IDEAL TYPES:

CHURCH PLANTING MODELS

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Introduction

The gospel message is the sole arbiter for all Christian mission activity.[1] The primary

task for today's church is the propagation of the gospel message throughout the world. Jesus

established this responsibility in His Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all

nations . . . baptizing them . . . teaching them" (Matt 28:19).[2] A vast gulf exists between Christ

and the lost, and therefore Christ insists that His disciples bridge that gulf. The evangelical call

for mission primarily emerged and developed through two, active church growth mechanisms:

evangelism[3] and *church planting*.[4]

The Bible alone provided—and still provides—the foundational impetus for both

evangelism and church planting. Both mechanisms exist through multiple strategies, forms, and

methods. For the purposes of this essay, the particulars of evangelism will be set aside while we

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[1]J. I. Packer describes the gospel message in this way: "Jesus Christ is to be proclaimed everywhere as God incarnate, Lord, and Savior; and God's authoritative invitation to find life through turning to Christ in repentance and faith is to be delivered to all mankind." J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), 223.

[2]In explicating the significance of the Matthean statement of the Great Commision, Moreau, Corwin, and McGee write: "Before discussing the passage itself [Matt 28:16-20], we should point out that the church by and large did not use it as a motivation for mission prior to 1792, when William Carey published *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. In this booklet Carey laid the foundation for contemporary mission societies. His ideas were so influential that many call him the 'father of modern Protestant missions.'" A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 43.

[3]*Evangelism* refers to the actions, processes, and methods connected with evangelization. "Evangelization" is defined as "the specific process of spreading the good news about Jesus Christ as God's salvation so that men and women have a valid opportunity to accept him." Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publushing Co., 1990), 46.

[4]*Church Planting* is defined as "the effort to bring men and women to Christ and incorporate them into growing, reproducing Christian fellowships." Ebbie C. Smith, "Church Planting," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 202.

focus our attention on church planting. Specifically, the aim of this essay is to consider by way of examination four major church planting models.

It is essential to recognize from the outset that limiting the number of church planting models to four is a difficult task. Even a cursory study of the available church planting literature proves that models are diverse and numerous. Therefore, it is vital to explain what is intended when discussing a "model." With a proper understanding of what a model entails, it becomes easier to reduce the planting models to just four.

Church Planting "Model" Explained

Explicating the meaning of "model" is a daunting and exhausting activity. Intuitively, we somewhat grasp what is meant. We synonymize *model* according to the following thoughts: an example to emulate, a miniature depiction (as in a model airplane), a design of a particular product (as in cars), a pattern of structure, a categorical type, or a simplified representation of a system. All of these notions are accurate to an extent, but it proves particularly difficult to narrow and tailor an explanation appropriate for what is often termed *church planting models*. Missiologists also struggle when trying to narrow what is intended by *model*.[5] Before proceeding further, this section will attempt to narrow and focus our understanding of a *model* in order to lay the foundation and expectations for the remainder of the essay. An accurate depiction of what we mean by the term "model" is crucial.

What is a model? The influential German sociologist Max Weber associated models

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[5]For a spattering—certainly not exhaustive— of various opinions related to church planting *models* and what they consist of, compare the following: Daniel R, Sanchez, Ebbie C. Smith, and Curtis E Watke, *Starting Reproducing Congregations* (Cumming, GA: Church Starting Network, 2001), 75-101; Joel Owens Rainey, "A Comparison of the Effectiveness of Selective Church Planting Models Measured by Conversion Growth and New Church Starts" (Ed.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005), 33-63; Tom A. Steffen, "Selecting a Church Planting Model that Works," *Missiology: An International Review* 22, no. 3 (1994), 361-376; and Tom Cheyney, "Planting Models Overview" (article prepared for the Church Planting Village website of the North American Mission Board) [on-line]; accessed 26 March 2007; available from www.churchplantingvillage.net/site/ c.IIJTKZPEJpH/b.76A9/Planting_Models_Overview.htm; Internet.

with what he called *idealtyp* (translated from German as "ideal type"). "Ideal type" is described

as "a special conceptual construct characterized by the fact that the items selected as its

components are the results of an analysis of a situation . . . to discover its *distinct and essential

features* [emphasis mine]."[6] The "ideal type" should be understood as follows:

> A type is always a pattern, a complex of associated factors which usually are represented by
> general concepts. Therefore, a type construct identifies particular cases as representing
> patterns . . . It should be viewed as an ideal experiment. . . . Knowledge of the results
> obtained by experiment helps us to find out what kind of factors might be operative in an
> actual situation which bring about results that differ from those observed in the
> experimental situation.[7]

Missiologist Harvie M. Conn also provides a useful definition: "Models are human,

conceptual arrangements of reality [emphasis mine], more than abstract theories and less than

empirical observations."[8] Analogies denote similarities and resemblances. As such, models are

constructed as a means of relating—by way of realistic similarities—the *conceptual* findings to

the real world.

How do models function? According to another sociologist, Abraham Kaplan, models

provide exemplifications of "meaningful contexts within which specific findings can be located

as specific details." In other words, models permit a point of reference to tangible and

observable findings. The observable findings are compiled into what we term "models" that

function as organized data, relevant characteristics, criticism or corroboration, imaginative

interpretation, and anticipated or expected outcomes.[9] These models are developed from reality,

and they are accessible—as a reference—to all interested and prospective church planters.

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[6]Theodore Abel, "Some Contributions of Max Weber to Sociological Theory," in *Max Weber: Critical Assessments 1*, ed. Peter Hamilton (London: Routledge, 1991), 313.

[7]Ibid., 314.

[8]Harvie M. Conn, "Samples: Linking Strategy to Model," in *Planting and Growing Urban Churches: from Dream to Reality*, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 195.

[9]Abraham Kaplan, *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science* (Louisville, KY: Chandler Publishing Company, 1964; reprint, London: Oxford, 1998), 268-272.

Functionally, models "do more than simply inform or explain reality; they reinforce, they stimulate, they shape. Through the model, the user can find imagination aroused, with resulting new ideas deepening the model even further."[10]

As relates to church planting, models function as templates, or patterns. Models offer the church planter or church planting organizers a reference from which to proceed. So, going forward, we should conceive of the following planting models as *type constructs, or pure patterns, to follow in actual church planting situations.* The church planting models present *specific details* and *essential features* of the ideal, or pure, church planting types that are available to *reinforce*, to *stimulate*, and to *shape* the efforts and planning strategies of church planters.

Four Church Planting Models

The ensuing four models consist of the ideal or pure types of the numerous church planting models. The scope of our present examination is tremendously limited by merely assessing four models. An exhaustive list of all known and named "models" would require greater effort and depth than our present purposes.[11] However, the vast majority of those named models do not exhibit "distinct and essential features" required for an ideal type. Rather, they are expressions that emerge from the four pure expressions.[12] The four models herein were selected based on their broad and overarching implementation as pure types—in both North

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[10]Conn, in *Planting and Growing Urban Churches*, 195.

[11]Tom Cheyney identifies as many as twenty-one different church planting models. Tom Cheyney "Twenty-One Church Planting Designs/Models for the Twenty-First Century" (article prepared for the Church Planting Village website of the North American Mission Board) [on-line]; accessed 28 March 2007; available from http://www.churchplantingvillage.net/site/c.iiJTKZPEJpH/b.758791/k.3CC6/21_Church_Planting_Designs.htm; Internet. Also, see note 5 above for additional resources on models.

[12]Cheyney, in his "Twenty-One Church Planting Models," includes the four "ideal" models discussed here (not necessarily under the same moniker we use herein): traditional, Purpose-Driven, cell, and house. However, he also recognizes seventeen additional models, which this paper rejects as "ideal" types. These additional models do not express the distinctiveness of the "ideal" models; rather, they emerge as *strategy models* or *variations* of the ideal types.

American and foreign contexts. As we examine these models, our intention is not to present a "how-to" list but rather to present basic essential characteristics.

Traditional Model

In the late seventies (1978-1979), Jack Redford, missionary leader with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, produced his well-known book entitled *Planting New Churches*. In this work, Redford advocates a practical church planting model for all local churches to plant additional local churches. Although Redford should not be viewed as thinking up this approach, he is the first person to describe its methodology in print.[13] Redford viewed church planting as a biblical and thus a necessary function for all congregations:

> Church planting is a *normal and natural function* [emphasis mine] for a church. If it does not take on this task, it has become rootbound. The early church set aside workers to go out and establish new churches. Modern congregations might copy the pattern and provide support and undergird the effort with prayer.
> Church planting is the task of the local church. This is based on Scripture. Also, it is a more practical, efficient, and effective way than any other system.[14]

Redford attempts to prepare willing churches—also called the sponsoring or mother churches—for multiplying daughter churches through a sequential, nine step model. We refer to Redford's model as "traditional" because his "process for starting new churches has been the basic strategy used in domestic church planting for decades."[15] Redford's distinctives include:

Select a Church Missions Committee. In most cases, sponsoring churches are ill-prepared for the task of church planting. For that reason, the formation of Redford's "missions committee" proves vital. This advisory team is charged with creating, within the mother church,

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[13]Rainey, "Church Planting Models," 34-35.

[14]Jack Redford, *Planting New Churches* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1978), 23.

[15]Bulley, "Program Based Church Planting" (article prepared for the Church Planting Village website of the North American Mission Board), page 19 [on-line]; accessed 31 March 2007; available from http://www.churchplantingvillage.net/atf/cf/%7B087EF6B4-D6E5-4BBF-BED1-7983D360F394%7D/Program_based_Church_Planting_edoc.pdf; Internet.

a conducive missions climate and a sense of need for new church plants. According to Redford, the team "generally carries through with responsibilities for launching the new mission and then continues to relate to the needs and problems of the new congregation as it grows."[16]

Select Areas for New Work. Redford shares a number of factors that affect the location for a church plant: unmet needs, outreach potential, growth potential, effective evangelical presence, socio-economic conditions, population data, and more. After amassing all relevant data, the advisory team then makes an intelligent decision regarding location.

Prepare the Sponsoring Church. According to Redford, "Every church needs motivating, educating, and training in order to be prepared for the church planting task."[17] From the beginning, the mission committee must provide exhaustive communication to the sponsoring church. The communication should offer specific plans and anticipated expectations.

Cultivate the Mission Field. Redford continues, saying, "The basic principle of community cultivation is simply to identify two things: community needs and community interests."[18] Put simply, cultivation analyzes the selected community and determines its ministry and activity needs.

The Mission Fellowship. Following cultivation, Redford advocates a time of drawing the people together into small groups. By calling this step "The Mission Fellowship," Redford demonstrates his antiquated terminology. What he is speaking of is what contemporary audiences understand as *core group* development.[19] The core group "exists to

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[16]Redford, *Planting New Churches*, 30.

[17]Ibid., 47.

[18]Ibid., 54.

[19]Calling attention to Redford's antiquated terminology is important. His word choice and language underscore the time period in which his book was written. In using this model in present-day settings, church planters do well to update Redford's terminology.

evangelize new converts and inactive Christians and to help them develop into effective, serving Christians who can be a nucleus of workers in a new church."[20]

The Mission Chapel. Once the small groups secure successful relationships, adequate finances, and spiritual leadership, the sponsoring church should initiate worship services. The established small groups converge as a congregation. Adequate and mature leadership—both from the new plant itself and the existing missions committee—are vital for this step to proceed.

The Financial Issues. Redford says, "Those responsible for the operation of the mission should carefully plan as they determine the financial needs, study the resources available, and manage the money."[21] During the early stages, the sponsoring church is the likely medium of financial decisions. Yet, churches must plan adequately for the future and autonomy.

Provide Facilities. A new church needs a place to worship. However, Redford quickly qualifies his thoughts on real estate saying, "Facilities are important, but they are to be used as tools and not revered as shrines."[22] Facilities must align with specific communities—the place of worship requires contextualization.

Constitute the New Church. The end result of the church planting process culminates in the constituting of the new church. Self-government is achieved when the new church attains spiritual maturity and actual stability. The new church becomes responsible for itself.

The principles underlying the traditional model have moved some church planters to call it "The Program-Based Model." The programming of the model permeates all nine steps, and the "church's programs are but a reflection of a church's understanding of its mission."[23] Ed

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[20]Ibid., 63.

[21]Ibid., 83.

[22]Ibid., 89.

[23]Ibid., 93.

Stetzer, missiologist and director of research for the North American Mission Board, appropriately assesses the traditional model articulated by Redford: "Redford's terminology . . . is a little dated, but the principles remain sound. Following this model will take some tweaking of terminology, but the idea is the same: your church needs to be organized and mobilized to get involved in church planting."[24]

Purpose-Driven Model

Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose-Driven Church* and founding pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Orange County, California, developed a five-part strategy for growing a church—worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, and discipleship.[25] These strategies were extracted from the Great Commandment (Matt 22:37-40) and the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). Warren establishes the significance of the five purposes when he says: "Healthy, lasting church growth is multidimensional. My definition of genuine church growth has five facets. Every church needs to grow *warmer* through fellowship, *deeper* through discipleship, *stronger* through worship, *broader* through ministry, and *larger* through evangelism."[26]

Thus far, the Purpose-Driven model looks as if its emphasis is on church growth for existing churches. But, what does the Purpose-Driven model contribute to church planting? It must be said that Warren's five purposes were discovered, developed, and implemented amid the planting of Saddleback Church, which was started Easter Sunday (1980). Warren's Purpose-Driven process is saturated throughout many church planting efforts. Church planters gravitate

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[24]Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 322.

[25]Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth without Compromising your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 103-107.

[26]Ibid., 48.

toward the Purpose-Driven model on account of its distinctive approaches, which include the following:[27]

The Five Biblical Purposes. Churches misplace influence and responsibility when they permit peripheral factors to drive their operation (like traditions, finances, programs, etc.). Instead, new churches are biblically charged to engage purposefully. According to Warren, "The starting point for every church should be the question, 'Why do we exist.' Until you know what your church exists for, you have no foundation, no motivation, and no direction for ministry."[28] A church plant must first define its purpose.

Culturally Relevant Worship. Both music and preaching must necessarily meet the target audience. Regarding music, Warren asserts: "[I]t is a crucial element that cannot be ignored." We must set aside personal preferences and "use the music that will best reach the unchurched for Christ."[29] Regarding preaching, Warren clearly desires to see preachers make the Bible accessible to unbelievers: "Both verse-by-verse (book) exposition and verse-with-verse (topical) exposition are necessary in order to grow a healthy church."[30]

Freedom from Buildings. Purpose-Driven church plants resist the temptation of relying on church buildings. Warren places great emphasis on a church looking beyond structural walls, "A building or lack of building should never be allowed to become a barrier to a wave of growth. People are far more important than property."[31] Reaching the community always precedes property.

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[27]The list of Purpose-Driven distinctives is adapted from a description provided by Dr. Daniel J. Morgan, Associate Professor of Missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Daniel J. Morgan, "Church Planting Model: Overview of Purpose-Driven Church Planting" (article prepared for the Church Planting Village website of the North American Mission Board), pages 4-8 [on-line]; accessed 1 April 2007; available from http://www.churchplantingvillage.net/atf/cf/%7B087EF6B4-D6E5-4BBF-BED1-7983D360F394%7D/Overview_ of_Purpose_Driven_Church_Planting_-_Dan_Morgan.pdf; Internet.

[28]Warren, *Purpose-Driven*, 81.

[29]Ibid., 292.

[30]Ibid., 296.

[31]Ibid., 46.

Targeted Evangelism. Naivety, in evangelism, abounds in too many congregations. A single church cannot reach every person. Multiple churches—with varying evangelistic emphases—must reach out together. The emphases to consider include geography, culture, demographics, spiritual maturity, social issues, et cetera. Individual plants need to determine their typical target, as Warren modeled at Saddleback Church when he identified "Saddleback Sam."[32]

Balanced Small Groups. "True assimilation," according to Allan Taylor, "is completely submerging others into the gospel ministry of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment."[33] One of the most difficult undertakings for any church is moving people from church attendance to active membership. In order to achieve any success, the small group ministry deserves great attention and planning. For genuine growth and development, the small groups need to be balanced around the five measurements of knowledge, perspective, conviction, skills, and character.[34]

Church Health over Church Growth. Warren returns repeatedly to the five purposes of the church when addressing a litany of topics. When it comes to the health of any church, whether newly planted or not, he especially focuses on those purposes. He talks about the five purposes of worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, and discipleship as the "solid foundation," and he avers, "This [laying down the foundation] is done by clarifying in the minds of everyone involved exactly why the church exists and what it is supposed to do." The purposes are vital because they build morale, reduce frustration, allow concentration, attract cooperation, and assist evaluation.[35]

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[32]Ibid., 169-172.

[33]Allan Taylor, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School: A Philosophical, Practical, & Passionate Approach to Sunday School* (Woodstock, GA: Riverstone Publishing Group, 2003), 170.

[34]For a detailed discussion on the five measurements of growth, see Warren, *Purpose-Driven*, 350-362.

[35]Ibid., 86-93.

Member Ministry. In the context of Purpose-Driven church plants, member ministry is essential. With a multitude of tasks and programs to manage, the participation of the laity is expected. Warren believes people want to contribute. In fact, he teaches that people are *made* for ministry. Pastors become equippers and the laity serve as ministers. Ministry is the expression of what Warren calls SHAPE (acronym for spiritual gifts, heart, ability, personality, and experiences).

A Paradigm, not a set Methodology. This distinctive is probably the most important as relates to church planting. Morgan writes, "The methods of Saddleback can be copied, and the closer the setting is to Saddleback, the better they will work. But when adopted as a way of viewing the church, it becomes a flexible and adaptable framework to guide any planter in any setting in how to develop a healthy, balanced church."[36] Morgan's analysis sounds strikingly familiar with our pursuit of the ideal type of church planting model.

The Purpose-Driven model enjoys wide influence in North America and abroad. The distinctives and essential are biblically focused and highly reproducible; thus, the appeal and implementation of this model is immeasurable in terms of indirect influence on new church starts.[37] However, the motives behind the Purpose-Driven model prove to be more than just indirect. Saddleback actively and directly practices church planting. An article in *Christianity Today* acknowledged the direct involvement of Saddleback in church planting: "Saddleback launched its first daughter church after its first year of existence; it has started at least one church every year since."[38] Saddleback is truly an ideal type for other planters to pattern new churches after.

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[36]Morgan, "Overview of Purpose-Driven," 8.

[37]The "indirect influence" spoken of here means that many churches—following the Purpose-Driven model—are planted without notifying Saddleback or receiving official recognition. As a highly reproducible model, many planter's utilize Warren's method, but there is no way to measure the actual pervasiveness of the Purpose-Driven model. In other words, any prospective church planter can simply secure a couple of *The Purpose-Driven Church* and implement its teachings.

[38]Tim Stafford, "A Regular Purpose-Driven Guy: Rick Warren's Genius is in Helping Pastors see the obvious," *Christianity Today* 46, no. 12, November 2002, 44.

The Cell Church Model

The emergence and growth of the cell church model in North America originated in response to the inadequacies of "large group" structures.[39] According to Ralph Neighbor,

> None of these models recognize the basic flaw in a church lifestyle built upon a "Program Base Design," . . . The term describes a structure of church life that is neither biblical nor efficient. It's used by nearly one hundred percent of all traditional churches today, whether they are Evangelical, Liturgical, Pentecostal, or "Fullness" in their theology.
> "Program Base Design" churches rightly acknowledge that the foundation of their church is Jesus Christ. What they build upon that foundation is incomplete.[40]

In the view of Neighbor, the "large group" structures, revealed in the traditional models of church planting, lack effectiveness and biblical foundations. As such, Neighbor writes *Where Do We Go From Here*. As a guidebook for the cell group church, there is little question as to what church planting model Neighbor supports. To allay any doubts about his intentions, Neighbor himself proclaims the need for a new Reformation: "The styles of church life so appropriate for the Reformation period are now impotent. The church is impotent. It cannot reproduce unless it first physically fathers new children. . . . It is time for the second Reformation."[41]

What will the second Reformation and its resultant reproducibility require? Neighbor answers this question in two words: *personal community*. He holds that our primary responsibility obligates us to elevate theology over methodology. Neighbor introduces and galvanizes his cell church approach on a biblical understanding of οἰκός.[42] Briefly, he explains οἰκός, translated from the Greek, as

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[39]Neighbor specifically names the "Megachurch," the "Praise Churches," and the "Restoration Churches" when discussing "large group" structures and "traditional" church models. Ralph W. Neighbor, Jr. *Where Do We Go from Here? A Guidebook for the Cell Group Church*, new and rev. ed. (Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 2000), 57.

[40]Ibid., 58.

[41]Ibid., 23.

[42]For a thorough understanding of οἰκός, see what Neighbor says in Chapters Five and, especially, Six of *Where Do We Go from Here?* (133-140).

the basic building block of society. It appears throughout the New Testament and refers to the *personal community*, which exists for us all. It is translated into English as house or household. . . . The οἰκός each of us lives within are not large. . . . Each of us has a primary group that includes some of our relatives and some of our friends who relate to us through work, recreation, hobbies, and neighbors.[43]

Neighbor goes on to say that people experience acceptance and security in their οἰκός.[44] Furthermore, our οἰκός, or cell group church, functions in community as the true Body of Christ, which signifies the joining together of all parts: "The members are united into a whole. There is freedom from diversity, a oneness of mind or feeling."[45]

Now that we understand the foundational principle of οἰκός for cell church planting, we now need to consider some of its characteristic expressions. Robert Logan links these characteristics to "something equivalent to reinventing the wheel."[46] These characteristics fly in the face of "traditional" church planting because they limit structure to small, intimate groups.

Cells, Congregation, and Celebration. These three "C" words summarize the cell church. *Cells* are called "Shepherd Groups" (discussed below). *Congregation* entails a regional gathering of multiple cells converging for sharing the Word, exhortation, training, praise sessions, prayer, and general fellowship. Congregations in no way replace the cells, but they do allow for involvement and *belonging* in a larger church. *Celebration* is an event, not a service. Celebration involves confluence of congregations for worship through music, Scripture reading, testimonies, and even baptisms.[47]

Shepherd Groups. The first "C," *cells*, proceeds from what Neighbor calls the Shepherd Group. Shepherd Groups provide a familiar place "where people are nurtured,

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[43]Ibid., 133-134.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., 59.

[46]Robert E. Logan, *Beyond Church Growth: Action Plans for Developing a Dynamic Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1989), 12.

[47]Neighbor, *Where Do We Go*, 224-227.

equipped to serve, and where members build up (edify) one another." These cells take the place of the programs offered with traditional churches. The primary aim of Shepherd Groups is edification through sharing and demonstrating the Gospel, not Bible study.[48] Logan describes the effort of cell groups in this way, "*Being* Good News is just as important as *sharing* the Good News."[49]

Cell Evangelism. The evangelistic focus centers on the here, not just the hereafter. The Gospel message is available after establishing personal relationships, where unbelievers observe and "comprehend the joy of a life in Christ." Unbelievers are reached through the personal communities of the οἰκός.[50] In addition to "οἰκός evangelism," Logan also uses the terms "friendship evangelism" and "incarnational evangelism."[51] Evangelism is performed through SHARE Groups.

SHARE Groups (Sharing His Answer Regarding Everything). There exists a "sub-cell" of the Shepherd Group, called the "Share Group." Share Groups form when three to four members of a Shepherd Group decide to meet for the purpose of reaching out to unchurched persons. The goal is to provide informal atmospheres of trust where individuals can work through their struggles.[52]

Developing a Penetration Strategy. Prior to planting a cell church, Neighbor insists on developing a clear strategy. Undergirded by prayer, the strategy involves gathering pertinent data (sociological, economic, infrastructural, demographic, etc), analyzing the data (dividing neighborhoods into categories based on age, income, ethnicity, etc), and selecting target neighborhoods (where existing cell members—with similar categorical qualities—penetrate the

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[48]Ibid., 218-221.

[49]Logan, *Beyond Church Growth*, 95.

[50]Neighbor, *Where Do We Go*, 283.

[51]Logan, *Beyond Church Growth*, 101.

[52]Neighbor, *Where Do We Go*, 294.

focal areas).[53] Similarly, Logan discusses the penetration strategy when he writes about cultural relevance: "Every successful church has a unique angle, something special to offer to a particular population segment."[54]

Equipping all the Ministers. Neighbor teaches, "The cell church trains with a purpose—to raise up people who can minister and lead others in holiness." Training in cell churches is likened to an apprenticeship, where mentors both teach and model truth. Discipleship takes place in three stages. First, new believers are brought to "an understanding of what it means to live in the kingdom of God" and live free of Satan. Second, mentors teach believers how "to walk in Spirit and Truth." Finally, believers are taught to reach the lost and to mentor these new converts.[55]

The cell church model, as an ideal type, offers a number of distinctive characteristics. The cell church model focuses on personal community (οἰκός). The personal community aspect of cell churches permits informal, one-on-one care for unbelievers. Additionally, it allows the unregenerate to observe the Christian life through the example of cell group members. There is a heightened degree of safety and security in cells. Advocates of cell church models, like Neighbor, believe the church growth movement negatively affected the effectiveness of churches.[56] As a result, cell church models are gaining traction by offering a "more" biblical and relational approach.

The House Church Model

The final type of church planting model is identified as the "house church" model.[57]

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[53]Ibid., 307-328.

[54]Logan, *Beyond Church Growth*, 71.

[55]Neighbor, *Where Do We Go*, 232-233.

[56]Ibid., 13-14.

[57]The movement does not want to be defined by location. They want to be defined by their emphasis. Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, 170.

Stetzer uses the term "Koinos Church" ("koinos" is used in Acts 2:44 where the believers possessed "all things in common") because many of the people intimately involved in this model do not like the "house church" terminology. Dick Scoggins defines the house church as "a group of people small enough to meet face-to-face, who have covenanted together with God and each other to be the church under the authority of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.[58]

The house church model is a relatively new yet growing phenomenon in the North American context, but it "continues to be the method God uses in most parts of the world." Its growth in popularity is infused by churches burdened by the "church growth" status quo. In an effort for revival, house church proponents package their model as genuinely biblical—adhering to New Testament views on community—and thoroughly reinvented for the postmodern, twenty-first century. Wolfgang Simson explains the motivation for house churches:

> Our cities look much more like Corinth than Jerusalem; many countries live in a postmodern and post-Christendom era. However, we can and should learn from New Testament principles, without copying all its time-specific and cultural procedures. We should take the New Testament quality of church very seriously, but develop structures, methodologies and procedures for our own time and cultures and people groups.[59]

In other words, principles supersede procedures. Church planters should not employ the exact procedures of the New Testament, but they should exegete and employ the principles therein.

What are the principles and characteristics embraced by house church planters? There is only one universal characteristic on which all house church advocates agree—house churches "do not need a building."[60] Otherwise, characteristic emphases vary. The following characteristics in no way represent a consensus; yet, they do provide a working list of the most

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[58]Dick Scoggins, "Planting House Churches in Networks" (article found on Dick Scoggins website), page 27 [on-line]; accessed 5 April 2007; available from http://dickscoggins.com/pdfs/church_planting_manual.pdf; Internet.

[59]Wolfgang Simson, *Houses that Change the World: the Return of the House Churches* (Waynesboro, GA; OM Publishing, 1998), 30.

[60]Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, 178.

common and observed characteristics within the house church model. The following

characteristics generally apply to house church planting:

> **Fundamentally Relational.** The value of community supersedes all aspects of house

churches. Although all church models support relationships, fellowship, and community, houses

churches seem to advance this emphasis more ardently. In the words of Scoggins,

> Because a house church is small, people develop meaningful relationships more easily. This
> encourages each person to take part in all the chores. There are no observers in a household.
> In a house church, not only do members observe and receive instruction but everyone
> actively participates in the ministry of the church. The church in the home fosters a high
> level of commitment. Participants either become significantly involved or they drop out
> quickly. The house church fosters mutual commitment. People minister to each other
> concerning everyday problems: family members examine how the Bible speaks to their
> everyday concerns. The Bible is our authority as we deal with real life situations in a caring
> family environment. Some of our meetings look like family "pow wows" around the dinner
> table where we discuss the day's problems and look for solutions.[61]

The relational nature of the house church inspires its advocates to articulate the centrality of

community. The ultimate purpose undergirding such communal structure is to extend the gospel.

In the words of Wolfgang Simson, "The church should be where the people are, in order to

saturate society with the glory of God. Each church should therefore be a 'shop-window for

God,' where people can see God and exclaim: 'See how they love each other.'"[62]

> **Multiplication.** In juxtaposing house churches with traditional churches, Simson says,

"House church is a model centered on multiplication and discipleship with huge growth potential,

because the 'cell' is the multipliable unit itself. Mentoring, multiplication and discipleship is the

heart of the concept."[63] Multiplication, described as churches planting churches planting

churches, exemplifies the mission of the church. In regard to the essential mission of all

churches, Stetzer states, "Success is measured in multiplication of churches and quality of

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[61]Scoggins, "Planting House Churches in Networks," 28-29.

[62]Simson, *Houses that Change*, 272.

[63]Ibid., 32.

disciples."[64] Multiplication is key within house church structure because "they [houses churches] can multiply literally endlessly, as long as they are provided with the essentials. Two of the essentials are biblical quality and leadership."[65] Houses churches form with the idea of multiplying quickly. In order to multiply quickly, house churches attempt to adhere to another characteristic: self-organization.

Self-Organizing Powers. According to Simson, all churches are obligated to function according to the structure delineated in Ephesians 4:11-13: "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." This is not simply a mandate on house churches, but house churches, in particular, appear to develop these "five-fold ministry" functions. Simson summarizes the five-fold ministry, saying,

> The apostle is the thumb. He gives stability, holds the counterbalance, and can literally touch all the other fingers. The prophet is the index finger. He points at you and says, 'You are the man!' The evangelist is the middle finger, the longest of all and sticking furthest out into the world. The ring-finger resembles the pastor/shepherd, caring for internal relationships. The little finger is the teacher: he can worm his way deep into any ear, and there share the truth of the gospel.[66]

Emerging from these five ministry areas, elders are recognized, and they provide leadership within house church structures. However, it must be noted that leadership is predominantly shared. The five-fold ministries, and a proper understanding of their indispensability, are vital for house church planting. They are areas for all laity, not merely ordained, professional, or called out ministers. Self-organizing in this way enhances multiplication and discipleship. "The bottom line of this process is the empowerment of exponentially more people to do the work of God. It is to find, nurture and release talented and supernaturally gifted people into their God-

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[64]Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, 165.

[65]Simson, *Houses that Change*, 108.

[66]Ibid., 112-113.

given calling in order to bring out God's best in them, and to do this systematically and strategically."[67]

In the house church model, the working structure is simplistic, which most basically describes its appeal. Fundamentally, house churches exist without a building. Beyond its insistence on what Stetzer calls "nonfacility,"[68] house churches generally exhibit a strong sense of community, an intentional penchant for multiplication, and a structural environment for self-organization. These characteristics—although not exhaustive—provide potential planters with a simple and reproducible model. As with all church plants, the house church model will certainly require contextualized fine-tuning, but, nevertheless, the house model offers an easy pattern to employ.

Distinguishing House Churches and Cell Churches

Briefly, we need to distinguish the house church from the cell church discussed above. While both models emerge in response to "large churches" and advocate intimacy and community, they are not the same (see Figure 1). In referring to the cell church, house church advocate Wolfgang Simson shares his opinion about the cell church movement, "[C]ould the unthinkable have happened, that the cell church has developed many excellent programmes to prevent itself becoming a programme-based design, and in so doing has become what it fears most—a programme-based design."[69] Conversely, Larry Kreider, promoter of the cell church model, draws the distinction thus: "Whereas cell groups usually function as a complementary ministry to the larger Sunday church meeting, a house church is the church itself—a complete little church with its own elders."[70] Moreover, Stetzer also distinguishes between the two types: "A home cell is a part of a larger church and supports the ministry of that church. . . . The

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[67]Ibid., 111.

[68]Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, 178.

[69]Simson, *Houses that Changed the World*, 131.

[70]Larry Kreider, *House to House* (Ephrata, PA: House To House Publications, 2001), 195.

Koinos church is different. Fundamental to its design is the idea that it will remain a Koinos church. As it grows, it will multiply into other homes, businesses, coffee shops, etc.—not enlarge."[71]

According to John S. Hammett, the main differences surface over organization (house churches exist completely autonomously while cell churches latch on to some type of cell plus congregation plus celebration structure), function (house churches are "intentionally holistic and fully ecclesial" in order to deepen relationships whereas cell churches are driven by multiplication and evangelism), and, lastly, theology (the house church seeks to manifest all the principles of the New Testament church while the cell church looks to convene into some semblance of an assembly).[72] As the growth of these two models becomes more and more realized, the church planting literature of the future will continue to distinguish the house church from the cell church.

Conclusion

In this paper, the distinctives of the four major church planting models—traditional, Purpose-Driven, cell, and house—have been examined. These church planting models, in particular, emerge from the multiplicity of recognized models that presently occupy church planting circles. In essence, these models emerge due to the reproducibility and simplicity of their "distinct and essential features." In the parlance of Weber, we have identified and examined the *idealtyp*—pure or ideal types.

Church planting models must never replace God's growth potential. Models are useful as a reference, but church planters do well to first understand and distinguish those characteristics that prove valuable from those characteristics that prove to be a hindrance. The models appraised above offer key characteristics that are transferable to multiple contexts.

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[71]Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, 174.

[72]John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundation for Baptist Churches: a Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 318-319.

However, the responsible church planter or planting organizers will ultimately rely upon God's leading. The characteristics of the ideal types of planting models assist, but God alone completes. Models are expressions of real life situations, and, as such, models legitimately *reinforce*, *stimulate*, and *shape* church planting efforts. Nevertheless, they should never replace the superintending acts of God. No matter what method, strategy, or model, we are participants in God's mission: "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." (Eph 3:20-21).

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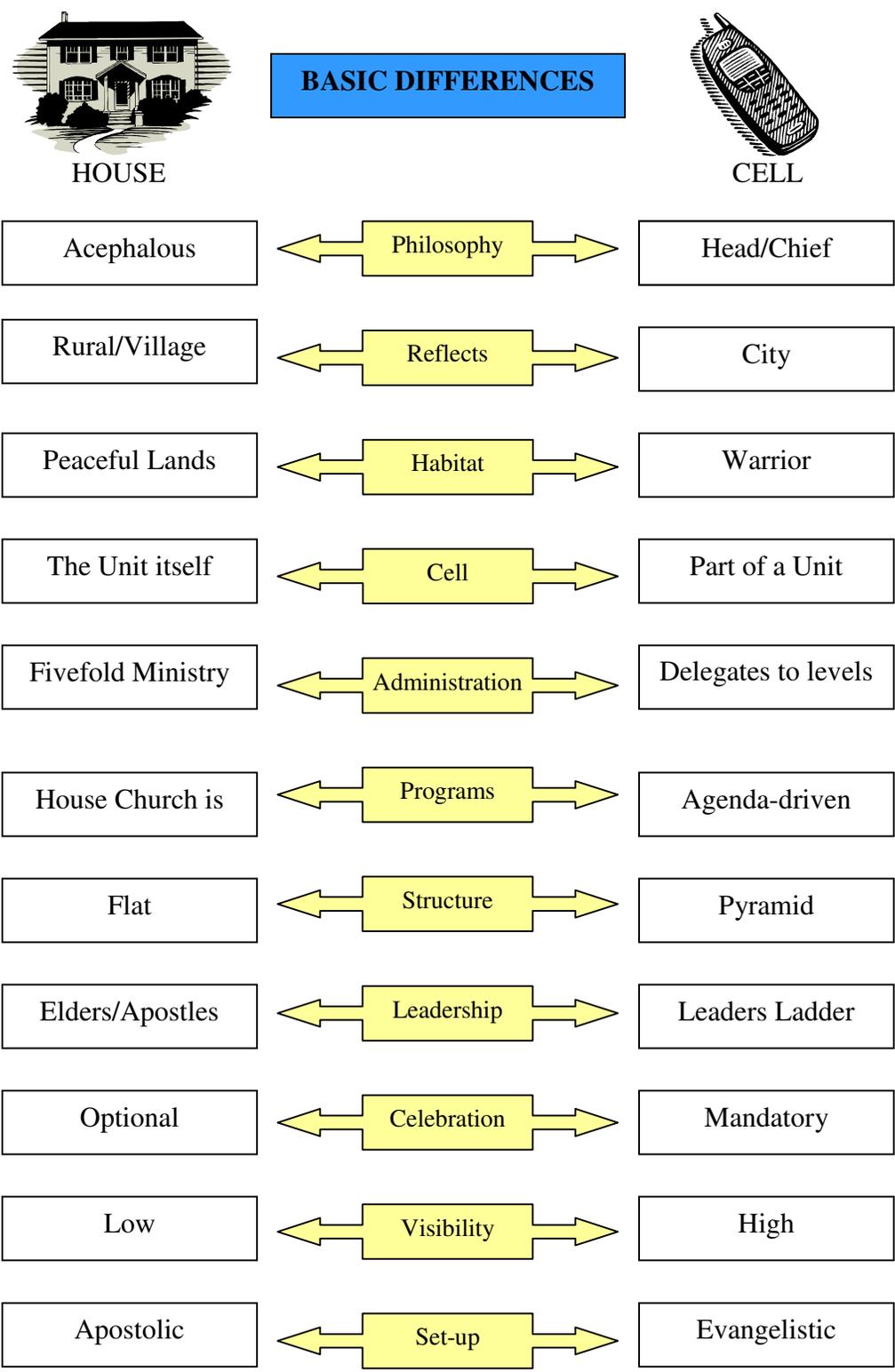

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BASIC DIFFERENCES

HOUSE		CELL
Acephalous	Philosophy	Head/Chief
Rural/Village	Reflects	City
Peaceful Lands	Habitat	Warrior
The Unit itself	Cell	Part of a Unit
Fivefold Ministry	Administration	Delegates to levels
House Church is	Programs	Agenda-driven
Flat	Structure	Pyramid
Elders/Apostles	Leadership	Leaders Ladder
Optional	Celebration	Mandatory
Low	Visibility	High
Apostolic	Set-up	Evangelistic

Figure 1. HOUSE and CELL Church Comparison[73]

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[73] This comparison chart was adapted from a list provided by Wolfgang Simson in *Houses that Change the World: the Return of the House Churches* (Waynesboro, GA; u7OM Publishing, 1998), 133-155.