpiece of the Christian Church during its first three hundred years of

³⁷ Ludlow, *The Early Church*, n.p.

³⁸ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 11.

³⁹ Lyman, *Early Christian Traditions*, 33.

existence.⁴⁰ As tensions grew between Jews and Christians in Jerusalem after the death of Christ, continued worship in the synagogue gradually dwindled as new believers found security and freedom to worship in the home.⁴¹

Additionally, as the Gospel spread outside of the walls of Jerusalem, it was done on the backs of traveling apostles and teachers of the faith. This movement of the faith would spawn new communities of believers from Palestine to Asia Minor, and the home would become the center of Christian life. These traveling missionaries, like the Apostle Paul, would raise up these house church communities who were united through a common belief and newly-established religious rituals, such as the baptism of new members and the sharing of food.⁴² As noted in Scripture, Paul would call on hosts to open up their homes as he established the local church in a new community, such as with Lydia in Thyatira in Acts 16:14-15, Pricilla and Aquila in Corinth in Acts 18:1-3, and Jason in Thessalonica in Acts 17:7.⁴³

Until the time of Constantine in the fourth century when Christianity was finally recognized as a legal religion of the Roman Empire, a majority of Christians gathered in domestic private homes to worship, instead of the single-functioned church building prevalent today.⁴⁴ These single-family residences, home to a typical nuclear family, would function as a

⁴⁰ Carolyn Osiek, "How Much Do We Really Know about the Lives of Early Christ Followers?" *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies*, 67/1, no. 841 (2011): 2.

⁴¹ Edward L. Smither, *Mission in the Early Church: Themes and Reflections* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 150.

⁴² Lyman, *Early Christian Traditions*, 33.

⁴³ Bradly S. Billings, "From House Church to Tenement Church: Domestic Space and the Development of Early Urban Christianity-The Example of Ephesus," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 62, no. 2 (2011): 544.

⁴⁴ Smither, *Mission in the Early Church*, 150.

meeting space for some thirty to forty believers in a communal time of worship and communion.⁴⁵ These house churches were the initial methods in which Christianity gained an actual physical presence in the urban centers of the Greco-Roman world.⁴⁶ At this time in Christian history, there was no ability or need to build free-standing church buildings.

For the first-century Christian, the house church was the initial model of living in community with fellow believers and was the bridge used to spread Christianity out of the synagogue. While basilica-style churches would soon spring up throughout the Roman Empire in the fourth century and displace the need for a simple home in which to worship, the fluidity and unstructured nature of these early gathering places played a vital role in the cross-cultural spread of the Christian faith.

In early Christian house churches, these Christ followers would gather in a prominent leader's home for the purpose of teaching and the sharing of information, but most importantly their time together was spent in the sharing of a Eucharist meal.⁴⁷ This ritual meal was usually conducted on the first day of the week after the Jewish Sabbath and was a time of remembrance of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary.⁴⁸ Whether for teaching, fellowship, or worship, the first-century Christian house church became a significant aspect of life for the early believer. It was where a community of all different types of people could come together, sometimes secretly in the face of violent opposition, and worship their Creator and proclaim their Messiah. The house church

⁴⁵ Smither, *Mission in the Early Church*, 150.

⁴⁶ Billings, *From House Church to Tenement Church*, 544.

⁴⁷ Osiek, *How Much Do We Really Know about the Lives of Early Christ Followers*, 3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

signified a break from Old Testament Jewish tradition and ushered in a new way of living life as a community of believers.

The Church at Antioch

During the middle of the first century, Christianity glanced north as its epicenter shifted from Jerusalem to Antioch. As described in Acts 11:19-21, the scattered Jewish Christ-followers fanned out from Jerusalem, with some finding a home in Antioch and preaching, first, to the Jews and soon to their Greek neighbors. This association with non-Jewish people and the scattered Hellenistic Jews became a primary source of disagreement among their Jewish-Aramaic brethren, who clung to their ancient traditions.⁴⁹ Upon the scattering and subsequent preaching of these Hellenistic speaking Jewish Christians, many new believers were brought into the faith as described by Luke, “The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21).

It was in Antioch that these followers of Jesus were seen as being distinct from, both paganism and Judaism.⁵⁰ The schools of thought from Jerusalem and Antioch were opposed as members of the Church of Jerusalem felt that one had to convert to Judaism and follow the Law in order to become a Christ follower, while the Church of Antioch balked at this traditional Old Testament idea.

The Church of Antioch can trace its roots back to persecution, beginning with the stoning of Stephen, creating a natural missional mindset to proclaim the Gospel as people dispersed

⁴⁹ Michelle Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century CE: Communion and Conflict* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 17-21.

⁵⁰ Walker, Norris, Lotz, and Handy, *The History of the Christian Church*, 26.

throughout the region. This was not a church that rested on its laurels and its past accomplishments. As Pastor David Platt explains, “The church at Antioch is established because some men and women left their comfort zones and went to people and places they had not gone before to proclaim the gospel. This church was born in the context of mission [and more specifically] also in the context of persecution.”⁵¹

The establishment of the Church of Antioch is a measurable point in history in which these Christ followers became a distinct religion apart from Judaism. It was where, as reported by Luke, these believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26b). Prior to this point in history, people viewed these Christ-followers as a mere sect of Judaism, especially since they still portrayed Jewish characteristics, such as the following of the Law and worship in the Temple. This splitting of the two religions was an arduous evolution for these new Christians, as Judaism enjoyed a protected status from the Roman Empire, while Christianity had no such protection, leading to continued persecution throughout the next three centuries.⁵²

As seen in Acts 11:27-30, this new Church also felt a need and responsibility to serve others. It was through a financial collection in response to meeting a predicted need from an upcoming famine that the Antioch Church reached out to their fellow believers in Judea. Finally, the Church of Antioch became a hub for cross-cultural missions as a launching and receiving point for the many missionary journeys of Paul and his teams. This is the church in which the Holy Spirit descended and declared that Barnabas and Paul were called for missionary service (Acts 13:2-3). Upon completion of this first missionary journey, this duo returned and brought

⁵¹ David Platt, “One Church with a Global Gospel” (podcast, November 22, 2009), accessed October 7, 2017, <http://www.radical.net/resources/sermons/54e370097ffa79487f0fcbcb>.

⁵² Ibid.

with them news from the mission field. These missionaries continually had a home and support in Antioch.

During the first century of Christianity, the tapestry of the Church began to be woven as this new religion grew outward from an initial sect of Judaism into a missionally-focused religion spreading to the far reaches of the powerful Roman Empire. As Jesus foretold in Acts 1:8, in the span of merely one century, the Gospel was taken to the ends of the known world, to the vast limits of the Roman Empire. Burdened on the backs of the Apostles, these selected few took the Gospel out and established new communities of believers through teaching, preaching, and conversion amongst communities of pagan and Jewish people. New churches were formed by these missionaries as the Church shifted away from the Jewish synagogue model and into the house model.

As Christianity rose to become the prominent religion in the world, the wind that blew the sail of missions soon died out as the Church became embroiled in its own affairs and positioning for world power in subsequent centuries. It was not until sixteen hundred years later, in a tiny central European community, that the Moravian Church hoisted the sail of missions and set out to rekindle the cross-cultural efforts of the first-century church.

CHAPTER III

The Moravian Church and its Missionary Reach

On April 18, 1521, Martin Luther closed his argument to King Charles V, Germany's Holy Roman Emperor and the most powerful man in the world, by saying these words, "I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience."¹ These words marked the birth of Protestantism and formed the core doctrine of biblical authority for this offshoot of "reformed" Christians against the mighty Roman Catholic Church.²

While Luther is known as the great reformer in church history, quietly, others helped pave the way for this stubborn monk prior to his monumental standoff at the feet of the Church and its King in 1521. Over one hundred years prior to Martin Luther, Czech reformer Jan Hus (1369-1415) started his own reformation movement against the Catholic Church. This calling was for a priority of biblical authority over church authority along with a need for increased local church autonomy, doctrines that would pave the way for the establishment of the Moravian Church in 1727.³ While not as highlighted in the history books, Hus' teaching molded Luther's thought and elicited the same vehement response from the ruling Church as did Luther's famous Reformation a century later.

Unlike Luther, who believed in Christ's imminent return and forsook the urgency for missions, it was the European Pietists of the eighteenth century who took seriously the call of the

¹ Noll, *Turning Points*, 144-146.

² *Ibid.*, 146-147.

³ *Ibid.*, 176.

Great Commission, and it was under this influence that the Moravian Brethren was born.⁴ Known as “one of the most remarkable missionary churches in Christian history,” Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf led this small missional-minded church as they sent missionaries to the far reaches of the world with the sole motivation of fulfilling the Great Commission and spreading the Gospel message.

It was the Moravian Church, located on Zinzendorf’s estate, that dedicated the time and energies of their entire community of believers to accomplish the mission of evangelism. All had a purpose, and all had a task in the Great Commission. In much the same way that the first-century church took the gospel to all nations after its split from Judaism, the Moravian Church broke off from their own predominant religion of the time in order to accomplish God’s sovereign task. Accordingly, it was over two hundred years prior to Zinzendorf that the seeds for Moravian evangelism were being planted and cultivated through reform and strengthened in the persecution of a small band of courageous believers.

Hus and the Unity of the Brethren

Tensions were mounting from the native Czech, or Bohemian, people against their German invaders to the north as their cultures, beliefs, and languages were being, unwelcomingly, melded together. The local congregations had grown deaf to the Orthodox Church as German influence and worldly pleasures had overtaken the pulpits of Bohemia.⁵ Urged on by the writings of English reformer, John Wycliffe (1320-1384), Jan Hus pleaded for the moral cleansing of the Roman Catholic Church, leading to opposition from the papacy over

⁴ Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 97-99.

⁵ J. E. Hutton, *The History of the Moravian Church* (Fort Worth, TX: RDMc Publishing, 2006), 14-15.

the sale of indulgences in the city of Prague.⁶ As a professor at the University of Prague and renowned preacher in this great city, Hus became the head of the reform movement in Bohemia and soon inspired an entire nation in his fight for Church reform.⁷

His beliefs and verbal attacks on the Church would soon lead to his death at the stake in 1415, but his life would pave the way for a change in Bohemia as his devout followers, or Hussites, would seek to further his fight against the Church. Contrary to quelling this rise against the Church, Hus' death and, subsequent, persecution of his followers, instead, poured kerosene on the flame of passion as they soon established a new Church called *Unitas Fratrum*, or Unity of the Brethren. This new reform movement would ultimately evolve into the Moravian Church.

This group that split from the Roman Catholic Church was founded on the four defining principles; the Bible as the only source of Christian doctrine, public worship to be conducted in the model of the Apostolic Church, the Lord's Supper to be defined scripturally, and the need to live a godly Christian life as an evidence of their saving faith.⁸ These four principles flew in the face of the powerful Catholic Church and would finally lead to all-out warfare against this small, but growing counter-culture.

Spurred on by the teachings of Hus, the Unity of the Brethren initiated guerrilla warfare in response to the Church's persecution in an attempt to defend their beliefs. Ultimately, they would need to find a leader of their fledgling community. As the son of a knight and himself a monk, Gregory the Patriarch became the official founder of the Church of the Brethren as he led

⁶ John R. Weinlick and Albert H. Frank, *The Moravian Church Through the Ages* (Bethlehem, PA: The Interprovincial Board of Publications and Communications, Moravian Church in America, 1996), 8-14.

⁷ Lars Qualben, *The History of the Christian Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), 193.

⁸ John Taylor Hamilton, *The History of Missions of the Moravian Church During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Company, 1901), x.

a disgruntled and persecuted community of followers to a small, rural community of Kunwald in the northeast border of Bohemia.⁹

It was here, in Kunwald, that the Church would call home and they would be distinct from Rome's influence. Now the foundations of the Moravian Church would begin to be forged from this secluded group of Christians. These "awakened" Bohemian and Moravian believers, who found themselves in Kunwald, eventually grew to over two hundred thousand Brethren members by the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ In its early existence, though, this group would have to endure persecution from the grip of the Roman Catholic Church.¹¹

By the middle of the sixteenth century, continued persecution had spread the Brethren's Church into three distinct geographic regions; Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland. With an increasing number of members dispersed throughout central Europe, this Church built colleges and seminaries and by 1609 had become legally-recognized as religious liberties were forged in the lands of Bohemia and Moravia.¹² This "recognized" status did not sit well with the Roman Catholic Church. Emperor Ferdinand II initiated a counter-reformation against the evangelical Brethren, among other Protestant sects. This effort from Emperor Ferdinand II is now known as the Thirty Years War which drove many of the church's members into exile, leaving only a remnant of the Church of the Brethren in its birthplace of Bohemia and Moravia.¹³

⁹ Hutton, *The History of the Moravian Church*, 45-47.

¹⁰ Hamilton, *The History of Missions of the Moravian Church During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, x-xi.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, xi.

¹³ Hamilton, *The History of Missions of the Moravian Church During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, x-xi.

At the same time that *Unitas Fratrum* was the target of the Roman Catholic Church and was facing extinction, a parallel reform movement was surfacing further north in Europe. According to Lars Qualben, “Pietism is a name given to a great religious awakening within the Protestant churches of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in belief of practical religion.”¹⁴ Effectively, Pietism was a sister movement against the Roman Catholic Church, which was the ruling power in Europe in the Middle Ages, that sprung up in Holland, Germany, and Switzerland in the 1660s.¹⁵ It was in the shadow of the persecution of the Brethren and the rise of Pietism in North Central Europe that the Moravian Church would soon emerge at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The Renewed Era of the Moravian Church

In Germany, the wind of missions started to blow as the University of Halle soon brought forth a once dormant passion for missions in the Protestant faith. Through the workings of a university professor, August Hermann Francke, the University became a center for this Pietistic undertaking as the school was soon providing all of Europe with teachers, pastors, and cross-cultural missionaries.¹⁶ With a request from the Pietist King of Denmark to the University of Halle for overseas missionaries, the soon-to-be established Danish-Halle mission was born and sent missionaries throughout the world, with a majority going to India.¹⁷

¹⁴ Qualben, *The History of the Christian Church*, 364.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 365.

¹⁷ Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 98-99.

This sweeping movement of Pietism throughout central Europe sparked a renewed spirit from the Unity of the Brethren, predominantly Bohemian and Moravian Protestants, who had been previously exiled after the Thirty Years War. In 1722 these people started to make their way out of the ashes of persecution from Emperor Ferdinand's earlier counter-reformation¹⁸ It was out of this group of rekindled believers that the Unity of the Brethren, later to be known as the Moravian Church, would reform the Church with a spirit of missions that had not been present since the first-century Apostles.

This rebirth of the Church of the Brethren would not have taken place without the aid of one man, Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760). It was Zinzendorf who was greatly influenced by the wave of pietist thought as he was born into a pietistic family active in the Lutheran Church. He was further influenced by this Protestant movement under his tutelage under of August Francke (1663-1727) while he was a student at the University of Halle.¹⁹ While at the University, Zinzendorf met two cross-cultural missionaries of the Danish-Halle mission who have previously been serving overseas in Tranquebar, India, further igniting his passion and intrigue for missions.²⁰

In the same way that their ancestral Brethren found a home in Kunwald, it was through the empathy and invitation of Zinzendorf, who opened up his home to the Moravian refugees and allowed them to build their village, known as Herrnhut, on his Saxon, Germany estate.²¹ Due to

¹⁸ Qualben, *The History of the Christian Church*, 366.

¹⁹ Felicity Jensz, *German Moravian Missionaries in the British Colony of Victoria, Australia, 1848-1908* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV Publishers, 2010), 16-17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

²¹ Moreau, *Introducing World Missions*, 123.

many religious refugees soon arriving at Herrnhut, with different traditions and backgrounds, tensions and frustrations soon arose within the community in its early years. It was Zinzendorf who is credited with leading this young refugee community through this difficult early time, avoiding possible fracture.

History notes that these tensions soon vanished on August 13, 1727, as the Moravian Pentecost took place at a communion gathering in which it is said by an eye-witness, “the Holy Ghost came upon us and in this day great signs and wonders took place in our midst.”²² It was here that the Church became so devoted to missions that twenty-six of its members vowed to conduct non-stop prayer for the world which ended up lasting for over one-hundred years.²³ This date is credited as the turning point for the Church and the beginning of its zeal for worldwide missions, leading to the awakening of the Protestant missionary revival of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁴ The Moravian Church, a small band of refugee Christians living together in Germany, was ignited by the Holy Spirit with an “Acts 1:8” passion to take the Gospel as a community of believers from Germany to the ends of the earth.

Moravian Missions to the World

John Weinlick states, “the word *Moravian* has almost become synonymous with missions,” while it is further believed that missions were the prime opportunity that gave this Church its identity and purpose.²⁵ For a Church that was born in opposition to the powerful

²² Moreau, *Introducing World Missions*, 123.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Jenz, *German Moravian Missionaries in the British Colony of Victoria, Australia*, 19.

²⁵ Weinlick and Frank, *The Moravian Church Through the Ages*, 75, 87.

orthodox rule, it was missions which gave this congregation a way to get out from under this ominous shadow as it set its sights to unreached cultures in places like Greenland, the Caribbean, North America, West Africa, and India. The Moravians did not stumble into the cross-cultural settings, but instead purposefully sought out the difficult and forgotten places around the globe in order to take the Gospel to the lost.²⁶

With over three-hundred years of history shaping its doctrine, the Moravian Church did not missionally look outside of its borders, though, until it fell under the leadership of Count Zinzendorf in the eighteenth century. Prior to stabilized life in Herrnhut by 1727, survival of the Church was the primary focus as opposed to far off cultures in need of Jesus. Missions came to the forefront of the Moravian Church in 1731 when Zinzendorf was introduced to an African slave living in the Virgin Islands, along with two Greenlandic Eskimos, who had all been previously converted to Christianity.²⁷

Stirred by the accounts of these missionized men, the pulse of missions continued to beat louder in the Count as he soon brought this young African slave to Herrnhut to preach about the need for missions amongst the slaves in the Caribbean. While this was certainly not the first account of Zinzendorf exploring opportunities for missions, this invited guest's words reverberated throughout the community as plans were soon being made to conduct their first cross-cultural missionary enterprise. After nearly four months of travel, on December 13, 1732, the missionary team of Leonard Dober and David Nitschmann set foot on the island of St. Thomas with the goal of working among plantation slaves by becoming slaves, themselves.²⁸

²⁶ Weinlick and Frank, *The Moravian Church Through the Ages*, 86.

²⁷ Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 101.

²⁸ Weinlick and Frank, *The Moravian Church Through the Ages*, 76-78.

Regardless of the cost, the first Moravian missionaries were now at work amongst an unreached people group.

Five years after their first missionary activity, Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians were exiled from Saxony, and life in Herrnhut, but they soon found their new home for the next fourteen years in the region of Marienborn.²⁹ It was at this new location that the fire for missions blazed even brighter. While headquarter locations and leadership continually changed, this missions-minded group never wavered in the originally established vision of its founder and leader.³⁰ A missions vision that permeated the thoughts and actions of the Moravians as they continued to reach the “ends of the earth” for years to come.

In much the same way that Paul had a unique missions strategy that changed history, the missions vision of Count Zinzendorf paved the way for this small refugee community to alter the landscape of cross-cultural evangelism as it devoted its existence to global outreach. The emergence of Protestant Evangelism and Pietism in Europe in the eighteenth century, with a focus on conversion, the Bible, the cross, and activism, was the foundation of the missions strategy for the Moravian Church.³¹ While missionaries had ventured out into distant lands previously, it was this Protestant Church that first conducted strategic, whole church-sponsored, cross-cultural work in order to fulfill the Great Commission.

²⁹ Robert L. Gallagher, “Zinzendorf and the Early Moravians: Pioneers in Leadership Selection and Training,” *Missiology: An International Review* 36, no. 2 (Apr 2008): 240.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Ian M. Randall, “A Missional Spirituality: Moravian Brethren and Eighteenth Century English Evangelicalism,” *Transformation* 23, no. 4 (Oct 2006): 204-205.

A Cohesive and Disciplined Community

What made the Moravian community at Herrnhut unique was not only its small size but that all of its members would partake in the missions vision by various unique forms. Through the leadership of Zinzendorf, a global strategy and zeal for missions were established for his followers. Daily activity for the residents included three meetings that consisted of prayer, song, and Bible study; furthermore, smaller gatherings of three to five Moravians were put into specified groups called “bands” who met two to three times a week for the purpose of prayer and encouragement.³² These Moravian bands were the launching pad for missions as these clusters were placed into larger, disciplined groups called “choirs,” which were organized based on gender, age, and ability.³³ It was these choirs of like-minded individuals, such as the Single Brethren, who would go through strict regiments of writing, languages, geography, medicine, and Bible in order to prepare for future missions work.³⁴

Prayer also encompassed every aspect of Moravian life. Along with the spiritual discipline of continuous prayer, physical discipline was also encouraged as daily job responsibilities were given to support the village.³⁵ Duties assigned according to an individual’s unique gifting. This characteristic of the Moravian work ethic would become a part of their missionary strategy as each cross-cultural worker was responsible for self-funding when overseas and would work within their new community to support their own missionary efforts.

³² Gallagher, *Zinzendorf and the Early Moravians: Pioneers in Leadership Selection and Training*, 238.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 239.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 238.

It was through the vision and leadership of Zinzendorf that these missionaries flourished. In the early years of Moravian missions there was no formal cross-cultural training, but by the end of the 1730s, Zinzendorf had established a seminary in Marienborn in order to train missionaries in Bible classes and language.³⁶ He also took a hands-on approach to training and supporting his missionaries through the transcribing of his daily missions devotions and sending them to Moravian settlements throughout the world, while also venturing around the globe and visiting these sites, himself.³⁷

All Are Called

Charles Henry Robinson discusses the topic of Moravian missionary efforts, “Within twenty years of the commencement of their missionary work the Moravian brethren had started more missions than Anglicans and Protestants had started during the two preceding centuries.”³⁸ At the height of Moravian missions work, it is believed that approximately one in twelve of its members, about 3,000 people total, were sent out as missionaries.³⁹ This number is in stark contrast to the one in every two thousand mainline English Protestant missionaries sent during this same time period.⁴⁰ Kenneth Mulholland eludes, “The Moravians were the first Protestants

³⁶ Gallagher, *Zinzendorf and the Early Moravians: Pioneers in Leadership Selection and Training*, 240-241.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Charles Henry Robinson, *History of Christian Missions* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915), 49.

³⁹ Robinson, *History of Christian Missions*, 50.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

to put into practice the idea that evangelizing the lost is the duty of the whole church, not just of a missionary society or a few individuals.”⁴¹

Prior to the Moravians, the individual did not take responsibility for the Great Commission. By the eighteenth century, belief had shifted away from churches sending out missionaries to it becoming a government-sponsored endeavor in partnership with colonial expansion.⁴² For the Moravians, though, the entire congregation was involved in the undertaking of missions as children were taken under the care of the community at home as fathers and mothers ventured overseas. While approximately eight percent of its members conducted hands-on cross-cultural work, all members had a part to play in the Moravian missionary machine. Efforts back home included continuous prayer, Bible and vocational training, and rigorous daily upkeep of the community.

Christ, Conversion, and the Cross

A defining characteristic of Moravian evangelism was a focus on Calvary. When these missionaries brought the “heathen” to their Creator, it was first at the foot of the Cross. A monumental change took place during a missionary encounter in Greenland in 1740 when it was discovered that introducing various doctrinal foundations such as God as the creator, His perfection, repentance, and obedience to the Law was ineffective.⁴³ Instead, the central theme of

⁴¹ Kenneth B. Mulholland, “Moravians, Puritans, and the Modern Missionary Movement,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 (April-June 1999): 222.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Robinson, *History of Christian Missions*, 52-53.

all Moravian evangelism shifted to the crucified Christ. It was at the cross where these people saw their own sin and a need for a savior, creating natural followers of God.⁴⁴

The Moravian focus on conversion took root from 1727 when spiritual renewal spread throughout Herrnhut and the idea of spiritual assurance permeated among the congregation.⁴⁵

The doctrines of conversion and assurance of salvation bled over to John Wesley, founder of the Methodist denomination, after encounters with Moravian missionaries who highlighted Christ's death for, not only, the world but for Wesley, himself.⁴⁶

Moravian missionaries created a unique and strategically-specific approach to evangelism. It was through distinct rituals, language, and behavior that resonated the theme of love and the suffering of Christ in order to create an individual's own "awakening" moment through a changed heart.⁴⁷ With a focus on a suffering and wounded Savior who shed His blood for each individual, there became a link to the many local indigenous concepts of the power of blood.⁴⁸ This was a theme that resonated with many native cultures such as Native Americans, West Indie slaves, Eskimos, and African tribal communities. According to Moravian theology, it was only through the understanding of the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross where one could find spiritual assurance, although the theme and incessant focus of His physical suffering

⁴⁴ Robinson, *History of Christian Missions*, 53..

⁴⁵ Randall, *A Missional Spirituality: Moravian Brethren and Eighteenth Century English Evangelicalism*, 205.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁴⁷ Jacqueline Van Gent, "The Burden of Love: Moravian Conversion and Emotions in Eighteenth Century Labrador," *Journal of Religious History* 39, no. 4 (Dec 2015): 560.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 561.

and bloodshed soon gave way to tensions between the Moravians and other European Protestant denominations.⁴⁹

Geographic Expanse

In much the same way as the first-century church, the Moravian missionary effort expanded outward from their original renewed congregation in Herrnhut, then throughout Europe, and finally into distant lands across continents and oceans. It had an Acts 1:8 type of movement, and like Paul who had sovereign guidance to go throughout Asia Minor and Europe in order to plant Christian communities, the Moravians were given a deliberate plan for the expanse of the Gospel. By the end of the eighteenth century, Moravian settlements and mission stations had been established in Germany, the Netherlands, England, Ireland, Greenland, Labrador, Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, North Carolina, the West Indies, and on the African coast of Guinea.⁵⁰ Their vision was to create a transatlantic network of like-minded communities which formed the center of the Moravian missionary efforts.⁵¹

The strategy to conduct this type of undertaking was no haphazard project. From its base back home in Europe, there was a great emphasis placed on cohesion amongst the Moravian's established missions communities throughout the transatlantic region.⁵² Within each settlement,

⁴⁹ Randall, *A Missional Spirituality: Moravian Brethren and Eighteenth Century English Evangelicalism*, 208-209.

⁵⁰ Peter Vogt, "Everywhere at Home: The Eighteenth Century Moravian Movement as a Transatlantic Religious Community," *Journal of Moravian History* 1 (2006): 8.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Vogt, *Everywhere at Home: The Eighteenth Century Moravian Movement as a Transatlantic Religious Community*, 9.

there was deliberate standardization in styles of worship, social organization, and institutional administration.⁵³ Great importance was placed on communication and interactions between the leadership back home and the isolated missionaries, allowing the Moravians to function as a tight-knit community even though many of its members were separated by thousands of miles.⁵⁴

The Missionary in Foreign Lands

Earlier Christian missionaries, mostly sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church, went to foreign lands with high credentials, a well-respected theological education, and a vast network of resources that included financial support. The Moravian missionaries had no such backing. These missionaries came into cross-cultural settings with little education and usually no theological training, but were able to immerse themselves within these indigenous cultures because they endeavored to arrive and exist on the same level as the locals.⁵⁵ Their backgrounds were as tradespeople, with some of its first missionaries employed as carpenters, potters, and even gravediggers.⁵⁶ Skills that were honed while living at Herrnhut.

In contrast to their Roman Catholic counterparts, the Moravian missionaries did not receive funding from their home church. In efforts to become engulfed amongst the indigenous culture, they employed a tentmaking strategy of missions in which they worked within the local community to make their own living.⁵⁷ Zinzendorf felt it paramount that his missionaries earn

⁵³ Vogt, *Everywhere at Home: The Eighteenth Century Moravian Movement as a Transatlantic Religious Community*, 9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Mulholland, *Moravians, Puritans, and the Modern Missionary Movement*, 224.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

their own money in a society in order to teach others the dignity of work.⁵⁸ Funding for their missionary work only came from the sweat of their brows. This tentmaking approach to foreign missions gave its users a twofold benefit of, first, helping to stimulate the local economy by creating industry and, second, providing a bridge with the local people in which to develop relationships and trust in order to present the Gospel.⁵⁹

The life of these missionaries was not one of prestige or notoriety. To devote to this life meant a total commitment to fulfilling the work of the Lord. Moravians are remembered for saying that in order to minister to “black African slaves,” they had to be willing to sell themselves into slavery, if necessary, in order to gain the ear of the people.⁶⁰ Following the model shown by Paul and Peter in the New Testament, on one occasion in the West Indies, missionaries ministered to fellow prison inmates after being placed behind bars by Dutch plantation owners for evangelizing their slaves.⁶¹ Many of their members throughout Greenland, North America, and Africa faced either, expulsion from the region by local leadership or the constant threat of death due to extreme environments.⁶² This is the environment that awaited them when they left the confines of Europe. Places like Nicaragua and Honduras, forgotten by other Western missionaries due to harsh environments, were sought out by the Moravians in a deliberate attempt to reach the unreachable.⁶³

⁵⁸ Weinlick and Frank, *The Moravian Church Through the Ages*, 79.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Paul Pierson, *The Dynamics of Christian Mission: History Through a Missiological Perspective* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2009), 190.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Mulholland, *Moravians, Puritans, and the Modern Missionary Movement*, 225.

⁶³ Ibid.

Moravian missionaries sent around the world set sail with the following three tenants for which to conduct their work; to live humbly among the people and not rule over them, to remember that the crucifixion of Jesus was to be their core doctrine, and not seek to convert entire groups, but instead, find the “first fruits” in a culture and use them to convert their brethren.⁶⁴ This first fruits approach followed the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 10:14 when he said, “If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town” or the example of Peter in Acts 10:23-48 when he first brought Cornelius to faith, followed by his entire family. Peter’s first fruits of Cornelius led to an entire family and community being saved. Where first fruits were found, the Moravians planted roots and converted and disciplined this initial group of believers. Where they were not found, the missionaries would take up their tent and move on to a new location of unreached peoples.

Moravians were distinct in Christian missions history in their evangelistic fervor and simplistic approach to herding the lost sheep, much like the passion and message of the first-century Apostles. Without zeal and simplicity, this flourishing Church that was born in persecution would not have been able to establish missionary communities throughout Europe and on both sides of the transatlantic region. An enormous undertaking from such a small group of believers. Like Paul and his newly-formed churches, the Moravians created Christian communities that are still present today. For the Moravians and the Apostles alike, much can be learned about the strategy and missionary techniques of both groups of believers as they fled bondage from powerful authorities and took the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

⁶⁴ Weinlick and Frank, *The Moravian Church Through the Ages*, 78-79.

CHAPTER IV

A Blueprint for Missions

The original missions strategy given to, not only, the first-century church but all of Christianity was in the Great Commission. Jesus declares, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20a). This overarching command by Christ has been the backbone of missions efforts throughout the history of the Christian Church. It was this command that drove, both, the first-century church and the Moravian Church to take the gospel from their original homes and into the far reaches of their known worlds.

Lacking any credible evidence, it is unrealistic to believe that Zinzendorf’s missional strategy was directly modeled by the actions of the first-century Christian Church, although knowledge of the early Church’s advance of the Gospel must have naturally seeped into his missional thought. What is reasonable to believe about Zinzendorf; this devout pietist, University educated man, and a lifelong follower of Scripture is that he was aware of the advancement of the Gospel after the life of Jesus, as recorded in the New Testament.

He knew of Peter talking to the amazed and confused crowd at Pentecost, of Stephen’s stoning after his speech at the Temple and the subsequent scattering of the first Christ followers, and of Paul’s church planting strategies throughout Asia Minor and Europe. While minimal direct correlation can be found between these two periods of Christian history, separated by eighteen-hundred years, much can be gleaned about how to successfully conduct cross-cultural missions when analyzing the similarities between these two missions models.

Through centuries of warfare, the strategy to win a war was established in the mission planning phase of operations and then implemented in the field by competent military commanders and fighting units. Contrary to historical military conquests, no multi-layered missions strategy was established by the early Church for the advancement of the Gospel, although Jesus did give His initial vision in Acts 1:8 about how His soldiers would sovereignly move throughout the battlefield.

Ultimately, it was the circumstantial factors, while still heavenly inspired, which led to the Gospel's movement from Jerusalem and into the Roman Empire. It was the ever-present mix of divine sovereignty and human responsibility that is imprinted throughout the history of God's interaction with His people, seen in the lives of Joseph, Moses, and David. Instead of a finely tuned strategy being efficiently conducted on the battlefield, the advancement of the Gospel was a natural reactionary movement of early Jewish reformers, known later as Christians, based on environmental and external factors that they faced in their first-century surroundings. As previously analyzed in this paper, it is only after summarizing the major circumstantial factors that led to the advancement of the gospel for each group that the similarities between the two churches can be highlighted.

Born Out of Reform and Persecution

From the time that God declared to Abram in Genesis 15:5, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars – If indeed you can count them. Then he said to him, So shall your offspring be," the nation of Israel continued to increase in numbers throughout the world. At the time of Christ, the Jewish population comprised 12 percent of the entire Roman population.¹ With

¹ Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 23.

approximately four and a half million Jews spread throughout the Empire, Judaism was firmly planted and influential in the life of the first-century world.²

The synagogue was the lifeblood of any Jewish community, and it was in the synagogue where the Christian reform movement erupted. As Norman Bull explains, “Every synagogue was a ready-made base for Christian preaching. From it came the nucleus of believers, Jews and especially Gentiles, who would form the local church.”³ This strategy of a synagogue-first approach is evident in the Acts of the Apostles as their Jewish brothers were the initial target audience prior to rejection that forced a shift in focus to the Gentiles.

While having similar backgrounds, this renewed group of Jewish Christians did not attempt to meld peacefully amidst their old roots of belief. Beginning with Stephen’s speech to the Sanhedrin in Acts Seven and his subsequent stoning outside of the city walls of Jerusalem, tensions arose between these new followers of Jesus and their Jewish brethren. While violence began with Stephen, Christianity’s split from Judaism actually began with the resurrection of Christ. Although skirmishes flared up in segmented pockets, such as when Paul was stoned by angry mobs of unbelieving Jews, it was not until the beginning of the second century when Christians were forcibly expelled from the synagogue while Jewish Christians were eventually labeled as heretics by the Jewish community.⁴ Ultimately, it was Jesus and His messiahship which created a new way of thinking for this “renewed” sect of Judaism, a group that became the founding fathers of Christianity.

² Adolph Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), 10.

³ Norman J. Bull, *The Rise of the Church* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, Ltd., 1967), 21.

⁴ Adolph Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, 72.

Similar to the early Christian Church, the Moravian Church called for its own reformation against an established and powerful religious entity. It was the original *Unitas Fratrum*'s core teaching, brought about by Hus' energetic defiance, which called for biblical authority and local church autonomy and ultimately paved the way for the establishment of the Moravian Church. Once again, in the latter portion of the sixteenth century, there was a need for religious reform in Central Europe. German Lutheranism, once beaming with enthusiasm, had now become lethargic as the laity became silent on matters of the Church, doctrinal disagreements erupted, and the State was, once again, meddling in the affairs of the Church.⁵ A familiar recipe that sparked similar reformation movements previously. Revival finally came in the aftermath of the persecution felt during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).

In 1618, Bohemian rebels revolted against the Catholic-Austrian rule in their region, a response to Emperor Matthias's attempt to eliminate Protestantism in Bohemia and the appointment of a leading Catholic as the King of Bohemia.⁶ This event marked the beginning of the Thirty Years War which pitted the Roman Catholic Church against the Protestant Church in Central Europe. This war, with conflicts over religion, territory, and power, was one of the deadliest wars in world history and marred the landscape of Germany, home of the former Unity of the Brethren, in the first half of the seventeenth century. While reports of death tolls vary, it is believed that, possibly, five to eight million individuals were killed in those three decades of war leading to the eventual decimation of Germany, with twenty percent of their population ultimately seeing its demise.⁷

⁵ Weinlick and Frank, *The Moravian Church Through the Ages*, 49.

⁶ Stephen Lee, *The Thirty Years War* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 1.

⁷ Smithsonian (web site) <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/researchers-catalogue-grisly-deaths-soldiers-thirty-years-war-180963531/> (accessed November 30, 2017).

Out of the war, religious reform came in the form of Pietism. The Pietist movement awakened the people as emotion took the place of intellectualism, true conversion to Christ was highlighted, and the laity was reenergized.⁸ Congregations were actively reading their Bibles, praying, and speaking publicly about their individual religious lives, while at the same time shunning worldly desires.⁹ Pietism paved the way for the emergence and rekindling of the Moravian Church, led by Count Zinzendorf in the following century.

Whether it was out of Judaism or the Roman Catholic Church, new movements of religious sects blossomed against antiquated tradition, tedious law, and an uncontrolled quest for power. Both, Christianity in the first-century and the renewed Moravian Church founded in Pietism in the eighteenth century, took a stand against the prevailing thought of the time and went back to the simple teachings of Scripture. One believing in the prophetic teachings of the coming Messiah, the other believing in its ultimate authority. It was through reform and persecution that formed both of these groups of believers and remained the building block for their strength to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth, no matter the cost.

Revival Through the Holy Spirit

Defining moments in time litter the pages of history books. Whether it was soldiers storming the beaches at Normandy in June 1944 or the advent of the printing press, these moments and others like them, altered the landscape of the world and are the stakes in the ground that shifted the rudder of human history. In much the same way, both the first-century church and the Moravian Church can attribute such defining moments that shaped their own missional

⁸ Weinlick and Frank, *The Moravian Church Through the Ages*, 50.

⁹ Ibid.

histories. Moments in which the sovereign hand of God reached down from heaven in order to direct the actions of his His creation. Through the interworking of the Holy Spirit at two separate points in history, there became a spiritual link between the cross-cultural missionary activities of both churches.

While an outpouring of the Holy Spirit is not solely confined to these two events in Christian history, there remains a need for an outpouring of the Spirit in order to awaken the Church. Many Church awakenings can be pinpointed throughout Christian history. Examples in the past five hundred years of awakenings are evidenced through the revivals of Wycliffe in the fifteenth century, the Reformation of the sixteenth, Wesley in the eighteenth, and the Evangelicals of the nineteenth century, along with more recent national revivals in Africa, South Korea, Latin America, and China.¹⁰

In Acts 2:1-4, Luke records the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the post-resurrection Pentecost when the New Testament Church began as “tongues of fire separated and came to rest on each of them” and those gathered were filled with the Spirit.¹¹ From this indwelling, revival would be born, leading to what would become known as Christianity, and the Gospel would soon be taken out of Jerusalem and to the people of the Roman Empire. In much the same way as the renewed Jews, the Holy Spirit also established its presence with the Moravian Church seventeen hundred years after Pentecost.

The Moravian Church credits the presence of the Holy Spirit to a specified point in its own history. On August 13, 1727, at an innocuous church service, the congregation of the church was overwhelmed by the presence of the Spirit and the church “determined to reach souls for the

¹⁰ Patrick Johnstone, “Expecting a Harvest,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 383.

¹¹ Ibid.

Lamb” and devoted their community to missions on that day.¹² Through this renewed relationship with the Spirit, an outpouring became evident as missions planning soon started to take shape as the first trained cross-cultural missionaries were sent overseas, just five years later, a worldwide missions-sending community was born. Through the actions of the Holy Spirit, a change of heart soon swept through the Moravian Church in much the same way as the early Christians, seventeen centuries earlier.

Take it to the People

The Apostle Paul was a man of action, whether leading the hunt to track down followers of “The Way” or, later, being called as God’s appointed missionary to the Gentiles. He records this action-oriented mindset when he urges fellow Christians to take the Gospel to those outside of the Church,

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? At it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news (Rom. 10:14-15).

Christianity, while an inclusive religion open to all people, must still be physically taken to the people in order for its receivers to hear its message. This advancement, seen by both the first-century church and the Moravians, while being guided by the Holy Spirit, still relied on environmental and cultural factors to be advantageous in order to successfully take the Gospel from Jerusalem and Herrnhut into the world. It was during the first-century Roman Empire, that advantageous factors to spread the message of Christ were present to the early believers.

¹² Moreau, *Introducing World Missions*, 123.

The strength of the Roman Empire in the first century, while casting a somewhat foreboding presence to the people of Palestine, also brought a semblance of peace to the world. There was the minimal threat of barbarous invaders or rival empires to unsettle the relative tranquility that was felt throughout the territory that Rome controlled.¹³ This peace, along with superior infrastructure, allowed those within the Empire to freely travel throughout the region from the Atlantic Ocean to Arabia and from England to North Africa, unprecedented prior to the rise of this powerful civilization.¹⁴

The unmatched Roman Roads are still known today as one of the greatest advancements in world history and allowed citizens the opportunity to travel freely from city to city, affording the opportunity to take the Gospel from Jerusalem into Gentile lands. As Paul declared in Romans Chapter Ten, the words of God must be taken to the people, and it was during this time of the Roman Empire that there was an unprecedented opportunity for common citizens to move outside of their home region using the technologically advanced road system throughout the Empire.

This freedom of movement predicated and shaped the missional culture of early Christianity as Apostles began evangelizing the known world. According to the third century Church historian, Eusebius, who writes in his book *Church History, Book III, Chapter I: The Parts of the World in Which the Apostles Preached Christ*:

Meanwhile, the holy apostles and disciples of our Saviour were dispersed throughout the world. Parthia, according to tradition, was allotted to Thomas as his field of labor, Scythia to Andrew, and Asia to John, who, after he had lived some time there, died at Ephesus.

Peter appears to have preached in Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Asia to the Jews of the dispersion. And at last, having come to Rome, he was crucified head-

¹³ J. G. Davies, *The Early Christian Church* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), 34.

¹⁴ Bull, *The Rise of the Church*, 2.

downwards; for he had requested that he might suffer in this way. What do we need to say concerning Paul, who preached the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and afterward suffered martyrdom in Rome under Nero?"¹⁵

In much the same way as the first-century church, the Moravians, spurred on by the indwelling Spirit, also lived amidst a time of worldwide expansion which allowed for the freedom of movement of the Gospel to the far reaches of the world. This period of history, known as "The Great European Migration," began with the commercial expansion of European countries across oceans into the New World, in an attempt to gain land, resources, and power for their respective Kings.¹⁶

Simultaneously, from the ashes of the Reformation and the subsequent counter-reformation of the Roman Catholic Church, a revitalized Christianity emerged during this "age of discovery" as a new period of Catholic cross-cultural missions arose.¹⁷ Between the two centuries of 1600 to 1800, devout Catholic sects of Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits began to take the Gospel out of Europe and into these newly-discovered lands of South America, Africa, and the Caribbean¹⁸ Unfortunately, this Gospel migration came on the backs of colonial expansion.

The idea of global trade, while not a European invention, reached a fevered pitch with the rise of colonialism, starting in the seventeenth century.¹⁹ It was during this time that independent,

¹⁵ New Advent (web site) <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm> (accessed December 5, 2017).

¹⁶ Ralph D. Winter, "Three Mission Eras and the Loss and Recovery of Kingdom Mission, 1800-2000," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 264.

¹⁷ Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 60.

¹⁸ Ralph D. Winter, *Three Mission Eras and the Loss and Recovery of Kingdom Mission, 1800-2000*, 264.

¹⁹ Brian M. Howell and Jenell Williams Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 209.

yet powerful, European nations set out to control other parts of the world in an attempt to control vast untapped natural resources to support their own growing domestic industries.²⁰ These colonial ventures opened up maritime highways of travel for evangelism as European Christianity now came face to face with unreached “pagans” in distant lands.

When Dober and Nitschmann began their missionary work with the native people of St. Thomas in 1732, it marked the beginning of cross-cultural missions for the Moravian Church. Soon after this first sending, other Moravian missionaries were sent to Greenland in 1733, Savannah, Georgia in 1734, Guyana in 1735, South Africa in 1736, Suriname in 1738, Pennsylvania in 1740, Labrador in 1752, and Jamaica in 1754.²¹ All territories controlled by the Protestant colonial powers of the Danes, English, and Dutch.²² Consequently, Protestantism also expanded globally on the back of colonialism.

The cross-cultural engine of missions for the Church was now beginning to be revitalized for the first time in hundreds of years, paving the way for Protestant missionaries to follow their trailblazing Catholic brethren across open oceans and into ripe mission fields. While colonialization did much to damage the cultures of those lands that it touched, it was still able to open up the world to Western civilization and became a catalyst for evangelism to these unreached peoples. For the first-century and Moravian Churches, the climates for movement across regions, previously unreachable, allowed for the Gospel to travel into unknown parts of a new world. Heeding the words of Paul, these missionaries physically took the Gospel from their

²⁰ Howell, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology*, 209.

²¹ Vogt, *Everywhere at Home: The Eighteenth Century Moravian Movement as a Transatlantic Religious Community*, 13.

²² *Ibid.*

homelands and into unknown regions of the world. They were, in fact, the feet that carried the Good News to the world!

A Missionary Community

In all walks of life, a mentality among *all* members of a group to buy into the prescribed vision is paramount. The success of the group, no matter the mission, is directly correlated to whether all members are working as a whole towards one strategic vision. If the strategic momentum is only coming from the top, then the passion of the entirety of the group will eventually wane. All involved have to be invested in the process. This “all-in” mentality, so important for missions, radiated from the early Christians, specifically those living in Antioch in the first century.

After being called by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas were brought in front of the Church of Antioch. Luke relays that the church fasted and prayed for their missionaries and “placed their hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13:2). According to Platt, “[the Church of Antioch] nurtured an atmosphere for sending people out.”²³ Not only did this Church send out missionaries, but according to Acts 14:26-28, Antioch was also a place for these missionaries to return from their travels. It was the hub of first-century missionary efforts.

This base of operations strategy is evident in Paul’s first missionary journey recorded in Acts Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen. Here, Antioch was the sending and receiving point for Paul. In Antioch, missionaries recharged themselves physically and recharged the church emotionally as they shared with the congregation about what God was doing in unknown lands.

²³ David Platt, *One Church with a Global Gospel*, n.p.

The Church of Antioch, guided by the Spirit, had a singular vision for missions encompassed by the whole congregation.

All members in Antioch were involved in the missions process as this individual church in an urban metropolis heeded Christ's call of the Great Commission. Known as "the first recorded intentional sending of missionaries" by a local church, the Church of Antioch has shown Christianity how the local congregation should be responsible for directly sending out missionaries.²⁴ Alternatively, this congregation allowed for missionary autonomy when dilemmas arose away from home or in amendments to missionary tasking, such as when the Spirit guided Paul and his companions to new locations in Acts 16:6-10.²⁵ Financial reliance was also limited between home church and missionary, as evidenced by Paul in Philippians 4:10-19, where Paul describes receiving aid from the Church of Philippi.

Similarly, the Moravian Church is known as a group of believers in which the entire church was wholeheartedly involved in missions. As previously reported in this paper, one in every twelve members of the Moravian Church was sent out as cross-cultural missionaries. It has been recorded that during the first one-hundred and fifty years of missions of this church, a total of 2,158 of its members were sent overseas.²⁶ A staggering number when compared to the rest of the Christian Church during the eighteenth century.

J. R. Weinlick explains, "The Moravian Church was the first among Protestant churches to treat this work [missions] as a responsibility of the Church as a whole, instead of leaving it to

²⁴ Ott, Strauss and Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 28, 208.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 209.

²⁶ Colin A. Grant, "Europe's Moravians: A Pioneer Missionary Church," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 291.

societies or specially interested people.”²⁷ From this small community, came so much dedication and action to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. While many went to unreached peoples, there were even more back home in Germany that supported these cross-cultural travelers through the training of new missionaries, continuous prayer, or taking over the parenting roles of missionary children. After renewal came from the Spirit in 1727, the Moravians were led to start a “round-the-clock prayer watch, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year” with lasted for over one-hundred years.²⁸ No matter the calling, all members of the church had a role in missions. Some sailed away to distant lands while others were behind the scenes in support roles. Regardless, there was a single-mindedness of these people as a community of missional believers to reach the lost of the world for Christ, in much the same way as the early congregation of the Church of Antioch.

Tentmaking

God uses tentmakers as a way of sending out missionaries into foreign lands in order that they become fully integrated into their new culture by working in their original trade as an organic means of financial support. Simply, it is any employment by a Christian in a cross-cultural setting with the goal of sharing the Gospel.²⁹ This missions method minimizes continued reliance on the home church while also presenting opportunities for missionaries to reach the lost by establishing trust and gaining respect through work ethic seen by the local community. For

²⁷ Grant, *Europe's Moravians: A Pioneer Missionary Church*, 293.

²⁸ Mulholland, *Moravians, Puritans, and the Modern Missionary Movement*, 225.

²⁹ Steve Rundle, “Restoring the Role of Business in Mission,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 760.

the first-century church, there is scriptural evidence that tentmaking was a method used by missionaries, specifically Paul when planting new churches outside of Palestine.

The Bible introduces the concept of *tentmaker* in Acts 18:3 when Luke makes reference to Paul as an actual maker of tents. Paul further expounds on his ability to make his own living and places significance on hard work in Acts 20:34-35 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13, in which he says that his own hands have supplied for his needs and the needs of his team. While not one to shy away from accepting support and financial aid from the local church, Paul prioritizes the need for the missionary to be self-sufficient. Ultimately, Paul's goal of the tentmaker in his cross-cultural settings was to build credibility for people to hear the Gospel, identify with the local culture, and to build a model for future cross-cultural evangelism.³⁰ These three results from a tentmaking approach to cross-cultural missions continued in the actions of the Moravian missionaries.

Born, both out of necessity and Scripture, the Moravians emulated this tentmaking strategy for its own missionaries. Without this strategy, it would have been unattainable for the village of six hundred people to support two hundred missionaries during the initial period of its missional existence.³¹ Through Zinzendorf's teaching that members should be literate in commerce and trade, missionaries were afforded flexibility to immerse themselves in any culture in which they settled.³² While in Labrador, missionaries to the Eskimos earned a living through trade, with funds first going to their own survival while the overflow went back to the

³⁰ Rundle, *Restoring the Role of Business in Mission*, 760.

³¹ Mulholland, *Moravians, Puritans, and the Modern Missionary Movement*, 224.

³² *Ibid.*

impoverished Eskimo people.³³ Later in Surinam, Moravians were known for their work in tailoring, watchmaking, and baking.³⁴

Through hard work, Moravian missionaries would eventually receive an audience with members of foreign communities. This approach to financial self-dependence was highlighted by Paul in Scripture and, further, implemented by the missions' strategy of Zinzendorf. In a method to "level the playing field," the tentmaking strategy to missions translates to all types of missionary efforts and to all people, no matter the culture.

A Leader's Vision

Leadership is the ability to cast your vision in others. To make other people see what, normally, they would not see. To inspire them to do things that they would normally not do. Joe Stowell, past president of Moody Bible Institute, says "that at best, only twenty percent of Moody's student body has gifts of leadership. The other eighty percent are followers."³⁵ Ultimately, in the absence of leadership one will find the absence of change.

The model of leadership for the Christian Church was established in the life and ministry of Jesus. In Christ, one can see examples of all variations of leadership traits. Traits that were diametrically opposed to each other but all a part of His ministry: strength and weakness, kingship and servanthood, boldness and meekness, and confidence and humility. As the King of all Creation, Christ humbly came into this world as a helpless baby in meager circumstances to show His followers what true leadership means. Showing His vast array of leadership styles, He

³³ Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 99.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 157.

is known for saying “turn the other cheek” while also overturning money tables in the temple, enraged over the defamation of the Holy Place. In the ultimate act of servant leadership, Christ gave mankind the ability to enter the throne room of God through His own life, death, and resurrection.³⁶

While Jesus shows mankind the model of a perfect leader, He could not accomplish His task on earth alone. To complete His ministry after His resurrection, Jesus’ strategy was to train a small group of followers who would spread His vision and teachings to the world. These twelve men, chosen by Jesus, were not men of influence or power, but were common men with no formal education but showed qualities of a tireless work ethic, bravery, teach-ability, honesty, and selflessness.³⁷ These simplistic characteristics of the Apostles are described by the people of the Sanhedrin, “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). The ultimate goal of Jesus was to find and train leaders who were inspired by His life and would continue and complete the work in His absence.³⁸ This was the job given to the early Apostles of Christ. He built true leaders.

As Christ found a small contingent of followers to do his bidding in the world, the Moravian Church continued this same principle when preparing and sending out missionaries. While a leader with his own personal faults, it was through the vision and leadership of Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf that the sense of urgency to spread the Gospel throughout the

³⁶ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 21.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

world was imputed into the refugee members at Herrnhut.³⁹ Zinzendorf, not only spent thirty-three years as the overseer of the Moravian “worldwide network of missionaries,” but also participated in cross-cultural missionary work in Africa and the colonies of North America.⁴⁰ In his passion and example, he caused others to devote their lives to missions.

According to Gallagher, “The all-encompassing charisma of Zinzendorf’s visionary persona is difficult to separate from the early Moravian movement.”⁴¹ Additionally, Count von Zinzendorf introduced and oversaw a rigid process for the selection and training of Moravian missionaries. He was intricately involved in the entire process of the Moravian missionary life. Whether it was through his zeal for missions, the organizational structure that was implemented into the daily lives at Herrnhut, or the training of prospective missionaries, Zinzendorf’s vision inspired others to take up the call to fulfill the Great Commission.⁴²

Holding to many of the same characteristics of the first-century church, the Moravian Church was initially established and led by a man who followed hard after God while implementing a plan to take the Gospel from a central location, out into the world. Similar to Christ, he knew this could not be done alone. Through effective leadership, others were filled with his initial vision and joined the ranks of Christian cross-cultural evangelism. Through stirring leadership, missionaries like Paul and Peter or Dober and Nitschmann gave up worldly desires and took up their cross daily as they lived a life with the singular goal of speaking the love of Christ to all who would listen.

³⁹ Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 101.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

⁴¹ Gallagher, *Zinzendorf and the Early Moravians: Pioneers in Leadership Selection and Training*, 238.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Ultimately, in the face of persecution, revivals took place for the first-century Christians and Moravian Church through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, causing renewed congregations of Christ-followers. Once in the field, the strategy of tentmaking forged a bridge to contextualize the Gospel through trust and comfort with unbelievers. Furthermore, these missions-minded bodies of believers understood the urgency to take the Gospel to the people, but without the commitment to missions by the entire Church, this all-consuming cross-cultural model could not be sustained. While the zeal for missions burned within each missional community, without the initial flame of true leadership, these congregations would not have flourished outside of their home countries and the light of missions would have soon smoldered.

While not all-encompassing, the first-century and Moravian churches gave an effective model for conducting cross-cultural missions. In analyzing the beginnings and the subsequent growth of both churches, many similar characteristics reside within the two churches. These similarities, such as the need for revival, leadership, tentmaking, and a congregation-wide commitment, can show the Church today how to effectively work together to conduct global cross-cultural missions. These two churches, while being separated by distance, time, and scope, encompassed many similar characteristics of cross-cultural missions strategy that can be brought forward into the present-day churches of the West.

CHAPTER V

North American Christianity and Global Missions

As the adage goes, the quickest way to get from point A to point B is to follow a straight line. As evidenced by this paper's church analyses, the line used to spread the Gospel globally has historically been implemented by the Church. A study of the first-century and Moravian churches has shown many common characteristics that led to the growth of Christianity in their respective eras, but in order to develop a strategy for the future Western global missions, one has also to understand the current landscape of North American Christianity. Once that starting-point is established, a thorough strategy and way-forward for missions can then be presented.

Modern Western culture is defined by a socially-connected, fast-paced, attention-lacking group of people. This hyper-caffeinated landscape in the West has also crept into many of the pews in North America. While missions continues to produce plentiful harvests for the Christian Church, primarily outside of the West, some local churches in America have grown numb to the idea of global missions outside of their own stained glass walls. Ultimately, missions has been put on the dusty shelves of forgotten church priorities, been turned over to non-church agencies, or has become a scattered endeavor by only a few within the congregation.

For North American Christianity, global missions can mean many different things within the local church. To some, it may mean local community outreach, or to others, it may be a simple budget category. Additionally, churches may be actively involved in short-term mission trips while a neighboring church may be sending cross-cultural missionaries and planting churches around the world. Different responses to missions are scattered throughout the landscape of the Western Church.

Missions Pastor, Paul Borthwick, categorizes the relationship between North American Christians and the global Church into three generalized groups to include globally-aware young Christians, locally-focused Christians, and American-centric Christians.¹ Within the first group, there are many of America's Christianized youth and young adults, focused on fighting for the poor and injustices of the world but lacking sound theology and Christian doctrine.² The locally-focused Christians, alternatively, have turned their backs on those outside of the walls of this country while the American-centric Christians, while willing to serve cross-culturally, still maintain a Western worldview regarding global missions.³

While many opinions abound about the effects of the North American Church in the global missions arena, there remain mixed impacts brought about by the West's involvement in the story of the Great Commission. Since the end of World War II and flourishing days of the Industrial Revolution, America has abounded in great prosperity. This prosperity has seeped into the coffers of the church in America, affording much opportunity to support global missions financially.⁴ According to Bishop Hwa Yung of Malaysia, "the American church is still the largest source of funding for global missions," while at the 2010 Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism, some eighty percent of the seventeen million dollars raised for global missions came from American Christian giving.⁵

¹ Paul Borthwick, *Western Christians in Global Mission: What's the Role of the North American Church?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 18-20.

² Ibid., 18.

³ Ibid, 19-20.

⁴ Ibid., 65.

⁵ Ibid., 66.

Additionally, the North American Church has a vast wealth of intangible resources such as its seminaries, libraries, training programs, and educated clergy and faculty.⁶ While both financial advantages and educational opportunities allow for many venues to serve the Majority World, unfortunately, these lavishes have led those in North America to develop a Western worldview when viewing the Global Church. This ethnocentric mindset, that way things are done in North America is the correct way, continues to plague the West in how it is received by the rest of the world, creating barriers to hearing the true Gospel. It also creates a skewed perspective of Christianity as being a “Western” religion; a thought not palatable to most in the world.

No Longer a Christian Nation

Overall, the North American Church is seeing a decline in its active members. While numbers show revivals taking place in the global South and in the East, the West crumbles under the weight of post-modern pluralistic thought. According to pollster, George Barna, in an interview with 22,000 adults and 2,000 teenagers, “six out of ten 20-somethings who were involved in a church during their teen years are already gone!”⁷ According to the Pew Research Center, the median age of the U.S. Christian church is over fifty years old, while the average age of the U.S population is well lower at thirty-two.⁸ Contrary to Christianity, the median age of U.S. Muslims and Hindus is thirty-three.⁹

⁶ Borthwick, *Western Christians in Global Mission*, 68.

⁷ Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, *Already Gone* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2010), 23.

⁸ Pew Research Center (web site) <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/11/which-u-s-religious-groups-are-oldest-and-youngest/> (accessed January 26, 2018).

⁹ Ibid.

While the names of megachurches such as Willow Creek in Chicago and Saddleback in California enamor the Christian population and promote staggering attendance numbers, over half of the Protestant Churches in North America are actually comprised of small congregations, averaging fewer than seventy-five members during a typical Sunday worship service.¹⁰ Contrarily, these small, nondescript churches dotting the landscape of North American Christianity face continuous financial problems, declining membership, and the loss of clergy.¹¹ Overall, the average American church is on the decline.

Additionally, a parallel break in Western Christian infrastructure has been seen in the collapse of North American *Christendom*.¹² This ideological relationship between the church and the state results when the state promotes Christian unity and values while the church legitimizes the actions of the state and grants it divine consent.¹³ While the United States government has constitutionally separated the church and state, Christianity has maintained a heightened status in the eyes of the country until recent modern times. It had been protected, but this is no longer true in the public's view as the name Jesus is taken from the airwaves, counter-scriptural creation is taught as truth, and sinful lifestyles are applauded as heroic.

Along with a post-Christendom North America, Paul Pierson explains that this era is also post-Western, meaning that global Christianity no longer resides in the West. It is now

¹⁰ Gilson Waldkoenig and William Avery, "Cooperating Congregations : Portraits of Mission Strategies," (Apr 2012): 10.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010), 18.

¹³ Ibid.

“international” and “intercultural” and resides in places like Africa and China.¹⁴ Global missions happens everywhere, and all cultures of the world are now its recipients. It is no longer the Western missionary going to the tribes of Africa, but it now entails the African Christian going to places like Europe, China, and Brazil to spread the Gospel in some this world’s largest cities.¹⁵

While Christianity in the West has become negatively stigmatized by some, the Church of Jesus Christ continues to stand as a visible manifestation of God’s love to the world. Opportunities abound for worldwide evangelism since the fall of communism as areas of the world that were previously cut off to global missions have now been opened since 1989.¹⁶ While other areas of the world, especially in predominantly Islamic regions, continue to be closed to the Gospel, alternative avenues to missions have arisen such as the business as missions model (BAM).

Today, the business as mission model is growing as an instrument in which men and women can use business as a tool for missions.¹⁷ Through BAM, people are using their vocation as a way of taking the Gospel to the world.¹⁸ Under the pretense of business, Christianity is able legally to enter areas of the world considered closed regions. No matter the length of time that is spent in a cross-cultural setting, missions through vocation is an opportunity afforded to many believers such as teachers, doctors, and entrepreneurs to take part in the Great Commission and

¹⁴ Paul E. Pierson, “Local Churches in Mission: What’s Behind the Impatience with Traditional Mission Agencies?” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (October 1998): 146.

¹⁵ Timothy Olonade, “African Sending,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 371.

¹⁶ Pierson, *Local Churches in Mission*, 146.

¹⁷ Lausanne.org (web site) https://www.lausanne.org/docs/2004forum/LOP59_IG30.pdf (accessed February 1, 2018).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

not just the theologically trained. The BAM mission model allows access and also levels the playing field by creating a common understanding between the sent and the receiver through the process of business.

As previously stated, non-Western areas of the world have rekindled their fire for Jesus from the work of indigenous churches and cross-cultural missionaries working hand-in-hand due to increased access to formally closed off areas of the world, the advent of globalization allowing easier communication and travel, and an increased focus on missions by the worldwide Church. While the church in North America is in retreat, it is ripe for future revival similar to the post-persecution eras of the first-century and Moravian churches.

The Local Church in Action

The local church in North America should cling to the words of Peter, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). As a chosen people called to declare God’s praises, the call to partake in global missions will ring loudly if answered. For the church in the West, two predominant schools of thought dictate global missions action when the church “declares His praises” to the world.

With the abundance of financial resources, the local church can support missions as its primary means of fulfilling the Great Commission.¹⁹ This is the model of a *supporting* church. The role of being a global missions supporter entails giving either financially or, sometimes, through human resources to a mission agency or a parent denomination.²⁰ This method of

¹⁹ Zane Pratt, M. David Sills, and Jeff Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 247.

²⁰ Ibid.

support, while positive, available to all, and good stewarding of our resources, usually have only short-term, lasting effects on reaching those that are unreached.

The second model is a *sending* church, one in which the local church has taken on the role of the missionary.²¹ This second model encompasses the entire congregation but is also limited in that the local church is responsible for the development of its own strategies, training and equipping, sending, and financial support.²² Each model, whether supporting or sending, are both viable methods for the local church to become involved in global missions and to look outside of the walls of the church and into the nations.

Whether through support or sending, the local church of North America can provide abundant opportunities to walk hand-in-hand in God's mission. For many, though, a lack of missions knowledge and education precedes a willingness to partake in missions as church members are simply unaware of the needs of the world.²³ This missions knowledge gap is a prime opportunity for a governing denomination or mission board, such as the IMB or North American Mission Board (NAMB), to educate congregations. A prime example of this took place in the 1970s when the Woman's Missionary Union, the Brotherhood Commission, and the Sunday School Board partnered to form the Missions Education Council with the goal of producing missions curriculum and activities for the local church.²⁴

²¹ Pratt, Sills, and Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions*, 247.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ June Whitlow, "Missions promotion in the local church," *Baptist History and Heritage*, 26, no. 1 (Jan 1991):13-14.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

Through the gloomy outlook of the Western Christian Church in the twenty-first century, a birth of a new movement of global Christian missions has emerged. By the vision, inspiration, and teaching of preachers such as David Platt and John Piper, the urgency for some in the local church to live out missions has reached a fevered pitch in specific pockets of the American Church. According to Mohler, “This new vision for world missions is also remarkable in the fact that much, if not most, of the energy is coming from grassroots Christians rather than from institutional structures.”²⁵ This recent fire that is spreading for global missions is coming from the younger generation of believers, the Christian Millennials. This generation is taking on the challenge of missions head-on as a “doing” generation. They are more equipped and comfortable in the culturally diverse and globalized world of today’s mission field as opposed to previous generations.²⁶

Ultimately, the local church is called to complete God’s mission in His world. According to the Nicene Creed, the Church is described as apostolic, meaning that it is sent by God into the world for the purpose of the *Missio Dei*.²⁷ The Church is a missionary itself.²⁸ It is not up to the individual, mission agency, or denomination to complete God’s mission, but instead, it is the responsibility of the local church.

Unfortunately, the North American Church is identified as successful based more on the number of new members that are passing through its doors than on what it is doing to win souls for the Kingdom of God. Even though new members usually correlates to new believers,

²⁵ Albert Mohler.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Calvin P. Van Reken, “The Mission of a Local Church,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 32 (1997): 348.

²⁸ Ibid.

churches can become easily distracted by implementing new programs and viable options to keep the interest of its established members while catching the gaze of new candidates. What is lost in all of this fight for growth is the true mission of the Church. Nowhere during the time of the first-century or Moravian churches was there a concern for programs or numbers, but instead, the only desire was to spread the Gospel to all people who have not yet heard the name of Jesus. This fire must be rekindled today.

Current Trends of Cross-Cultural Missions

An unreached people group is a distinct group of people who share a unique culture, language, or geography where there is no community of believing Christians, usually with less than two percent of its population that can be categorized as Evangelical Christian.²⁹ According to global missions research, there are approximately 24,000 missionaries from the total pool of 250,000 global missionaries that are intentionally reaching the unreached people groups of the world.³⁰ This equates to approximately nine percent of Christian missionaries targeting the unreached, with the remaining ninety percent are spending their efforts on people groups that already have a Christian presence in their midst.

Approximately eighty-eight percent of the world's unreached groups lie within the 10/40 Window.³¹ With so much of the world's unreached who live inside this "lost" window, global missions has recentered its focus on this part of the world in the past quarter-century. According to Patrick Johnstone, "of the 6.7 billion people in the world in 2008, I estimate that 1.2-1.4

²⁹ Joshua Project (web site) <https://joshuaproject.net/help/definitions> (accessed January 26, 2018).

³⁰ Winter and Koch, *Finishing the Task*, 543.

³¹ About Missions.

billion have never had the chance to hear the gospel, and over 95 percent of these individuals reside in the [10/40] window area.”³² With only a minimal percentage of cross-cultural missionaries going to the unreached, and with the daunting number of unreached people groups who generally reside in gospel-resistant areas of the world, global missions from the West must continue to shift the priority of focus to the hard-to-reach places of the world in order to find the unreached.

Short-Term Missionaries

Today, some churches in North America do not have the luxury of being a sending church that supports full-time overseas missionaries, but instead they can now provide short-term missionaries into the global mission field combining its financial resources with a call to send missionaries overseas. A recent phenomenon of sending missionaries for as little as a week to up to two years, this new missions strategy has grown from 120,000 short-term missionaries in 1989 to over 2 million, just two decades later.³³ Roger Patterson describes short-term missions as, “the God-commanded repetitive deployment of swift, temporary, nonprofessional missionaries.”³⁴

For the short-term missionary, opportunities also arise for tentmaker strategies to be implemented for those entering a cross-cultural context to use their vocational skills and talents in sharing the Gospel. Doctors, teachers, and business people can work with the local population as a method of cultivating Gospel opportunities.

³² Johnstone, *Covering the Globe*, 549.

³³ Pratt, Sills, and Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions*, 248.

³⁴ Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Missions* (Minneapolis, MN: STEMPress, 2003), 110.

Alternatively, while there are many benefits to the short-term worker, there still remains limitations compared to the full-time, longer-term missionary. Relationships are molded after years of bonding and through built trust. This cannot be developed on a short-term basis, especially when entering an unreached cross-cultural setting unfamiliar with Western culture. Understanding the culture and effectively contextualizing the Gospel is developed through years interacting together, relationships which only the full-time missionary is afforded. While downfalls persist, short-term missions does still allow the local church to have a stake in global missions when time, finances, or training may be limited.

To the Cities

At the dawn of Protestant Christian missions starting in the nineteenth century, the strategy most often employed was to evangelize outlying villages and rural areas of a region. Even prior to this period of Protestant missions, Roman Catholic missionary sects, centuries earlier, evangelized the Native Americans of South and Central America and focused on rural tribes deep inside jungle territories. This tactic, to stay outside of urban centers, has recently started to shift as a more deliberate focus has been placed on reaching large urban centers of populations, primarily within cities in the *10/40 Window*. This “urban” strategy of reaching the cities can be traced back to first-century Christianity as Paul focused on the larger urban areas within the Roman Empire as his target geographical locations of interest.

An unprecedented shift from rural to urban has taken place in the past two hundred years. Two centuries ago only 4 percent of the population was urban, but now 51 percent of the world

calls a major city home. With no end in sight to this trend, it is projected that at the close of this century 90 percent of the world will live in an urban center.³⁵

Migration to the cities of the world has been paved by great opportunities for employment, education, entertainment, and healthcare. Johnstone believes that the cities of the world are to be the key challenge of twenty-first-century global missions as they hold the greatest source of wealth, misery, depravity, innovation, and sin.³⁶ The cities of the world have now become a ripe mission field for the Christian missionary.

Unfortunately, while the major cities of the world offer unforeseen opportunities, they are also primed for inexplicable poverty and suffering due to the high cost of rent or owning a dwelling, overcrowding, and the inability to find employment.³⁷ Within the city, 30 to 50 percent of the population is classified as poor.³⁸ Where there is hurting, though, there is often an openness to hearing the Gospel.

Urban strategies of evangelization include door-to-door witnessing, home Bible studies, and simply developing personal relationships with individuals within an unreached culture.³⁹ The cities also present prime opportunities for the tentmaker missionary to set up shop and practice their trade. It is in these major urban centers that physical, emotional, and spiritual needs are

³⁵ Patrick Johnstone, *Covering the Globe*, 556.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Roger S. Greenway, "The Challenge of the Cities," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 560-561.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 561.

being met as people groups are being evangelized who were at one time thought to be unreachable prior to the great urban migration of the last two hundred years.

The Holistic Gospel

Scripture echoes with the message of a faith that is contrary to the world. From Genesis to Revelation, God calls for His people to serve those who are in need, whether it be spiritual, physical, or financial. This holistic approach to fulfilling the mission of the Kingdom of God is shown to the disciples when Jesus calls for them to “preach the Kingdom of God and heal the sick” (Luke 9:2). In the Old Testament, Israel’s continual sin of idolatry plagued their relationship with their Creator, but written throughout its pages is God’s cry for His people to “act justly and love mercy” (Mic. 6:8).⁴⁰ Jesus pleads with His followers to serve the downtrodden in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matt. 25:40).

Scripture continually calls the Christ-follower to take on the mission of serving those who cannot serve themselves. This needs-based focus rings true for today’s missionary as the gap between the world’s accomplished and forgotten continues to widen evermore. Only two hundred years ago the average income disparity of persons from the richest countries was only four times greater than the income of those in the poorest countries, but due to advancements in the industries of the wealthy countries since the twentieth-century, this gap is now seismic.⁴¹ This gap, now sitting at sixty-five times greater, continues ever to widen.⁴²

⁴⁰ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 39-40.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴² WorldData.info (website) <https://www.worlddata.info/average-income.php> (accessed January 19, 2018).

While the average American lives on about ninety dollars per day, about 10 percent of the world's population live on less than two dollars per day and a billion individuals on less than one dollar per day.⁴³ According to a *USA Today* article on wealth, the three richest Americans have more wealth than the poorest half of the U.S. population, while globally, 82 percent of the global wealth created last year went to only 1 percent of the worldwide population.⁴⁴

The North American church continues to take on the call of the downtrodden through giving and needs-based short-term missions trips. While meeting the eternal spiritual needs of people continues to be the priority, meeting the physical needs of those hurting must still be vital for the wealthy North American Church. Not only must we give as stewards of what God has given us, but we must go to those hurting and see them at their level, whether the homeless we pass on the way to work or the beggar on the streets of Delhi, India. Through the local church and missions agencies, opportunities continually abound to serve the world as Jesus called for His disciples to preach the good news of the Gospel and to heal the sick. While one is the priority, both were commanded by our Savior as part of our mission of the Kingdom of God.

The local church of North America continues to have a role in the drama of global missions, but there remains no unified direction or strategy being conducted. Instead, some churches blindly become supporting churches, while some send, yet others do not even play a part in the Great Commission. Missions outside of the West has become more effective as the Majority World Church continues to thrive while the Western Church is fading.

⁴³ Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 41.

⁴⁴ USA Today (website) <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2018/01/22/vast-majority-new-wealth-last-year-went-top-1/1051947001/> (accessed February 11, 2018).

Ultimately, a new strategy for global missions must be developed for the church in North America. Revival must take place within the congregations from California to New York. Fortunately, a strategy has already been established and effectively used throughout Christian history to bring forward to today to show believers how to truly live out the Gospel and take the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

CHAPTER VI

A Missions Strategy for the North American Church

With scattered priorities and a lack of a clear missions vision, it is no wonder that the Western Church has been bypassed as the center of global missions for the world. While it is a positive attribute for the Church that Christianity no longer resides in the West, it being now both international and intercultural, the Western Church must attempt to regain its footing in the missions world because of the need in our own country along with the necessity to partner in God's plan around the world.

A simplified global missions strategy must be established for the North American Church, one that has been effectively proven to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ from a centralized location out into the world. Thankfully, this strategy for global missions has already been laid out in Christian history by the first-century church and the eighteenth-century Moravian church. This blueprint given by these two churches sheds light on how an entire community of believers can live in mission together with the goal of taking the gospel to the unreached peoples of the world, a strategy that worked two-thousand years ago and can provide a missional foundation for the Church today.

Reformation to Bring Change

While there remain North American missionaries scattered throughout the world taking the Gospel to the unreached, revival within the local church must begin as fewer individuals are taking up God's call to reach the lost in full-time cross-cultural Christian service.¹ This is the first step within any church movement that generates world-changing Gospel action. As

¹ Michael Jaffarian, "The Statistical State of the North American Protestant Missions Movement, from the *Mission Handbook*, 20th Edition," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 1 (Jan 2008): 35-38.

previously referenced, the first-century and Moravian churches went through periods of reform which consequently saw the worldwide advancement of the Gospel born from a tiny cell of committed believers. This outpouring of obedience and change brought about by reform ultimately became the catalyst for monumental global missions efforts that would take the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, and then later from Bohemia to the harsh frozen land of Greenland, seventeen-hundred years later.

In this time of declining attendance in the North American Church and scattered priorities for global missions, missional reform has to begin in our churches. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to say where this reform will begin, the simple fact remains that it *must* begin. It began in Jerusalem in the first-century with a small band of Apostles, and it began for the Moravians centuries later in Bohemia with Jan Hus' inspirational teachings.

Whether it comes from an individual, a denominational board, a mission agency, or the local church, reform always starts small and builds like an uncontained wildfire as it catches the hearts and minds of those it touches. Without the passion of reform that soon brings about sweeping change, there is no chance to galvanize the church of North America with the single-minded focus on fulfilling the Great Commission. A shift in priorities must sweep through the pulpits of this country, brought about through true reformation.

The Power of the Holy Spirit and Prayer

John recalls in 1 John 3:13-16 that we are given the Spirit of God, and when the Christian acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God then resides in believers through the Holy Spirit. Earlier John says, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to you remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26).

While reformation is a molding of God's will into tangible results, it is not until an indwelling of the Holy Spirit comes upon His people that the Christian truly sets on a path of shepherding the Gospel to the lost, as seen by the first-century and Moravian churches. Luke recounts in Acts Chapter Two the "coming down" of the Holy Spirit on those at Pentecost, while August 13, 1727 was the day that the Spirit came to Herrnhut to guide this small community of believers into a devoted life of cross-cultural evangelistic service.

Global missions is not a task to be undertaken solely by human efforts. Paul explains the role of the Holy Spirit when he says, "And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God" (Rom. 8:27). As Jesus said in Acts 1:8, His followers would receive power when the Holy Spirit dwells in them. This is the power that is needed to complete the task of the fulfilling the Great Commission. Without the Spirit, missions is only attempted through human ability and will ultimately fail.

Encountering the Spirit involves prayer. The Moravians conducted a round-the-clock prayer session which lasted for over one-hundred years during their most active era of global missions. Prayer was a matter of vital importance, a life and death matter. Prayer was a priority to the Apostles and the Moravians, and this must be modeled by today's Church. It is through prayer that the Christian can ask for intercession and strength from the Spirit. Today's churches see prayer so differently, so haphazardly.

It is through prayer that the Holy Spirit will come to the believer and will guide them emotionally, physically, and geographically in missions. The Spirit will teach and show believers what needs to be said in all circumstances (Luke 12:12). He will also guide the Christian in the actual physical locations of where one should conduct missions, as seen through Paul's travels

(Acts 16:6-10). Without the indwelling of the Spirit, the missionary is on loose foundation. It is not until the Spirit dwells within the believer and initiates a missions call that cross-cultural work should be conducted.

Understanding the Unreached

Once reform has begun, and the Holy Spirit is guiding the direction of global missions, a missionary still has to gain an understanding of the culture in which he or she are entering as there is not a one-size-fits-all method to present the Gospel to the unique cultures of the world. Examples of this cultural knowledge are seen in the methods of Paul during his three journeys and in the Moravians learning their target audience's language while also conducting cultural study at Herrnhut in preparation for missions. This education must present a baseline of understanding of a culture before a cross-cultural relationship can be initiated. Paul understood this concept of cultural understanding and so to must today's missionary gain this knowledge in addition to the theological training he or she receives. According to Mark E. Van Houten, "No matter how adept an exegete a theologian is,... it is all for naught if he does not understand his contemporary audience."²

With Paul's background as a Roman citizen, a Jewish scholar, fluency in Greek, and his business acumen, he was well suited to serve cross-culturally to both the Jewish synagogue leaders and Gentile townspeople. He understood his audience and saw the world through their eyes, evidenced by his ability to present the Gospel in three distinct methods through Acts Thirteen, Fourteen, and Seventeen.

² Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 125.

Similarly, the Moravian “choirs” focused on learning their target culture and becoming educated in the indigenous language, writing, and geography before ever setting foot in a new land. Furthermore, Moravian missionaries took with them trades and vocational skills in order to indigenize themselves within their target audience. They became part of their new culture and wanted to truly understand their new world, to the point of becoming slaves in the West Indies. To understand how these people saw the world and would receive the Gospel was of vital importance to both sets of missionaries.

According to missiologist Lloyd Kwast, “One’s own worldview provides a system of beliefs which are reflected in [their] actual values and behavior.”³ A person’s worldview is their deep-level fundamental assumptions about life and how situations are perceived, which defines how their own decisions are made and actions are executed.⁴ It is the lens through which a person sees the world. These unique worldviews provide the Christian missionary with different methods to build relationships and communicate in order to present the Gospel message effectively to unique cultures.

Understanding the culture in which one is entering is paramount, just like Paul and the Moravian missionaries experienced. According to Duane Elmer, “*understanding* is the ability to see patterns of behavior and values that reveal the integrity of a people.”⁵ If the missionary comes with a Western worldview and a lack of cultural understanding, it will be difficult to

³ Lloyd Kwast, “Understanding Culture,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 399.

⁴ Charles Kraft, “Culture, Worldview and Contextualization,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 401.

⁵ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 125.

effectively communicate and develop intimate relationships which will ultimately provide bridges to introduce the Gospel.⁶

For the Western missionary, they must rid themselves of the ethnocentric tendencies of their home culture which cause worldviews to remain based on Western ideas.⁷ This eradication of internal biases eliminates unnecessary barriers to evangelism. Secondly, a thorough education of the receiving culture, of its language, social structure, geography, and economics, should be clearly understood prior to working cross-culturally. Whether through internet resources, university education, or various other means available, gaining this understanding of the new culture will ease the cross-cultural transition and expectations of their new life.

Finally, the ability to participate in the new culture as an insider may be more accessible if the missionary follows the tentmaking philosophy displayed by Paul and the Moravian missionaries. Tentmaking afforded many opportunities for the missionary, from allowing flexibility of movement, to generating an entrance into an unknown culture through industry and commerce, and ultimately leading to opportunities to build trust by becoming a peer.

The local church should allow adequate opportunities to gain knowledge of unfamiliar areas of the world in which the missionary is planning to enter. Ultimately, there are many different methods with which the prospective missionary can involve themselves in the study of a new culture. This prior level of education and cultural understanding will only help to create a more seamless transition and eliminate ethnocentric worldviews that have been previously established in order to gain access from the indigenous population.

⁶ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 126.

⁷ Howell and Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective*, 33.

Crossing Borders

While much preparation must be finalized prior to entering a cross-cultural setting, the primary task of the missionary is to physically go to the regions of the world where the unreached are located. The declaration by Paul in Romans 10:14-15, demanding Christians to take the Gospel to the lost was true for the first-century Christian and remains so for the Church today. As the ultimate good news for mankind, the Gospel calls for its followers not to wait for people to come but, instead, seek out those that have not heard the message of Jesus Christ. It is a message that calls for action!

This outward expansion of the Gospel is the signature missions strategy of the first-century and Moravian churches. The call to missions is a deliberate movement outward just as Jesus pronounced when He told of the Gospel advancement in Acts 1:8. Similarly, when the Holy Spirit came down on the Moravians, their natural reaction was to go across treacherous oceans with this same message. One cannot wholly participate in God's plan for His creation without sharing His words given to us in Scripture. It is a natural outflow of a life in Christ.

Unfortunately, so many churches today conduct missions in a way that is counterintuitive to the examples given throughout Christian history. They are content to use the strategy of "sit and wait" instead of a "get up and go" method of reaching the lost. Pastor Tim Keller, describes four different types of churches in North America; the church that is *in* the city, *against* the city, *of* the city, and *for* the city.⁸ It is the church that is *for the city* that goes beyond meeting together for worship and attending programs but is instead burdened for the welfare and salvation of those outside of its walls while engaging in the mission of reaching those that are in need of the

⁸ The Gospel Coalition (web site) <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/4-kinds-churches-city/> (accessed February 1, 2018).

Gospel.⁹ Whether it is to the unreached in our own cities or in the distant 10/40 Window, the local church must be “for the world” and go to these people. That must be the primary vision of the local church, no matter the cost.

For the local church to bring back the urgency of missions, it must model the actions of the first-century and Moravian churches. To turn vision into reality, the local church needs to be wrought with people in leadership with a single-minded focus on fulfilling the Great Commission. Dwight D. Eisenhower is known to have said, “Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”¹⁰ It is through strong leadership that change takes place and a vision is transformed into action. This is true no matter if it is politics, military, sports, or religion.

Jesus demonstrated this virtue, and so did Hus and Zinzendorf. Without the examples given by these men, there would not have been people willing to line up and sacrifice so much for the ideas that they presented. Ideas turned into actions that changed the course of Christianity. The modern local church needs these same type of men and women who are in strategic positions of leadership to drive the vision for missions and inspire the Church with the common purpose of spreading the name of Jesus.

Furthermore, global missions cannot be the enterprise of only a select group within Western congregations. The Great Commission is a call for *all* who believe in the message of Christ. Through this call, all are given unique tasks. The Moravian Church showed how an entire community of believers could participate in global evangelism. Missionaries went while others stayed home in various, but vital roles. Duties consisting of prayer, training, and fulfilling the

⁹ The Gospel Coalition.

¹⁰ ThoughtCo. (web site) <https://www.thoughtco.com/military-quotes-to-inspire-you-2830421> (accessed February 1, 2018).

daily responsibilities of the community. Those that went were not forgotten once they disappeared over the horizon. Additionally, the Church of Antioch was a missions-minded congregation. This church was a hub is missionary travels and was a place of refuge after arduous journeys west into Asia Minor and Europe.

Today, many times, missionaries are soon forgotten by the local church once they have started their new lives overseas. Congregations fall back into their daily routines soon after laying hands on those called and sending them to unknown areas of the world. Memories of missionaries rekindled only when pictures from the front-line are sent home or funds are needed to continue work abroad. Instead, the entire local church should play an active role in the work of the cross-cultural missions.

There are jobs to be executed back home when one of their own is sent. Whether the local church follows the example given by the Moravians with a constant blanket of prayer, continuously training up new missionary candidates, or financially supporting those sent, active participation is required from the entire church. While all are called to be a part of global missions, some may go while others stay home, but the entire congregation must be active members of reaching the unreached.

Finally, this case study showed that global missions is best executed in teams. As Paul went with Silas and Barnabus and the Moravians traveled in groups, Gospel teams should be the primary structure when the local church sends missionaries around the world. Whether it is a coffee shop in China or English teachers in India, missionaries traveling in teams, specifically through vocational ministry, are able to support each other, grow together, and develop a more elaborate web of relationships within their new culture.

Overall, the first-century and Moravian churches conducted global missions with many parallel characteristics which successfully allowed for the worldwide advancement of the Gospel. These ideas, such as the need for reform, a calling of the Holy Spirit, an understanding of the receiving culture, along with a congregation-wide effort allowed for Christianity to spread to formally unreached regions of the world. These matching details can show the North American Church how to develop and implement a successful strategy to conduct global missions in our current world.

Conclusion

The prospect of fulfilling the Great Commission is a daunting task for the Church. Multiple challenges face the North American Church as the local Western audience has grown numb and sometimes even hostile to Christianity while attempting to sweep it out of this country's lexicon. Furthermore, looking outside of our borders offers unique challenges as 90 percent of the world's unreached lie within regions of the world entrenched with the religions of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism¹¹ The Christian reads in 1 John 3:13, "Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you." The tide of negativity towards Christianity continues to swell.

While worldwide evangelism will face trials as the Gospel is spread, John offers a glimpse into a future redeemed humanity in Revelation 7:9, "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb." All people groups will one day bow on bended knee, worshipping our Creator. This picture of all ethnic groups lying prone at the throne

¹¹ Lausanne.org.

is the fuel for global missions. There is no perfect strategy to execute this task, but one can look through points in Christian history and see how God advanced His message throughout the world.

After the fall of mankind, He spun His plan in motion to create His chosen people, the Israelites. He would use these stiff-necked peoples to show the world His glory. Ultimately, redemption came in the form of one of these Israelite babies, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. From this point, the Gospel would be taken outward. Starting with the Twelve, the message of the Christ began to burn in Jerusalem and soon flamed throughout the Roman Empire.

Soon after this outward movement of the Gospel, as detailed in the book of Acts, it became a legalized religion by Roman authorities, further legitimizing its truth claims. As this message grew throughout Europe, primarily in the next fifteen-hundred years, it became entrenched as the primary religion of the modern world. Soon, Roman Catholic missionaries were taking the Gospel to new uncharted territories of Africa, South America, and Asia through colonialization. It was during this period of history that reform against the dominant Roman Catholic Church brought about the creation of Moravian Brethren.

The Moravian Brethren, born out of persecution and reform, soon found a home in present-day Germany at Count Zinzendorf's estate, called Herrnhut. As a religious community, this small group of believers lived quietly in communion together until the Holy Spirit came down to them and turned their hearts toward worldwide evangelism. Soon, these believers were swept up in the surge of fulfilling the Great Commission as they sent missionaries around the world to spread the name of Jesus, modeling many of the same strategies and characteristics of the first-century Christians.

Today, the Church in North America is stagnate and unimaginative, although there remain pockets within the Church that are attempting to be a part of God's Kingdom-building plan through cross-cultural evangelism. The growth of the Church in Africa, China, South Korea, and South America shadows the North American Church. Although still able to be financially and educationally relevant, this church needs its own Western reformation to reinvigorate the call to global missions.

Ultimately, it will be through the model given by the first-century and Moravian churches that will show today's Western Church how to bring about a new strategy for missions. The Moravian church mirrored how the first-century church took the Gospel from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, and so should the local church in North America lean on these examples. It is not the call of only a select few, but it is instead the call of *all* people who claim Jesus as their Savior. Every Christ follower in the local church should place their mark on the pages of Matthew 28:19-20 in order to usher in the scene in Revelation 7:9 when every nation, tribe, people, and language are worshipping at the throne room of the Lord.

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