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CHURCH HOSPITALITY: A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR GROWTH BASED ON THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN REVELATION

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By

Gesner Noel

Lynchburg, Virginia

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THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

GR ADE

MENTOR
Dr. Charlie Davidson
Director, Doctor of Ministry Program
Associate Professor of Chaplaincy

READER
Dr. David Hirschman
Acting Dean
Assistant Professor of Religion
ABSTRACT

CHURCH HOSPITALITY: A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR GROWTH BASED ON THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN REVELATION.

Gesner Noel

Liberty University Theological Seminary

Mentor: Dr. Charlie Davidson

Church growth seeks both to actualize the precepts of the “Great Commission”, to attract new members and sustain current congregation. One of the fundamental problems is the inability to preserve hospitality. The pertinence of hospitality to the Church originates from Scriptures that clearly exemplify Christ’s deeds and teachings of hospitality. This thesis project will investigate the seven churches in Revelation and reveal factors of outstanding and inhospitable practices in relation to Church growth and hospitality. Surveys will be based on unregulated interactions among pastors. Twenty pastors across five denominations, Evangelical Lutheran, Charismatic, Pentecostal, Seven-Day Adventist, and Roman Catholic will demonstrate Christian hospitality as well as show areas for improvement. A biblical model for hospitality will be shaped on this research that will enable churches to continue the mission of reaching the masses.

Abstract length: 132 words
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INTRODUCTION

The terrorist attack against the United States on September 11, 2001 is an event that will never be erased from the memory of the people as a nation. It was a bright sunny Tuesday morning. Everyone near the New Stock Exchange was getting ready for the Stock Market opening bell. At around 9:05 AM, two airplanes stroke the World Trade Center Twin Towers. While the EMS, the NYPD, the NYFD, and others were rushing towards the building to help, both buildings suddenly collapsed like volcanoes mixed with fire and dust. The dust spread like cloud in the air. The buildings and everyone around the Financial District were covered with dust and became unrecognizable. In the mist of this tragedy, people from all walks of life were helping other people. Gender, race, sexual orientations, and the like did not matter that day. The offices nearby sheltered everyone. Prayer was the most treasurable commodity of the day. It was a day when everyone was welcome. Hospitality was everywhere.

The hospitality shown on September 11, 2001 is a reminder to the church that hospitality is not a new human device to attract people for church growth but it is a fundamental biblical mandate to church growth. It is God’s intention for churches to multiply for His glory. Multiplication is a major item in God’s agenda. However, church multiplication or magnification should not impede or diminish the value and practice of hospitality. Hospitality is as old as the Earth. God welcomed Adam and Eve to His beautiful Garden in Eden. God welcomes every human being who inhabits the earth. Abraham was blessed by God with a child when he welcomed the angels of the Lord. Lydia welcomed Paul as a missionary in Philippi. Therefore, church leaders must ensure that their church growth is not an impediment to hospitality.

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1 Genesis 18, KJV.
Definition of Hospitality

This author defines hospitality as the spirit by which one makes a stranger feel comfortable to the point that the stranger experiences a comfort similar to that of a family member or a closed relative. Notice in this definition the use of “spirit” and not “act”. An act is the manifestation of a spirit in the visible world. The act will not be if the spirit is not. This argument may not stand or this definition may not be realistic in today’s world with its current traditions, customs, and cultures. However, the reality is that it is this kind of hospitality that God expects from every individual including those who claim to be His followers. God’s intention in creating the world was to bring a spirited-life to all creation including humanity. Hospitality brings life and hope to humanity in area where none is expected in order to preserve God’s original intent.

In 1986, this author experienced the dyer effects of inhospitality. It was like the sting of death when this author was quietly thrown out of a church by supposedly a deacon. A pair of Jeans, sneakers, and a polo shirt were the main cause of this embarrassment. The church policy expected a worshiper with tie and suit to walk in their temple. To their surprise, a dirty black young man from nowhere invaded and violated this church inhospitable policy. There was no biblical foundation for this embarrassment. This was a flagrant proof that such a church was not operating based on biblical principles. In 2000, fourteen years later, there was a big split within that particular church, and it died as of the writing this paragraph. There were many more similar instances of clear violations of foundational biblical principles by some pretended to be churches of Jesus-Christ. This author hopes to contribute to this subject with a biblical model for church hospitality.
Statement of Problem

The overall purpose of this research is to critically analyze the inter-connection between church growth and hospitality implementation. The main prerequisite to the current study is the presupposition, or, it is better to say, a scientific presumption, that the expansion of church in our days inevitably leads to the decrease in hospitality. The aforesaid scientific presumption rests on the evidentiary basis.

The idea of indisputability of the relationship between church growth and hospitality implementation dominates the studies by Dr. Richard J. Krejcir. According to the scholar, “The main rationale for church growth originates from the Holy Scripture. This rationale stems from God’s desire to have His church growing.”² This means that God is the initiator of the movement of church growth, while people must fulfill His desire. Arguments of Krejcir are tightly linked with the justifications of Donald McGavran, a missionary in third generation who wrote the publication ‘The Bridges of God’. Thus, Krejcir assays, “McGavran became a great visionary through his practice and laid down his visions as the foundation of the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary in 1965.”³

Krejcir is disposed to think that the biggest shortcoming of McGavran’s teachings lies in the fact that he focuses on investigating different tendencies of church growth by comparing one church to another, instead of making insight into the Holy Scripture. In other words, Krejcir contends that it is impossible to know why a church grows in one situation and dilapidates in

³ Krejcir, 65.
another situation without doing in-depth exegesis on Scripture. According to Hayes and Holladay, “The concept of exegesis should be understood as a critical interpretation of the Biblical text in order to grasp the meaning of every passage.”4 The appropriateness of exegesis to the problem of church growth may be justified with the necessity to relate in detail, or, in other word, to expound the Biblical roots and prerequisites to the movement of growth.

To reconcile Krejcir with McGavran, the present investigations will synthesize the approaches of both thinkers. The following research questions must be propounded in the context of present research: 1) What are the critical factors affecting the growth of a church today days? 2) What is the significance of hospitality in terms of the church growth? 3) How is it possible to increase the velocity of church growth without detriment to hospitality?

The above-captioned research questions raise a number of problematic issues that needs to be clarified before commencing research. Thus, the problem of church growth underlies the first research question. The modern doctrine of church growth rests on the teachings of Donald Anderson McGavran. Therefore, initial considerations with regard to the nature of church growth as a dynamic phenomenon must have been given in the publications by McGavran. According to the author, “The scrutiny of church growth must be started with the discussion of theological considerations.”5

The first impression is that McGavran is consistent in his scientific approach to the problem of church growth. McGavran claims, “Church growth is a much broader and profounder category than it is believed to be. The problem of church growth delves into the reasons and conditions of how individuals become Christians irrespective of geographical, national, and

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cultural diversity and obstacles.”

That is, the problem of church growth entails the question of biblical faithfulness and theological effectiveness. The factors affecting biblical faithfulness and theological effectiveness as the preconditions to the contemporary church growth constitute one of the main interests of this research.

To continue, the second research question raises the problem of hospitality. The problem of hospitality is urgent because it is a dynamic phenomenon that not only experiences changes in its meaning, but also is tightly linked with the problem of church growth. Christine D. Pohl successfully demonstrates, “In past centuries, the term hospitality was used as the practice of ministry offering assistance and aid to needy strangers. In other words, the original meaning of hospitality was the practice of welcoming strangers into a residence and proposing them shelter, food, safety, and furtherance.”

In the context of the present study, hospitality will be addressed from the perspective of its indissolubility with church growth under the conditions of contemporary life.

Finally, the third research question should be deemed the most important one. This question raises a very urgent problem of the reciprocity between church growth and hospitality. Also, it highlights the value of hospitality in the normal operation of church growth. The nexus between hospitality and church growth is clearly visible in the publication ‘Giving and Receiving Hospitality (new church participants)’ by Barbara Mason Rathbun. According to Rathbun, “Any community is based on the principle of giving and receiving and, therefore, hospitality as an

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6 McGavran, 71.

instrument of giving and receiving will inevitably influences the normal functioning of church growth as the community of new church participants."  

In addition to this, the present study is not purposed to provide a mere analysis of the relationship between church growth and hospitality, but aims at offering a prudent solution on how to go on the policy of church growth without detriment to hospitality.

Statement of Limitation

This project does not address the subject of hospitality in relation to the Holy Communion nor in relation to homosexuality. However, this author will pursue further research that will bring together hospitality, the Holy Communion, and homosexuality under the scrutiny of the Bible. Second, this project does not take into consideration the various translations of the Bible, and their impact on the definition or interpretation of certain terms.

Theoretical Basis for the Project

This part of research is the most important, because it offers a structural basis of this project will guide all investigations and explorations. Sinclair explains, “In its broad sense, the concept of theoretical framework should be understood as a guide or plan of a project.”  

Sinclair continues, “A theoretical framework precedes any serious research, as it assists in ascertaining

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the expectations, abilities, and instruments of research, thus help to attain good outcomes and achieve research objectives.”

As far as the category of church growth is concerned, it is possible to discern two major theories that are involved in the discussion of this concept. The first theory is the doctrine of exegesis, while the second conception is the theory and theology of mission. The preceding analysis has revealed that exegesis is not only a theory, but also an every-day activity, as well as a systematic approach to the Biblical text. Hayes and Holladay write that exegesis as a Biblical criticism varies in both form and meaning.

The second theory that treats church growth as an intrinsically biblical category is the theory and theology of mission. Regardless the disputable nature of this theory, its implications originate from the teachings of McGavran. According to McGavran, “It is incumbent on all Christians to carry out the Christian mission in the kaleidoscopic world. The researcher associates the term ‘mission’ with God’s desire.” That is, the theory and theology of mission implies that it is not a human-related activity, but the mission of God, who remains both the initiator and supervisor of the mission.

Statement of Methodology

The current research was conducted by means of primary, secondary and specialized methods. Before giving any justifications for the chosen method of research, it is essentially to explain the difference between primary data and secondary data. To put it briefly, the critical discrepancy between primary data and secondary data lies in the sources of information.

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10 Sinclair, 50.

11 Hayes, & Holladay, 34.

Secondary data can be retrieved from past publications and previous interpretations. On the contrary, primary data can be obtained from original sources containing unmodified factual information.

There are several reasons in favor of using secondary data. First, sometimes the collection of primary data is time-consuming and expensive. Second, it is impossible to always have enough information. Third, secondary data may supplement the findings of primary research. Fourth, secondary data may verify, alter, orient, or contradict primary findings. Fifth, it helps to accentuate on interpretation and analysis. Sixth, it is impossible to conduct a research in isolation from what has already been researched.

In view of the above, the project was carried out with the help of the following secondary data collection methods: review, comparative analysis, and critique. The method of review was conducted as a literature review, the systematic overhaul of previous publications in the domains of church growth and Christian hospitality. This method facilitated the familiarization with the available academic literature and aided the analysis of gaps in past researches.

The method of comparative analysis helped to prepare data, describe it, collate with other relevant data, and make pertinent inference. Comparative analysis assisted the progress of juxtaposing practices of various churches in order to observe, collate and confront the particularities of such practices. In other words, it was anticipated that the comparison and

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13 Loraine Blaxter, Christina Hughes and Malcolm Tight, How to Research (Open University Press, 2010), 192.
contrast of several churches would help to better understand the interdependence between church growth and hospitality.

To continue, the method of critique was employed as a systematic and progressive exploration of the original components of the phenomena. Suffice it to say that the method of critique was directed at major strengths and shortcomings of church growth and hospitality as the interdependent phenomena. There are two salient features of critique that justify the appropriateness of the method to the present research: (1) its exploratory paradigm, and (2) the progressiveness of application.

Apart from the above, this project was also elaborated with the help of several specialized methods. The main specialized methods for studying church growth and hospitality were exegesis, and catechetical approach. As the preceding discussion has unveiled, exegesis is a systematic approach to the explanation and critical interpretation of the biblical text. Young extends the understanding of exegesis as a specialized method of religious research by propounding that exegesis inevitably resembles fundamental principles of hermeneutics that stem from the bigger process of appropriation and reception. In other words, Young explicates, “The method of exegesis as a practice of understanding specific passages or sentences, as well as distinguishing the apprehended all-encompassing plot, argument or plan of a biblical work.” In addition to Young, Craig L Blomberg considers, “The method of exegesis to be not only the way of interpreting the biblical text, but also the textual criticism.”

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19 Young, 10

As far as the specialized method of catechetical study is concerned, it needs to be explained that this method helped to achieve the overall purpose of the present study through research by question and answer. That is, the biblical texts, as well as academic publications, were approached from the perspective of question. After the question was asked, the pertinent answer was looked for.

Aside from secondary data collection methods and specialized methods of research, this project was elaborated by means of primary research. The main superiority of primary research stems from the capability of primary data collection methods to attain more accurate and undisputed findings. Also, primary data was used to enhance the reliability and validity of the research finding.

Case Study

In the context of the present research, the method of case study focused on the dynamics of unveiling situations. The present research largely relied on the case study of Christian communities such as the Seven Churches in the book of Revelation and contemporary organizations (churches). In the context of the present research, the method of case study was employed through the series of sequential steps: 1) search and retrieval of the cases; 2) exploration of the case’s salient features; 3) fixation of raw data by way of field notes; 4) comparison and contrast between the analyzed cases; 5) establishment of appropriate inferences and the extension of findings to the broader set of relative cases.

Each step of case study includes the following elements:

*Search and Retrieval of the Cases*

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At this stage, relevant cases of Christian communities and Christian churches were searched and made accessible for research. In its broad sense, this step was the phase of identifying churches and congregation for deeper analysis. The search for cases was largely conducted through online databases, such as ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, Christian Periodical Index, ProQuest Religion, JSTOR, etc. The retrieval of the cases was made under the criterion of keywords – church growth and hospitality.

*Exploration of the Case’s Salient Features*

At this stage of case study, the retrieved cases of Christian communities and churches were analyzed. The analysis of salient features of the cases was commenced as the collection of all data relevant to church growth and hospitality in terms of the retrieved cases.\(^{22}\) Taking into consideration that case study is an empirical investigation, all relevant data was collected with the help of field notes and unstructured interviews. Fields notes and unstructured interviews were deemed convenient ways of collecting data, because they required no prior written consent of other individuals to the collection of information.

*Fixation of Raw Data By Means of Field Notes*

The next stage of case study was the fixation of raw data by means of field notes. This phase was interrelated with the previous one, because the fixation of raw data accompanied the

\(^{22}\) Cohen et al., 262.
analysis of the case’s salient features. Field notes are results of observation and unstructured (impersonalized) interviewing.\textsuperscript{23} The observation was direct. The observation was conducted in locations of Christian congregations and churches. The field notes were made as notebooks recordings.

\textit{Comparison and Contrast between the Analyzed Cases. Inferences}

After salient features of the analyzed cases were scrutinized, it was possible to juxtapose, collate and contrast the cases. The comparison and contrast made possible to provision of final inferences.

\textbf{Surveys}

Unstructured interviewing and surveying are two primary data collection methods that help to establish and verify the relationships between variables. The method of unstructured interviewing is a qualitative research design that consists in the ingenious interaction between the researcher and a respondent.\textsuperscript{24} This method does not have a preliminary structure as it relies on the uncontrolled discussion. It was expected that the method of unstructured interviewing would augment the understanding of church growth and its dependence on hospitality. The method of unstructured interviewing was conducted through the following sequential stages: 1) statement of the research problem; 2) search and selection of relevant interviewees; 3) performance of interviewing; 4) fixation of results; and 5) making inferences.

\textsuperscript{23} M G Maxfield, & E R Babbie, \textit{Basics of Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology} (Cengage Learning, 2011), 188.

\textsuperscript{24} Trochim, 2.
In the context of this research, the method of surveying was employed in the form of a questionnaire. 25 pastors were surveyed. Saunders et al specify the following types of questionnaire: a) self-administered questionnaires; b) internet-mediated questionnaires; c) intranet-mediated questionnaires; d) postal and mail questionnaires; e) delivery and collection questionnaires. Delivery and collection questionnaire was deemed the most appropriate to this project as it was possible for the researcher to deliver a questionnaire by hand to every respondent and to collect them later on. Statistics will be provided in chapter II.

Exegetical Approach

The main specialized theological method was exegesis. Exegesis is a systematic approach to the explanation and critical interpretation of the biblical text. Young extends the understanding of exegesis as a specialized method of religious research by propounding that exegesis inevitably resembles fundamental principles of hermeneutics that stem from the bigger process of appropriation and reception. In other words, Young explicates the method of exegesis as a practice of understanding specific passages or sentences, as well as distinguishing the apprehended all-encompassing plot, argument or plan of a biblical work. In addition to Young, Craig L Bloomberg considers the method of exegesis to be not only the way of interpreting the biblical text, but also the textual criticism.

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25 Saunders et al, 357.


Following the explanations of Young and Blomberg, the method of exegesis was employed. This method brings to light the biblical foundations of church growth and hospitality.

**Biblical Foundation of Church Growth**

In Acts 2:47, the Bible clearly articulates that God intends to increase the number of people who should be saved on the daily basis. However, there is a precondition to such intention of the Lord: a man is required to praise Good and have favor with all human beings. The initial analysis of the aforementioned passage makes evident that the passage has direct relevance to the problem of church growth.

According to Wiersbe, the first sentence of Acts 2:47 implies the magnification of a church, while the second sentence of Acts 2:47 means the multiplication of the church. From this passage, it is possible to infer that there are two sequential steps to church growth. The first mandatory phase of church growth is magnification of the church. Magnification of the church will be possible only if each individual praises the Lord and have favor with all other individuals.

The next phase of the church growth is the multiplication of church. This phase will be accomplished only if the Lord goes on multiplying churches on the daily basis. To sum up, the success of the first phase depends on the will of a separate individual, while the success of the second phase is dependent on the will of God. However, Acts 2:47 makes it clear that God will inevitably add to the church if an individual praises God and favors other individuals. That is, multiplication of the church is predetermined by the magnification of the church.

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In addition to this, the requirement to ‘have favor with all the people’ is very close to the definition of hospitality. To favor means to provide furtherance. In this sense, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that there are two preconditions to church growth: (1) the praise of God; and (2) hospitality (favor with all the people).

In Ephesians 4:11-12, it is prescribed that church growth is the collaborative result of the work of apostles, evangelists, the prophets, the pastors and teachers, everyone who edify ‘the body of Christ’. According to Wiersbe, the aforementioned biblical passages should be understood as the imposition of obligations on all persons responsible for the work of ministry (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) to teach people the Word of God in order to increase their faith.

Martin H Manser writes that the aforementioned biblical passages concern the question of church leadership. Suffice it to say that the present passage highlights the role of spiritual workers in the augmentation and growth of a church. The passage prescribes that it is incumbent on apostles, evangelists, prophets, teachers and pastors to work on the construction of church as ‘the body of Jesus Christ’.

John 12:32 has direct pertinence to the category of church growth. The passage provides that if Jesus will be lifted to the skies, all men will be drawn unto him. This passage from the Bible is closely connected with the life and deeds of Jesus Christ. Some authors, such as

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29 Ephesians 4:11-12.
32 John 12:32.
Bartholoma\textsuperscript{33} and Stovell\textsuperscript{34}, write that the Fourth Gospel often relies on metaphorical way of discoursing on Jesus’s history. From the analysis of the passage, it is possible to infer that the phenomenon of church growth is inherent to the life and deeds of Jesus Christ. In other words, it is impossible to secure reliable growth of a church without following the teachings of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus unveils his intent to establish His church on the rock. The narrator implies that the established church will so strong and trustworthy that even ‘the gates of hell’ will not prove superior to it.\textsuperscript{35} The text of this passage is very metaphorical. This notwithstanding, it is possible to grasp the idea of church growth that is concealed in this biblical narration. According to Frederick Bruner, Matthew 16:18 makes certain that the church is not established on the authority of a man, but rather on the ministry of the confession of Peter who declared Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God.\textsuperscript{36}

Given this, Bruner is prone to believe that the foundation of church is the ministry of the confession, and not the authority of a man. Following the interpretation of Bruner, it is possible to make inference that church growth must not be dependent on the authority of a human being, but must be carried out in terms of the ministry of Peter’s confession.

The Confession of Peter is delineated in three Synoptic Gospels: Matthew 16:13-20, Luke 9:16-20, and Mark 8:27-30.\textsuperscript{37} This Confession is an important clue to the understanding of

\textsuperscript{33} Philipp F Bartholoma, \textit{The Johnnine Discourses and the Teaching of Jesus in the Synoptics} (Books on Demand, 2012), 180.

\textsuperscript{34} Beth M Stovell, \textit{Mapping Metaphorical Discourse in the Fourth Gospel: John’s Eternal King} (BRILL, 2012), 262.

\textsuperscript{35} Matthew 16:18.


the foundation of church, because Jesus accepted the title of Messiah and, thus acknowledged the
divine, rather than human, roots of church. The significance of Peter’s Confession in the church
growth lies in the fact that a man’s church cannot withstand ‘the gates of hell’, whereas the
church that bases on the Confession of Peter cannot be influenced by the hell.

Also, some authors are disposed to think that it is incumbent on church leaders to carry
out the development of church in accordance with the Confession of Peter. This means that
Matthew 16:18 is directed at church leaders in view of the fact that Peter was the leader of the
Apostles. Assuredly, the main precept of Matthew 16:18 is to spur leaders of a church to rely on
Peter’s Confession in their ministries rather than on any human foundation. This passage
stipulates the reliance on Jesus Christ in order to magnify and multiply the church.

**Biblical Foundation of Hospitality**

Matthew 25:34-43 is directly connected with the category of hospitality. According to
these passages, hospitality is the key to the inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom. Matthew
25:34 prescribes that the kingdom was prepared for inheritance by people since the creation of
the Earth. Furthermore, the human beings are deemed blessed by God only if they demonstrate
hospitality through the following conducts: a) providing a hungry person with food; b) providing
a thirsty person with water; c) letting a stranger in; d) providing a person with clothes; d) visiting
a sick person; e) attending a person in the prison.

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39 Matthew 25:35-36.
The aforesaid list of deeds constitutes the dimensions of the biblical concept of hospitality. This means that, in contemporary religious practices, hospitality should be understood as the provision a stranger with furtherance that satisfies the basic, or, in other words, the most primitive needs, such as the necessities in food, water and helter.

More important findings can be received from the analysis of the next passages. Thus, Matthew 25:40 clearly articulates that hospitality is a divine category and everyone who provides aid to other people must be deemed as a person who provides aid to Jesus Christ. Jesus is direct in His explanations. He states that: ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’.\(^40\) This means that the manifestation of hospitality towards the least noticeable individual will be recognized as a big hospitality in respect of Jesus Christ. Hence, it follows that hospitality has inherently divine nature.

In confirmation to the thesis that hospitality has divine essence, Matthew 25:41 prescribes that those persons who manifest no hospitality will be departed from God as they are cursed and belong to the eternal fire.\(^41\) All these statements help to arrive at the conclusion that people not only obliged to manifest hospitality in respect of other people, but also are obliged not to refrain from providing other people with hospitality. If an individual withholds from being hospitable, this will lead to the situation when the Lord denies such individual.

Luke 10:30-37 provides another biblical precept on how people must behave in respect of strangers. The passages delineate a situation when a man was deprived of all necessities and left dead. Two passersby disregarded the man who had been left by the robbers to die. However, a Samaritan who was passing by manifested hospitality with regard to the man in need.\(^42\)

\(^{40}\) Matthew 25:40.

\(^{41}\) Matthew 25:41.

\(^{42}\) Luke 10:30-37.
By referring to the aforementioned situation, Jesus not only theorizes on the necessity of demonstrating hospitality, but also practically spurs individuals to demonstrate hospitality in everyday life. In Luke 10:30-37, it is possible to discern the following forms of hospitality: a) compassion on an individual; b) bounding up of an individual’s wounds; c) pouring in oil and wine; d) taking an individual to safety; e) taking care of an individual; f) paying for an individual’s expenses; g) asking others to take care of an individual.

From Luke 10:30-37, it is possible to make inference that hospitality is a practical furtherance and aid in respect of strangers by any individual who does not expect compensation in return. Also, the aforesaid biblical passages makes evident that hospitality refers to assistance with regard to strangers. In other words, any help provided to strangers is more valuable than assistance to relatives and friends.

Acts 4:32 shows that it is incumbent on all believers to share their belongings. The passage prescribes that true believers are ‘of one heart and of one soul’ and, moreover, nobody from the multitude of the true believers must stick to their belongings, because they are predestined to share everything they have.43

Analyzing this passage, Hybels and Ortberg arrive at the conclusion that the wording of Acts 4:32 implies encouragement and generosity.44 It is possible to agree with the authors that the spirit of encouragement and generosity impregnates Acts 4:32. Encouragement may be understood in the phrase that all believers are of the one heart and of the one soul. This formulation may be interpreted as the encouragement in respect of all believers to cheer each, rejoice with each other, and mourn with each other.

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43 Acts 4:32.

44 Bill Hybels and John Ortberg, Acts: Build Community (Zondervan, 1999), 44.
Alternatively, the phrase ‘of one heart and of one soul’ may be construed as the unifying force of the faith. In other words, every individual who believes automatically experiences the same feelings, revelations and endowments. This fact encourages people to magnify their attachments to each other, because they become aware of the indivisible unity between each other.

Following the arguments of Hybels and Ortberg, it is possible to deduce that the notion of encouragement is pronounced in the first part of Acts 4:32, whereas the second part of the passage focuses on the concept of generosity. In the context of Acts 4:32, the true generosity takes place people refrain from appropriating material things, but willingly share any of their possessions with other people. As the matter of fact, only individuals of one heart and of one soul are capable to share everything with other individuals. Hence, the first part of Acts 4:32 logically leads to the second part. It is obvious that Acts 4:32 encourage all believers to be generous. In the context of Acts 4:32, generosity is postulated as a very important virtue. In the ultimate analysis, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that generosity may be associated with hospitality.

Romans 12:13 is another biblical passage that has direct relevance to the phenomenon of hospitality. This passage exhorts to distribute ‘to the necessity of saints’ and show hospitality in practice.45 This means that every individual must share with those who are in need and apply hospitality in practice, rather than just theorize on the themes of hospitality. These considerations may be substantiated with the findings by Wiersbe.

45 Romans 12:13.
In his analysis of Romans, Wiersbe emphasizes Paul’s attitude to hospitality. The author writes that, in Romans, Paul always accentuates on the urgency of entering into the feelings of other people.\textsuperscript{46} Wiersbe continues that the unpretentious behavior and a readiness to share are the most important criteria of a Christian who genuinely ministers to the body. Importantly, Wiersbe highlights the fact that the Lord ministers to the common people. Also, the author stipulates that a local church must not minister to a particular ‘high class’ of people, because it will be contrary to the biblical concept of ministry.\textsuperscript{47}

Utilizing considerations of Wiersbe, it is possible to make inference that the ability to distribute to those who are in need is associated with the biblical concept of hospitality. Hence, it follows that the biblical concept of hospitality both helps to equal the odds in the social structure of believers and enables people to share the burdens and the blessings of each other as the Lord prescribes it.

Review of Literature

In the context of This project, the review of literature aims at shedding light on the existing publications in the domain of church growth and hospitality. The following publications are potential to be used in a chronological order:

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{46} Warren W Wiersbe, \textit{Be Right (Romans): How to Be Right with God, Yourself, and Others} (David C Cook, 2010), 152.
  \item \textsuperscript{47} Wiersbe, 152.
\end{itemize}
Books

*Church growth bulletin*\(^{48}\)

This is a conglomeration of scientific publications in the domain of church growth. The publications discuss various aspects of church growth as a scientific phenomenon, such as the peculiarities of a missionary work, present challenges to church growth, etc.

*Life-study of Romans: messages 51-69, Volume 2*\(^{49}\)

In this publication, the author offers a very interesting discussion of hospitality in terms of local churches. The main benefit of the publication lies in its reliance on the biblical verses. The possible limitation of the study lies in the fact that the discussion of hospitality is reduced to the context of Romans.

*How to break growth barriers: capturing overlooked opportunities for church growth*\(^{50}\)

Without dipping into the basics of church growth, George brings into light the peculiarities of different reliable strategies of church growth. The discussed strategies are purposed to ensure the growth of a church under the conditions of challenges. In other words,


\(^{50}\) Carl F George, *How to break Growth Barriers: Capturing Overlooked Opportunities for Church Growth* (Baker Books, 1993).
George discusses only those strategies that are capable to break through barriers to church growth. The main limitation of the publication lies in its emphasis on the task of delegating work and authority.

*Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work With God to Build a Faithful Church*[^51]

In this publication, Gary McIntosh makes insight into the biblical precepts of church growth and applies these principles to the contemporary society.

*The Road to Growth towards a Thriving Church*[^52]

The main advantage of the publication is that Bob Jackson utilizes all who experience with churches and dioceses in order to ascertain the causes of church growth.

*Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*[^53]


[^52]: Bob Jackson, *The Road To Growth Towards a Thriving Church* (Church House Publishing, 2005).

This piece of scientific literature pays due attention to the problem of hospitality in the context of church growth. The authors delineate hospitality as a spirit that must be cultivated in every congregation. The main benefit of the study lies in its emphasis on the factors driving the spirit of hospitality away from a church.

*Hospitality: The Heart of Spiritual Direction*\(^{54}\)

In this publication, Lieslie A Hay provides suggestions on how professional spiritual practitioners can extend traditional forms of hospitality by way of delving into the innermost sense of hospitality.

*Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*\(^{55}\)

The main advantage of the study is the author’s endeavor to demonstrate that churches are not as hospitable in respect of persons with disabilities as it should be. To that end, the researcher aims at proving that churches will perceive the power of God only if they discover this power in vulnerabilities and weaknesses. The limitation of the publication lies in its narrow scope, the theology of disability.


Ancient Faith for The Church’s Future\textsuperscript{56}

The authors offer a conglomeration of noteworthy essays from the 2007 Wheaton Theology Conference. The main advantage of the publication consists in the fact that it demonstrates the importance and vitality of the early Christian ideas. Also, the authors take efforts to show the appropriateness of early Christian ideas to the contemporary religious practices. It is no exaggeration to say that the authors of this publication offer a very successful interpretation of the thought and practices of the patristic church. Among other things, hospitality as the outcome of missional witness is a precept of patristic church.

Hospitality: God’s Call to Compassion\textsuperscript{57}

In this piece of academic literature, Pell makes attempts to analyze hospitality from various perspectives. The author presents nine biblical studies in the domain of hospitality. The main advantage of the book lies in its emphasis on various approaches to hospitality. The author contends that the biblical conception of hospitality differs from its secular analogue. In other words, the biblical interpretation of hospitality is much profounder and more important than the mere preparation of tables filled with pots of coffee and cookies.

Church Growth from the Ground Up\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{56} Mark Husbands and Jeffrey P Greenman, Ancient Faith for The Church’s Future (InterVarsity Press, 2008).

\textsuperscript{57} Patty Pell, Hospitality: God’s Call to Compassion (InterVarsity Press, 2008).
In his piece of literature, Bishop Dortch discusses the basic principles of church growth. The most important thing in this study is the author’s emphasis on the necessity to participate in practical activities leading to the knowledge and activities of church growth, rather than just in theoretical studies. According to the author, many pastors cannot achieve success in church growth, because of the lack of tutorial, training, and specialized teaching. The main shortcoming of this publication lies in the accent on the basic principles of church growth without giving due regard to the specificities and predicaments of church growth in terms of contemporary challenges.

*The Apostolic Congregation: Church Growth Reconceived for a New Generation*[^59]

In this piece of research, Hunter III offers a comprehensive analysis of churches around the world in order to show that every congregation can become capable of focusing on the most important things.

*Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church*[^60]

[^58]: Bishop Dortch, *Church Growth from the Ground Up* (Xilibris Corporation, 2010).

The author makes attempts to establish the linkage between cultural and racial peculiarities of congregates and the development of a church. In terms of this study, the issue of hospitality is comprehensively discussed in chapter 9. The main advantage of this study lies in its emphasis on all facets of genuine hospitality as the ability to embrace other people. The possible limitation of the publication stems from its preoccupation with the issues of races and cultures without giving due regard to other factors of hospitality.

*Enduring Church Growth: Issues on Discipleship, Leadership and Followership*[^61]

In his book, Philip Huan analyzes various factors, prerequisites, and conditions of church growth. Huan questions the necessity of church growth. Also, the author brings into light the importance of vision and faith in the augmentation of a church. The most noteworthy benefit of Huan’s research stems from the fact that the author not only specifies, but also interprets substantial factors of church growth. The researcher calls these factors ’10 ingredients that keep churches growing’[^62].

*Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West*[^63]


[^62]: Huan, 39.

The concepts of church growth and hospitality are combined in the up-to-date publication by Ross Hastings. The author discusses the problem of church growth in the context of missional church. On the other hand, the problem of hospitality is unveiled in terms of the Bible.

Scriptures

The following verses will potentially be used in this project to show the biblical foundations of church growth and hospitality:

Acts 2:47, “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Ephesians 4:11-12, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”

John 12:32, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

Matthew 16:18, “And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

1 Corinthians 3:11, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, that is Jesus Christ.”

Romans 12:2, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Titus 1:5, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.”
Psalms 40:3, “And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”

Acts 2:42, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

1 Chronicles 16:29, “Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.”

1 Timothy 4:13, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”

Matthew 28:19-20, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

1 Peter 1:17-19, “And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojournning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”

Matthew 25:42-43, “For I was a hungrred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.”

Luke 10:36-37, “That now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”
CHAPTER ONE: THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION

The second chapter purposes to present an overview of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor in the order presented by the Apostle John during his incarceration in the Island of Patmos. John wrote, “What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches that are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.”

These seven churches will be investigated in the context of the city where they were located, and in the context of the Church as a divine institution.

William M. Ramsay, one of the authorities in the study of the Seven Churches of Asia, so describes the circular route where the Seven Churches were located:

The letter enclosing the Apocalypse with the Seven Letters was written in Patmos, and the messenger would naturally land at Ephesus, and make his round through the Seven representative Churches as they are enumerated by the writer. The route was clearly marked out, and the messenger could hardly avoid it. He would go north along the great road through Smyrna to Pergamum (the earliest Roman road build in the Province about 133-130 B.C, as soon as Asia was organized). Thence he would follow the imperial Post Road to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, and so back to Ephesus, or on to the East, as duty called him, using in either case the great Central Route of the Empire. At each point, like the other messenger, he would trust to the local organization to complete the work of divulgation.

The Church in Ephesus

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil: and thou hast tried them that say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and

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1 Revelation 1:11.

hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, that I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, that is in the midst of the paradise of God.

-- (Revelation 2:1-7, KJV)

The City

Ramsay wrote:

Ephesus, as the chief harbor of Asia looking towards the West, was far more important than an ordinary city of Province. It was the gate of the Province, both on the sea-way to Rome, and also on the great central highway leading from Syria by Corinth and Brundisium to Rome. The Roman governors naturally fell into the habit of entering the Province by way of Ephesus, for there was, one might say, no other way at first; and this custom soon became a binding rule, with uninterrupted precedents to guarantee it.³

This is to say that Ephesus was the home of commerce, politics, entertainment, and many other activities that attract people of power like the Emperors, the governors, and other politicians. It was like one of modern cities like the Manhattan, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Collin J. Hemer described, “Ephesus reached the height of its wealth and influence in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. It suffered severely at time from the wars of the Diadochi before coming securely under the rule of the Attalids of Pergamum. When Rome assumed power in 133 B.C. under the terms of the bequest of Attalus III, this wealthy seaport was open to exploitation by ruthless officials … But under the pax Romana of the Empire Ephesus was a populous and privilege city.”⁴

As a prosperous city, Ephesus was also the center of pagan worship. Ramsay observed, “But the Ephesian Goddess had a stronger influence than the deities of Pergamum,

³ Ramsay, 228.

⁴ Colin J. Hemer, The Letter to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting (Livonia, MI: Dove Booksellers, 1989), 36.
for every city of Asia was brought into trading and financial relations with Ephesus, and thus learned to appreciate the power of the Goddess. Every city became familiarized with transactions in that the gods of the two parties were named, the Ephesian Artemis and the god or goddess of the city to that the other contracting party belonged. In this way, Artemis of Ephesus was in A.D. 55 the city “whom all Asia and the civilized world worshipped.”

The Church

Jesus identifies Himself to the Ephesian Church as, “he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;” After his identification, Jesus presents to the Ephesians believers nine positive statements connected by “and” in verses 2:2-3, then a sudden “but” introduces the one negative mark he has against them in 2:4. They are summoned to repent, and a final positive remark about how they are doing in 2:6 encourages them before they commanded to hear and the promise to those who overcome closes the letter. These nine positive comments of Jesus to the Ephesian Church can be summarizes as (1) deeds and (2) theology. Everything says about their deeds is good. “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil: and thou hast tried them that say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.” The Ephesians believers are bearing up for the name of Jesus. And everything said about their theology is also good: They recognizing the difference between good and evil, testing those who claim to be messengers of other churches, and refusing to recognize liars.

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5 Ramsay, 230.
6 Revelation 1:1.
7 James M. Hamilton Jr., Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 65.
But the one thing that the church lacks, that Jesus will identify in 2:4, seems to indicate that the Ephesian church is muddling through without much joy, holding out with steadfastness but with faded fervor. It may be that they are slipping into a pattern of just going through the emotions. M. R. De Haan II observes, “To a busy church the Lord now changes the tone of His comments, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” Jesus meant that this busy, laboring, discerning, persevering, evangelical church that hated what He hated had apparently forgotten how to love.”

The Church of Ephesus was in great spiritual danger. Ramsay explains, “They should continue to show their old character, yet a return to their earlier spirit was urgently necessary. The fault of the Ephesians Church was that it no longer showed the same spirit: the intense enthusiasm that characterized the young church had grown cooler with advancing age. That was the serious danger that lay before them.”

The Church in Smyrna

And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, that was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things that thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

-- (Revelation 2:8-11, KJV)

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8 Revelation 2:4.

9 M. R. De Haan II, Let’s Talk Turkey: A Study of the Seven Churches in Asia (MI: Radio Bible Class, 1979), 4.

10 Ramsay, 242.
Ramsay called Smyrna “The City of Life”. This is because Smyrna was founded as a Greek colony more than a thousand years before Christ; but that ancient Aeolian Smyrna was soon captured by Ionian Greeks, and made into an Ionian colony. Ionian Smyrna was a great city, whose dominion extended to the East far beyond the valley, and whose armies contended on even terms against the power of Lydia. Battles fought against the Lydians on the banks of the Hermus are mentioned by the Smyrnaean poet Miimnermus in the seventh century. But the Lydian power with its center at Sardis was increasing during that period, and Smyrna gradually gave way before it, until finally the Greek city was captured and destroyed about 600 B.C. by King Alyattes. In one sense, Smyrna was now dead the Greek; the Greek city had ceased to exist; and it was only in the third century that it was restored to the history of the Hellenic enterprise in Asia.  

According to Ramsay, the Smyrneans were proud of the beauty of their city. The frequent legend on their coins, “First of Asia,” was contested by Pergamum and Ephesus; all three were first of Asia in one respect or another; Smyrna redefined her rank on some coins as “First of Asia in beauty and size”. Besides the beauty of their city, the citizens were also proud of their distinction in every branch of literature; and Apollonius of Tyana is said to have encouraged them in this, and to have advised them to rest self-esteem more in the character than in the beauty of their city; “for tough,” as he said, “though it is the most beautiful of all cities under the sun, and make the sea its own, and holds the fountains of Zephyrus, yet it is a greater charm to wear a crown of men than a crown of porticoes and pictures and gold beyond the standard of mankind: for buildings are seen only in their own

11 Ramsay, 250.
place, but men are seen everywhere and spoken about everywhere and make their city as vast as the range of countries that the can visit.”

As the Ephesians worshiped pagan gods, the city of Smyrna also worshiped pagan gods. The patron-goddess of Smyrna was a local variety of Cybele, known as the Sipylene Mother. Like the Artemis of Ephesus, her oldest home was in the mountains on the North of the valley, famous in myth and history as Sipylos, where Niobe dwelt and Tantalus reigned; and she became down to the plain with her worshippers, and took up her abode “Before-the-City:. She became a more moralized conception in the Ionian Greek city; and Nemesis was the aspect that she bore to the Greek mind. In Smyrna alone, of all the Greek cities, Nemesis was regarded not as a single figure but as pair. The twin figures Nemesis was often appear as a type on coins of the city.

Finally, in the Byzantine ecclesiastical order, Smyrna was at an early time separated from the rest of Asia, and made independent of Ephesus. In the new order that takes its name from Leo VI. It appears as a metropolis with six subject bishoprics on the shores of the gulf or in the lower Hermus Valley.”

The Church

When Jesus addressed the church of Smyrna as the one “that was dead, and is alive” is not only referring to Himself who was crucified and raised from the dead. Jesus was here giving a picture of the history of Smyrna. Ramsay observed, “All Smyrnaean readers would at once appreciated the striking analogy to the early history of their own city that lies in that form of address. Strabo, as usual, furnishes the best commentary. He relates that the Lydians destroyed the ancient city of Smyrna, and that for four hundred years there was no city, but

12 Ramsay, 256.

13 Ramsay, 259.
merely a state composed of village scattered over the plain and the hillsides around.”¹⁴ Ramsay related that Smyrna had ceased to exist as a Greek city, but it lived on as a village state after the Anatolian system: then the new period began, and it was restored as an autonomous, self-governing Greek city, electing its own magistrates and administering its own affairs according to the laws that it made for itself. It is in that manner that Jesus reminds the church of Smyrna of its history.

In this verse, v8, the idea of life is to be understood in its fullest sense when applied to a Christian congregation. It implies the energy, the passion discharged in all the duties and functions of the Church. The contrast between apparent destruction and real vitality is expressed in several forms through this letter. The Church seemed poor, but was rich. It suffered apparent tribulation, but was really triumphant and crowned with crown of life. Its enemies on the other hand were pretenders; they claimed to be the people of God, but they were only a synagogue of Satan.

In this letter, Jesus shows great knowledge of the condition of the environment in that the church of Smyrna was evolving. Ramsay was correct when he wrote, “The humble condition and the sufferings of the Smyrnaean Church are in this letter pointedly connected with the action of the Jews, and especially with the calumnies that they had circulated in the city and among the magistrates and the Roman officials.”¹⁵ From this letter one may infer the strong hatred felt by the Jews, that at first many of the Christians of Smyrna had been converted from Judaism. It was the Jewish Christian, and not the pagan converts, whom the national Jews hated so violently. It is by the action of these Jews that Polycarp was martyred. Ramsay explained, “The eagerness of the Jews to expedite the execution of the Christian leader actually overpowered their objection to profane the Sabbath day, and they came into

¹⁴ Ramsay, 270.
¹⁵ Ramsay, 271.
the gay assemblage in the Stadium, bringing faggots to make fire in that Polycarp should be consumed.”

Because of all this suffering Jesus exhorts the church of Smyrna to be “faithful unto death”. This is to say that the Smyrnaean Christians had to endure all that falls to the lot of the true and steadfast Christians, beginning with arrest and imprisonment, ending with execution: that death will not be the end, but only the entrance to the true life, the birthday of martyrdom. It is the triumph over death that constitutes the guiding thought of the whole letter to the church of Smyrna.

The Church in Pergamum

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he that hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, that thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, that no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

-- (Revelation 2:12-17, KJV)

The City

Ramsay describes Pergamum as “The Royal City or The City of Authority”. The reason behind this description is because “beyond all other sites in Asia Minor it gives the traveler the impression of a royal city, the home of authority: the rocky hill on that it stands

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16 Ramsay, 273.
is so huge, and dominates the broad plain of the Caicus so proudly and boldly … It would impossible for any stronghold. However large and bold, to produce sun an impression. The rock rules over and as it were plants its foot upon a great valley; and its summit looks over the southern mountains that bound the valley, until the distant lofty peaks south of the gulf of Smyrna, abs especially the beautiful twin peaks now called the Two Brothers, close in the outlook.”

The second reason for calling Pergamum “The royal city or the city of authority” is that “the first Provincial temple of the Imperial cult in Asia was built at Pergamum in honour of Rome and Augustus (29 B.C.). A second temple was built there in honor of Trajan, and a third in honor of Severus. Thus Pergamum was the first city to have distinction of the Temple-Warden both one and twice in the State religion; and even its third Wardenship was also a few years earlier than that of Ephesus.” Ramsay continues to explain, “The Augustan Temple is often represented on its coins and on those struck by the commune. As the oldest temple of the Asian cult it is far more frequently mentioned and figured than any other Asian temple; it appears on coins of many Emperors down to the time of Trajan, and is generally represented open, to show the Emperor crowned by the Province. Pergamum had four patron deities: Zeus, Athena, Dionysos, and Asklepios. These represent, doubtless, four different elements in the Pergamenian population; Zeus the Savior and Athena the Victory-Bearing had given the State in glorious victories over foreign enemies, and specially the Gauls; and the greatest efforts of Pergamenian art were directed to glorify them as representative of the Hellenic spirt triumphing over barbarism. The great Altar with its long zone of stately reliefs, showing the gods of Hellas destroying the barbarian giants, was dedicated to Zeus Soter.

Pergamum, then, as being first promoted to all three stages in the imperial worship must have been the official capital and titular seat of Roman authority. The name of the city

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17 Ramsay, 282.
of Pergamum lives in literary language through the word “parchment” (Pergamum), applied to an improved preparation of hide adapted to purposes of writing, that had been used in Ionia from a very early period.

*The Church*

The intimate connection between the city of Pergamum and the appropriateness, in view of the rank and position of the city, of the opening address to the Church are even more obvious than in the two previous letters. Jesus presents himself as “he that hath the sharp sword with two edges”. The sharp sword with two edges is the symbol of absolute authority with the power of life and death. This is the aspect in that Jesus addresses Himself to the official capital of the Province, the seat of authority in the ancient kingdom and in the Roman administration. Notice that to no other of the Seven Cities could this address have been appropriate. To Pergamum, it is entirely suitable. He that had the absolute and universal authority speaks to the Church situated in the city where official authority dwells.

In Roman estimation the sword was the symbol of the highest order of official authority, with that the Proconsul of Asia was invested. The right of sword was roughly equivalent to what we call the power of life and death; and governors of Province were divided into higher and lower class, according as they were or were not invested with power. When the Divine address Pergamum in this character, His intention is clear, and would be caught immediately by all Asian readers, that people imagine to be vested in the Proconsul of the province.

In this letter, Jesus knows very well the history of the Church in Pergamum. Its fortunes had been mainly determined by the rank and character of the city as the seat of government and authority; and he who knows its history express the fullness of His knowledge in the striking words, “I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where
Satan's seat is”. In these words, a world of meaning is compressed. Satan is a term used in a figurative sense to denote the power or influence that withstands the Church and all who belong to it. The idea expressed is that in the State religion of the Empire, the worship of the Divine Emperors, organized on a regular system in Asia as in all other Provinces, Satan found his home and exercised his power in opposition to God and His Church. Pergamum, as being still the administrative capital of the Province, was also the chief seat of the State religion.

The Church in Thyatira

And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, that calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and the children that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and that have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that that ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and that have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that that ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

-- (Revelation 2:18-29, KJV)

The City

Writing from the point of view of preacher, M. R De Haan II described the city of Thyatira as “An unusually well-organized system of trade guilds or unions. These were
societies of tradesmen organized to protect their common interests. Through group pressure they exercised a lot of influence. So significant were these association in Thyatira that it would have been hard for a tradesman to carry on business in this city if had not cooperated.”  

De Haan continues to describe Thyatira as a growing city for reason noted above. However, Ramsay’s view of the city Thyatira is a little more explanatory that De Haan. While De Haan represents the city as a growing city Ramsay portrayed Thyatira as “A Weakness Made Strong”. He wrote, “No city has been given by nature less of a look or strength of a fortress than Thyatira. It lies in an open smiling vale, bordered by gently sloping hills, of moderate elevation but sufficient to overshadow the vale. It possesses no proper acropolis, and the whole impression that the situation gives is of weakness, subjection and dependence. The most careless and casual observer could never take Thyatira for a ruling city, or the capital of an Empire.” Ramsay’s understanding of Thyatira is that the city is essential a handmaid city build to serve an Empire by obstructing for a little the path of its enemies and so giving time for the concentration of its military strength.

As all the cities of Asia Minor, Thyatira as a city worship its own pagan gods. Again, Ramsay gave his readers a behind the scene view of the Thyatiran religion when he wrote:

The Thyatiran religion is obscure, and our chief authority lies in the coins of the city. A hero Tyrimnos represents the Thyatiran conception of the city’s function in the world. He goes forth on horseback with the battle-axe over his shoulder, the fit representative of a military colony, to conquer, and to dash his enemies in pieces. How far he may have a Macedonian origin, as brought with them by the first Macedonian soldiers who were settled there, remains doubtful; but his aspect in art is entirely that of a common Anatolian heroic figure. This hero Tyrimnos is closely related in nature to the tutelary god of Thyatira, whose full titles are recorded in inscription: he was styled Propolis because he had his temple in front of the city, Propator as the divine ancestor, Helios the sun-god, PytianTyrimnaean Apollo, a strange mixture of Hellenic and Anatolian names. This god is never named on the coins, so far as published, but he often appears as a

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type on them, a standing figure, wearing only a cloak fastened with a brooch round his neck, carrying a battle-axe over one shoulder, and holding forth in his right hand a laurel branch, that symbolizes his purifying power. This elaborate and highly composite impersonation of the Divine nature, with so many names and such diversity of character, seems to have been produced by a syncretism of different religious ideas in the evolution of the city.19

The Church

John’s vision as recorded in Revelation chapter one adds an important detail concerning the church of Thyatira in relation to its walk with Jesus-Christ. John wrote, “These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;” According to Haan, “These are the judgment feet of Christ, and they are mentioned by the Lord in the setting of a loving threat. Combined with penetrating eyes of fire that look deep into the hearts and minds of his people, they leave a growing, compromising church with a clear message.”20 Although God is comfort to those who are doing his will, he is a judge to those who do evil. To the Christians in Thyatira the Lord said, “I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first” (Rev 2:19). The Christians who lived out their faith in Thyatira were doing very well. They were growing in faith. They were not losing momentum. There was enthusiasm and “forward motion”. However, the bad news is, “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, that calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Rev 2:20). The pressure of the pagan societies as described in the city section were infiltrating into the church fabric. From all appearance, a powerful woman in the church had convinced many born-again believers that it was not all that bad to get involved into pagan pleasures. Jezebel preaching seemed to be that those who secure in Christ should

19 Ramsay, 319-320.
20 De Haan, 17.
not feel bound to the law of Christ that would a growing and moving church from moving ahead. That lady, according the Old Testament story, reflected the morals and the knowledge of an idolater.

To those who faithful, however, the Lord promised, “But that that ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star” Rev 2:25-28). This a fitting promise to the Church of Thyatira. For those who had ears to hear, it was a reminder that the darkness and the political and the economic pressures that faced them would be short-lived. Those in Christ who overcame their fears could in fact look forward to the coming of a whole new day.

The Church in Sardis

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis that have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

-- (Revelation 3:1-6, KJV)
Ramsay baptized the city of Sardis, “The City of Death”. The reason for this label, he explained, “This small city on its lofty plateau was an ideal stronghold for a prince of primitive times. It was large enough for his needs; it could be easily fortified and defended at the only point where fortification or defense was needed. It was like a watch-tower overlooking the whole of the great plain.”\(^{21}\) Sardis was a fortified city. It was the dream of all kings to have Sardis as a strategic location. Ramsay was convinced that Sardis was actually inaccessible except at one point, the next of land on the south, that still offers the only approach. On all other sides the rock walls were smooth, nearly perpendicular, and absolutely unscaleable even without a defender.

Sardis was one of the great cities in Asia Minor. According to Ramsay, “In the Greek view it was long the greatest of all cities. At the beginning of record it stands forth prominently as the capital of a powerful empire. Its situation marks it out as a ruling city, according to the method of early warfare and early kings; it was however more like a robber’s stronghold than an abode of civilized men; and in a peaceful and civilized aged its position was found inconvenient. In the Roman period it was almost like a city of the past, a relic of the period of barbaric warfare, that lived rather on its ancient prestige than on its suitability to present conditions.”\(^{22}\)

Sardis’ religion was the expression of the character of the city. It reflects the spirit of the Province. Ramsay reported, “The patron deity of the city was Cybele, two columns of whose temple still protrude from the ground near the banks of the Pactolus. She was a goddess of the regular Anatolian type; and her general character is well known.”\(^{23}\) The essence of the Anatolian religion is the worship of the life of Nature – that life subject

\(^{21}\) Ramsay, 356.
\(^{22}\) Ramsay, 354.
\(^{23}\) Ramsay, 358.
apparently to death, yet never dying but reproducing itself in new forms, different and yet the same.

The Church

In this letter to the church in Sardis, Jesus presents Himself as “he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars”. Jesus’ intent is to set the tone of the letter and establish the church needs. De Haan II distinguished three factors from Jesus’ introduction: (1) The number seven that in Scripture symbolizes divine perfection or completeness; (2) The seven spirits of God that, when compared to a Revelation 1:4, become a reference to the Holy Spirit; (3) The seven stars represent the messengers of God, who carry the of God.” These three factors bring attention to the nature of the Lord Jesus-Christ who is complete in reference to both spirit and truth. Ramsay explained, “The Church of Sardis, then, is addressed by Him who controls and directs the Divine action in the Churches as they exist in the world, and who holds in His hand the Seven Churches with their history and destiny.” Ramsay’s understanding is that the sender of letter to the Sardis Church stands forth as the center, the pivot and the director of the Universal Church, and in particular of the entire group of the Asian Churches. It is effective power exercised by the Lord over His Churches.

In relation to the church of Sardis, the three points mentioned in the letter, the number seven, the seven spirits, and the seven stars, show to the necessity for the church of Sardis to have both the word and the spirit in order to be complete. In translation, the church of Sardis had the word but not the spirit. After His introduction, Jesus declared, “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore

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24 De Hann II, 21.

25 Ramsay, 370.
thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

Jesus using those words is drawing a picture of the history and degeneration of the Sardian Church. Ramsay concurred, “But he draws it in such a way as to set before the readers the continuity of Sardian history. The story of the Church is a repetition of past experience; the character of the people remains unchanged; their faults are still the same; and their fate must be the same.”

Finally, to Jesus, the believers in the Sardian Church had the appearance of life but in reality were dead.

The Church in Philadelphia

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, that say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, that shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, that is new Jerusalem, that cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

-- (Revelation 3:7-13, KJV)

The City

26 Revelation 3:1-3.

27 Ramsay, 370.
Philadelphia was a very strategic city. Its role was to spread Hellenism, the Greek language and manners in particular, to the eastern parts of Asia Minor. Ramsay explained, “Philadelphia was founded more for consolidating and regulating and educating the central regions subject to the Pergamenian kings. The intention of its founder was to make it a center of the Graeco-Asiatic civilization … It was a missionary city from the beginning, founded to promote a certain unity of spirit, customs and loyalty within the realm, the apostle of Hellenism in Oriental land. It was a successful teacher. It was a successful teacher. Before A.D. 19 the Lydian tongue had ceased to be spoken in Lydia, and Greek was the only language of the country.”

In other words, Philadelphia was considered the center for the diffusion of Greek language and letters in a peaceful land by peaceful means.

According to Ramsay, “Philadelphia was distinguished from the other cities by several characteristics: first, it was the missionary city; second, its people lived always in dread of a disaster, “the day of trial”; thirdly, many of its people went out of the city to dwell; fourthly, it took a new name from the Imperial god … under Caracalla it was honored with the title Neokoros or Temple-Warden in the State religion. This implies that a Provincial temple of the Imperial cult was built there between A.D 211 and 217; and henceforward the Commune of Asia met there occasionally to hold some of its State festivals.”

The Church

The Philadelphian letter begins with the usual statement of the Lord’s knowledge of the history and activities of the Philadelphian Church: “I know thy works. The follow, as usual, an outline of the past achievements and conduct of that Church. However this outline starts with an unusual form: “I have set before thee an open door”. Ramsay observed, “There

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28 Ramsay, 392.
29 Ramsay, 399.
can be no doubt what the “opened door” means. It is a Pauline metaphor, that had passed into ordinary usage in the early Church. At Ephesus: “For a great door and effectual is opened unto me”\textsuperscript{30} At Troas also, “a door was opened” for him.\textsuperscript{31} He asked the Colossians to pray “God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ.”\textsuperscript{32,33} These three Pauline expression means that there is a good opportunity for missionary work to take place in Philadelphia. Ramsay concurred that the usage of the word door has become fixed. It is a technical term that became familiar and almost stereotyped.

Since the door was now opened by the Lord, the Church in Philadelphia became the keeper of the gateway to the plateau. Therefore, the work of the Church of Philadelphia had been to go forth through the door and carry the gospel to the cities of the Phrygian land. It is worth noting, besides, the Church of Smyrna, the Philadelphian Church was praised with far more cordiality than any other of the seven Churches.

The Church in Laodicea

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also

\textsuperscript{30} 1 Cor. 16:9.

\textsuperscript{31} 2 Cor. 2:12.

\textsuperscript{32} 1 Cor. 4:3.

\textsuperscript{33} Ramsay, 404.
overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

-- (Revelation 3:14-22, KJV)

The City

Laodicea is located six miles from Hierapolis. It is famous for its hot springs. James M. Hamilton Jr. described, “The waters are as hot as 95 degree Fahrenheit. By contrast, the waters of nearby Colossae were cold and pure. The site of Laodicea appears to have been chosen because it was a crossroads, not because it had its own water supply. It seems that Laodicea received water from a remarkable aqueduct of stone pipes. Archeological evidence indicates that the waters around Laodicea were afflicted with a calcium carbonate content that resulted in the waters being impure and emetic – that is they caused vomiting.”34

Laodicea was not only well known for its water but also it was a wealthy city. Hamilton Jr. explained, “Laodicea was a wealthy banking center. After a massive earthquake in A.D 60, Laodicea needed no help from Rome in the rebuilding of the city. In this Laodicea seems to have demonstrated a certain proud self-sufficiency. There are some indications that Laodicea might have also been home to significant specialists in ophthalmology. And the city of Laodicea was also something of a center of style promoting a fashion in black glossy fabrics from the natural fleeces of an animal developed by its own breeders.”35

To conclude, Laodicea was characterized by bad water, big banks, stylish garments, and eye doctors. Laodicea best represents the dangers of a church that has found a comfortable position in an affluent society. Jesus speaks to them as they are, and he speaks to the needs they have.

34 Hamilton Jr., 119.

35 Hamilton, 120.
The Church

The Laodicean Church was so proud that it was blind to see its real conditions. John wrote, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” The Church of Laodicea must recognize that it is poor, and seek riches where the true riches can be found. Its banks and its wealthy monychangers can give it only false money, but the Author and finisher of the faith can sell it “gold refined by fire”. He does not give this gold for nothing, it must be bought with a price, the price of suffering and truth, fidelity and martyrdom.

The Church must recognize that it is naked, and seeks to be clad. Its manufacturers cannot help it with their fine glossy clack and violet garments, that they sell and export to the whole world. Only white garments, such as the faithful in Sardis wear, will be of any use to cover their shame.

Ramsay added, “The Laodicean Church had to learn that it is blind, but yet not incurably blind. It is suffering from disease, and needs medical treatment. But the physicians of its famous medical school can do nothing for it. The tabloids that they prescribe, and that are now used all over the civilized world, to reduce to powder and smear on the eyes, will be useless for this kind of ophthalmia.” Among all the Seven Churches, the Laodicean Church is the only one that is absolutely condemned. No exception is allowed in Laodicea: advice is given, but there is no appearance that it will be taken. The weakness of the city will become apparent in the testing.

Ramsay masterfully summarized the state of the Seven Churches of Asia in the following manner:

36 Revelation 3:17.
37 Ramsay, 429.
So far as grouping can be detected among the Seven Churches, it would rather appear that they are placed in pairs. Ephesus and Sardis go together; so again Smyrna and Philadelphia, Pergamum and Thyatira; while the distant Laodicea stands by itself, far away in the land of Phrygia. Ephesus and Sardis have both changed and deteriorated; but in Ephesus the change amounts only to a loss of enthusiasm that is still perhaps recoverable; in Sardis the deterioration has deepened into death. Smyrna and Philadelphia are praised far more unreservedly than the rest; both are poor and weak; both suffered from the Jews; but both are full of life and vigor, now and forever. Pergamum and Thyatira have both been strongly affected by Nicolaitanism; both are compared and contrasted with the Imperial power; and both are promised victory over it. Laodicea stands alone, outcast and rejected, because it cannot make up its mind whether to be one thing or another.\(^{38}\)

The Seven Churches In hospitable Conditions

There are many factors for the inhospitable conditions that reigned in the Seven Churches of Asia. Among them are noted the conflict between the Christian Jews and the National Jews, the Imperial Religion, and the Teaching of the Nicolaitans.

The National Jews hated the Jews Christians. The conflict between these two groups reflect in the letter to the Smyrnean Church. Ramsay wrote, “Many of the Christians of Smyrna had been converted from Judaism. It was the Jewish Christian, and not the pagan converts, whom the national Jews hated so violently. Their violent hatred was roused by the renegade Jews like St Paul, who tried to place unclean Pagans on a level with themselves.”\(^{39}\) The National Jews hatred culminated in the martyrdom of Polycarp. Ramsay observed, “In that case the eagerness of Jews to expedite the execution of the Christian leader actually overpowered their objection to profane the Sabbath day, and they came into the gay assemblage in the Stadium, bringing faggots to make fire in that Polycarp should be consumed.”\(^{40}\)

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\(^{38}\) Ramsay, 207-208.

\(^{39}\) Hamilton, 272-273.

\(^{40}\) Hamilton, 274
The second enemy to hospitality to the Asian Churches is the Imperial Worship. Ramsay argued, “The Imperial power and the Imperial worship, that the writer saw plainly to be the power of Satan engaged in a determined attempt to annihilate the Church … The Church and the Imperial power are irreconcilable; one or the other must be destroyed; and the issue is not doubtful.”

The third element is the Nicolaitan principle, that taught that men should have confidence in their own character and judgment, and promised to set them free from a hard law, while they were in reality enticing back to lascivious enjoyment the young converts who had barely escaped the defilement of the world. Ramsay argued, “The opposition to the Nicolaitans is the chief factor in determining the character and form of the Seven Letters. But for them there would probably be no letters to the Seven Churches.”

The environment of hatred and heresy prevents the Seven Churches of Asia to be considered as a role model to church growth and hospitality. This writer will consider using the contemporary churches communities from different faiths to present a model for church hospitality. This will be the purpose of the remaining chapters.

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41 Hamilton, 300.

42 Ramsay, 400.
CHAPTER TWO: THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCHES

Andrew Fisher and James Foreit discern several types of intervention in research. They are the following: a) experimental, b) non-experimental, and c) quasi-experiment. The present research was conducted as a non-experimental study. The non-experimental nature of research was considered justifiable. The main reason for choosing the non-experimental research design was the qualitative nature of the research questions and research objectives.

According to Fisher and Foreit, non-experimental designs are most appropriate for the collection of descriptive information or for conducting small case studies that aim at determining the effect or influence of a program intervention, and may be favorable for the determination of the reasons why the problem exists. Taking into consideration that the conducted research was conceived to rely largely on case study, secondary data collection methods and specialized theological methods such as exegesis, it was decided to conduct research in the form of the non-experimental design.

In addition, it was deemed prudently to investigate the correlation between church growth and hospitality in the form of a qualitative research. More circumstantial justifications for the appropriateness of qualitative research are offered below. First and foremost, the term research design means the method of planning research to collect the most pertinent data, in the proper way, and to analyze the findings effectively. Also, Laws highlights that a research design must be correspondent with practical purposes of the research due to the fact that it is a procedural design rather than an academic exercise.

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1 Andrew Fisher and James Foreit, Designing HIV/AIDS intervention studies: an operations research handbook (Population Council, 2002), 49.

2 Fisher and Foreit, 54.

3 Sophie Laws, Research for development: a practical guide (SAGE, 2003), 459.

4 Laws, 78.
As far as different kinds of research design are concerned, Robson differentiates between flexible and fixed research designs.⁵ According to the scholar, flexible research designs, also known as qualitative research, embodies the plan of methodological procedures that can be altered or adjusted while the project is underway. On the contrary, the projects using fixed research designs, also known as quantitative research, are generally pre-planned in detail.

The proper decision on what research design to choose became possible only after the core particularities of both types were scrutinized. Thus, following the arguments of Robson, flexible designs are more general in initial planning than fixed designs. The author makes certain that flexible research designs emphasize the scope of research, while the step of initial planning is connected with the elaboration of general research questions.

Flexible research designs rest predominantly on the collection of qualitative data, irrespective of the fact that some quantitative data may also be gathered in its framework. On the other hand, fixed research designs rely largely on the collection of quantitative data and factual evidence. The core peculiarity of the fixed designs lies in the abundance of numerical data and statistical facts as the major research evidence and results.

Having analyzed all the pros and cons of flexible and fixed research designs, it was decided to carry out non-experimental flexible research design, or, in other words, qualitative research.

The factors affecting this decision should be explained as follows.

First, it was expected that qualitative research design would help to generate a new theory concerning the reciprocity between church growth and hospitality. According to Trochim, one of the core advantages of doing qualitative research is to become more

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informed and experienced with the phenomenon in question. In the context of the conducted study, the employment of qualitative research methods assisted in getting new knowledge and experience with regard to the relationship between church growth and hospitality.

Second, it was also expected that the qualitative research would provide furtherance for the clarification of what the concepts of church growth and hospitality were. In Trochim’s opinion, qualitative research methods are suitable for the investigation of complicated and sensitive problems. The author contends: ‘For example, if you are interested in how people view topics like God and religion, human sexuality, […] and so on, my guess is that you would be hard-pressed to develop a quantitative methodology that would do anything more than summarize a few key positions on these issues’.7

Third, the superiority of qualitative paradigm over quantitative paradigm in terms of the conducted study may be justified with the necessity to approach the relationship between church growth and hospitality as a dynamic correlation sensitive to various internal and external factors. According to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, qualitative paradigm is largely based on un-generalizable single case studies that take into account the dynamic nature of the discussed phenomena and relies on grounded, discovery oriented, descriptive, exploratory, expansionist and inductive process.8

Hypotheses Statements

In this research, the chosen churches were typical cases of churches that had recourse to the doctrine of church growth and hospitality. To generalize, in the micro level, there were


7 Trochim.

8 L Blaxter, C Hughes, & M Tight, How to research (Open University Press, 2010).
five samples for case study: 1) Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; 2) Charismatic church; 3) Pentecostal church; 4) Seventh-Day Adventists; 5) Roman Catholic church.

Table 1 "Five Chosen Denominations"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denominations</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church in America</td>
<td>5 pastors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic church</td>
<td>5 pastors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal church</td>
<td>5 pastors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh-Day Adventists</td>
<td>5 pastors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic church</td>
<td>5 pastors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data concerning the salient features of the retrieved cases of Christian communities and churches was collected. The collection of data was made under the criterion of its relation to church growth and hospitality. The data collected with the help of such instruments as field notes and unstructured interviews.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison write that case studies usually focus on the dynamics of unraveling situations and, thus it is necessary to commence the study with a very broad field of focus, ‘an open phase, without selectivity or prejudgment’. At this stage, the case study was started as the collection of all data pertinent to church growth and hospitality without emphasizing particular characteristics of the aforesaid phenomena. The data was gathered largely with the help of field notes and unstructured interviews, in line with the requirement of qualitative research.

To continue, the second stage of a case study was progressive focusing. At this stage, the researcher is capable to narrow the field of focus by way of determining the key characteristics of the researched cases for subsequent research and data collection.

Thus, at the second stage, case study was conducted as the collection of data relevant to preliminary research hypotheses and concepts that had been elaborated in Chapter One.

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9 Cohen et al., 262.
10 Cohen et al., 263.
11 Cohen et al., 264.
Methods Used in the Study of Church growth and Hospitality. At this stage all research hypotheses were reiterated and regarded as guiding signs for the data collection procedures. The hypotheses were recapitulated as follows:

**Table 2 "Hypotheses Statements"**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis No. 1</th>
<th>Magnification of a church (independent variable) precedes and determines the subsequent multiplication of the church (dependent variable).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis No. 2</td>
<td>Church growth (dependent variable) is achievable through magnification and multiplication of a church (independent variables).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis No. 3</td>
<td>The major determinants of church growth (dependent variable) are the predisposition to praise the Lord in everything, reliance on Peter’s confession rather than on human foundations, apprehension of God’s will, maintenance of the order within a church, ‘singing of a new song’, fulfillment of a ministry, sticking to the biblical roots, recognition of Jesus’s authority, fear of God (independent variables).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis No. 4</td>
<td>Hospitality (dependent variable) is an obligation imposed by God on every individual (independent variable).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis No. 5</td>
<td>Hospitality (dependent variable) is achievable through any degree of assistance to strangers in the form of either an active behavior or a passive conduct (independent variable).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis No. 6</td>
<td>The major determinants of hospitality (dependent variables) are love, charity, generosity, recognition of people as ‘of one heart and of one soul’, lust for the truth, justice in treatment with people, especially with foreigners, reliance on the practical experience of God (independent variables).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis No. 7

Strategies of church growth (dependent variable) may vary in tactical and operational elements (independent variables) but must rest on the same theological foundations of church growth (independent variables).

Hypothesis No. 8

Hospitality (dependent variable) is a multifaceted phenomenon that is based on the Lord’s law of love (independent variable) and is directed at human vulnerabilities and disabilities (independent variables).

Hypothesis No. 9:

Church growth as the magnification and multiplication of a church according to the Will of God (dependent variable) is impossible without the Christian model of hospitality (independent variable).

Taking into consideration the aforementioned research hypotheses, it needs to be explained that the term ‘independent variable’ means the input and cause to be tested in order to find out whether it is the genuine cause. On the other hand, the term ‘dependent variable’ means the output and result (effect) to be tested in order to find out whether it is the genuine result (consequence). The relationship between the dependent and independent variables is the core of every hypothesis, because it indicates on the nature of dependence.

The relationships between variables of the research hypotheses may be introduced in a table below.

Table 3 "Relationships between Variables in the Research Hypotheses"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Independent variable(s)</th>
<th>Dependent variable(s)</th>
<th>Type(s) of relationship(s) between</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Magnification of a church</td>
<td>Multiplication of the church</td>
<td>Sequence of events; precondition-consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Magnification and multiplication of a church</td>
<td>Church growth</td>
<td>Sequence of events; precondition-consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The predisposition to praise the Lord in everything; reliance on Peter’s confession rather than on human foundations; apprehension of God’s will; maintenance of the order within a church; ‘singing of a new song’; fulfillment of a ministry; sticking to the biblical roots; recognition of Jesus’s authority; fear of God.</td>
<td>Church growth</td>
<td>Prerequisites-consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Obligation imposed by God on every individual</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Any degree of assistance in the form of either an active or passive conduct</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Causal nexus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Love; charity; generosity; recognition of people as ‘of one heart and of one soul’; lust for the truth; justice in treatment with people; especially with foreigners; reliance on the practical experience of God</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Preconditions-consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Variable tactical and operation elements + the universal theological foundations of church growth</td>
<td>Strategies of church growth</td>
<td>Prerequisites-consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lord’s law of love + acts directed at human vulnerabilities and disabilities</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Prerequisites-consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Christian model of hospitality</td>
<td>Magnification and multiplication of a church according to God’s Will</td>
<td>Causal nexus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Cohen et al, this type of interpretation was coordinated with the participants of case study (respondents) before incorporating in the final form. Following the arguments of Cohen et al, it was possible to discern two types of data to be collected: a) structured; b) unstructured.

The first type of data collection procedures is generally referred to as unstructured or filed notes. On the contrary, the second type of data collection procedures is usually regarded as structured or pre-planned data collection.

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12 Cohen et al., 266.
Taking into consideration that this work was conceived largely as a flexible (qualitative) research design, unstructured data collection procedures were employed. Hence, in the framework of case study, the data was collected by means of field notes and unstructured interviews, whereas, in the framework of surveying, the data was collected by means of structured data collected procedures. The discussion of surveying will be offered after the explanation of the methodology of case study.

In summary, the field notes as narrative data collection instruments helped both to fix the retrieved data and to foster the subsequent analysis.

Field notes were results of observation and unstructured (impersonalized) interviewing.\textsuperscript{13} The observation was direct. The observation was conducted in locations of Christian congregations and churches. The field notes were made as notebooks recordings.

The technique of field research is a composite research design, that combines the methods of observation and interviewing.\textsuperscript{14} As far as the methodology of observations is concerned, it should be clarified that there is a wide range of various types of observation. A brief outline of the most common types needs to be conducted in order to justify the appropriateness of one.

Trochim discerns three kinds of observations: participant observation, direct observation, and structured observation. In case of the participant observation, it is required from the researcher to become a participant of the researched environment in order to investigate the issues as tightly as possible. In contrast to the method of participant observations, direct observations and structured observations did not require from the observer to become a participant of the examined environment.

\textsuperscript{13} Maxfield, & Babbie, 188.

\textsuperscript{14} Maxfield, & Babbie, 189.
Thus, the method of direct observations is more focused on watching rather than acting, whereas the method of structured observations involves the collection and fixation of data by means of various highly structured forms with well-elaborated parameters.\footnote{Maxfield, & Babbie, 203.}

The method of direct observations was implemented through the following sequential steps: a) - selection of the location of observation (interior of churches chosen as samples of case study); b) - preparation of the necessary equipment (a notebook); c) – record of the raw data with the help of field notes; g) - establishment of links between the observations and other research data.

In addition to the technique of observation, the data collection procedure of field research involved unstructured (qualitative) interviewing as well. The method of unstructured interviewing was considered a rather effective technique of the ingenious interaction between the researcher and a respondent.\footnote{Trochim, 3}

The method of unstructured interviewing was free from a predefined set of questions. It was employed as a free and unregulated interaction with pastors from the churches that had been chosen as samples of case study. To sum up, the technique of unstructured interviewing was employed through the following sequential steps: a) - restatement of the research problem; b) - search and selection of the relevant interviewees (pastors of churches); c) – commencement of the interviewing with some initial questions; d) – encouragement of the discussion and control of the course of the interview; e) – record of the data; f) – depersonalization of the data; g) establishment of relevant inferences.

After salient features of the analyzed cases were scrutinized, it was possible to juxtapose, collate and contrast the cases. The comparison and contrast made possible to
provide final inferences. The inferences and conclusions from case study will be discussed in Chapter Four ‘The Outcome of the Research’.

According to Saunders et al, the strategy of surveying allows the collection of a large amount of data from a sizeable population. Also, the researchers assay that the strategy of surveys allows the collection of a sufficient amount of data from a sizeable population in a highly economical way. Thus, surveys are usually used for the purposes of a descriptive or exploratory study. To be more precise, the strategy of surveying makes it possible to collect quantitative data that can be analyzed quantitatively by means of descriptive and inferential statistics.

The data collected by way of surveying can be used to offer possible explanations for specific relationships between variables and to elaborate models of these relationships. Also, the researchers state that the most popular instrument of surveying is a questionnaire. Apart from a questionnaire, the strategy of surveying may be conducted by means of structured observation and structured interviews.

In the context of the present research, the method of surveying was employed in the form of a questionnaire (Appendix A). 20 pastors were surveyed. Saunders et al specify the following types of questionnaire: a) self-administered questionnaires; b) internet-mediated questionnaires; c) intranet-mediated questionnaires; d) postal and mail questionnaires; e) delivery and collection questionnaires. Delivery and collection questionnaire was deemed the most appropriate to this project as it was possible for the researcher to deliver a questionnaire by hand to every respondent and to collect them later on.

19 Saunders et al, 138.
20 Saunders et al, 357.
Several reasons affected the decision to use delivery and collection questionnaires. First, it was importantly to reach respondents in person. Second, it was essentially to have respondents’ answers not being distorted or contaminated. Third, questions to be asked to the respondents were specific. The questionnaire was elaborated as a multiple-choice survey.

In the context of this work, the questionnaire was developed with questions based on the theological and theoretical characteristics of the relationship between church growth and hospitality. The questionnaire was formed as a multi-choice survey. Each of the values was connected with the preliminary research hypotheses delineated above. The questions in the questionnaire sought to test the research hypotheses. The questionnaire was distributed to a sample (20 pastors) across the five denominations (see Table 1: ‘Five Chosen Denominations’).

The questions followed logical progression starting from simpler themes and continuing to more complicated issues in order to sustain the interest of respondents and ignite coherent question answering. The questionnaire concerned no personal issues connected with a respondent, not did it require information about the denomination.

When the questionnaire was delivered in person, each respondent was instructed about the nature of research, the nature of questions and the urgency of sincere answers. The method of survey involved close-ended questions in order to achieve quantitative results rather than qualitative, taking into consideration that qualitative findings were expected to be achieved by means of case study.

The survey population included all pastors of the non-randomly chosen 5 Christian denominations in the United States. The population sample was 25 pastors. 4 pastors were randomly chosen from each denomination. This number was justified with the possibility to randomly choose an equal number of pastors from each denomination and thus equally represent each type of church.
Every respondent was chosen by chance after the negotiations with the administration of each denomination. Therefore, every pastor from the survey population had the same probability of being chosen at any phase of the sampling process. Also, it was agreed that the information tying individuals to their replies would be destroyed. After the names of respondents were received, they were met in person and were given the questionnaires accompanied with above instructions. All respondents agreed to participate in surveying.

The questionnaires were collected in person, after the respondents had answered the questions. The preparation took place in the form of checking the data for accuracy, entering the data into computer, transforming the data and structuring the data into an intelligible system of information. At this stage, the collected data (field notes) and answers in the questionnaire about the relationship between church growth, hospitality and the relationship between them were checked for accuracy and cleared from the bias. It was vitally essential to filter the data and clear it from uncertainties, unconfirmed speculations, prejudices and fiction. This was achieved through the disregard of any word, sentence or a piece of information that was uncertain, dubious, ambivalent or unintelligible.

To sum up, the data collection procedure of surveying was conducted through the following sequential steps: a) random sampling (25 pastors); b) delivery and introduction of the questionnaire; c) questioning; d) collection of the filled questionnaires.

Descriptive statistics

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21 Trochim, 3
The description of the cleared data, as known as descriptive statistics. At this stage, the collected and prepared quantitative data (answers in the questionnaire) was described by quantitative means (numbers, percentage, proportion, relative frequency, etc.). According to Trochim, the appropriateness of descriptive statistics to this work lies in the fact that it helps to delineate basic characteristics of the collected data. In the context of the conducted study, the description of data helped to clarify relationships between variables in the research hypotheses and provide answers to the research questions. The operations of descriptive statistics may be introduced in the following figures.

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22 Trochim, 5.
Figure 1 “Question No. 1”

Magnification and multiplication of a church are two sequential steps of church growth

- Strongly disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Figure 2 “Question No. 2”

What practice is the most important for church growth?

- Respondents

Figure 3 “Question No. 3”

Hospitality is an obligation imposed by God on every individual

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

75%
Figure 4 “Question No. 4”

Hospitality is achievable through any degree of assistance to strangers in the form of either an active behavior or a passive conduct.

- Strongly agree: 70%
- Agree: 15%
- Disagree: 5%
- Strongly disagree: 10%

Figure 5 “Question No. 5”

What practice is the most important for hospitality?

- Love: 15%
- Charity: 5%
- Generosity: 5%
- As of one heart and of one soul: 15%
- Lust for truth: 5%
- Just treatment: 75%
- Reliance on God's practical experience: 0%

Figure 6 “Question No. 6”

Strategies of church growth may vary in tactical and operational elements but must rest on the same theological foundations of church growth.

- Strongly disagree: 15%
- Disagree: 5%
- Agree: 5%
- Strongly agree: 75%
Hospitality is a multifaceted phenomenon which is based on the Lord’s law of love and is directed at human vulnerabilities and disabilities.

- Strongly agree: 50%
- Agree: 35%
- Disagree: 10%
- Strongly disagree: 5%

Church growth as the magnification and multiplication of a church according to the Will of God is impossible without the Christian model of hospitality.

- Strongly agree: 50%
- Agree: 30%
- Disagree: 15%
- Strongly disagree: 5%
Figure 9 “Question No. 9”

Church growth without detriment to hospitality is possible only if it is implemented in accordance with the biblical precepts.

Figure 10 “Question No. 10”

Church growth is the Will of God and not the ambition of every single church leader.

80%

5%

5%

10%

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The application of direct observations and unstructured interviews with pastors of Evangelic Lutheran Church in America resulted in the finding that this denomination paid significant attention to hospitality as part of its church growth strategies.

The relationship between church growth and hospitality in terms of Evangelic Lutheran Church in America was detected in such practices as free acceptance of different people into its communities, endeavors to provide furtherance to local communities, incentives to fuel growth of the church both numerically and spiritually, etc.

The aforesaid empirical findings may be underpinned by the scientific literature. Thus, Inskeep writes that Evangelic Lutheran Church in America considers community context to be a very significant factor in apprehending church growth.  

Also, it was ascertained that the effectiveness of ministry in the framework of Evangelic Lutheran Church in America substantially effected attendance for congregations. This finding was reached through the application of direct observation. Also, this finding proves the validity and pertinence to the contemporary society of the biblical statement that fulfillment of ministry is one of the major determinants of church growth.

Case study of Evangelic Lutheran Church in America showed that the strategic objectives of the denomination are based on the fundamentals that underlie the biblical model of church growth and hospitality. Thus, in the official web-site of Evangelical Lutheran

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Church in America, the tagline is ‘God’s work. Our hands.’ This tagline implies that the leaders of this church recognize the dominance of God in every action in terms of church growth, and consider themselves to be an instrument in the hands of God.

In the website, it is possible to find strategic objectives of the church. Thus, the strategic objectives of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are: a) to share a living and audacious confidence in the grace of God; b) to liberate people by means of their faith; c) to embrace every individual as a whole person with his complexities, vulnerabilities, and questions; d) to do God’s work in the name of Jesus Christ.

The case study made it clear that the strategic objectives of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is based on the biblical precepts of church growth and hospitality, such as confidence in God’s grace, the liberating (unifying) essence of the faith, the apprehension of individuals as persons with complexities and questions, and the recognition of both the dominance of God in all things and authority of Jesus Christ.

Charismatic Church

As far as the case of Charismatic church is concerned, it needs to be stated that the employment of direct observation and unstructured interviews made certain that the leaders of this denomination were also disposed to follow the biblical prescriptions of church growth and hospitality in their practice. Taking into consideration the contemporary context of this work, the case study was directed at the neo-charismatic churches such as King Jesus International Ministry and Church on the Rock-International.


25 ‘Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’.

26 1 Peter 1:13-19.

27 Acts 4:32.

28 Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14.

29 Matthew 16:18; Matthew 28:18-19.
Analysis of the activities practiced in the framework of these churches made certain that both churches underpin their strategic goals with biblical precepts. Thus, it was found that the main purpose of the North Church (Church on the Rock-International) was to spur people to submit their actions and conscience to the Lord’s truth in order to be directed by it.\textsuperscript{30}

Also, the church declares that the truth can be achieved in different ways, but all of them can be reduced to the revelation of the Bible. In their practices, the church emphasizes the necessity of truths of God unfolded in the Scriptures. Moreover, the church highlights that the Bible is foundational guide for all teaching, preaching and instruction at North Church.\textsuperscript{31}

The same reliance on the Bible as the only absolutely trustworthy guide for church growth and hospitality can be found in the declarative objectives of King Jesus International Ministry. Among other things, this church declares that it was established by God to reach all nations of the world by applying all means of communication such as television, radio, the Internet, and missionary trips.\textsuperscript{32} The employment of observation and unstructured interviews made certain that the mission of King Jesus International Ministry included such practices as healing, restoration of believers and development of the church for the benefit of the Kingdom of God.


\textsuperscript{31} North Church ‘What We Believe’.

Pentecostal Church

Pentecostal denomination was another sample of case study. The research of the United Pentecostal Church International by means of observation and unstructured interviews led to the following findings. First, it was ascertained that the fundamental doctrine of Pentecostal denomination is the biblical standards of full salvation, including baptism in water by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ, repentance, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.\(^\text{33}\)

The case study showed that church growth and hospitality were regarded by this church as two reciprocal phenomena stemming from the Bible. The church considers church growth to be the result of the unity of all believers of the faith, while hospitality was found to be the factor ensuring that all believers would not be disunited because of their different views.\(^\text{34}\)

Seventh-Day Adventists

The next case for empirical study was Seventh-Day Adventists. Similar to previous cases, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church was investigated by means of observation and unstructured interviews. As a result of case study, it was ascertained that Seventh-day Adventists recognizes the Bible as the only source of their fundamental beliefs.\(^\text{35}\) The phenomena of church growth and hospitality were found to be regarded by the church as well. Thus, the research showed that the Seventh-Day Adventists understood the category of church growth as a twofold phenomenon. On the one hand, church growth was regarded as


\(^{34}\) 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

the multiplication, or, in other words, a quantitative increase of a church. On the other hand, church growth was associated with the idea of personal growing in Christ.

The aforesaid two ideas were underpinned by biblical passages. From the perspective of the Seventh-Day Adventists church growth is achievable through the commitment to Jesus Christ as people’s Lord and Savior. Also, praise of the Lord, love, and hospitality were considered by the Seventh-Day Adventists salient features of church growth as the growth of every individual in Jesus Christ.

The concept of church was found to be regarded by the Seventh-Day Adventists as the conglomeration of believers who recognize the authority of Jesus Christ. This approach corresponds with a biblical teaching on church growth. The Seventh-Day Adventists were found to believe that the authority of the church originated from Jesus Christ as the incarnation of the Word of God. The church growth as a climax of development was found to be considered by the Seventh-Day Adventists as the glorious community of believers, the faithful of all the ages.

Roman Catholic Church

Roman Catholic Church was chosen as the final sample of case study. This case was also investigated by means of observation and unstructured interviews. The primary research showed that the Roman Catholic Church in the United States has its strategic plan of church growth. Thus, according to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops Strategic Plan for 2013-2016, it was decided to actualize the conception of the New Evangelization. Also, the

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analysis of the primary document – USCCB Strategic Plan for 2013-2016 – was complemented by the methods of observation and unstructured interviews.

The employment of observation and unstructured interviews brought into light the finding that the contemporary Roman Catholic Church accentuates on the practice of pilgrimage. From the perspective of the church pilgrimage should be deemed a reliable road to church growth. In the context of the Roman Catholic Church the phenomenon of pilgrimage was associated with the journey of Jesus Christ and his disciples. Nowadays, the Roman Catholic interpretation of pilgrimage implies the journey of every believer for the purposes of deepening his own faith, augmenting the participation in the sacramental life of the church, and becoming the true Christian witness in the final analysis.39

Given this, it is possible to infer that the Roman Catholic Church envisions church growth as the journey of every individual for the common purpose of enhancing the status of the church as a sacramental embodiment of the faith. Certainly, the success of pilgrimage is impossible without hospitality. Similar to other denominations, the Roman Catholic Church regards hospitality as assistance to strangers. The phenomenon of pilgrimage requires from a believer to become a stranger. Hospitality facilitates pilgrimage by way of aiding strangers. Hence, it follows that hospitality facilitates church growth.

39 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, ‘Strategic/Pastoral Plan’
CHAPTER THREE: A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR HOSPITALITY

Description of the Findings

After the primary and secondary data have been collected and analyzed, it is the right time to describe the findings of research. According to Saunders et al, the exploratory study relies on the use of diagrams to describe and understand the data.¹ A large number of diagrams and tables was offered in Chapter Three ‘Sampling and Surveying Contemporary Church Models’. These instruments would facilitate the description of the research findings, in view of the fact that the present research was conceived largely as exploratory study.

Before describing the findings, it is necessary to recapitulate the main research questions of this work. They are the following: What are the critical factors affecting the growth church today? 2) What is the significance of hospitality in terms of the church growth? 3) How is it possible to increase the velocity of church growth without detriment to hospitality?

The employment of secondary data collection methods (literature review, comparative analysis, and critique) in conjunction with specialized theological methods (exegesis and catechetical approach) helped to reach a set of valuable research findings.

Thus, it was ascertained that the phenomena of church growth and hospitality had biblical roots. This means that contemporary practices of church growth and hospitality may be deemed correct only if they are based on the biblical precepts. Moreover, the application of exegesis to the biblical text helped to find out that the Bible prescribed all necessary steps, prerequisites and limitations of church growth and hospitality. One of the most important findings was the revelation that church growth could be viewed as magnification and multiplication of a church.

¹ Saunders et al, 433.
In other words, the Bible considers church growth a twofold process. Magnification as the first step of church growth means individual praises of the Lord in favor of all other individuals. Multiplication as the second step of church growth lies in God’s Will towards multiplying the church on the daily basis. Importantly, it was disclosed that each individual had to be preoccupied with the first step, while the second step was the necessary consequence of magnification.

To continue, the secondary research brought into light the main determinants of church growth as a biblical phenomenon. They are the following: a man’s inclination to praise God in everything, reliance on Peter’s confession instead of human patterns, susceptibility to God’s Will, preservation of the order in the framework of a church, ‘singing of a new song’, diligent fulfillment of a ministry, devotion to the biblical roots of church growth, recognition of Jesus’s authority as the Son of God, and fear of God.

The aforesaid factors were found to be determinants of church growth, irrespective of space and time. This means that the above factors are not reasons necessarily leading to church growth, but they determine conditions in terms of that church growth is attainable. In other words, the aforementioned determinants of church growth form up the environment in that a church must develop.

Besides, the application of exegesis with regard to the biblical foundations of church growth made certain that church growth should be approached in correlation with hospitality. Hospitality was found to be another phenomenon that was deeply enrooted in the Bible. Furthermore, it was disclosed that the Bible established direct nexus between church growth and hospitality. Also, it was ascertained that hospitality should be regarded as an obligation rather than a right. The following factors were detected as the major determinants of hospitality: charity, love, generosity, recognition of people as ‘of one heart and of one soul’,
lust for the truth, justice in treatment with people, especially with foreigners, reliance on the practical experience of God.

In addition, it was found that the Bible recognized two forms of hospitality: active and passive.\(^2\) The analysis of the biblical text reached the most important finding, church growth and hospitality originate from God’s Will. Hence, it follows that the two phenomena are interrelated, because of the common source, the Will of God.

The method of critique and comparative analysis brought into light important findings as well. The former was directed primarily at the systematic and gradual investigation of theoretical implications of scholars in the domain of theology. The latter was employed as the collation and confrontation of similar elements of different theories of church growth and hospitality. The conjunctive application of the two secondary data collection methods helped to achieve the following findings: 1) all analyzed publications on church growth and hospitality were based on the biblical interpretations of these concepts, irrespective of the fact that strategies of church growth and hospitality implementation were discrepant in different authors; 2) all researched authors were inclined to think that church growth could not be properly implemented without taking into account hospitality.

In the ultimate analysis, the examined sources of secondary research had one important thing in common – it was impossible to attain church growth without implementing the Christian model of hospitality as prescribed in the Bible.

To that end, the description of findings should be made through the description of answers to every question of the questionnaire.

**Question No. 1**

The main idea of the first question was to ascertain the position of contemporary pastors with regard to the biblical stages of church growth. This question was based on the

\(^2\) Leviticus 19:10.
biblical precept that magnification and multiplication of a church were two constituents of church growth. Fifteen pastors answered this question as “Strongly agree”, three pastors provided the answer “Agree”, one pastor answered as “Strongly disagree”, and one pastor answered as “Disagree”. Only two of twenty respondents did not believe in the validity of the statement that magnification and multiplication are two sequential steps of church growth. This means that 10% of contemporary pastors does not recognize that magnification and multiplication of church growth are two biblical stages of church growth.

**Question No. 2**

The second question of the questionnaire was a direct multiple-choice question that required from the respondents to choose one option from nine possible variants. The question concerned practices that were connected with the attainment of church growth. All these practices were brought into light as a result of the conceptual framework. Answering this question, nine pastors confessed that the “Praise to the Lord in everything” should be deemed the most important practice leading to church growth. Two pastors provided the answer “Reliance on Peter’s confession”.

One pastor answered that the “Apprehension of God’s will” should be considered the practice leading to church growth. Two pastors were disposed to think that the “Maintenance of the order within a church” was the most important practice for church growth”. One pastor answered that ‘singing of a new song’ was the most significant practice for church growth. Two pastors answered that the “Fulfillment of a ministry” should be regarded as the best practice for church growth.

One pastor preferred the answer “Sticking to the biblical roots”. One pastor gave preference to the answer “Recognition of Jesus’s authority”. One pastor provided the answer “Fear of God”. These findings will be interpreted in Chapter Five “Conclusion”. Nonetheless,
it is necessary to sum up that the relative majority of respondents (45%) has chosen the “Praise to the Lord in everything” as the most important practice for church growth.

**Question No. 3**

The main idea of the third question was to verify whether contemporary pastors recognize hospitality as an obligation imposed by the Lord on every individual, or regard hospitality as a right or good will. This question is based on the theological foundations of hospitality as a duty with the divine origin. In answering this question, fifteen pastors provided the answer “Strongly agree”. Three pastors answered as “Agree”. One pastor preferred the option “Strongly disagree”. One pastor gave preference to the answer “Disagree”. In summary, 75 % of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that hospitality is an obligation imposed by God on every individual. The total of positive answers was 90 %.

**Question No. 4**

This question was inserted into the questionnaire to verify whether the contemporary pastors recognize hospitality as not only an active conduct, but also a passive behavior. As a result of the surveying, fourteen pastors “Strongly agree” that hospitality is any degree of assistance to strangers and can be achieved both through an active conduct and a passive conduct. Three pastors provided the answer “Agree”. Two pastors answered as “Strongly disagree”. One pastor answered as “Disagree”. To sum up, 70 % of respondents “Strongly agree” that hospitality is achievable through both active and passive conduct, and that hospitality is any degree of furtherance to strangers. The total of positive answers was 85 %.

**Question No. 5**

The fifth question was conceived to ascertain the views of contemporary pastors on the practices that are most important for hospitality. In this connection, question 5 was developed as a multiple-choice question with seven possible options. All options were
retrieved from the theological foundations of hospitality. As a result of questioning, two pastors answered “Love”. Eight pastors provide the answer “Charity”. Three pastors preferred the variant “Generosity”. One pastor gave preference to the option “Recognition of people as ‘of one heart and of one soul’”. One pastor marked the variant “Lust for the truth”. Four pastors gave preference to the option “Justice in treatment with people, especially with foreigners”. One pastor answered the question as the “Reliance on the practical experience of God”. The survey showed that the relative majority of respondents (40%) considered charity to be the most important practice for hospitality.

**Question No. 6**

This question was based on the theoretical foundations of church growth. The question of the questionnaire was very complex. It consisted of several variables. In answering this question, a respondent had to think first on strategies of church growth as a system of tactical and operational elements. Then, a respondent had to decide whether discrepant strategies of church growth had the same theological foundations of church growth or not. As a result, fifteen pastors provided the answer “Strongly agree”. Three pastors answered as “Agree”. One pastor preferred the option “Strongly disagree”. One pastor gave preference to the variant “Disagree”. In summary, 75 % of respondents provided the answer “Strongly agree”. The total of positive answers was 90 %.

**Question No. 7**

This question was derived from the theoretical foundations of hospitality. This means that the question was based on both biblical precepts of hospitality and academic theories of hospitalities that had been retrieved from publications of previous authors. The question was meant to find out the position of present pastors concerning the relationship between hospitality and human vulnerabilities (disabilities). Ten pastors answered the question as “Strongly agree”. Seven pastors provided the answer “Agree”. One pastor gave preference to
the answer “Strongly disagree”. Two pastors answered as “Disagree”. As a result, the 50 % of respondents were found to be confident that hospitality as a multifaceted phenomenon is based on God’s law of love and is directed at human vulnerabilities (disabilities). The total of positive answers was 85 %.

**Question No. 8**

The main objective of the eighth question of the questionnaire was to find out whether contemporary pastors considered the Christian model of hospitality the cornerstone of church growth or not. This question required from the respondents to agree or disagree with three correlated statements: 1) church growth is the magnification and multiplication of a church; 2) church growth is operated according to God’s Will; 3) church growth is impossible without the implementation of the Christian model of hospitality. The answer “Strongly agree” should be understood as the affirmative consent to all three statements.

The answer “Agree” should be understood as the consent to all three statements with some uncertainty. The answer “Strongly disagree” should be perceived as the total refusal to recognize the validity of all three parts of the question. The answer “Disagree” should be apprehended as the disagreement with all parts of the question to a certain degree. Thus, ten pastors provided the answer “Strongly agree”. Six pastors answered that they “Agree”. One pastor preferred the answer “Strongly disagree”. Two pastors gave preference to the variant “Disagree”. As a result of questioning, 50 % of pastors were found to be strongly confident that church growth is impossible without the Christian model of hospitality. To sum up, the total of positive answers to question 8 was 80 %.

**Question No. 9**

This question was included in the questionnaire with the purpose to find out differences in the principle position of contemporary pastors on how it is possible to reach church growth without detriment to hospitality. As a result of surveying, ten pastors answered
that they “Strongly agree”. Six pastors provided the answer “Agree”. One pastor gave preference to the answer “Strongly disagree”. Three pastors preferred the answer “Disagree”. In summary, 50 % of the respondents “Strongly agree” that it is possible to carry out church growth without detriment to hospitality only if the development of the church is made in accordance with the biblical precepts. The total of positive answers was 80%.

Question No. 10

The last question of the questionnaire was conceived to test the strategies of church growth implemented by contemporary pastors. The question set forth a very provocative statement – church growth is the Will of God and not the ambition of every single church leader. As the result of questioning, sixteen pastors answered as “Strongly agree”. Two pastors provided the answer “Agree”. One pastor gave preference to the answer “Strongly disagree”. One pastor preferred the answer “Disagree”. In summary, 80 % of the respondents “Strongly agree” that church growth depends on the Will of the Lord, and not on the ambition of every single church leader. The total of positive answers was 90 %.

After the data had been described, it was necessary to represent the whole process of research in a certain form. Both Robson\(^3\) and Cohen et al.\(^4\) discern several forms of how research findings can be reported. All these forms are pertinent to case study-based research. Taking into consideration that the present work was conceived largely as case study, the classification of reports by Robson and Cohen et al were deemed relevant to the context of the study.

\(^3\) Robson.

\(^4\) Cohen et al.
Both groups of researchers point out that the writing up of a case study-based report must be carried out with the double notions: a) fitness for research purpose; b) fitness for audience.\(^5\)

Thus, Cohen et al and Robson offer the following types of the presentation of research findings: 1) suspense structure; 2) narrative report; 3) comparative structure; 4) chronological structure; 5) theory-generating structure; 6) un-sequenced structure. In the context of this work, the choice of the pertinent type was made after the in-depth analysis and juxtaposition of all six types. Thus, in the suspense structure, it is incumbent on the researcher to introduce the main results of the research in the opening statements and then dedicate the remainder of the report to the introduction of supplementary evidence, explanations, analysis, justifications, and arguments that led to the conclusion.\(^6\)

The second type of report is the narrative report. This form of reporting research findings may be understood as a prose approach that is connected with pertinent figures, tables, analysis, and inferences.\(^7\) The third type of report is the comparative structure that implies that the issues in question are informed through two or more lenses, such as explanatory, theoretical, or descriptive, in order to offer a rich, all-embracing account of the case, ‘or to enable the reader to have sufficient information from that to conclude that of the explanations, descriptions or theories best fit(s) the data.\(^8\)

The next option to choose from was the chronological structure. Cohen et al write that the chronological mode of reporting research findings is based on a simple sequence or chronology.\(^9\) Chronology is the organizational principle of such report that makes possible

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\(^5\) Cohen et al, 200.


\(^7\) Cohen et al, 216.

\(^8\) Cohen et al, 220.

\(^9\) Cohen et al, 230.
both the cause and effect to be introduced, and to augment the strength of the findings. Despite the fact that chronology can be an organizing principle, different sorts of content may be introduced at various stages of the chronological sequence.

The next variant was the theory-generating structure. This option implies the structure of a report that follows a series of theoretical components or case studies.\(^{(10)}\) Not opposed to Robson, Cohen et al is prone to believe that this type of report requires from the researcher to ensure that every subsequent section of the work makes a contribution, or constitutes, a component of an elaborating ‘theoretical formulation’, “providing a link in the chain of argument, leading eventually to the overall theoretical formulation.”\(^{(11)}\)

The last option was the kind of reports. According to Cohen et al and Robson, the structures make it difficult for the reader to discern important and unimportant areas of research. This may lead to unpredictable response and attitude in respect of the researcher.

After the main six types of reports have been reviewed, it should be conceded that the narrative report in conjunction with the theory-generating structure was the best choice in view of the specificities of this work. The main factors justifying the choice in favor of the narrative report complemented with the theory-generating structure should be explained as follows.

First, the study was conducted largely as a prose account on the relationship between church growth and hospitality.

Second, the prosaic way of reporting research findings was diversified with tables, charts and analysis as the key features of the narrative report.

Third, the construction of the project followed the theory-generating model, according to that the whole work consisted of reciprocal theoretical constructs (literature review,

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\(^{(10)}\) Cohen et al, 235.  
\(^{(11)}\) Cohen et al, 263.
theological foundations, theoretical foundations, primary research, etc.), and each subsequent section of the study contributed to, or constituted, a component of a developing ‘theoretical formulation’, establishing a connection in the range of arguments.

A Biblical Model for Hospitality

After everything has been given due consideration, it is possible to generalize that the research objectives were achieved, while the research questions were answered completely. The conducted study unveiled that the critical factor affecting the growth of a church is the same factor that affected church growth in the past, the following of the biblical precepts of church growth. It was ascertained that any incentives to develop a church without reliance on the biblical teachings must not be considered church growth, from the biblical perspective.

Also, the second question of research was answered completely. The conducted study provided evidence that hospitality is a cornerstone for church growth. The third question of research was answered as well. The answer to this question is simple: the velocity of church growth without detriment to hospitality is possible only if church growth is implemented in accordance with the biblical principles. In other words, any incentive to make church growth compatible with the biblical teachings will definitely result in promotion of hospitality, because the biblical writers consider hospitality an undeniable element of church growth.

It is no exaggeration to say the conducted research made possible to introduce a set of substantial implications for future. Taking into consideration that the present study was conceived as an applied research, the recommendations derived from this research should be discussed under the two subsections: 1) implications for practice; 2) implications for further research.

*Implications for Practice*
In the context of this work, implications for practice should be represented in the form of the model of church growth that is totally based on the biblical teachings and seeks to utilize hospitality as a cornerstone of church growth. The proposed model can be applied by any pastor. The model does not seek to undermine the authority of any denomination. It is derived from the findings of this work and rests completely on the biblical precepts.

The structure of the model.

There are three levels of the model: strategic, tactical, and operational. Each of the levels is constituted of specific structural elements. All levels are interdependent and function as one whole.

**Strategic Level.**

Strategic level involves the entire organization (church) in mind and starts with the church’s mission. In this level, it is essentially to look forward to where the church wants to be in many years. Also, this level serves as the framework (basis) for the tactical and operational levels. In light of this, the strategic level of church growth is constituted by the fundamentals of church growth and hospitality that need to be achieved in the future.

It is suggested that a church leader who implements this model learns the biblical nature of all these fundamentals before setting them as strategic goals. The fundamentals of church growth include the following concepts: magnification of a church, multiplication of a church; the Lord’s law of love, recognition of the Will of God, praise to the Lord in everything, reliance on Peter’s confession; apprehension of God’s will, maintenance of the order within a church, ‘singing of a new song’, fulfillment of a ministry; sticking to the biblical roots, recognition of Jesus’s authority, and Fear of God.
In like manner, the strategic foundations of hospitality include the following concepts: treatment of human vulnerabilities and disabilities, activeness and passiveness of hospitality, obligation of hospitality, love, charity, generosity, recognition of people as ‘of one heart and of one soul, lust for the truth, justice in treatment with people, especially with foreigners, and reliance on the practical experience of God.

The aforesaid determinants are strategic elements of church growth and hospitality that determine the tactical and operational level of the proposed model of church growth. Moreover, the above determinants of church growth and hospitality have strategic significance for the model of church growth, because they show the boundaries within that the church must develop.

Before proceeding to the next level of the model, it is prudent to clarify the nature of each determinant. It is incumbent on every participant of the model to be aware of the precise dimensions of every determinant. Thus, it should be reiterated that magnification of a church always precedes multiplication of the church. That is, it is incorrectly to plan the multiplication of a church without making a strategic plan of magnification first. In the biblical context, magnification can be achieved only if each individual praises the Lord and have favor with all other individuals.

The next phase of the church growth is the multiplication of church. This phase will be accomplished only if the Lord goes on multiplying churches on the daily basis. To sum up, the success of the first phase depends on the will of a separate individual, while the success of the second phase is dependent on the will of God. However, Acts 2:47 makes it clear that God will inevitably add to the church if an individual praises God and favors other

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13 Acts 2:47.
individuals. That is, multiplication of the church is predetermined by the magnification of the church.

In addition to this, the requirement to ‘have favor with all the people’ is very close to the definition of hospitality. To favor means to provide furtherance. In this sense, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that there are two preconditions to church growth: (1) the praise of God; and (2) hospitality (favor with all the people).

Given this, spiritual leaders should elaborate strategic plans of church magnification and church multiplication that will involve all participants of their churches. They have to determine approximate deadlines for the accomplishment of each step by taking into account that everything depends on the Will of God. Also, they must ensure that the magnification and multiplication of their churches are operated in the correct sequence – magnification first, and multiplication next.

In like manner, it is incumbent on church leaders to elaborate adequate strategic plans for the practice of other determinants of church growth and hospitality. Before planning what measure to undertake, spiritual leaders should clearly understand themselves, and teach to others, the nature of the biblical concepts, such as the Will of God, Peter’s confession, the order within a church, ‘singing of a new song’, the biblical roots, Jesus’s authority, Fear of God, treatment of human vulnerabilities and disabilities, activeness and passiveness of hospitality, obligation of hospitality, love, charity, generosity, recognition of people as ‘of one heart and of one soul’, lust for the truth, justice in treatment with people, especially with foreigners, the practical experience of God, etc.

In the strategic level of the model, the above-mentioned concepts must underlie the functioning of a church. In other words, each spiritual leader must attain clear understanding of the above concepts and convey their biblical meaning to congregants. After that, it is incumbent on church leaders to compose strategic annuals programs under the titles of
“Love”, “Charity”, “Generosity”, “Lust for truth”, “Active and Passive Hospitality”, “Peter’s Confession”, etc. Each of such programs must contain general evaluation of how a particular determinant can help achieve the growth of a church. Also, unstructured plans must be incorporated into each of the programs.

To generalize, it needs to be stated that the strategic level of planning lacks structural plans. According to Richardson, strategic decision process is characterized by complexity, novelty, and open-endedness. Also, the researchers purport that strategic decisions affect not only an organization, but the society as a whole. In the context of the recommended model of church growth, the strategic level is reduced to unstructured open-ended planning for many years ahead that involves all participants of the church and all biblical determinants of church growth and hospitality.

**Tactical level.**

Rabinovich and Rosenschein interpret the strategic level of planning as the transformation of system goals into desired system dynamics. Following the definition of Rabinovich and Rosenschein, it should be conceded that, in the strategic level, the system goals of church growth are offered to transformed into desired system dynamics by way of considering, interpreting, studying, teaching and actualizing the biblical determinants of church growth and hospitality. In this level, it is expected that the biblical determinants of church growth will commence the desired system dynamics by showing the direction of subsequent decision-making process and the practical undertaking of concrete measures.

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In contrast to the strategic level, the tactical level is a lower level of creating a sequence of actions in order to spur the system into the desired form of dynamics.\textsuperscript{16} That is, the tactical level of the proposed model may be reduced to the introduction of the sequences of pertinent acts (measures) to be implemented in the framework of every strategic plan of church growth (“a plan of determinant”). In the context of the strategic level, a set of strategic plans are proposed. Each of these plans resembles the corresponding determinant of church growth and hospitality. In the tactical level, it is recommended to elaborate a set of acts (measures) to be implemented in the framework of strategic plans. The following tactical acts (measures) are suggested for each strategic plan:

- \textit{The plan of magnification of the church (strategic plan)} – encouragement of congregants, by means of persuasion, catechetical approach and teaching, to praise God in everything and to have favor with all human beings (tactical plan).

- \textit{The plan of multiplication of the church (strategic plan)} – encouragement of magnification of a church in order to proceed to multiplication of the church (tactical plan).

- \textit{The plan of recognition of the Will of God (strategic plan)} – recognition of the dictates of the Will of God, through the Holy Spirit and biblical teachings (tactical plan).

- \textit{The plan of praise to God (strategic plan)} – verbal, mental and non-verbal praise to God accompanying every spiritual act in the church (tactical plan).

- \textit{The plan of reliance on Peter’s confession (strategic plan)} – understanding and teaching of Peter’s confession through biblical readings, exegesis, and catechetical approach as well as the actualization of principles underlying the confession (tactical plan).

\textsuperscript{16} Rabinovich & Rosenschein, 11.
• **The plan of maintenance of the order within the church (strategic plan)** – appointment of church administrators by taking into consideration their religious virtues and competence (tactical plan).

• **The plan of ’singing of a new song’ (strategic plan)** – teaching about the worldwide context of the new message about God’s deeds among all the world nations and practical actualization of the precepts of the new song (tactical plan).

• **The plan of fulfillment of a ministry (strategic plan)** - it is incumbent on a spiritual leader to be watchful in all existent situations, to endure conditions of great distress, to carry out the obligations of an evangelist, and perform the duties regarding the ministry to the full (tactical plan).  

• **The plan of sticking to the biblical roots (strategic plan)** - devotion to the biblical doctrine through recognition and interpretation of the doctrinal teachings, devotion to the mutual trust and charitableness of the apostles as the roots of church (tactical plan).

• **The plan of recognition of Jesus’s authority (strategic plan)** – learning and teaching of the biblical passage through that Jesus’s authority can be recognized and proved (tactical plan).

• **The plan of treatment of human vulnerabilities and disabilities (strategic plan)** – understanding of what human vulnerabilities and disabilities are; welcoming and treating people with disabilities and vulnerabilities in the same manner as other individuals (tactical plan).

• **The plan of activeness and passiveness of hospitality (strategic plan)** – encouragement of both active and passive forms of hospitality through persuasion, exegesis and catechetical approach (tactical plan).

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17 2 Timothy 4:5 (KJV).
• **The plan of hospitality as obligation (strategic plan)** – making the practice of hospitality mandatory in the framework of church growth; welcoming and assistance to church visitors and strangers as an everyday duty, rather than a manifestation of good will (tactical plan).

• **The plans of love, charity, and generosity (strategic plan)** – nurturing of friendly and generous behavior of the congregates; teaching and practicing love as the universal law of the Lord; elaboration and execution of plans of charity (tactical plan).

The aforesaid list of tactical plans is not exhaustive. Every church leader is entitled to include additional tactical elements in the proposed model of church growth. However, in offering novelties in the tactical level, a church leader must remember that tactical elements cannot contradict to the strategic elements – the determinants of church growth and hospitality.

**Operational level.**

In the operational level, each spiritual leader must decide on the peculiar operational measures to be taken by every participant of church growth in terms of the strategic and tactical elements of church growth. For instance, church leaders may decide that some administrators of a concrete church are responsible for the welcoming of people in the church on the everyday basis, while other administrators are responsible for programs of charity. It depends on a church leader what measures to implement. The only requirement to such measures is that such measures must be compatible and subservient to strategic and tactical elements of the model of church growth.
Implications for further research

Apart from the practical implications, the conducted study is the basis for implications for further research. Before making suggestions for next research, it is essentially to recapitulate the core specificities of this work. The salient features of this work are the following: (1) Fusion of secondary data collection methods with primary data collection methods; (2) Combination of qualitative research methods (case study, direct observation, unstructured interviewing) with quantitative research methods (surveying); (3) Combination of general scientific methods (comparative analysis, doctrinal study, review, critique) with specialized theological methods (exegesis and catechetical study), (4) Nine research hypotheses (six theological hypotheses and three theoretical hypotheses).

In-depth investigation of theological and theoretical foundations of church growth and hospitality.

Taking into consideration the aforesaid specificities of the conducted research, it is possible to infer that the main significance of this work lies in its (1) comprehensiveness, both theoretical and methodological, and (2) applied nature.

Nonetheless, the following aspects of the researched topic were not properly addressed in the context of this research, and thus should be approached by future researchers: (1) The study of church growth in correlation with the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God; (2) The Laity’s position in respect of church growth and hospitality implementation; (3) The peculiarities and viability of the church doctrine concerning church growth; (4) The influences of Judaism on the understanding of church growth; (5) Church growth in the documents of church; (6) Problems with interpretation and translation of the Bible and their influence on the understanding of church growth.
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

The following determinants of church growth were retrieved from the theological foundations: praise to God in everything, reliance on Peter’s confession instead of human patterns, susceptibility to God’s Will, preservation of the order in the framework of a church, ‘singing of a new song’, diligent fulfillment of a ministry, devotion to the biblical roots of church growth, recognition of Jesus’s authority as the Son of God, and fear of God. The aforementioned determinants should be understood as factors without that the operation of church growth was impossible in the past and is impossible in the present times.

In addition to this, the secondary research brought into light the following determinants of hospitality: charity, love, generosity, recognition of people as “of one heart and of one soul”, lust for the truth, justice for the truth, justice in treatment with people, especially with foreigners, and reliance on the practical experience of God. All these determinants should be taken into account by every church leader, because the implementation of hospitality was impossible without them in the past, and is impossible without them in present times.

Another very important finding of secondary research is the fact that the Bible recognizes two modes of hospitality: active and passive.\(^1\) This finding indicates on the universal nature of hospitality. The universal nature of hospitality means that the act of hospitality may be conducted either as any behavior in the form of active assistance to a stranger, or a passive deed in the form of withholding from action that may deprive a stranger of a natural benefit. For instance, the reluctance to pick up a bunch of grapes is a passive act of hospitality as it provides a stranger with the possibility to satisfy his need in food.

\(^1\) Leviticus 19:10.
The next important finding of secondary research was the evidence that both church growth and hospitality originate from God’s Will. This finding means that there is no human deliberation in the creation of the ideas of church growth and hospitality. Hence, it follows that the divine nature of church growth and hospitality warns a church leader from pretending to be the initiator of these processes. God is the true founder and overseer of church growth and hospitality. The main duty of a church leader is to properly perceive the Will of God through the Holy Spirit, and to implement church growth and hospitality in the name of Jesus Christ.

Apart from theological foundations, the phenomena of church growth and hospitality were researched from the theoretical perspective. Theoretical foundations of church growth were formulated after the comprehensive examination of noteworthy academic publications. The secondary research of theoretical publications resulted in the following important findings: 1) all analyzed publications on church growth and hospitality were based on the biblical interpretation of these concepts; 2) all respectable authors were disposed to think that church growth could not be implemented without taken into account hospitality.

The first finding means that it is impossible to construct any reliable model of church growth by ignoring the prescriptions of the Bible. The second finding implies that church growth is tightly linked with hospitality and an implementer of church growth must not ignore hospitality in the endeavors to reach growth for his church. Actually, all authors who had been involved in the secondary research unanimously wrote that hospitality could lead both to individual growth and to the growth of a church. There is no doubt that church growth can be implemented without detriment to hospitality only if it is implemented in accordance with the biblical precepts.
Despite the clarity, the results from case study must be interpreted in order to highlight the relationships and processes between five cases. Thus, case study of five denominations was conducted largely by means of observation and unstructured interviewing. The employment of these methods led to the following important findings.

First, it was ascertained that all denominations that had been analyzed in the framework of case study considered the Bible the only source of their practices. In other words, it was investigated that Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Charismatic church, Pentecostal church, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Roman Catholic church relied on the biblical teachings in the elaboration and implementation of the strategic goals.

Second, it was disclosed that all cases considered church growth and hospitality important elements of their programs. To be more precise, the research showed that the Evangelic Lutheran Church in America paid significant attention to hospitality. This denomination involved hospitality in its strategic program of church growth.

The practical implementation of hospitality as part of church growth was detected in such practices as free and unprejudiced acceptance of different people into the communities of the Evangelic Lutheran Church in America, efforts of the pastors to provide aid to local communities, predisposition of the church leaders to magnify and multiply the church not only statistically, but also spiritually. Importantly, the representatives of the Evangelic Lutheran Church in America were found to stick to the biblical models of church growth and hospitality. This means that they had fully incorporated the biblical precepts in their practices. The dominance of God was recognized in every action, whereas the role of people was reduced to the instrument in the hands of God.
In like manner, the biblical precepts of church growth and hospitality were recognized in the practices of Charismatic church. Not opposed to the Evangelic Lutheran Church in America, Charismatic churches were found to have declared the dominance of God and supremacy of Jesus’s authority on the Earth. Also, it was investigated that the pastors of Charismatic church were devoted to the idea of the divine truth that could be unfolded through the study of the Holy Scriptures. This means that the representatives of Charismatic church were not disposed to recognize the truth of the patterns of this world, but gave preference to the implications of God’s truth instead.

Among other things, the religious leaders of Charismatic church deemed it their duty to reach every individual and build bridges between nations by way of applying all possible means of communication, including the Internet, television, radio, and missionary trips. Similar to pastors of Evangelic Lutheran Church in America, representatives of Charismatic church were meant to apply church growth and hospitality in the name of God. The basic practices of Charismatic leaders in terms of church growth included healing, restoration of believers and development of the church for the benefit of the Kingdom of God.

It is interesting to note, that Charismatic leaders appealed to such term as the Kingdom of God. In the context of their practices, church was regarded as the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on the Earth. Therefore, according to Charismatic leaders, the growth of church will be justifiable only if it is directed at the achievement of the Kingdom of God.

Pentecostal denomination was another case of church growth and hospitality. The case study made certain that church growth and hospitality were regarded by Pentecostal leaders as two interrelated biblical phenomena that were pertinent to the idea of full salvation. According to
Pentecostalism, the full salvation was possible through church growth, while church growth was possible through hospitality.

It was investigated that Pentecostal leaders considered church growth as the consequence of the unity of all believers of the faith, while hospitality was found to be the factor guaranteeing that all believers would not be disunited because of their different views.\(^1\) Hence, it follows that Pentecostal church was not focused on the multiplication of church for the purposes of multiplication, but rather sought the spiritual unity of all believers for the purposes of salvation.

To continue, the case study of the Seventh-Day Adventists made certain that this Christian denomination recognized the supremacy of the biblical teachings. It was investigated that the Bible was the only source of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-Day Adventists.\(^2\) Similar to the above-mentioned denominations, the Seventh-Day Adventists were prone to believe that church growth and hospitality were interdependent phenomena.

In contrast to the aforementioned denominations, the Seventh-Day Adventists were more devoted to the idea of personal development of every believer in Jesus Christ, rather than in general development of church. That is, the Seventh-Day Adventists were inclined to think that church growth would be achieved only if each believer could actualize his personal growth in Christ.

Hence, in the Seventh-Day Adventists, the idea of church growth was found to be intertwined with the notion of commitment to Jesus Christ as people’s Lord Savior. Similar to representatives of Pentecostal church, the Seventh-Day Adventists were focused on the problem of people’s salvation. Both Pentecostal leaders and the Seventh-Day Adventists claimed that

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\(^1\) 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

church growth would be achieved only if all believers could be united in the faith. The Seventh-Day Adventists added that this unity would firm only if the glorious community of the believers recognized the authority of Jesus Christ.

Finally, the case of the Roman Catholic Church was considered pertinent to this study, because the Roman Catholic leaders were found to be adherents to the ideas of church growth and hospitality. Similar to above-mentioned denominations, the Roman Catholic Church declared the superiority of the biblical precepts over human teachings. Among other things, it was found that the contemporary Roman Catholic Church associated church growth particularly with the practice of pilgrimage. It was found that, from the perspective of the Roman Catholic pastors, pilgrimage should be deemed a reliable road to church growth. In this statement, the Roman Catholic pastors demonstrated their reliance on the biblical roots of hospitality and church growth. In the Bible, pilgrimage was connected with the journeys of Jesus Christ, his disciples and every individual who followed the callings of the faith.

Nowadays, the Roman Catholic Church made attempts to utilize the concept of pilgrimage by spurring all believers to participate in the journey for the purposes of augmentation of personal faith and unconditional participation in the sacramental life of the church. From this finding, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that the Roman Catholic Church associates church growth with the magnification of each individual’s faith and multiplication of the true Christian witnesses through pilgrimage, hospitality and other biblical practices.

Hypothesis No. 1: Magnification of a church (independent variable) precedes and determines the subsequent multiplication of the church (dependent variable)
The validity of the first hypothesis was tested by means of the first question in the questionnaire. As it has been explained in Chapter Four “The Outcome of the Research”, the main idea of the first question of the questionnaire was to ascertain the position of contemporary pastors concerning the biblical stages of church growth. The results of the questioning were the following: 90% of respondents answered that magnification and multiplication of a church are two sequential steps of church growth. This means that the contemporary pastors recognized the existence of two reciprocal steps of church growth – magnification and multiplication of a church. Hence, it follows that the first research hypothesis was verified as true.

Hypothesis No. 2: Church growth (dependent variable) is achievable through magnification and multiplication of a church (independent variables)

The second research hypothesis was also tested by means of answers to the first question of the questionnaire. Similarly, the surveying proved the truth of the second research hypothesis.

Hypothesis No. 3: The major determinants of church growth (dependent variable) are the predisposition to praise the Lord in everything, reliance on Peter’s confession rather than on human foundations, apprehension of God’s will, maintenance of the order within a church, ‘singing of a new song’, fulfillment of a ministry, sticking to the biblical roots, recognition of Jesus’s authority, fear of God (independent variables)

The truth of the third research hypothesis was verified with the help of answers to the second question of the questionnaire. This question provided respondents with the possibility to choose among nine options of determinants of church growth. These options were retrieved from the biblical foundations. Each of them was a true biblical determinant of church growth. The respondents were required to choose the most important to their way of thinking factor leading to church growth. The questioning showed that the relative majority of respondents (45%) chose
the variant “Praise to the Lord in everything” as the most important determinant of church growth.

The answers to the second research question made possible to arrive at the twofold conclusion. Firstly, it is possible to state that the praise to the Lord in everything is the most significant factor of church growth within contemporary Christian churches. Second, the surveying showed that each of the nine options was chosen by a particular number of respondents. This means that all biblical determinants of church growth are recognized and practiced by Christian pastors. In the ultimate analysis, it is possible to infer that the third hypothesis was verified as true.

Hypothesis No. 4: Hospitality (dependent variable) is an obligation imposed by God on every individual (independent variable)

The formulation of the fourth research hypothesis coincides with the third question of the questionnaire. The main idea of the third question of the questionnaire was to test the attitude of contemporary pastors towards the nature of hospitality. It was expected that the answers to this question would clarify whether contemporary pastors recognized hospitality as an obligation imposed by the Lord on every individual, or as a right and good will. As a result of surveying, the answers showed that 90% of respondents recognized hospitality as an obligation imposed by God on every individual. This result proved that the fourth research hypothesis was true.

Hypothesis No. 5: Hospitality (dependent variable) is achievable through any degree of assistance to strangers in the form of either an active behavior or a passive conduct (independent variable)

The formulation of the fifth research hypothesis coincides with the fourth question of the questionnaire. 85% of respondents provided positive answers to this question. From this finding,
it is possible to make two inferences. First, the majority of pastors associated hospitality with assistance to strangers that could be provided in any form and irrespective of the degree. Second, most pastors were found to be knowledgeable about the two operational forms of hospitality – active and passive. On these grounds, the fifth research hypothesis was found to be true.

Hypothesis No. 6: The major determinants of hospitality (dependent variables) are love, charity, generosity, recognition of people as ‘of one heart and of one soul’, lust for the truth, justice in treatment with people, especially with foreigners, reliance on the practical experience of God (independent variables).

The sixth research hypothesis was tested through answers to the fifth question of the questionnaire. The fifth question was conceived to find out the view of contemporary pastors on factors predetermining hospitality. The main idea was to highlight the determinant that was the most important for hospitality in terms of contemporary Christianity. The respondents were provided with the possible to choose one of seven biblical determinants of hospitality. As a result, the relative majority of respondents (40%) considered charity to be the most important practice for hospitality. All other options were chosen by different number of respondents.

From this finding, it is possible to make a twofold conclusion. First, it was ascertained that charity is the most important determinant of hospitality. Second, other options are the factors that are incorporated by Christian pastors in their programs of hospitality. On these grounds, the sixth research hypothesis was verified as true.

Hypothesis No. 7: Strategies of church growth (dependent variable) may vary in tactical and operational elements (independent variables) but must rest on the same theological foundations of church growth (independent variables).
The formulation of the seventh research hypothesis coincides with the sixth question of the questionnaire. The sixth question was based on the theoretical foundations of church growth. As a result of questioning, it was ascertained that 90% of respondents were disposed to think that all strategies of church growth had to rest on the same theological foundations, irrespective of the fact that they might differ in tactical and operation elements. This finding means that there is the common basis for all strategies of church growth – the Bible.

Also, the aforementioned finding makes certain that human beings are entitled to elaborate and implement specific approaches to church growth only if these approaches are underpinned by the universal theological foundations of church growth, such as the praise to the Lord in everything, reliance on Peter’s confession, apprehension of God’s Will, maintenance of the order within a church, etc. In the last analysis, it needs to be stated that the seventh hypothesis was verified as true.

Hypothesis No. 8: Hospitality (dependent variable) is a multifaceted phenomenon that is based on the Lord’s law of love (independent variable) and is directed at human vulnerabilities and disabilities (independent variables).

The formulation of this hypothesis coincides with question 7 of the questionnaire. The main objective of the aforesaid question was to know the considerations of pastors in respect of hospitality as God’s law of love. This question was derived from the theoretical foundations of hospitality and implied the association of hospitality with the divine law of love.

The answers to the question were meant to clarify the position of pastors with regard to hospitality as the divine law of love. As a result of questioning, 85% of respondents affirmed that hospitality should be approached a multifaceted phenomenon that is based on God’s law of love. Besides, the second part of the seventh question of the questionnaire put forth that
hospitality as the Lord’s law of love was directed at human vulnerabilities and disabilities. 85% of respondents confirmed that hospitality was truly directed at human vulnerabilities and disabilities. In general, the eighth research hypothesis was verified as true.

Hypothesis No. 9: Church growth as the magnification and multiplication of a church according to the Will of God (dependent variable) is impossible without the Christian model of hospitality (independent variable).

The wording of the ninth research hypothesis resembles the formulation of the eighth question of the questionnaire. The principal aim of the eighth question of the questionnaire was to disclose the position of contemporary pastors in respect of the Christian model of hospitality. In the context of this research, it was necessary to find out whether the majority of the pastors considered the Christian model of hospitality to be the cornerstone of church growth or not. As a result of the questioning, 80% of respondents showed that they did consider the Christian model of hospitality to be the cornerstone of church growth. That is, it was ascertained that the majority of contemporary pastors deemed it impossible to magnify and multiply a church according to the Will of God without implementing the Christian model of hospitality. In this sense, the ninth research hypothesis was tested as true.

In summary, all nine hypothesis of this project were verified as true. Aside from the questions of the questionnaire that were designed to verify the validity of research hypotheses, there were two questions that were conceived to provide the generalized understanding of the relationship between church growth and hospitality. Thus, the findings from questions 9 and 10 of the questionnaire need to be interpreted as well.

Question 9 was conceived to find out the discrepancies in the attitudes of contemporary pastors on how it is possible to reach church growth without detriment to hospitality. 80% of
respondents confirmed that church growth without detriment to hospitality is possible only if it is implemented in accordance with the biblical precepts. Actually, the overall answer to question 9 of the questionnaire meant the answer to the third question of this research. The third research question should be recapitulated as follows: *How is it possible to increase the velocity of church growth without detriment to hospitality?*

In this light, the answer to the third question of research coincides with the answer to the ninth question of the question. That is, the velocity of church growth without detriment to hospitality is possible only if church growth is implemented in strict correspondence with the biblical precepts.

The answer to the third question of research was extended by the overall answer to the tenth question of the questionnaire. The tenth question of the questionnaire was designed to find out whether the majority of pastors considered church growth to be dependent on the Will of God, rather than to be dependent on the ambition of every single church leader. 90% of respondents provided positive answers to the tenth question of the questionnaire, proving that church growth depended on God’s Will, and not on the ambition of every single church leader.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Magnification and multiplication of a church are two sequential steps of church growth
   1) Strongly agree
   2) Agree
   3) Strongly disagree
   4) Disagree

2. What practice is the most important for church growth?
   1) Praise to the Lord in everything
   2) Reliance on Peter’s confession
   3) Apprehension of God’s will
   4) Maintenance of the order within a church
   5) ‘Singing of a new song’
   6) Fulfillment of a ministry
   7) Sticking to the biblical roots
   8) Recognition of Jesus’s authority
   9) Fear of God

3. Hospitality is an obligation imposed by God on every individual
   1) Strongly agree
   2) Agree
   3) Strongly disagree
4) Disagree

4. Hospitality is achievable through any degree of assistance to strangers in the form of either an active behavior or a passive conduct

1) Strongly agree
2) Agree
3) Strongly disagree
4) Disagree

5. What practice is the most important for hospitality?

1) Love
2) Charity
3) Generosity
4) Recognition of people as ‘of one heart and of one soul’
5) Lust for the truth
6) Justice in treatment with people, especially with foreigners
7) Reliance on the practical experience of God

6. Strategies of church growth may vary in tactical and operational elements but must rest on the same theological foundations of church growth

1) Strongly agree
2) Agree
3) Strongly disagree
4) Disagree
7. Hospitality is a multifaceted phenomenon that is based on the Lord’s law of love and is directed at human vulnerabilities and disabilities

1) Strongly agree
2) Agree
3) Strongly disagree
4) Disagree

8. Church growth as the magnification and multiplication of a church according to the Will of God is impossible without the Christian model of hospitality

1) Strongly agree
2) Agree
3) Strongly disagree
4) Disagree

9. Church growth without detriment to hospitality is possible only if it is implemented in accordance with the biblical precepts

1) Strongly agree
2) Agree
3) Strongly disagree
4) Disagree

10. Church growth is the Will of God and not the ambition of every single church leader

1) Strongly agree
2) Agree
3) Strongly disagree

4) Disagree
APPENDIX B.

PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary

Title of the study: CHURCH HOSPITALITY: A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR GROWTH BASED ON THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN REVELATION.

Introduction
The core objective of the research is to make insight into the relationship between church growth and hospitality, as well as to elaborate a viable model of church growth that can be implemented without detriment to hospitality.

Do you have to take part?
A participant is not obliged to take part in the research. However, his/her participation will help to achieve valuable data.

What will you do in the project?
The main task of the participants is to precisely and sincerely answer all questions in the questionnaire.

Why have you been invited to take part?
The participants are chosen randomly.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?
There is no either potential or actual risk in taking part in the survey.

What happens to the information in the project?
The collected information will be depersonalized.

Researcher Contact Details:
BIBLIOGRAPHY


The Bible. King James Version.


IRB APPROVAL

IRB Exemption 1856.042814

Dear Gesner,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), that identifies specific situations in that human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054