

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS STRATEGY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH: A TRINITARIAN MODEL

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Introduction

Is every local church obligated to have a strategy to take the gospel cross cultures to those who have never heard? If so, what is the biblical foundation that shapes how churches go about accomplishing this goal? Is it the Great Commission? What about the models of Jesus and Paul? As helpful as these are for developing missions strategy, churches and mission organizations must recognize that the Trinity, as revealed in the Scriptures, is the foundational reality from which all missions strategy must be derived. This work argues specifically that missions strategy most faithful to this Trinitarian foundation must strive to proclaim and reflect the eternal love, order, unity, and mission of the divine community (Father, Son, and Spirit); a strategy that cannot be faithfully accomplished apart from healthy biblical community. By the end this work will demonstrate that sending missionary teams, or strategic kingdom communities (SKC's), from local churches is the most faithful strategy to the Trinitarian nature of God.

The Foundational Reality For Missions Strategy

The Immanent Trinity: Love, Order, and Unity

Timothy Tennent defines the immanent Trinity as that which, “refers to the inner life of the Trinity within God’s own self—the ontology or aseity of God, apart from His actions in relation to human history.” He goes on to define the economic Trinity as that which “refers to the

various ways the Triune God acts in history and interacts with humanity.”¹ Though each term will be examined individually, it must first be noted that they are inseparable. Scott Horrell is helpful when he says, “Scripture’s record of God’s revelation in human history (the economic Trinity) should inform and control how we think about the eternal relations of the Godhead (the immanent Trinity)... I presuppose that the economic Trinity as revealed in the Bible accurately represents to finite creation who and what God is but, at the same time, the economic Trinity is not all that is God.”² With this in mind it is now possible to begin a brief examination on the inner life of God.

From the Bible and from church history, one can discern that God exists as one eternal and divine essence who is united in nature and mission. Yet God is also three distinct persons (Father, Son, Spirit) with differing functions. Concerning the inner relationship of the eternal Godhead, it is important to first point out that the divine community is a community of sacrificial love. This love is evident in John 17:24 when Jesus, praying for His disciples says, “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”³ A mistake is often made when individuals suppose that God created the world and humanity because he needed something or someone to share His love with. Similarly God did not choose to redeem humanity because of any sense of despair or diminished glory. God would be just as loving had he chosen not to create or redeem humanity. Fred Sanders labels the truth that God created and

1. Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010), 12.

2. Scott Horrell, “In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Toward a Transcultural Trinitarian Worldview,” *globalmissiology.org* 3, no. 6 (April 2009): 14.

3. English Standard Version used unless otherwise noted.

redeemed freely as “double gratuity.” He simply loved us because he loved us. Sanders goes on to say,

The Trinity isn't for anything beyond itself, because the Trinity is God. God is God in this way: God's way of being God is to be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit simultaneously from all eternity, perfectly complete in a triune fellowship of love. God the Trinity is the end, the goal, the telos, and the omega. In himself and without any reference to a created world or the plan of salvation, God is that being who exists as the triune love of the Father for the Son in the unity of the Spirit. The good news of the gospel is that God has opened to us the dynamics of His triune life and given us a share in that fellowship.⁴

God has created and redeemed humanity so that His children might participate in the loving intimacy of the triune community for all of eternity. This knowledge and participation, John says earlier in chapter 17 is the essence of eternal life. In Christ humans get what they were created for; a loving God. This truth is beyond our ability to fully comprehend, yet those who are saved by the blood of Christ are presently living in this reality. Christians are called and assured that through the help of the Spirit, they can rightly love and commune with God even in the midst of this sin bent world.

Further examination of the immanent Trinity, from what is revealed in Scripture, shows that for all of eternity there has been a divine order pertaining to the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Bruce Ware gets it right when he states, “The most marked characteristic of the Trinitarian relationships is the presence of an eternal and inherent expression of authority and submission.”⁵ The Father is supreme in position and authority. He is the designer of creation, redemption, and restoration, working through the Son and the Spirit to accomplish His will. This is clear in Matthew's Holy Spirit inspired version of Jesus' model prayer (6:9&10). All things,

4. Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 70.

5. Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 137.

even His own life are subject to the will of the Father. Jesus' humble submission to the Father is an eternal submission which is seen most clearly when he "humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:8)." Before His death, resurrection, and ascension, the Son is shown submitting to the Spirit as the Spirit anointed Messiah. The Spirit embraces the backstage position of the Trinity. He eternally seeks to point away from himself to the Son, and through him to the Father.⁶

The astonishing thing for humanity is that, in Christ, humans are welcomed into the divine order. Jesus died not simply to make servants, which is alone a great honor, but to mysteriously transfer His children into the divine order. Some privileges are evident now, but many await the age to come. With invitation into this order, however, comes great responsibility to accurately reflect this order, in the God-ordained ways of Scripture, thus pointing the world to behold the image of the Trinity.

Finally, another key characteristic of the eternal Godhead is defined by the term *perichoresis*. This simply represents the mutual indwelling of each member of the Godhead in the other. Though each member of the Trinity acts freely, they always act in accordance to their unity in mind and will. While each of the divine persons is dependent on the other two to fulfill their ordained role in the working out of the divine will, they are all participating in the tasks of the other all the time. Theologians commonly refer to the Son and the Spirit as the "two hands of the Father" when it comes to the divine acts of creation, redemption, and restoration. Sanders explains this well when he comments,

The Son and the Spirit are always together in carrying out the work of the Father. They are always at work in an integrated mutually reinforcing way, fulfilling the Father's will in unison. Yet they are not interchangeable with each other, and they

6. Sanders, 103-4.

are not duplicating each other's work. Understanding them as the Father's two hands helps depict their unity (they both come from the Father for one purpose) and their distinctness (there are two hands, not one).⁷

So, in Christ, God opens up His life, the Trinitarian community of love and order, and invites us to join with Him as he accomplishes His will, or mission, in all of creation.

The God of Mission: The Economic Trinity

The triune communities' inner life of love, order, and unity would have remained a mystery to humanity if God were not missionary by nature. Before the term *missions* became used to describe the life of the church, or even an aspect of that life, its' first theological usage was to denote the Trinitarian relationships.⁸ From the triune community flowed the sovereign and missional act of the creation depicted in Genesis 1 and 2. God's revelation of Himself along with His presence among humanity in a harmonious world would be the great goal of creation. Evident right away in Scripture is that humanity did nothing to initiate this mission, because humanity had yet to be brought into existence. Therefore, mission can be understood as God's mission from the opening pages of the Bible. Mission is rooted in His divine initiative and character.⁹

In chapter 3 of Genesis, one learns of man's rebellion against God. Sin and death enter into humanity and God's divine revelation and presence becomes a terrifying curse rather than the intended blessing. Nevertheless, one sees the divine initiative and God's intent to continue His mission in 3:15 by promising to send an offspring that would destroy sin and death and crush Satan. Scripture from this point forward is about how God will choose to redeem and restore His

7. Ibid., 138.

7. John F. Hoffmeyer. "The Missional Trinity." *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40, no. 2 (June 2001) 108.

8. Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering a Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 62.

fallen creation, replacing the curse with blessing, and establishing His kingdom rule on earth as it is in heaven. If one skips to Revelation 21 and 22, it becomes clear that God will accomplish His mission. It is not in doubt. The church's concern then is not with the "if," but the "how" when it comes to God's mission.

To speak of God's mission without speaking of the Trinity is impossible. Love compels, unity wills, and order assigns the various roles necessary for accomplishing God's mission. As churches develop theology foundational to their engagement in international missions they must not forget, "Mission must begin with the identity of the one who loves His own proper life in reconciling the world to himself, and it is in His acting for the redemption of humanity in sending His Son and Spirit that we have to do with His being as God."¹⁰ The mission of the church, and all that she embarks on in fulfillment of that mission must be rooted in and influenced by the love, order, unity, and mission of the eternal Trinitarian community.

The Great Commission of God's Image Bearing Community

After a brief examination of the immanent and economic Trinity, it can be argued that the mission of the church is rooted in the very nature of God. Therefore, the Trinity must shape how the church goes about fulfilling its mission. God's love, order, unity and missionary nature are more faithfully reflected in and through Spirit-filled Christian community. This next section will demonstrate the centrality of Christian community in God's mission by examining the neglected Trinitarian context of the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:18-20 has served as virtually the sole biblical and theological foundation for the international missions strategies of Protestant churches and denominations since the time of

10. John Flett. *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 201.

William Carey. Did Jesus intend the Great Commission to be foundational? The Great Commission is an imperative. When it becomes the indicative behind missions strategy then that strategy tends to be centered upon the goal of finishing the task while being shaped primarily by pragmatism, finances, urgency, and statistics. The Great Commission is much more than Jesus' marching orders for His church, or a motivational speech and validation for missions. It is situated in a particular context, and this cannot be ignored. Christopher Wright is helpful again when he points out that the church's obedience to the Great Commission, and even the Great Commission itself is set within the reality of the Triune God and His mission. Behind the Great Commission is the Great Communication, which includes the revelation of the identity of God, His action in the world, and saving purposes for all creation.¹¹

The Trinitarian context of Matthew 28 is no subtle observation. Because of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection he has been given "all authority on heaven and earth" by the Father. The Son is on the verge of returning to the Father, while the Spirit will soon be sent to continue the work of the Son through the church. Wright believes, concerning context, that for Jesus the Old Testament provided the foundation of the Great Commission. He says,

The Great Commission was not something Jesus thought up as an afterthought-something for the disciples to be getting on with while he went back to heaven. It was not just something that rested solely on His own authority as the risen Lord (though, of course, it is fully warranted by that, as Matthew's version makes clear). It was the inevitable outcome of the story as the Scriptures told it-leading up to the Messiah and leading on to mission to the nations.¹²

11. Ibid., 58-60.

12. Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 39.

The echoes in the Great Commission of Genesis 1:26-28 are unavoidable. First, God declares, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Concerning this passage John Sailhamer comments,

Verse 27 stated twice that humankind was created in God’s image and a third time that humankind was created ‘male and female... The singular, ‘human being,’ is created as a plurality, “male and female.” In a similar way, the one God created humanity through an expression of His plurality. Following this clue, one may see the divine plurality expressed in verse 26 as an anticipation of the human plurality of the man and woman, thus casting human relationships between man and woman in the role of reflecting God’s own personal relationship with himself.”¹³

In other words, God created humanity in His image for the purpose of reflecting His triune nature throughout the whole creation. Wrapped up in this mission was authority (Gen. 1:26) over all other created things, and multiplication (Gen. 2:28). So God’s people from the very beginning were both commanded and invited to join God in His mission in community. The author of Genesis clearly sees their participation in this mission as vital to God’s blessing them and all of His creation through them. If God’s people are not participating in His mission then they cannot fully partake of God’s blessing, which is himself.

From the Fall forward humanity embarks on an anthropocentric mission to make a name for themselves (Gen. 11:4). Things appear hopeless until God acts to call out Abraham and promises to bring blessing and the restoration of humanities mission through His seed. Matthew makes it clear in Chapter One that Jesus is this Seed and that through him God’s people can again receive blessing and the divine invitation to participate in God’s mission. Matthew’s gospel, culminating in the Great Commission, makes it clear that through Jesus, dominion has been restored (Matt. 28:18) and the task to make image bearers of the Triune God is again a

¹³. John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 95.

reality (Matt. 28:19). The only difference is that now the mission will not fail because it is no longer the mission of Adam, but of Jesus, and He will not fail to complete the mission through His people. So in this sense the mission of God's people has never changed. There was just a time when God's people of faith were unable to fully participate in and accomplish it. Disciple making, is essentially remaking image bearers, and the divinely ordered way to make image bearers is in and through the expression of God's community in this present age- the church.

It is important to recognize that the people of God, whether in the Old Testament or the New were given the mission to exercise authority over creation and to be worshiping image bearers of God who made image bearers throughout the entire world. It is also important, however, to recognize that there is a uniqueness to the mission of God's people after the crucifixion, resurrection, and Pentecost. Another major theme in Matthew's gospel is that the coming of the kingdom of God has been inaugurated in a real way with the incarnation of Jesus. From the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6, one learns that the coming of the kingdom is simply the comprehensive reign of God and the hallowing, of God's name and nature, throughout the world. "At Pentecost the church was equipped (and empowered) to be the community of proclamation that uniquely embodies in word and deed the in-breaking of God's reign."¹⁴ In other words, because of the sending of the Spirit, the church has a greater ability than the Old Testament people of God to make worshipers by providing the world with an image of the triune community.

While the end of verse 19, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," is perhaps the most neglected part of the Great Commission; it is hardly insignificant. Spirit baptism at conversion is a Trinitarian action. "It is the gracious gift of God

14. Ibid., 95.

the Father through which believers are incorporated by faith into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and become part of the forgiven, gifted and sanctified community of the Holy Spirit, which is a sign of the forthcoming kingdom of God.”¹⁵ Baptism links the Trinity, church, and mission. Though marred by sin, the church is God’s ordained physical representation on earth of His rule and his triune nature. Baptism into the Trinitarian fellowship necessitates baptism into a community of believers for both sanctification and mission. Lesslie Newbigin writes,

The new reality that he introduced into history was to be continued through history in the form of a community, not in the form of a book. All this language bears witness to the fact that there is a society in which the life of the crucified and risen Jesus lives on and His mission continues, not only as the proclamation of the kingdom but as the presence of the kingdom in the form of death and resurrection. It is not simply the continuance of a teaching. It would be impossible to imagine the disciples of Buddha or of Muhammad using the phrase "in Buddha" or "in Muhammad." The presence of the kingdom, hidden and revealed in the cross of Jesus, is carried through history hidden and revealed in the life of that community which bears in its life the dying and rising of Jesus.¹⁶

So the church is by nature a community called together to faithfully reflect God’s triune nature. She gives the world a glimpse of His love, order, unity, and mission. At its core, the church is a missionary community birthed through the cross and filled with the Spirit to reflect the Trinity to the world so that disciples will be made among all the nations. In other words, the Great Commission moves forward only as God’s image is reflected within faithful biblical communities. Whatever our strategy may be for making disciples, it dare not be detached from the local church and community.

How the Trinity Challenges and Shapes Missions Strategy

15. Brian Edgar, *The Message of the Trinity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 194.

16. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 52.

From a brief study of Trinitarian theology an argument can be made that the local church, not mission agencies, must be central when it comes to reaching the nations. While the New Testament (Paul's missionary teams in Acts) at least allows for mission agencies to be formed to help churches fulfill their mission, many churches are guilty of outsourcing their obligation to the nations. What would happen if churches woke up tomorrow and not one mission agency existed? How capable would churches be to reach the nations?

One way churches and mission boards can partner together to ensure that local churches play a more direct role in international missions is to send out SKC's instead of individuals and non-strategic teams. SKC's are premobilized teams within a local church already demonstrating, to some degree, the triune love, order, unity, and mission. This means that the teams will mostly be formed before going overseas, and will fellowship, minister, and form strategy together before being deployed. Local churches will have to bear more of the weight of responsibility as they select, send, and shepherd these teams. This will require more sacrifice from churches and their leaders as well as great humility from mission agencies as they release these responsibilities back to the local church. Many SKC's will look different depending on where they are going and what they are doing. Daniel Sinclair points out that Paul's teams looked different in each of his missionary journeys. In the first, (Acts 13:4-14:28) he went out quickly with a good friend or ministry partner. In the second (Acts 15:39-18:22) he deliberately built a team over time to more strategically meet the needs of the vision God had given him. In his final missionary journey (18:23-21:17), after becoming a respected veteran, Paul established a base in Ephesus and networked with a wide variety of workers to reach a whole region with the Gospel.¹⁷ The number of people on a team, the strategy of the team, and the lifespan of the team may vary

17. Ibid., 50.

depending on the context they are entering into. Every SKC, however, must be birthed out of a local church because it is there where team members learn how to be Trinitarian image bearers. This final section will demonstrate some specific ways sending SKC's is more faithful to the church's Trinitarian missions mandate.

Strategic Kingdom Communities Faithfully Reflect and Proclaim Trinitarian Love

Love must be an integral component of missions strategy. Not just love for God and the lost but for one-another. John's gospel provides perhaps the most convincing evidence for not separating Christian love and fellowship from missions. Andreas Kostenberger believes that in the second half of his gospel, John emphasizes Jesus' vision of a loving, unified, suffering and witnessing community of believers through which he will continue to carry out his mission through the Spirit.¹⁸ Jesus' statement in John 13:35, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" is just as essential to the churches mission strategy as the Great Commission in Matthew. Disciples cannot be made apart from deep relationships in communities of believers reflecting the Christian virtues of love, patience, gentleness, compassion, kindness, forgiveness, blamelessness, forbearance, and hospitality- none of which can be practiced alone.

In SKC's, this love will be evident to the sending church and the leaders of the church before sending the team overseas. Teams learn to love one another in the context of a local church as they fellowship, minister, and formulate vision and strategy together. This means that as churches and missions agencies work together to send missionaries there cannot be any "Lone Rangers." Furthermore, strategy that emphasizes rapid multiplication and thinly spreads

18. Andreas Kostenberger and P.T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 203.

individuals among massive unreached people groups must be questioned when it emphasizes results to the detriment of an image bearing community. When it comes to the present strategy of the International Mission Board¹⁹, teams often refers to individuals, or families, that meet for the first time overseas. In many cases, the team members will live hours apart from one another and get together to discuss strategy and worship together sparingly. It is here that we must ask ourselves, is the current strategy recognizing the importance of visibly loving one another? This work is not arguing for a return to the days of mission compounds, but rather a balance between that strategy and one that often disregards biblical community altogether. Healthy biblical communities cannot be on mission with God while isolating themselves from the people and culture around them.

Strategic Kingdom Communities Faithfully Reflect and Proclaim Trinitarian Order

Just as love can only be imaged in community, divine order is no different. Like in the church, a SKC will reflect the functional order in the life of the Trinity and the subsequent authority and submission present in the Godhead. Order and roles in the church are ordained by God in Scripture and are contingent on calling, gifting, gender, and godliness. While a SKC is not a church and does not have the divinely ordained offices found in Scripture, it must have leadership and order. Minimally, a church planting team needs leaders who possess the Ephesians 4 giftings of apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, and teacher for long-term survival and sustainability.²⁰

19. This is the mission board of the Southern Baptist Convention- which is the convention my local church is affiliated with.

20. Paul R Gupta and Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Breaking Tradition to Accomplish Vision: Training Leaders for a Church Planting Movement*, 82-87.

In Acts 13 Paul and Barnabas were using their spiritual gifts in the local church before being affirmed and sent out by the leaders and the church body at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas appear to complement each other well. Paul was clearly a gifted church planter, evangelist, and theologian, while Barnabas was a gifted shepherd and teacher. Apostles and evangelists prevent a SKC from being inward focused while shepherds and teachers prevent the community from becoming spiritually dry from being driven by results. Presently those who are more like Paul go, while those more like Barnabas stay and lead churches at home. Without balance at home and overseas John Driver points out, “Christian communities may become ingrown and self-serving. While the missionary enterprise continues in the hands of Christian activists who seem to be more concerned for the discovery of more effective missionary strategies than in the authenticity of the message communicated. Meanwhile, the world awaits for a clear, uncompromised, undistorted word of salvation.”²¹

There are certainly numerous other gifts highlighted by Paul that would be extremely helpful for a SKC, but these are the ones that the church and mission agencies must work together to ensure that each team has. As these leaders humbly lead and other team members submit to their authority, the Trinity is reflected. Submission to another does not imply inferiority any more than the Son, by His obedience, is inferior to the Father.²²

Strategic Kingdom Communities Faithfully Reflect and Proclaim the Trinitarian Unity

Not only will a SKC reflect the Trinitarian love and order, but it will embody the oneness of the Father, Son, and Spirit as well. In John 17:20-23 Jesus prays, “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as

21. Harold Driver, *Images of the Church in Mission*. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1997), 217.

22. Scott Horrell, “The Self Giving Triune God, the Imago Dei and the Nature of the Local Church: An Ontology of Mission,” *www.globalmissiology.org* 1, no. 6 (October 2008): 10.

you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Enoch Wan has pointed out that this prayer of unity is not a prayer for unity for the sake of unity, rather a “unity intended to provide a convincing testimony, a believable platform upon which the gospel might be preached so that the world would believe that the Father sent the Son.”²³ He goes on to note, “Except for the Great Commission itself this is one of the strongest comments Jesus made on missions. He hinged the credibility of our message on our oneness in Him.”²⁴

The Trinity is reflected as Christians pursue holiness together and bear with one another through conflict and sin. One missionary noted that it is their strategy to separate couples whenever possible because couples never got along. Instead their elevated personal opinions, personal expectations, injured pride, judgmental spirits, jealous and competitive spirits, and critical spirits get in the way of the work.²⁵ What kind of gospel does this strategy model? Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote, “Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the disastrous is His isolation.”²⁶ The mission is not hindered, but greatly aided when missionaries are able, in community, to display confession, repentance, and forgiveness. A desire for unreached people groups to see small

23. Enoch Wan and Geoff Baggett, “A Theology of Partnership: Implications for Implementation by a Local Church,” *globalmissiology.org* 3, no. 7 (April 2010): 5-6.

24. *Ibid.*, 5-6.

25. *Ibid.*, 13-14.

26. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Faith in Community* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1954), 112.

believing communities who are united in worship, sanctification, and mission must influence missions strategy at every level.

Strategic Kingdom Communities Faithfully Reflect and Proclaim the Trinitarian Mission

SKC's simply reflect God, and the church's missionary nature as well as God's mission itself. They are extensions of local churches, which are able to focus the majority of their time and resources on cross-cultural church planting. While these communities clearly represent God's mission through the church in this age, they also provide an image of the future culmination of God's mission. Timothy Tennent states, "Missions is about extending the claims and realities of the new creation into the present order... Missions summons people not merely to "make a decision" to follow Christ but also to enter the community of the faithful, the church, and to live out the realities of the future in the present before the eyes of the world in real space-time history."²⁷ It is arrogant to presume that certain cultures will willingly listen to the Gospel message before they see the power of it manifested in and through a community of believers.

Conclusion

It has been the purpose of this work to challenge local churches and mission agencies to become more Trinitarian in the way they engage in cross-cultural church planting. This will require local churches to play a more foundational role in the international church planting process. It will require them to select, train, send, and shepherd SKC's. Although sending teams is not always the most economic and practical way to reach the nations, this work has argued that it is the model that most faithfully reflects the Triune nature of the God whose mission we have been called to join. The hope is that there will be just as much zeal for faithfully reflecting

²⁷ Tennent, 488.

Trinitarian love, order, unity, and mission as there is for finishing the task. In the end, the two can never be separated.

Appendix 1: A Description of The Ephesians 4 Gifts²⁸

pastor: One who shepherds, loves, protects, equips, and mentors the body.

teacher: One gifted in teaching the Scriptures to the body for growth and maturity.

apostle: A visionary Paul type leader who does not pastor a church. He brings others together to envision God's purpose and mission for the church, then to develop a strategy together to accomplish that vision. This is the primary way in which apostle and apostleship are used in the New Testament when not referring to the twelve Apostles.

George Miley adds, "My understanding is that God has designed apostolic leaders to go first in sequence. They are to blaze the trail, to pioneer, to initiate kingdom break-throughs into new areas, and to lay foundations on which others can build. When it comes to extending the reign of God on earth, they have to go first..."²⁹

evangelist: One who has great compassion for the lost that compels him to take the good news to the lost. One passionate and gifted at helping communities and individuals be reconciled to God. Often leading in prayer for the lost as well.

prophet: Those God has given to keep the church from compromise with the world and sin. Can speak biblical truth into a particular cultural context effectively.

27. Paul R Gupta and Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Breaking Tradition to Accomplish Vision: Training Leaders for a Church Planting Movement*, 82-87

29. George Miley, *Loving the Church and Blessing the Nations: Pursuing the Role of the Local Churches in Global Mission* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2003), 96.

Appendix 2: Was the Great Commission Given To the Local Church?

Some might argue that the Great Commission was given to the Universal Church and not the local church. If so then local churches could certainly outsource their obligation to take the Gospel to the nations. Several basic arguments against this view follow:

1: Who did Matthew write his Gospel to? Matthew wrote his gospel to local churches, and the same can be said of the other New Testament writers. Many scholars have suggested that the prominent church in Antioch of Syria, whose members included Jewish and Gentile Christians, was the intended audience of Matthew. However, it is also suggested that the Gospel circulated rapidly and widely to all the fledgling churches of his day. This suggests that the Great Commission, or any other missional text, was not given as a subjective command to the Universal Church.³⁰

2: The New Testament model reveals that ministry and mission were to take place in and through local, visible, communities of believers. John Hammett has noted that the word “ekklesia” is used 114 times in the New Testament. Of these, three refers to secular assembly, two refer to the people of God in the Old Testament, and 109 refer to the New Testament church. The vast majority of these 109 uses refer to the local, rather than the universal church.³¹ From the beginning this Spirit filled community in Acts 2, a local church, devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, fellowship, the Lord’s Supper, and prayer. Their love, order, unity, and mission were evident to the world around them, and through this witness the Lord added to their number daily. This restored kingdom community in Acts becomes a model for God’s mission for the world.

3. George Miley, in his work, *Loving the Church and Blessing the Nations* asks why it is reasonable to conceptualize (local) churches as centers that initiate church planting among unreached peoples?³² A few practical answers follow:

- Each member of the church can participate in mission. Each spiritual gift, natural talent, and vocational skill in the church are available to the mission.
- Christians who work in secular careers are naturally linked with opportunities among the target people group.
- Those who work cross culturally are connected with people gifted in pastoral care.
- Mission teams are mentored in the principles of church life. If new churches are to be the end products, to start them, let’s send people who have proven themselves in the whole range of church life.
- There is a base for developing a common ministry philosophy and establishing personal bonding. An effective team is made up of many people who happen to be in the same

30. *English Standard Version Study Bible*, 1816.

31. John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2005), 27-28.

32. Miley, 66.

location, which is made possible if a team comes from the same church. The members share relational bonds and a common sense of purpose. These take time and personal investment with one another to establish, but once they are present, they take teams through the rough spots that cause individuals on their own to stumble.

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