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Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

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Editorial

A year has passed since the first publication of the SATS PhD Compendium (volume 1, 2020) and now I gladly present you with the second volume (2021). This year's Compendium contains doctoral thesis summary articles from English, Spanish, and Portuguese PhD alumni.

I am mindful of the dedication and countless hours each of our doctoral students ploughed into their research and writing. It is no small feat to successfully complete a PhD thesis, and for this reason we joyfully celebrate all those students who have contributed not only to this volume but also to theological scholarship and more importantly, the kingdom of God. Such an achievement is certainly not without the faithfulness of God, his goodness and divine presence, and of course all the love and support from family and friends. The supervisors also played a tremendous role in skilfully guiding and mentoring these students. SATS is very grateful for your service and dedication. All this to say that while we celebrate our PhD students, we also celebrate those who stood by their side during their doctoral journey.

I would like to personally thank all those who contributed to the publication, namely, Michael Smith, Dr David Roldán, and Dr Eli Maga, who did the proofreading of the manuscript, and Marno Kirstein, who did an exceptional job in typesetting the document. I also thank all our doctoral alumni who submitted their articles; together they have produced a superb publication. Most importantly, a huge thank you to the Blessed Trinity for the kindness and generosity given to each of us at SATS, the supervisors, and our doctoral alumni.

Dr Robert Falconer

SATS Coordinator of MTh & PhD Programs

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A Theological Evaluation of Views on Children and Childhood in the Ethiopian Full Gospel Believers' Church (EFGBC), with Special Reference to the Gospel according to Luke

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Abstract

This is a summary of the research entitled, “A Theological Evaluation of Views on Children and Childhood in the Ethiopian Full Gospel Believers’ Church (EFGBC), with Special Reference to the Gospel according to Luke.”

The research question of the dissertation is, “What is the theological value and validity of common views about children and childhood among adult members of the EFGBC?” The research question was answered by using four tasks of a practical theology research process as identified by Osmer, namely the descriptive, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic tasks.

The descriptive task attempted to answer the question, “What is going on in relation to children in Ethiopian society and the EFGBC?” The methods used were a literature study and a qualitative empirical investigation involving focus group discussions. The literature study showed that children are not receiving sufficient protection, care, and due respect because of the presence of underlying negative views. An analysis of the focus group data also revealed that although parents, the church, and the community at large accept children as gifts from God and there are good intentions to nurture them, children are not treated as they should be.

The interpretive task was accomplished by addressing the question, “Why is it going on?” The reasons found in this investigation include lack of knowledge and awareness, traditional beliefs and practices, and insufficient integration of theology and practice. Other contributing factors include famine, war and conflict, corruption, and inappropriate reporting by some child-based organizations.

The normative task of this research was conducted through exegesis and analysis of selected passages from the Gospel of Luke concerning children. A key perspective revealed by the study was the example set by Jesus in welcoming and respecting children, caring for and ministering to them.

The pragmatic task was addressed by formulating strategies to enhance the views of adult members of the EFGBC about children, their life, and ministry, in the light of the theological perspectives based on our analysis of the Gospel of Luke’s view about children.

1. Introduction

In the Bible, world history, various traditions, the Ethiopian society, and the world, understandings of children and childhood vary, ranging from extremely positive to extremely negative.

In the constitution of Ethiopia, children's rights to health, education, and social protection seem to lean towards children being accepted as an important part of society. However, despite article 36 in the constitution of Ethiopia that supports the well-being of children and acceptance of the UN Convention on the rights of children, there are many indicators that children are neglected by the community and the government itself (UNICEF 2012, 31). For instance, abortion is allowed, as is the exploitation of cheap labor, child prostitution is tolerated and many children are exposed to addictions (Busuttil 2012, 2; EDP 2017, 30; CDTRC 2013, 24).

There are many negative sayings about children and harmful practices commonly used in many traditional communities of Africa. As a result, African children have rarely been given adequate attention; this seems to apply equally to Ethiopia. Moreover, there are many negative sayings about children and harmful practices commonly used in many traditional communities of Ethiopia (Fantaye 2009, 212; Malherbe 2011, 316). Even in the church children generally have a limited and inferior position, being excluded from key functions, which shows the church places little value upon children.

The EFGBC has been characterized as the leading Pentecostal church in Ethiopia (Eshete 2009, 145). The church accepts the principle that all people, without regard to age, color, social status, or ethnic and gender differences can be saved and serve the Lord based on the gifts God has bestowed on them (EFGBC Constitution 2010, Article 3.11). However, the practice of the church seems to be in contradiction to its position because

children do not get adequate care and attention.

It, therefore, appears that adult EFGBC members' views of children generally do not align with God's view of children as expressed in the Scriptures but rather with the negative views towards children present in Ethiopian culture. It is for these reasons that the author chose to research the status of children and views about childhood present among adult members of the EFGBC.

The choice of the EFGBC as the context for this research is motivated by the cultural background of the researcher as an Ethiopian citizen and a leader within the EFGBC and the desire to inspire the church to function according to God's view of children.

1.1 Problem statement

The problem that this research addressed was the lack of a clear theological evaluation and validation of the common views about children and childhood among adult members of the EFGBC.

1.2 Research question

The problem statement was reformulated in the following research question, "What is the theological value and validity of common views about children and childhood among adult members of the EFGBC?"

1.3 Sub questions and objectives

To address the research question, the study was structured as answers to the following sub-questions:

- What are the common views held about children and childhood in Ethiopian society? This section (Chapter 2) explores the common views regarding children and childhood in Ethiopian society.
- What are the common views about children and childhood among the adult members of the EFGBC? The objective of this sub-question is to describe the common views regarding children and childhood among the adult members of the EFGBC (Chapters 3, 4, and 5); and to explore why this is happening in Ethiopian society and the EFGBC (Chapter 5).
- Which perspectives from the Gospel of Luke can give insight into what views about children and childhood should be held by adult members of the EFGBC? The aim is to identify and formulate perspectives from the Gospel of Luke which can give insight into what views about children and childhood should be held by adult members of the EFGBC (Chapter 6).
- What recommendations can be formulated about ways of viewing children and childhood by adult members of the EFGBC that can lead to a better praxis with children in the EFGBC? The objective is to formulate recommendations about ways of viewing children and childhood by adult members of the EFGBC that can lead to a better praxis with children in the EFGBC (Chapter 7).

1.4 Delimitation

This study was delimited geographically to Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. It is also delimited by age. Only adults were participants in the empirical research. It excluded children in the research process because of the nature of the research question: What is the theological value and validity of common views about children and childhood among adult members of the EFGBC? It is also not possible within the scope of this research to study the whole Bible to formulate biblical principles on children and childhood. Thus, the investigation was delimited to the Gospel according to Luke, focusing on pericopes directly related to children.

1.5 Methodology

The research is a qualitative study using descriptive and exploratory methods helpful to examine a problem in practical theology studies. Evaluation, interviews, and narrations were also used.

Many practical theologians agree about the importance of four core aspects in their research, namely descriptive, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic (Smith 2012, 73–99). Osmer presented all four as tasks of practical theology research (Osmer 2008, 240–241). Osmer refers to these tasks as responses to the key questions, “What is going on?”, “Why is it going on?”, “What should be going on?”, and “What has to change?” Thus, the researcher chose to use these four tasks to focus on adult EFGBC members’ views about children and childhood, namely the descriptive (Chapters 2–5), the interpretive (latter part of Chapter 5), the normative (Chapter 6) and the pragmatic (Chapter 7).

1.5.1 Data collection method

For the primary data collection, the researcher used focus groups and interviews. The decision was made on the premise that it is an appropriate methodology for examining what people think and why they think the way they do about children, revealing their views, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and experiences (Kothari 2004, 5; Leedy 2001, 191).

Secondary data collected from existing research was used to provide background information, contributing to the constructive development of the research and ultimately helping others understand the results of the research (Kalof et al. 2008, 108).

1.5.2 Sample design

Out of the 65 EFGBC local churches present in Addis Ababa, only 10 churches were established before 2002 each with more than 1,000 members and a well-structured leadership. Out of the ten churches, five were selected, based on the interest their leaders showed in the project and the geographical location of the churches (North, South, East, West, and Central). This aligns with the description in the focus group compilation table in the thesis, which mentions the goal of accommodating diversity.

The sample consisted of four different semi-structured focus groups in each of the five churches that were selected for discussion. The different focus groups involved the following people: (1) leaders, (2) mentors, (3) parents, and (4) members who were not participating as leaders, parents, or mentors. Each focus group consisted of six to eight participants.

1.5.3 Pilot study

A pilot study was done before the formal data gathering process started. The purpose of the pilot study was to refine the research design and process and to identify possible practical challenges during the implementation of the research that could be addressed proactively. It also served as an orientation for the researcher on the research strategy.

1.5.4 Data analysis

Both thematic and comparative analyses were used to analyze the collected data. In thematic analysis, the data is analyzed by identified themes whereas, in comparative analysis, the data from different people are compared and contrasted (Dawson 2009, 115, 120). Therefore, both thematic and comparative analyses were used to be more effective in understanding the data collected.

2. Literature review

One of the methods used in this research was a review of relevant literature. This review played an important role in two facets of the research process. The intention was to use relevant resources, especially local stories and proverbs about children in Ethiopia that show the popular beliefs and practices of the people, as a knowledge base to guide the empirical research. Secondly, the literature review that included major technical commentaries, theological dictionaries, and other literature, played an important role

in interpreting the world as it should be, by formulating normative perspectives to guide the EFGBC in its ministry development.

To avoid duplication, the researcher used relevant literature at the appropriate points in the thesis. However, to show the contributions of key sources on children and childhood, attention was given to children in the Bible and the Christian tradition, on the African continent in general, and specifically within Ethiopia. It emerged that there is significant and growing scholarly interest in child-related issues, including studies from biblical and theological perspectives. However, no focused research has been conducted on the views of adult members of the EFGBC about children. Even where views by or about children have been explored, the researcher is not aware of any studies conducted from a biblical and theological perspective, as is the case with this study.

3. Value of the research

This research can be of value to academia, the ministry of the EFGBC, those involved in children's ministry, and parents in Ethiopia. It is hoped that this research will inspire other ministers to invest more in child-related ministries.

Chapters 2 through 7 record research conducted based on Osmer's four tasks, namely the descriptive, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic.

4. The Descriptive task: What is going on?

Chapters 2 through 5 attend to the descriptive task. Primary data was obtained through focus groups and secondary data through documents, books, articles, and magazines.

Chapter 2 describes the common views and attitudes regarding children and childhood present in Ethiopian society through gathering secondary data from various textual resources available. Statistics from various documents, reports about children at school, at home, and in the community, popular idioms and stories regarding children, government constitutions, and policies were the main sources consulted.

Key issues revealed in this data were:

- The statistical situation of children in Ethiopia shows that there is a high birth rate and at the same time a high mortality rate. The many orphans, street children, and abuse faced by children are also documented. This demonstrates that many children are not getting sufficient protection, care, and due respect.
- Reports about children show that children are not allowed to express their ideas freely. They also suffer in some areas of their lives through the way that adults treat them. Child-rearing practices in the family are mostly characterized by the authoritarian use of physical force. The thinking behind this is that the best way of leading, teaching, and disciplining children is physical punishment, even for minor mistakes. As a result, many children suffer due to the improper punishment they receive. Children with disabilities also suggest that because of their condition, their families often neglect them in terms of time together and money spent on them.

- Popular idioms and stories portray both positive and negative views of childhood. There is a general belief that children are gifts from God and worthy of care. On the other hand, many sayings portray children very negatively. The positive aspects are few and show that children are worthy of care, while the negative ones are more dominant and numerous. We can thus deduce that many children are not fully respected by their families and the community at large.
- Child abuse is evident, for example in sexual abuse and harmful traditional practices such as arranged marriage and female genital mutilation. Many reports in recent news and other media show that child abuse is prevalent in schools, neighborhoods, and communities.
- The government constitution confirms that the country has accepted the UN Convention on the Rights of Children. However, the rights of the child are not recognized fully nor implemented completely. They are rather applied partially and as a result, many children are exposed to abuse and suffering.

Chapter 3 explores common views about children and childhood in the EFGBC. This was done through a literature study of the history of the church and the status of children in the church as it comes to the fore in church documents. The data shows that although awareness about children is growing in the church, there is a lack of commitment of leaders and members of the church to children and children's ministry. This may be attributed to the presence of a low view of children among church leaders and members. The challenges the EFGBC faced from within and outside also contributed to the neglect of children.

Chapters 4 and 5 build further on the exploration of common views of children and childhood in the EFGBC as expressed in Chapter 3 by undertaking an empirical investigation. Chapter 4 focuses on the empirical research design and procedures used to collect information regarding common views about children and childhood among adult members of the EFGBC. Four groups participated in the focus groups: leaders, parents, mentors, and members who were not part of the first three groups.

The reasons for having four separate groups were: to obtain a more representative sample of the whole population; to avoid possible barriers and/or tension between leaders and mentors or parents; and to help participants express themselves freely.

The research started with a pilot study. It contained nine semi-structured open-ended discussion questions prepared in Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia, and the discussion was also in Amharic. In the pilot study, some key points that needed attention were identified: busy schedules and transportation (some participants faced delays because of transportation problems); time (some participants asked for additional time for the discussion); and facilitators (one of the two appointed facilitators did not attend due to a busy schedule). Moreover, some questions were not clear and thus demanded more clarification.

The Data Analysis process of each response of the participants was grouped under the following four categories:

- Category 1. Views – Beliefs, values, ideas, convictions, thoughts, and understanding of respondents about children.
- Category 2. Feelings – Facial expressions, gestures, and words reflect respondents' emotional expressions.
- Category 3. Attitudes – Words and sentences expressing respondents' perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of the church regarding children.

- Category 4. Experiences – knowledge, involvement, incidents, and practices of respondents.

The recorded responses and meaningful words, attitudes, and emotions were identified, noted, and coded according to the categories mentioned above. The exploration of explanations and reasons behind each response enriched the categories (Berg 2001, 111). The collected data were summarized as a report in terms of the nine open-ended questions.

Chapter 5 examines and analyzes the empirical data to help to answer the question: “What is going on in the EFGBC regarding the common views among adult members about children and childhood?”

Although this is a qualitative study, enumeration was used to quantify the data to give a better description of the participants’ views. All the responses were sorted and counted under the relevant themes to determine some measure of quantification. The following table shows the quantifying categories used.

Expressions used	Percentage of the respondents
Few	Less than 30 percent (< 39)
Some	31 percent – 50 percent (40–65)
Many	51 percent – 70 percent (66–91)
Majority/Most	71 – 90 percent (92–117)
Almost all	More than 90 percent (> 117)
All	100 percent (130)

After dealing with the participants’ responses following the nine questions, a comparison was made between their similarities and differences, which were then expressed in an integrated summary of the responses.

Key issues that came to the fore in this data were:

- All participants viewed children as gifts and blessings from God.
- Most of the respondents viewed children's behavior mostly negatively, as selfish, distracting, and disturbing. They viewed them as unable to differentiate between good and bad.
- Many adults misunderstood children and thus could not discern between playing and naughty disturbances by children. Some adults were judgmental towards them, even for minor mistakes. As a result, many adults did not treat children as they should.
- Almost all participants viewed the EFGBC as not being a welcoming and nurturing environment for children. Children are not valued and respected as human beings equal to adults. Although the EFGBC has started to attend to the needs of children, change happens very slowly and much more should be done.
- Children are not included in any ministry activities of the church, except once or twice a year during Christmas and Easter festivals, and even then they are only involved in the singing of one or two songs.
- There is a lack of well-qualified mentors for children's ministry, although the church assigned some ministers as mentors because they are willing to serve children.
- The Ethiopian Full Gospel Theological Seminary does not have child-related courses in its curriculum for the training of pastors.
- Many of the believing community showed a lack of interest concerning children and their attitudes towards children expressed a low view of children.
- Many participants said parents view children positively, although this is not always the case. Many parents show love and make

much effort to satisfy the needs of their children, especially their material needs. However, many parents discipline their children physically, which is mostly considered the best means to teach and guide children.

5. The Interpretive task: Why is it going on?

After examining and analyzing the empirical data, the researcher attended Osmer's second task which responds to the question, "Why is it going on?" The outcome shows that the main reasons why negative views are so dominant are lack of knowledge and harmful traditional practices (Rogers 2012, 15; Cuninghame et al. 2018, 62). For instance, children report experiences of corporal punishment from their parents and the community around them which may stem from a lack of knowledge on how to nurture their children (Cuninghame et al. 2018, 61). Harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage exist in many areas of Ethiopia.

War and conflicts, famine and drought, corruption, and inappropriate reports of some child-based organizations contributed greatly to the maltreatment of children in Ethiopia (Zewde 2013, 263). The reports of some child-focused organizations also contribute to the low view of children in Ethiopia. There are examples of exaggeration, focusing only on the negatives, the use of outdated information, and the conflation of child work and child labor. The latter ignores the clear differentiation contained in the International Labour Organization of the United Nations (Cuninghame et al. 2018, 83). Child work refers to tasks that are culturally acceptable and beneficial to children and their overall development. Child labor, on the other hand, is done for commercial purposes and affects children negatively. The conflict between articles in the Ethiopian

constitution regarding children's rights (article 32, 36) and family laws (article 258) that allows parents to take necessary disciplinary measures to ensure children's upbringing may also expose children to repeated physical abuse.

In the EFGBC, the insufficient integration of theology and practice contributes to the low view of children. This is seen in the marginalization and exclusion of children from ministry and the neglect of childcare, which contradict the church's claims regarding the equality of all people without regard to age, gender, and social status. The improper interpretation of Scriptures especially verses from the book of Proverbs, such as chapters 13:24; 22:15; 23:13–14; 29:15, 17, also fuels negative views of children. For example, physical punishment is seen as mandated in Scripture and as the best means to teach and guide children. As a result, if discipline is too harsh, children can become bitter and suffer physical and emotional damage.

On the other hand, there are many examples of good practices and improvements in childcare:

- Generally, Ethiopian parents and the community show good cultural values in nurturing their children.
- There is also a general reduction in traditional harmful practices, child labor, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and physical punishment.
- The government helps children by increasing domestic adoption, feeding programs, and providing teaching utilities for children in schools as alternative childcare options.
- Many churches and Christian organizations are taking the lead in child support projects.

Therefore, balance is needed between positive and negative views.

6. The Normative task: What ought to be going on?

Chapter 6 explored the question: “Which perspectives from the Gospel of Luke can give insight into what the views about children and childhood amongst the adult members of the EFGBC ought to be?”

This was done through exegesis and analysis of selected passages regarding children in the Gospel according to Luke, namely, chapters 1; 2; 8:40–56; 9:37–43; 9:46–8; 18:15–7. The status of children in the first-century world, Jewish culture, and the early church were discussed as background to the interpretation of the relevant texts. Some of the key perspectives revealed by the exegesis and analysis of the child-related texts are that children were considered the least in their community, and welcoming children, the ones with a very low status in the surrounding society, becomes welcoming Jesus and God.

The gospel according to Luke has much in common with those of Matthew and Mark. Its unique features include the infancy narratives and Jesus’s childhood life. Children are mentioned at several points in the ministry of Jesus, especially at the homes of several people (Luke 4:38–41, 10:38–42, 11:5–7, 19:1–10).

The narratives about the birth of the two babies, Anna and Simeon receiving the infant Jesus, and the teachers and elders receiving the 12-year-old Jesus at the temple all seem to reflect the general acceptance of children. They may also indicate that even babies (*brephe*) are important to God and are welcomed as valuable members of the community.

In the argument about who is the greatest among Jesus’s disciples, Matthew and Mark record that Jesus put a child *in the midst* of the disciples. However, Luke uniquely states that Jesus placed the child *by his side* (Luke 9:47) to show that Jesus identifies himself with children (Nolland 1993, 570; Berryman 2009, 14). Matthew highlights Jesus’s saying about becoming like

a child (Matt 18:3–4; cf. Luke 18:17) while all three Synoptics mention the welcoming of children (Matt 18:5; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48). Luke alone includes the statement about the least being the greatest (9:48). This illustrates Jesus's solidarity with the child and his expectation that the disciples should do the same (Hendriksen 2002, 519; France 2013, 172). Whereas Matthew and Mark present the child as a model or teaching aid, Luke focuses on the attitude and action of Jesus in including children in the company of the disciples.

In the account of Jesus receiving/blessing little children (Matt 19:13–5; Mark 10:13–6; Luke 18:15–7), Luke alone uses the word infants (*brephe*)—the other two have *paidia*, which is used for older children (Guthrie 1990, 65; Barton 1992, 103). The term *brephe* also appears in Luke's birth narratives (1:41, 44; 2:12, 16), bringing the total number of occurrences of this word in Luke to eight, with only three others in the rest of the New Testament (Acts 7:19; 2 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 2:2). Luke's positive reference to infants here stands in sharp contrast to the widespread disregard for children in the ancient world (cf. Constable 2005, 211; Utley 2011, 272).

Matthew says that Jesus placed his hands on the children and prayed for them (19:15) and according to Mark Jesus took the children into his arms, placed his hands on them, and blessed them (10:16). Luke says the babies were brought to Jesus so that He could touch them, which closely corresponds with Mark 10:13. This delicate gesture may be a further indication of Jesus welcoming children and demonstrating his love for them (cf. Blenkinsopp 1997, 66–67).

This shows that Luke presents Jesus as accepting, welcoming, and respecting children as valuable members of the community. Therefore, Jesus's disciples should:

- Welcome, respect, and include children as part of the faith community and all its ministries.
- Give care and show love for children, including infants.
- Accept that children are full human beings and valuable to God, and thus also valuable to every faith community.
- Welcome, respect, care for, and minister to children, even and especially when they are neglected or marginalized in society.

7. The Pragmatic task: How might we respond? / What ought to change?

Chapter 7 attended to the pragmatic task by answering the sub-research question: “What recommendations can be formulated about ways of viewing children and childhood by adult members of the EFGBC that can lead to a better praxis with children in the EFGBC?” These recommendations were formulated by bringing the research findings in Chapters 2, 3, and 5 into conversation with the normative findings in Chapter 6.

To be a friend and defender of children, adults should follow the teaching, attitudes, and practice of Jesus toward children and act accordingly. The Bible urges the church, families, and adults in general, to take seriously the needs of children, as Jesus has taught his disciples to welcome them (Luke 9:48). Thus, adults should identify their responsibility towards children by welcoming and respecting their emotions following Jesus’s attitude and teaching regarding children.

The following are guidelines for practical responses based on Jesus’s attitude and teaching regarding children as identified in the Gospel according to Luke.

- The church (EFGBC) should follow what our Lord Jesus has taught his disciples about welcoming children, for that honors

God and enhances the human dignity of children. The Gospel of Luke teaches that marginalized people, such as children, should be protected and given hope by including them in the kingdom of God. To welcome and love children may require that the EFGBC more directly challenge the social and political forces that marginalize them, so that children may be welcomed, loved, and protected, as Jesus showed through his teaching and ministry activities. Moreover, as Jesus was a model for his disciples in caring for the children, the leaders in the different local churches should realize that they also have the responsibility to be models for their church members on how to treat children.

- Parents are primarily responsible to welcome and nurture their children. Luke mentioned stories of a few parents who were compassionate and caring to their children (Luke 8:54–56; 9:42; 18:15–16). Therefore, today's parents should also give care and protection to their children, instead of neglecting them, because God wants parents to take care of every aspect of their children's lives just as Jesus welcomed and blessed them (Luke 18:15–17) and healed them (Luke 8:40–56; 9:37–43; 9:46–48; 18:15–17). By doing so, parents can contribute to the well-being of their children and motivate them to love Jesus.
- The believing community's social life is where children should enjoy being members of God's family. Thus, they must set an example by interacting with children in the way Jesus did according to the Gospel of Luke and help and protect them from sinning and from any abuses by adults. Perhaps, due to the influence of the surrounding traditional negative views of children some members of the EFGBC struggle, just like the disciples, to accept a more

positive and biblical view of children. However, Luke used the stories of children to remind all believing communities today of their responsibility to welcome children into their midst through giving care and hospitality to them and identifying with them.

Therefore, the church, parents, and the believing community at large should consider children as people who have the same value and dignity as adults and welcome them as full participants in the life of God's people, in worship services, and in all other ministries.

Certain strategies are recommended to influence and change common views about children amongst adult members of the EFGBC to come in line with Jesus's view of children as expressed in the Gospel of Luke, which can lead to a better praxis with children in the EFGBC.

Key possible strategies which were identified are:

- Creating awareness of children in the believing community based on the attitudes, teachings, and ministry of Jesus regarding children as expressed in the Gospel of Luke.
- Establishing a welcoming environment for children at the church compound and in the ministries of the church.
- Using every opportunity to advocate for the needs and value of children and their parents.
- Teaching the believing community through preaching and training to welcome, love, give care to, and protect children by following the model of Jesus in his interaction with children.
- Establishing and strengthening children's ministry, child evangelism, and children's worship programs so that children may be viewed and treated as equal to the adult members.
- Developing national strategies for the EFGBC to develop teaching resources, including child-related courses for the curriculum of

the Ethiopian Full Gospel Theological Seminary (EFGTS), that can influence and change common views of children present among the adult members of the EFGBC towards a more biblical view as expressed in the Gospel of Luke, and help local churches to enhance children's ministry.

8. Concluding remarks

This study explored, described, and evaluated common views about children and childhood among adult members of the EFGBC.

Some suggestions regarding the significance and contribution of the findings of this study:

- The low view of children among adult members of the EFGBC, and even more widely, may be addressed by accepting the high value of children expressed in the ministry and teachings of Jesus according to the Gospel of Luke and stated in this research.
- The study provides clear biblical perspectives on children and children's ministry which may be useful in teaching parents, mentors, and church leaders how to view, welcome, and minister to children in the faith community.
- The results of this study may enhance the theology of children in the Ethiopian context and the EFGBC in particular.
- Possible strategies to address and change common views about children among the adult members of the EFGBC to a more biblical view, and to establish and/or strengthen children's ministry were identified.

The study indicates that children's ministry can be enhanced if the believing community welcomes children by creating a loving and caring environment for them. The researcher believes that where the findings

of this research are implemented, beneficial changes in the attitudes and views of the believing community towards children and childhood will take place.

Hopefully, it will be used by the EFGBC to develop different strategies to address the low view of children amongst many adult members of the church and to enhance children's ministry in and through the church.

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Discipling Migrant Youth in an Informal Settlement in Agbogbloshie, Accra: Strategies for the Accra South Baptist Association

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Abstract

It is an undeniable fact that the local church is called to have a transforming influence on all areas of society and the youth. Any discipleship program that focuses on the youth is a step in the right direction. This dissertation is about migrant youth in the informal settlement in Agbogbloshie, Accra. The main question of the dissertation is, “What strategies could the Accra South Baptist Association develop and employ to disciple the migrant youth in the informal settlement in Agbogbloshie, Accra?” This research aims to develop a model that will help with reaching out to the migrant youth in squatter settlements as well as discipling them so that there will be a lasting transformation in their lives. To answer the question, a survey was

conducted. The findings of the survey revealed that the migrant youth had come to Accra from all parts of the country, mainly for economic reasons. Despite their predicament in the informal settlement, it was apparent that some of them were open to Christian programs; thus, the migrants are receptive to the gospel of Christ. Consequently, a discipling model or strategy based on the survey and the Bible was developed. The model aims to help the Church with the proclamation of the gospel to the migrant youth and to disciple them to become new persons in Christ Jesus.

1. Introduction

Human beings, by virtue of their agency, tend to migrate under difficult domestic circumstances. As such, it is a flexible and dynamic phenomenon that encompasses territorial mobility of people in the form of commuting and absence from home for periods ranging from days to several years (Thomas and Yeboah 2008) and this has been a common phenomenon for ages. Consequently, migration has been described as a socio-economic phenomenon resulting from other complex mechanisms involving social, psychological, economic, political, and institutional determinants (Ghana Statistical Service 2014). Thus, personal, social, and economic reasons are the main factors influencing migration.

Rural-urban migration is generally viewed as the most common type of migration in developing countries, including Ghana. However, other types of migration also exist, even if on a smaller scale. Figures from the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2000) indicate that 35% of migratory movement within the country is rural-urban, followed by 18% seasonal migration, 14% rural-rural, and 23% urban migration. It is for this reason that several studies on migration focus on rural-urban migration. Regarding the migratory movement, the Internal Organization for Migration (IOM)

indicated in 2020 that the major forms of migration are rural-rural, rural-urban, and urban-rural. In Ghana, it is generally known that the dominant regions of destination are Greater Accra (Accra), Ashanti (Kumasi), and Western Region (Sekondi-Takoradi), with the Upper East (Bolgatanga) as the least attractive destination.

The United Nations (1995) defines youth as persons between 15 and 24 years of age, and further states that it is a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adult independence. The term youth may vary from place to place, yet it was resolved in 1995 and adopted in the world program of action for youth in 2000 and beyond. The African Youth Charter defined youth as a person between the ages of 15 and 35 years at the 17th Ordinary African Union Summit held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in 2011 (African Union 2006). It is also believed that when referring to the youth, there are no defined boundaries.

Youth have certain characteristics that trigger the need for identity and the sense of trying new things. Young people are very adventurous and seek meaning in many things around them. They sometimes seem to be obstinate in their thinking and actions; some of their wrong decisions plunge them into trouble. Accordingly, many of the youth migrate to the city of their own volition without the knowledge of their parents, or the townfolks. Keehn (2012) states that the mental power of the youth at an early stage drives them to self-awareness and an increased desire for knowledge. They advance on intellectual fronts; they dream and use their imagination a lot; their reasoning power and judgment begin to grow, but they are limited by experience. It is this lack of experience and naivety that lands them in many troubles. Similar to the assertion of Keehn (2012), Laboi (2018) reiterates that the youth attempt to discover the world beyond them, have ambitious dreams, and look at the future as a vast field to be

conquered. They hold strong opinions; they are very curious and ask many questions.

One disturbing effect of rural-urban migration is the creation of slum areas within the urban areas. Consequently, the crime rate in the urban areas increases (Botchey 2018), and this is one of the reasons why people see rural-urban migration in a negative light. Also, Pickbourn (2018) contends that homeless and migrant youth living on their own in squatter settlements are often plagued with immoral behavior that puts them at huge health-related and associated kinds of risk. The behaviors referred to pertain mostly to sexual immorality, which includes rape and unprotected sex that culminates in unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia trachoma, lymph-granuloma, and HIV/AIDS, among others. Morton, Kugley, Epstein, and Farrell (2020) intimate that the living conditions of homeless youth may compel them to resort to violent behavior amongst themselves or become subject to the violent behavior of the general population. It is obvious that migrant youth manifest the same attitudes and actions in the squatter settlements, and this is representative of the current occurrences prevailing in the squatter settlement at Agbogbloshie in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

There have been various studies on discipleship in general. Some studies on discipleship have focused on creating a discipleship model. For example, there is the discipleship model that is known as the “Super Model” by Barna (2001, 124). This model focused on discipling youth who are already members of a local church. Another discipleship model is Ogden’s “Small Group Model” (Ogden 2007). Furthermore, Maxson (2009) developed a discipleship model called “Steps to Discipleship”. All three discipleship models, in a non-African context, focused on discipling converts who are already members of a church. This study, therefore, seeks to contextualize

a discipleship model, in an African setting, specifically Ghana, for migrant youth who live in a squatter settlement, by fusing together both findings from the survey conducted and the Bible. This study is important because it has as its point of departure a focus on developing a discipleship model that is tailor-made for the youth who are outside the church and live in squatter settlements. Surely, a discipleship model used for converts in the church will not meet all the needs of those outside the church. This study seeks to propose a discipleship model that is grounded in both research and the Scriptures. This will lead to the creation of a discipleship model that is holistic in nature and effective in squatter settlements. Put differently, the purpose of the study is to propose a discipling program that reflects the identity and situation of migrant youth at Agbogbloshie. Bearing in mind that the divine mandate of every contemporary church is the transformation of the lives of unbelievers in every nook and cranny of society, this study has relevance. The migrant youth, to the best of the knowledge of the researcher, have not been reached with the gospel of Christ. Therefore, a special approach—a discipleship model—will be sought to engage these migrant youth with the gospel of Christ and to disciple them in an effective way and manner that will lead to their transformation.

2. Osmer's Model of Practical Theology and Research Questions

The Osmer model of practical theology has been adapted for this research. The primary purpose of Osmer's methodology is to equip leaders to engage in practical theological interpretations of episodes, situations, and contexts that confront them in ministry (Smith 2010, 98–99). The Osmer model proposes a four-step model of theological reflection built around four tasks, each governed by a key question. Step one, named the descriptive-empirical task, asks the question “What is going on here?” It is meant

to describe the episode or situation at hand. In line with this study, the corresponding research question is “What is the current situation in the squatter settlement in Agboghloshie, Accra, in terms of the moral behavior of the youth?” The second step which is named the interpretive task asks the question, “Why is it going on?” The corresponding research question for the interpretive task is “What does the scripture and theology teach about migrants?” The third step, known as the normative task, asks the question “What ought to be going on?” This is meant to find out how the situation should have been as God intended it or how it is to be corrected through good practice. The answer to the question will serve as the answer to the third subsidiary research question, namely, “What does theology and ethical reflection teach about the moral behavior of the youth?” The fourth and final step is named the strategic or pragmatic task, and the relevant question is “How might we respond to this?” In this regard, a plan of action is to be formulated to solve the problem of a lack of proper discipleship of the migrant youth in Agboghloshie. The overall aim of this task is to answer the fourth subsidiary research question: “What strategies could the Accra Baptist Association employ to disciple the migrant youth in the squatter settlement in Agboghloshie, Accra?”

3. Research Results

This section corresponds to the first step in Osmer’s model of practical theology, namely the descriptive-empirical task (Osmer 2008, 31–17). As indicated earlier, the first research question is “What is the current situation in the squatter settlement in Agboghloshie, Accra in terms of the moral behavior of the youth?” The answer to this question is discussed in the subsequent sub-sections.

3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the migrant youth

This section will discuss the age, gender, educational, religious, and occupational background as well as the number of years spent in the squatter settlement. Out of the 40 respondents who were interviewed, those who fell between the ages of 15 and 16 form 30% of the respondents. Additionally, respondents who were captured within the 17–18 years of age bracket represent 40%, whereas those who fell in the age bracket of 19–20 years also represent 30%. Youths between the ages of 15 and 20 form the majority of those who migrated from other localities to the squatter settlement under scrutiny. This is partly because quite a number of migrant youths appear unsettled in terms of job security and economic empowerment. In their quest to augment their living standards, they subsequently migrate to the urban regions in search of greener pastures.

Regarding their gender, the male respondents make up 37.5% of the respondents whereas the females make up 62.5%. Awumbila (2006) states that in more recent times, a dominant migration stream from the north to south has been that of female adolescents, moving independently of family, largely towards the cities of Accra and Kumasi, and not always with positive outcomes for the migrants. Anarfi and Appiah (2009) also aver that in most instances, girls as young as eight years old found on the streets of Accra engage in the head porter business, which is popularly referred to as '*kayayeism*' in the Ghanaian indigenous parlance. Similar to the assertions of Awumbila (2006) and Anarfi and Appiah (2009), Kwankye et al. (2009) have indicated the growing preponderance of female migrants in cities. From the sub-Saharan African perspective, Bockerhoff and Eu (1993) assert that educated, young, unmarried women had higher tendencies to migrate into cities than their male counterparts.

Concerning the educational background of the migrant youth, those who had no education make up 37.5% (n=15) of the respondents. Additionally, the respondents who had either primary, junior high school, or secondary school education recorded percentage scores of 22.5% (n=9), 15.0% (n=6), and 25.0% (n=10), respectively. Awumbila, Owusu, and Teye (2014) assert that migrant youth in most developing economies in sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana, have no choice but to settle in shanty towns and slums where they lack access to superior quality education which then makes them extremely poor in the long run. The assertion by Awumbila et al. (2014) is corroborated by Ginsburg et al. (2014) who indicated that migrants lack economic opportunities in the urban centers, and as a result, they resort to temporal or less permanent settlement.

Regarding the religious background of the respondents, it was evident that those linked to Christianity, Islam, or African Traditional Religion have percentage scores of 25.0% (n=10), 37.5% (n=15), and 7.5% (n=3), respectively. Finally, about 30.0% (n=12) of the respondents who could not specify their religious affiliation, said they belonged to other religions apart from the main three religions indicated earlier. It was not surprising that the category with the highest number of people is “Muslim.” This is because many of the respondents hail from the Northern Region of Ghana which is predominantly known for the Islam religion. It was revealed that none of the respondents had been contacted or sought to be disciplined or converted by any known religious body at the time of the interview, which could be a possible opportunity for Christian conversions and discipleship. With respect to the number of years spent or the length of stay in the squatter settlement, it was evident that 37.5% (n=15) of the respondents had spent 8 years, 25.0% (n=10) had spent 5 years, and 15.0% (n=6) had spent 3 years. Likewise, 12.5% (n=5) of the respondents had spent 2 years while 10.0% (n=4)

had spent just a year in the settlement. The majority of the migrant youth have lived in the squatter settlement from five to eight years (n=25) without reverting to their original parental homes. This means that the squatter settlement is the new home to some of these migrants.

3.2 Respondents' involvement in hard drugs

Concerning the respondents' involvement in the use of illicit drugs, 87.5% (n=35) admitted to using drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, glue, and tramadol just to mention a few. Moreover, it was realized that some migrant youth take these drugs so they can have hallucinatory experiences and high levels of vigor. These drugs also help them to work extra hard without faltering while carrying their luggage from one locality to another. On the other hand, 12.5% (n=5) stated that they do not take illicit drugs because they were issued stern warnings by their parents before leaving for the city, about the crippling and adverse effects associated with their continual usage. These include reduced thinking capacity, extreme aggression, and hyperactive and reaction formation tendencies, among others. These findings buttress the assertions of Nada and Suliman (2010), who claim that drug addiction and alcohol abuse continue to rob contemporary youths of their aspirations for the future and subsequently render them useless to most developing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. The need to reach out to these youths and disciple them is one way of restoring their hope and aspirations for the future.

3.3 Respondents' involvement in alcohol

A quarter of the respondents claim they drink alcohol every day to keep themselves intoxicated so they do not feel the cold and mosquito bites

in the open spaces where they sleep at night. Additionally, some of the female migrants attributed their strong desire for liquor intake to the need for courage in order for them to engage in sex with men for the first time, and to forget the day-to-day problems they face in the squatter settlement including hardship, hunger, loneliness, meager daily income, fighting among friends, frustration, and inability to send remittances to siblings at home, and failing to meet the expectations for which they had migrated to the urban centers. This finding is corroborated by Owusu-Ansah and Addai (2013) who assert that migrant youth resort to alcoholism as a means of escape from their troubles or challenges.

3.4 Respondents' views on immoral activities

With regard to whether immoral activities are viewed as normal or abnormal, 20.0% of the respondents at Agbogbloshie squatter settlement were of the view that immoral activities are normal for any migrant youth. Some of the respondents were of the candid opinion that without engaging in some of these immoral activities, it would be extremely difficult for an individual to live in the squatter settlement at Agbogbloshie. Additionally, 80% of the respondents indicated that they were of the strongest conviction that living in the city, especially in the squatter settlement makes one lose one's moral values. They mentioned the fact that it is not normal to indulge in immoral tendencies. Immoral activities such as theft, pre-marital sex, prostitution, and usage of drugs are not activities that are widespread in rural communities but are rampant in the city. Quite a number of the respondents attested to the fact that they engaged in some form of immoral activities due to the influence of friends in the squatter settlement and have realized that it has been of no benefit to them. From the foregoing

discussion, the researcher thinks that migration has both positive and negative consequences for migrant youth.

3.5 Respondents' desire to participate in Christian youth activities

Respondents were asked whether they wished to take part in Christian youth activities. Concerning the desire to participate in Christian youth activities 70.0% (n=28) of the respondents answered in the affirmative, whereas the remaining 30.0% (n=12) declined. This meant that 70% of the respondents stated that they have a desire to participate in Christian youth activities if organized in the squatter settlement. The reason given was that they have been contacted and asked about their lifestyle and plight in the slum and hope to be helped to change their behavior since it is not what they were used to before coming to the city. It was, therefore, evident that some of them indulge in immoral life practices due to peer influence, coupled with the material benefits they stand to gain. A significant number of the respondents were of the view that those who come to the squatter settlement to invite them to church have no personal interaction with them. They are often afraid to attend such religious gatherings because they want to conceal their identity, image, and integrity.

4. Causes of Migration among the Migrant Youth

This section corresponds to the second step in Osmer's model of practical theology, namely the interpretive task (Osmer 2008, 79–128). In other words, this section discusses the reasons for the migration. The reasons for migration are grouped under economic, social, and cultural factors. These factors are discussed next.

4.1 Desire for greener pastures

Emphatically, the rural-urban movement, as it is currently, has experienced a meteoric rise owing to individuals' hankering for greener pastures. The non-rural regions more often than not provide a wealth of jobs that offer relatively enhanced remuneration packages compared to farming or fishing in the non-urban regions of Ghana. Services such as electrical power, pipe-borne water, and job acquisition privileges, as well as entertainment, motivate the adolescents, who are attracted to such facilities, to move to the urban regions to improve their living standards. Some come to learn new entrepreneurial skills, such as shoemaking, tailoring, catering, construction, painting, bread-making, and others; they then return to their homes of origin to set themselves up in business

4.2 Arranged marriages

Masanja (2012,) argues that within African societies, traditions such as arranged marriages can sometimes be a causative factor in migration. In several African societies, an older man may either enter an agreement with a young girl's parents to marry her once she attains the legal age of marriage or betroths her to his son. This usually takes place when a cordial relationship exists between the two families or when the man believes that the girl is from a noble family. In certain scenarios, the young girl may be given to her prospective mother-in-law to nurture her so that she grows up knowing how things are supposed to be done in her future matrimonial home. When the girl attains puberty, the man then decides when she should start married life. As intimated by Adu (1999), when the time arrives to determine her bride price, the expenses that were incurred for her during her childhood are taken into consideration. If the girl is still

a student when her prospective husband decides she is ready for marriage, she may be withdrawn from school. When that happens, the girl is unable to complete her formal education. To prevent such a thing from happening, some parents and guardians strive to protect their girls. This means that the cultural practices of some people are a contributing factor to the migration of young girls, especially from northern Ghana to the south. These factors can be described as non-economic factors that push young girls to flee their original homes to start life on their own in a different place.

Adu (1999) further argues that in parts of northern Ghana, some girls run away with their male lovers to undisclosed locations to escape arranged marriages. When that happens, the lover is required to refund all the money a suitor may have spent on the girl right from the onset. If the man who eloped with the girl is unable to refund the money, the girl is forced to return and live with the suitor back home. This sometimes leads to unpleasant consequences. Such unpleasant consequences may come from the girl's family or the man with whom the family of the girl has arranged the marriage. Since such girls anticipate no protection from their parents, they, therefore, run away to urban cities. Some schools of thought are that often such girls end up as '*Kayaye*' (female porters) or prostitutes because they lack the requisite skills to secure lucrative jobs. To make sure their family members and prospective husbands do not find them they always hide from familiar faces. This is because others known to them may report the whereabouts of these girls to their parents.

4.3 Female genital mutilation

In other societies, female genital mutilation (FGM) is a predictor of migration. Societies that practice this hold the view that it is in the interest of a woman to undergo FGM to be accepted, even though it is a painful and

dangerous procedure. Those who do not survive it are said to have either been witches or bewitched or lost their virginity by the time of the operation. Concerning those who survive it, a celebration consisting of feasting and merry-making is assured and they are given gifts, including expensive jewelry by relatives and well-wishers. The ultimate rationale behind female circumcision, according to Adu (1999), is to suppress a woman's sexuality and to make her docile and faithful to her husband. Young women who have been enlightened through education run away from their communities to urban centers to escape having to go through such a heinous practice. The northern regions of Ghana are known for the practice of FGM even though there have been several educational campaigns to discourage the practice. It is, therefore, not surprising that almost all the *kayaye* (female head porters) hail from the northern regions of Ghana. Some of them probably migrated to the south to escape this cultural practice that is known to be detrimental to the health of young females.

5. Theological Reflection on Youth and their Behavior

This section corresponds to the third step in Osmer's model of practical theology, namely the normative task (Osmer 2008, 129–174). As indicated earlier, the normative task is meant to find out how the situation should have been as God intended it, or how it is to be corrected through good practice. According to Dean (2001, 15), we are entering “a theological turn in youth ministry.” She describes it as an era in which theological reflection is becoming the norm in youth ministry instead of the exception (cf. Borgman 2013, 7). The Scriptures represent youth as a time of both danger and challenge. Moses said that “the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth” (Gen 8:21), and Paul admonished Timothy to “flee youthful lusts” (2 Tim 2:22). Youngsters have energy; they are daring, and their hearts

are filled with visions of the future. Indeed, they can be a most valuable component in the service of God. Solomon, who wasted much of his life in folly, perhaps thought better of the matter in his declining days. He contended: “Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say ‘I find no pleasure in them’” (Eccl 12:1). Again, he says, “Young men, be happy while you are still young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment” (Eccl 11:9). This biblical text implies that youth is a time of experiential living, in which many good and bad decisions are made including all kinds of vices, yet the youth need to bear in mind that for every way of living there is a day of reckoning to God.

Again, Paul would say to Timothy, “Let no men despise your youth; but you be an example to them that believe, in word, in the manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12). It is a fact that our youth can be quite impetuous and sometimes a bit foolish; they are, nonetheless, a wonderful resource in the kingdom of heaven. The Bible is replete with examples of how God has used young people in some of the most vital roles in the unfolding of his wonderful plan of redemption. Ministry to and with young people has limitless biblical precedent. Throughout the Bible, it is evident that young people were used by God, including such important figures as Joseph, Josiah, Esther, Jeremiah, Mary, John Mark, and Timothy. God works in and through young people. If the church is to do what God is doing, the church must make it a priority to draw youth into God’s Kingdom and train them up as disciples. The Old Testament is clear in its promptings to make sure that young people are taught the principles of God. God called Israel to teach their young to obey and revere the Lord. Deuteronomy 6 indicates

that great effort should be taken to ensure that the word of God is passed on to the next generation. The Psalms repeatedly declare that God should be made known to future generations (Ps 33:11; 100:5; 102:12). Joel 1:3 briefly summarizes the mandate to pass God's prophetic word on to younger generations.

It can be seen that the OT is clear in its admonishment to make sure that children are taught the precepts of God. Did the OT writers envision youth ministry as we practice it today? Probably not. Yet the message is clear that God expects and demands that a specific effort be made to make him known in subsequent generations. The church must put this principle into practice so that future generations will know God, his truth, and goodness and find redemption and healing in him. Evangelistic outreach to youth in any sphere of life requires ministry and communication across sub-cultural barriers.

6. Strategies for Discipling Migrant Youth in the Squatter Settlement

This section corresponds to the last step in Osmer's model of practical theology, namely the pragmatic task (Osmer 2008, 175–218). Here, the strategies that could be adopted to disciple migrant youth are discussed. The various steps in the proposed biblical model for discipling migrants are explained next.

6.1 Church preparation

This first step mainly has to do with informing members of a local church about the migrant youth who live in squatter settlements. This means knowledge about the plight of the migrant youth must be shared with a

congregation. The need to also reach out to the youth must also be made known. Lastly, a youth committee must be set up to discuss the outreach as well as document the outcome of outreaches.

6.2 Community entry skills

The second step is training church volunteers or church workers for migrant youth ministry in community entry skills. According to Amu et al. (2020) community entry refers to the process of initiating, nurturing, and sustaining a desirable relationship to secure and sustain a community's interest in all aspects of a program. It involves recognizing the community, its leadership, and people, and adopting the most appropriate process for a meeting, interacting, and working with them. One must be tactful and sensitive when one wants to enter a new community.

6.3 Building relationship

Reaching this mission field for Christ must begin with a proper understanding of the gospel, which is the visible demonstration of God's love (Luke 7:18–23). How do we strategically put the gospel into loving action among these young migrants? To minister to the migrant youth, one must be aware of their situation, their frustration, and their hopes. This will call for regular contacts and strong relationships to work among them as in the case of Christ.

6.4 Group formation

Before any group of people visits the squatter settlement, the “squatter lords” are contacted first. These are the local leaders in the settlement. They then inform the migrant youth about the group's mission. Migrant youth

who are interested in the mission are informed of a time and venue for meeting the volunteer preachers or evangelists. Those who turn up for such meetings are then put into various groups. These groups are maintained. The volunteers begin by introducing themselves and telling the migrant youth of their mission, the church, and the opportunities available for them to access. After this, the community-entering skills that include contact-making, relationship-building, conducting a needs assessment, information-gathering, gospel presentation, church placement issues, and ministering to the needs of the squatters are discussed. Continuous visits by the volunteers will strengthen the relationship between the volunteers and the squatter migrants.

6.5 Evangelism

Effective evangelism to migrant youth in squatter settlements begins with the training of an outreach team. It is wise to choose leaders who have personal experiences that directly relate to the target group. After training the group, they can begin to reach out to the migrant youth who are the targeted group. The outreach team could learn about the history and culture and seek to build trusting relationships with people there. If they are unable to distinguish between the culture of the migrant youth and arrive just as people meeting social needs, then their efforts will be severely handicapped. Urban minorities tend to be more relationship-oriented; if they don't trust the outreach team, they won't trust their ideas. To reach out to the young migrants in the squatter settlement, the outreach team would need to speak their language or employ those who can speak their local dialect, and mingle with them; in this way, they can connect to the migrant youth who are receptive to the gospel. The outreach team needs to accomplish two primary objectives: identify the potential target groups and

evaluate which target group could be reached most effectively through the church's resources.

6.6 Discipleship

Jesus underscored the importance of discipleship when he asserted that “all authority has been given to me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:18–20). Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit, who resides in the hearts of Christians and helps them to overcome the pressures and trials of this present life and become more and more Christlike. This process requires believers to respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting to examine their thoughts, words, and actions and compare them with the Word of God. The process of making disciples includes “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” It includes teaching biblical precepts, while modeling and guiding others, in this case, the migrant youth, toward living righteously as followers of Jesus Christ. This should be a cyclical process—meaning, once discipled, the disciple needs to disciple others, and so on.

6.7 Pastoral care

According to Ralph Underwood (1993, 16), the ministry of pastoral care “consists of service done by representative Christian persons of other religious communities, persons, directed towards the celebrating, healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of persons whose joy and troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings.” He further stated the

functions of pastoral care, which apply to working with migrant youth in squatter settlements, include healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, and nurturing. This means that anyone offering pastoral care should be concerned about healing broken-hearted people, sustaining their faith through encouragement, guiding them in the circumstances of life, reconciling them, as well as nurturing them by feeding them with the Word of God. The goal of pastoral care is to minister to the lonely, the sick, the dying, marginalized, the poor, the homeless, the orphan, and migrants. Pastoral care also includes providing comfort and care to those suffering from illness, losses, and burdens as well as increasing awareness of the relationship between a person's faith and their physical and emotional circumstance. It is for this reason that young migrants need pastoral care in the process of their transformation.

6.8 Worship and prayer

Transforming young migrants begins with worship, as they connect their soul with an invisible being who they can trust and depend on and to whom they can turn all their predicaments and aspirations and receive rest in their spirits. The Bible emphasizes that “without faith it is impossible to please God, anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists” (Heb 11:6). The act of worship points the youth to an invisible being that they can befriend and grow on from there. Furthermore, the migrants must be taught the importance of prayer. When the migrant youth receive Christ into their hearts, they become children of God and have the privilege of talking to him in prayer at any time. The Christian life is a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Best of all, it is a relationship that will last for all eternity. For this reason, the migrant youth will be taught what prayer is and how they can communicate their problem to God in prayer. Many

young migrants have no one to share their problems with. Teaching them how to pray will be a big relief to them.

6.9 Social support

In the view of the researcher, the effective migrant ministry is incarnational; in other words, “the word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14). Jesus did not commune with people in the morning, pass out tracts, and head back to heaven at night. Jesus identifies with our sufferings. Thus, since he faced the same temptations that we do, his teachings are trustworthy. Urban squatters are opened to the gospel to the extent that they trust the messenger, so people who have made the urban community their home do the most effective outreach. Perkins (1994) makes this suggestion a strategy of evangelizing to the urban dweller, and this principle would be very useful among the squatter settlers at Agbogbloshie. It all boils down to building stronger relationships with the individuals and then witnessing to them so that their needs can be met. This means working alongside the migrant youth by creating educational opportunities that make the youth job-ready or making home ownership broadly available. As the church focuses on its needs, it creates opportunities to share the gospel.

6.10 Recreation

Consequently, there cannot be a youth group without an effective recreational program. Recreation is a vital aspect of youth development; moreover, much can be gained by providing healthy and instructive recreation for young people. Recreation is important. The principal objectives for recreation are not merely to occupy them but to also provide a wholesome change of activity that will lead to fellowship, healthful activity,

and intellectual stimulation. In addition, recreation affords refreshment for the mind and body and provides resilience for day-to-day living in the slum. Young migrants can engage in recreational activities such as football, table tennis, swimming, tug of war, spoon racing, sack racing, weightlifting, and high jumping.

6.II Church integration

Owusu (2013) attests to the fact that effective migrant ministry requires well-scheduled visits by volunteers to aid the process of teaching the converted young migrants about the Christian faith and to also discuss church placement. Owusu further emphasizes that volunteers must seek to know from the squatters whether they belonged to any church while in their home of origin. When the response is positive and a church is mentioned, the volunteer will need to contact a branch of that church in the metropolis and then introduce the squatter migrant to the leadership. The leadership will then send another volunteer to take over from there and begin the follow-up and conduct Bible studies with the new convert in the slum. This means that the discipling of the migrant youth must not only take place in the squatter settlement. It should also involve a visit by the migrant to a church that he/she can call home. Church leaders there will also nurture and raise the person in the Lord.

6.I2 Migrant youth leadership development

Developing leaders as bridges to sustain the work in the slum is also important. There are people in the slum who have great potential for ministering to others effectively when they are evangelized and trained to carry on the mantle of ministry among colleagues in the slum. Indigenous

leaders are the most effective and trustworthy evangelists among squatter communities. The absence of such visible, dedicated, faithful, skilled leaders will impede the work. As the team reaches out to young people in the squatter settlements, it must seek to develop them into Christian leaders who no longer want to escape from their communities but want to heal them. The squatter settlers are knitted closely together. This is because they see themselves as each other's keeper. They have no families in the city and, therefore, are very receptive to one another. Having squatter landlords receiving the gospel and giving their lives to Christ paves the way for others in the slum to do the same. They also value information from their colleague migrants in the settlement.

7. Conclusion

The research focused on the migrant youth in the squatter settlement at Agboghloshie in Accra, Ghana, to develop an effective discipleship model. In carrying out this study, Osmer's model of practical theology was employed. The study presented a discipleship model that was based on the survey conducted in the squatter settlement as well as the Bible. The model can be employed to disciple unchurched and unhoused youth. Consequently, institutions and all the Christian churches, including Accra South Baptist Churches, can consider the model for discipling migrant youth in squatter settlements. This will help in providing effective discipleship, support, and care system based on a sound biblical foundation for the discipling of the migrant youth.

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Developing Biblical Strategies for Young Adults' Ministry in the Ghanaian Churches in Sydney, Australia

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Abstract

Diasporic congregations within the African communities in Australia experience a decline in attendance, and the younger generation dominates the dropout rate. The study aimed to develop biblical strategies for the attraction and retention of young adults in the Ghanaian churches in Sydney. Employing a convergent mixed-method approach, Swinton and Mowat's practical theology framework was used for the qualitative research. Fifteen interviewees were interviewed, and data were analyzed using *ATLAS.ti*. The quantitative data were collected from 345 respondents using a five-point Likert scale: 341 participants responded, and data were analyzed using SPSS version 23 and Partial Least Squares.

The study discovered fifteen factors responsible for youth church decline. The main research question uncovered twenty-one merged

outcomes which were grouped per the hypothesis into four Human Influences, Educational Impact, Peer/friendly Church, and Parental Influences.

1. Introduction

Churches in Australia have experienced unstable church growth over the years. It is disturbing to note how some churches have been stagnant, and others are declining, with the younger generation being at a greater rate (cf. Hull 2014; Sonksen 2018; Tiffen and Gittens 2004). Nationwide studies have been carried out (Ward 2013, 6–8, 116; Williams 2015, 18–28), and a research gap appeared to have occurred *vis-à-vis* likely reciprocated features of the GCSA. In carrying out my ministerial assignment, various questions were asked by both the younger and older generation, such as, “How do we increase our membership?” “Where is the youth in the Church?” “What can bring the young adults to Church?” “How do we maintain church membership?” These questions led me to realize that the young ones are either not regular at church services, or that their numbers are not increasing.

Earlier studies revealed that attendance at the younger generation’s activities has been extremely low in recent times. In some cases, many of the young ones have left the Church entirely, blaming it on a lack of modernization and leadership challenges in the Church (Chandler 2020, 111–115; DeVries 2010, 10–18; Vitisia 2016, 33–36). For example, in Nigeria, the world’s seventh largest-growing country, Okwuosa, Uroko, Mokwenye, Agbo, and Ekwueme (2020, 99–111) argued that while some of the youth endeavor to be present at church services, their faith shivers as they lack proper faith formation. Okwuosa et al. explained that the younger group moves from one denomination to another, searching for companionship

and a fulfilled life. Nel postulated that the Church had failed the next generation because we have not disciplined them in a Christ-like manner (Nel 2018, 30). According to him, we have left out the younger group in the administration and mission of the Church. Côté (2014, 187) argued that the emotional needs of the youth had been neglected at the expense of the community. Other studies focusing on the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches' perspective in Ghana, Koduah (2018, 95) and Quartey (2016, 16, 77–78), affirm the earlier Africans' discovery that the younger group's dwindling participation in church programs is on the increase.

In America, Rainer (2001, 41) discovered that about 76 percent of the younger generation have dwindled in Church attendance in the earlier millennial epoch. In congruence, Hardie, Pearce, and Denton (2016, 151) also found that young people's attendance at religious activities has dropped in recent times in America. They argued that life changes, leaving home, being employed, and exposure to sexual activities stir up youth's drop in church turnout. Back in Australia, Ruth Lockaby recounted from the 1930s and indicated how the churches in Sydney were worried about the challenges of the youth. To her, social forces such as depression, excessive war, and the emergence of atheist philosophies signaled that the young people were in crisis and needed spiritual revival (Lukabyo 2020, 124–125). At this point, Lukabyo referred to John Jamieson and added that as of 1936 two reasons were attributed to the young people's internal and external problems. The latter challenges were ideology and current economic and social difficulties.

On the other hand, the former were issues among the youth group. That is their desire to exercise leadership rights, relationship matters, and the quest to live a purposeful and peaceful life. Jamieson states the urgency for spiritual fellowship among young adults to enhance their endurance of

life's prevailing internal and external challenges. His conviction was that the younger generation is the bedrock of the future Church (Lukabyo 2020, 126). According to Rackley (2014, 107–108), since the GCSA cannot be left out of this roll call of reasons for the youth church decline, there is a need to find the factors contributing to this low church attendance. Therefore, this study is based on field research conducted within five Ghanaian Churches in Sydney, Australia. They included Ghanaian Presbyterian Church–Sydney (GPC), Church of Pentecost–Sydney (CoP), Methodist Church Ghana–Sydney (MCG), Living Word Worship Centre–Sydney (LWWC), and Living Word Church International—Sydney (LWCI). It explored the triggering factors of church decline while focusing on young adults and developed a pragmatic biblical model for their attraction and retention.

2. Alignment of the study

My study finds itself in the context of the young adult ministry, which seeks to motivate youth workers, leaders, pastors, and members to connect with God. The world population shows that over 4.9 billion are under 40 years, and 2.4 billion out of the 4.9 billion are less than 30 years of age. However, depression and suicidal cases are predominant among this same age group. Over a million die each year (UN, June 2021). Youth ministry seeks to establish a relationship between the young adult and the Christian adult or the young person and their peers. It creates a connection for transformation into Christlikeness and how we were destined to be (cf. Kageler 2010, 37; Nel 2018, 249). For instance, among Protestants and Catholics, young people's ministry was geared towards conversion and discipleship within the church. Still, as they became Christians, the “conversion” faded as they felt that they were believers already. For years, these twin approaches (discipleship and conversion) faced challenges with the emergence of the

parachurch, as they siphoned the young adults from the Catholic and Protestant churches. A blame game continued, as the former critiqued the latter for not being current with youth ministry and lacking the approach of Christ-centeredness. Youth ministry bloomed during the last part of the twentieth century (Root and Dean 2011, 19).

The Ghanaian churches in Sydney, Australia, are faced with a myriad of issues among young adults. Paramount amongst such challenges was the youth church drift. Studies and observations showed that churches in Sydney have declined. The Australian Ghanaian community was aware of the rampant declining trend of youth church attendance, and yet they remained passive in rectifying the situation. Therefore, the study's critical question is to investigate what strategies the Ghanaian churches in Sydney could use to retain young adults.

2.1 The Church declining target group

Numerous studies show that the downturn of church attendance groups points to the younger peers of the church (Jones 2015, 45–60; Kirk et al. 1999, 99–107; Lamb 2016, 74, 140).¹ According to Vitisia (2016, 19), the age group between 15 and 35 has dropped out of the church. Jones (2020, 125) argues that in cases where young people are denied the opportunity to use their leadership skills, they leave the church. Rackley (2014, 107–108) confirms that the youth contribute to church drop statistics. Keith Porteous Wood (cited in Sherwood 2016) posits that the church attendance in the “Church of England” is two percent, a rate beneath the church's population. Keith even anticipated that the number might drop further since most churchgoers were the older group. In response, papers are written by Nel and Moser

¹ The younger generation is wrestling with self-doubt, intricacy, isolation, and low self-esteem.

(2019, 6–7), and Nel (2018, 30) consider the church’s situation as deserting the ministry of the younger generation. They stated that the church no longer attracts nor retains young people. This is where DeVries (2010, 11) remarked that an unsuccessful church is a church that failed to sustain its youth ministries. Their failure is linked to wasting their resources to fix all challenges swiftly at the expense of youth ministries.

In 2019, in a Lifeway Research, Earls discovered that the younger generation, 18–22 years, had been disconnected from the church. What is breaking this link? Intellectuals have argued that the catalysts that bind the youth to the church appear to be absent. For instance, Brailey and Parker (2020, 121) and Jones (2020, 124) maintain that if the “spiritual formation” that drives youth development does not occur with deliberate mentorship, it affects their directions. Faith formation progresses within a systemic and relational context above individuality or self-centeredness. The younger group needs to focus on faith formation to progress; otherwise, they stop attending church.

2.2 The youth decline rate

Earlier in the millennial era, Rainer (2001, 41) had established in a study on “formerly unchurched” (non-member) to “churched” that out of 37 states in the USA, only 26 percent of persons born between 1977 and 1994 attend church. Duin (2017, 12) also confirmed the church decline in membership in the USA and cited Barna, an enthusiastic researcher, that annually over one million members drop out of church (10). In Australia, Tiffen and Gittens (2004, 246–247) noted that in the 1990s, interest in church activities was 47 percent which was 5 percent lower than for sports. However, a study from another Australian perspective shows that church attendance has been low in recent times (Kirk et al. 1999, 99, 107). In 2015, the NCLS research

revealed that 36 percent of Australians could not disclose their religious affiliation, whereas 23 percent did not see anything good in religion. In 2011, over 22.3 percent said they have “no religion.” In 1996, church attendance in Australian Catholic Churches was 17.9 percent. Nonetheless, the number of churchgoers between the ages of 15–44 (young adults) reduced to 12.2 percent in 2011 (Wilkinson, 2012). In a Lifeway Research, Earls (2019) attributed 70 percent to youth church decline, and Rackley (2014, 107) confirmed that 60 percent of the younger group no longer attends church.

2.3 A Review of Youth Church Decline Factors in Africa, America, and Australia

A global report by the Pew Research Centre (2018) maintained that Ghana and Chad rated highly young adults' attachment to religious activities, indicating that out of a collective of thirty countries with gaps in religious affiliation Ghana, and Chad, stand out in the global pattern principle. Nonetheless, from the Ghanaian perspective, in a qualitative study Boahene (2016, 48) argues that church dropout is alarming, with nine principal factors responsible for declining Church membership. They include, (i) uninteresting youth ministry, (ii) inadequate visitation, (iii) lack of evangelism, (iv) migration issues, (v) the presence of Islamic and other organizations, (vi) no follow-up, (vii) emergence of charismatic/ Pentecostal churches, (viii) undue financial demand and (ix) unfulfilled promise (47–51). Amongst the universal conclusions of Boahene's work, the lack of attention to the younger generation's ministry was considered a significant factor in the decline in church attendance.

Two other scholars from Ghana also oppose Pew's assertion that younger generations in Ghana are religious. Koduah (2018, 95) and Quartey (2016, 16, 77–78) used mixed techniques to confirm that the drift in church

attendance is predominantly among the younger generation. Comparatively, both Quartey and Koduah's work argued that negative *parental influence* was a factor in the young adults' decline in church attendance. Even in other African contexts, scholars deliver diverse findings. For instance, in Nigeria, the world's seventh largest-growing country, in a qualitative study on youth's dual "denomination," Okwuosa, Uroko, Mokwenye, Agbo, and Ekwueme (2020, 99–111), discovered that most youths belong to multiple denominations. Besides, in Nairobi, Kenya, Vitisia (2016, 19) established a comparative study of two churches showing that young adults aged 15 to 35 had ceased attending church. Different from the work of Vitisia (2016) and Okwuosa et al. (2020, 99–111) attributed the decline of youth membership to their craving for quick wealth, the search for messages of hope, lack of modernization in youth activities, lack of leadership, modern technology, insufficient sense of belonging, parents' influence, and outdated youth ministry policies (Okwuosa et al. 2020, 99–111).

However, another recent study by Jones (2020, 117, 125) ascribed the decline to parental factors, confirming the earlier studies by Koduah (2018, 95) and Quartey (2016, 77–78). In the United States, Brines (2011), Comiskey (2007), Hull (2014), and Sonksen (2018) all attribute the low church attendance of young adults to the absence of effective discipleship. A contemporary study like Earls (2019) and Waters (2020, 161–166) offered different theories. The latter maintains that *liturgy and leadership* challenges impede church growth. On the other hand, the former showed nine completely different factors as agents of low church attendance. They comprise, (a) the break from church, (b) judgmental or hypocritical attitude, (c) migration to college, (d) workload, (e) relocation to outskirts of the church, (f) very occupied and unable to attend service, (g) Church not connected to members, (h) diverse opinion of church's stand on societal and political issues, (i) hanging out

with friends, and (j) joining other people to church to please them (Earls 2019).

Nevertheless, Chandler's (2020, 110–116) quantitative survey also confirmed Waters's assertion that poor liturgy and lack of competent leadership do not attract the youth to church. Awuku-Gyampoh in *Academia Letters* presented sixteen factors of youth church decline in Australia. They include,

Lack of youth leadership; The hypercritical approach of members; Poor youth activities; Lack of motivation from the adult group; Love relationships within the youth group; Part-time work and student's placement; School commitments and related assignments; Marriage and family commitment; Bad examples of some adults in the congregation; Love proposals from some adults; Lack of representation of the youth on the church leadership; Lack of funds for youth programs; Adult's negative influence; Peer pressure; Immigration challenges, and Lack of church support for individuals (Awuku-Gyampoh 2021, 5–7).

According to Awuku-Gyampoh, these youth decline factors have been gathered over six years of his ministry in Sydney. The subsequent discussions detail the major youth decline factors.

3. Research Objectives

The aims and objectives of the study served as a road map for the entire research. The main aim was to explore ways that the GCSA can adopt in an endeavor to develop biblical strategies for young adults' attraction and retention. The research attempted to correlate the objectives with the

study's theoretical framework. The following goals helped to accomplish the aforesaid broader aim:

- 1) To explore the triggering factors of youth church decline in the GCSA.
- 2) To examine the impact of Christian education (including faith formation, discipleship, and mentorship) on the attraction and retention of young adults in the GCSA.
- 3) To assess the human influences (including caring, pastor-youth-relationship, and youth-based leadership) that impact the attraction and retention of young adults in the GCSA.
- 4) To investigate the influence of peer influence/youth-friendly congregation (including utilization of technology/modern liturgy) on the attraction and retention of young adults in the GCSA.

4. Research Design and Methodology.

The study combined the qualitative and quantitative approaches for a wide-ranging analysis of the problem under study. After interpreting the data independently, I gathered the required information simultaneously and fitted it into the overall outcome (Creswell and Creswell 2018, 15, 219). With this design, every inconsistent or unrelated finding was explored further (cf. Creswell and Pablo-Clerk 2017; Cuthill 2002, 79–89; Savitt 1980, 52–58). The mixed design approach paved the way for an in-depth determination of basic philosophies to discover relations and interrelationships outside the available research conceptual framework. Swinton and Mowat's (2016, 89–92) four phases of the practical theological reflection were adopted since they give more attention to the empirical approach in practical theology, especially caring for and sustaining human lives. Their stages

include Phase 1: pre-reflective/Current praxis/intuitive/the situation; Phase 2: Cultural/contextual analysis; Phase 3: Theological reflection; Phase 4: Formulating revised forms of practice.

4.1 Population/Sampling

Since I could not focus on the entire population of the GCSA, I deduced the sample size from the 2500 younger generation's population using Slovin's (1960) formula. A population represents the study location and the overall target group of the research. Yan (2006, 167) defines a research population as the individual elements in each area examined in the study. The sample size is determined based on the research plan (Fowler, in Creswell and Creswell 2018, 151). Therefore, in this study, probability sampling methods were adopted in selecting the participants. Sharma (2017, 749–750) maintained that simple random selection is ideal for smaller populations and gives each person the chance of being selected. According to Slovin's (1960) formula,

$$n = \frac{N}{(1+Ne^2)}$$

Where: N=Population size, that is (N) = 2500; e = Confidence interval/ Margin of Error = 0.05%. n=Sampling size. If the Confidence Level is 95%, then we can have the solution below,

$$\frac{2500}{(1+(2500).(0.05)^2)}$$

That is 2500/[1+(2500 x 0.0025)] this means 2500/1+6.25 = 2500/7.25 = 345. Therefore, the study included 345 participants as a quantitative sample size to explore the quantitative research questions. In ensuring an equal opportunity for the study population, five churches were selected to cover

the three hundred and forty-five (345) sample size.

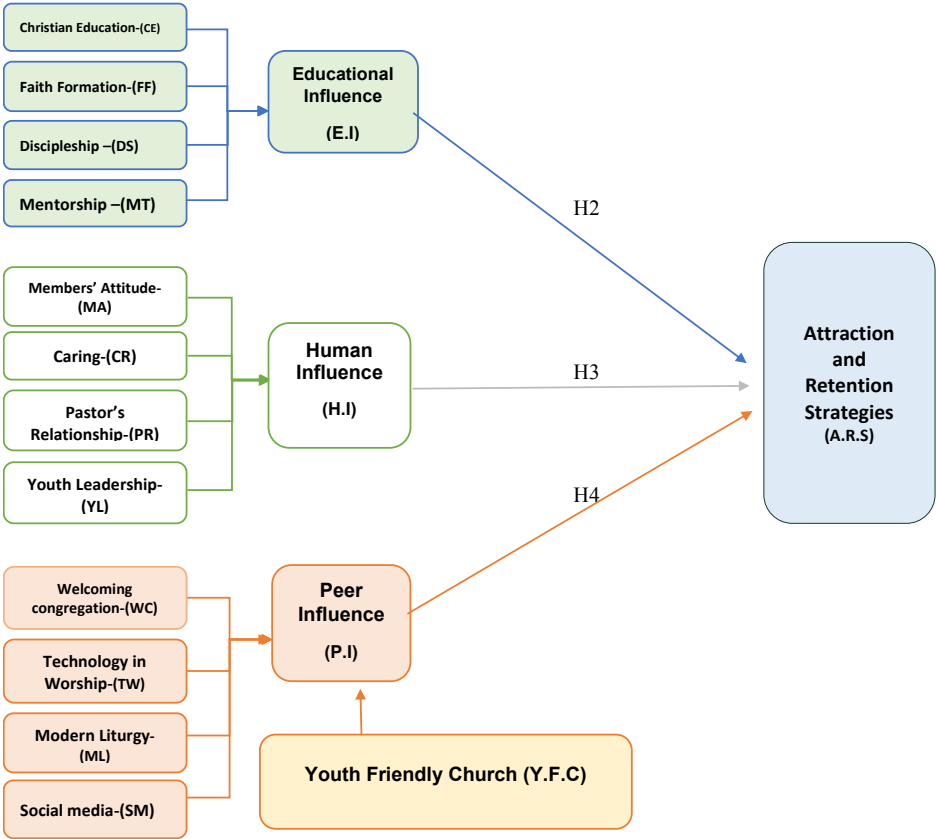
4.2 Data collection/data analysis

Questionnaires and individual interviews were employed for getting quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. This was intended to ensure integrations since it is a convergent mixed method. The researcher also utilized closed-ended, open-ended, and semi-structured questions. A consent letter was sent in advance to the sampled participants. The questionnaires were delivered online, face-to-face, by phone, and by mail (Creswell and Creswell 2018, 17–18; Hammarberg, Kirkman, de Lacey 2016, 498–501). A five-point Likert scale was used to measure all the quantitative surveys: 1–Strongly Approve, 2–Approve, 3–Not Sure, 4–Oppose, and 5–Strongly Oppose (Willis 2015, 179–183). The questionnaires were administered to 345 participants, followed by an interview with 15 persons selected from the 345 for an in-depth view of the subject. This purposeful selection included young adults’ leaders, youth pastors, youth group members, pastors, church leaders, parents, and former youth members from each of the five participating churches with knowledge of youth ministry.

In analyzing the statistics descriptively, like frequency distribution, standard deviation, mean, and multiple regression, version 23 of SPSS and Smart PLS version 3 was employed (Creswell and Creswell 2018, 156). ATLAS.ti was employed to organize and manage the data presentation and analysis. A reflection from the framework of Swinton and Mowat (2016, 90–92) aided the data collected. The overall concept adapted for the study was the convergent mixed approach that compared the quantitative and qualitative data outcomes in line with a practical theological reflection by Swinton and Mowat.

4.3 Research Proposed Model

Figure 1: Unified model for young adults' attraction and retention in the GCSA



Note. A combined education model, human and peer influence model for attracting and retaining young adults in the Ghanaian churches in Sydney, Australia.

5. Study findings

The result as presented in *Table 1* below revealed that the lack of competent leadership affecting youth church attendance was significant with (Mean=1.5353; $t=-34.938$; $p<0.05$) which implies that the absence of a competent leadership may affect church attendance for the youth. Poor worship style may discourage the youth from attending church was significant with (Mean=1.6716; $t=-27.568$; $p<0.05$) which indicates that the youth may be discouraged from attending church due to poor worship style. Also, lack of care from the church members which may lead to a drop in the youth's church attendance was significant with (Mean=1.5865; $t=-35.804$; $p<0.05$) which implies that the absence of care from the church members for the youth may lead them to drop out of the church. Moreover, the absence of true discipleship (Christlike-life) may lead to a lack of commitment scored (Mean=1.5484; $t=-41.413$; $p<0.05$), which implies that the absence of true discipleship (Christlike-life) may lead to a lack of commitment was significant in the causes of youth church drop out. Furthermore, the lack of current church activities which may drive the youth out of the church was significant with (Mean=1.6217; $t=-33.505$; $p<0.05$), which indicates that the lack of the church's current activities may drive today's youth out of the church.

Additionally, the lack of parental church commitment may affect the youth's church participation was significant with (Mean=1.9027; $t=-21.820$; $p<0.05$), which also implies that the lack of commitment from the home may affect the youth's church participation. In addition, poor teachings/sermons may lead to a lack of Christ-like life among the youth score (Mean=1.4824; $t=-39.414$; $p<0.05$), which implies that poor teachings/sermons may lead to a lack of Christ-like life among the youth was significant in the causes of youth church drop. Finally, poor messages

(sermons/teachings) from the pastor affecting youth's commitment were also significant with (Mean=1.9459; $t=-6.421$; $p<0.05$) which therefore implies that messages (sermons/teachings) from the pastors which are very poor can affect the commitment of the youth. The study, therefore, revealed that all the eight (8) items were significant in measuring the causes of youth church drop; however, the most influential cause of youth church drop is poor teachings/sermons which may lead to a lack of Christ-like life among the youth, while the least influential factor is poor messages (sermons/teachings) of the pastor affecting youth's commitment.

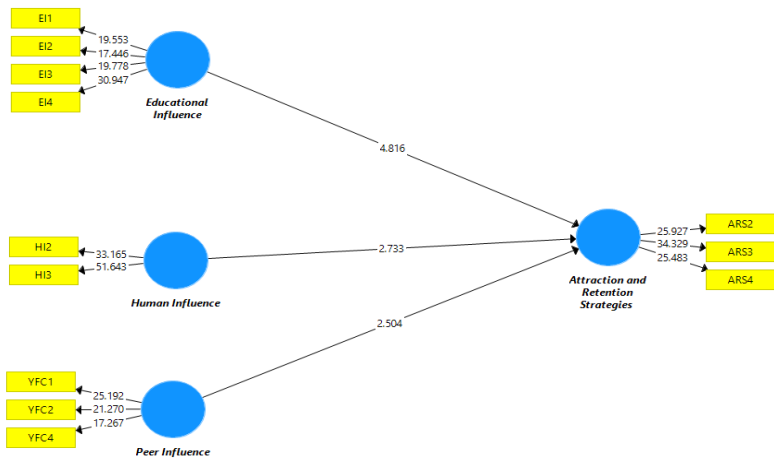
Table 1: Causes of Youth Church Drop Out in the GCSA

Causes		Test Value = 3						
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Ranking
	Mean					Lower	Upper	
Poor teachings/sermons may lead to a lack of Christ-like life among the youth	1.4824	-39.414	339	0	-1.51765	-1.5934	-1.4419	1st
Lack of competent leadership may affect youth church attendance	1.5353	-34.938	339	0	-1.46471	-1.5472	-1.3822	2nd
The absence of true discipleship (Christlike life) may lead to a lack of commitment	1.5484	-41.413	340	0	-1.45161	-1.5206	-1.3827	3rd
Lack of care from the church members may lead to youth church drop	1.5865	-35.804	340	0	-1.41349	-1.4911	-1.3358	4th
Lack of current church activities may drive the youth out of the church	1.6217	-33.505	340	0	-1.3783	-1.4592	-1.2974	5th
Poor worship style may discourage the youth from attending church	1.6716	-27.568	340	0	-1.32845	-1.4232	-1.2337	6th
Lack of parental church commitment may affect the youth's church participation	1.9027	-21.82	338	0	-1.09735	-1.1963	-0.9984	7th
Poor messages (sermons/teachings) of the pastor affect youth's commitment	1.9459	-6.421	36	0	-1.05405	-1.387	-0.7211	8th

5.1 Hypotheses Testing for Direct Hypothesis

The framework in this study hypothesizes that Educational Influence, Human Influence, and Peer Influence impact on Attraction and Retention Strategies. The study proposed that Educational Influence significantly impacts Attraction and Retention Strategies. The result revealed a positive significant relationship between Educational Influence and Attraction and Retention Strategies ($\beta=0.327$, $p<0.05$) hence Educational Influence significantly impacts Attraction and Retention Strategies. The result again revealed a positive significant relationship between Human Influence and Attraction and Retention Strategies ($\beta=0.202$, $p<0.05$), hence Human Influence has a positive significant effect on Attraction and Retention Strategies. Peer Influence and Attraction and Retention Strategies were also significantly related ($\beta=0.0183$, $p<0.05$). In all, all the 3 direct hypotheses were supported as shown in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2: Structural model evaluation



Note. Direct hypotheses were supported.

Table 2: Summary of the hypothesis testing

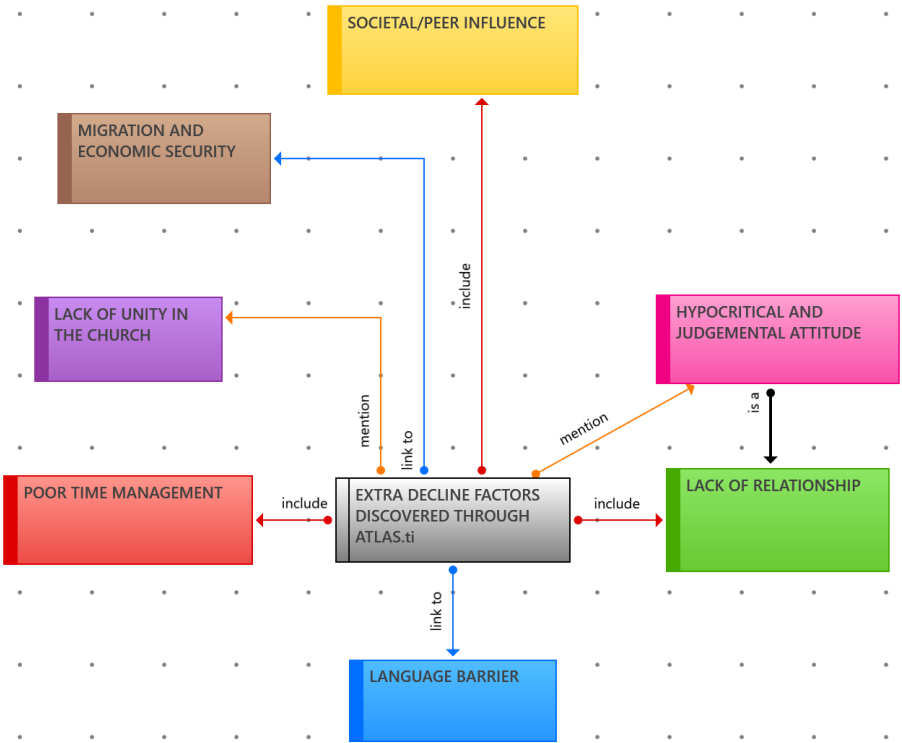
	Hypotheses	Remarks
H1b	Christian Education has a positive and significant influence on youth church participation in the GCSA	Accepted
H1c	Faith Formation has a progressive and significant influence on youth church participation in the GCSA	Accepted
H1d	Discipleship has a positive and significant influence on young people's Christ-centeredness and church participation in the GCSA.	Accepted
H1e	Mentoring has a positive and significant influence on youth development and involvement.	Accepted
H2b	Church Members' Attitude has a positive and significant influence on youth development and church involvement in the GCSA	Rejected
H2c	Care has a positive and significant impact on youth church retention in the GCSA	Accepted
H3d	Pastor's Relationship—(PR) has a positive and significant impact on young adults' church retention in the GCSA	Accepted
H3e	Youth leadership positively and significantly affects youth church participation and retention in the GCSA	Rejected
H4b	A welcoming congregation has a positive and significant influence in attracting and retaining the young adults in the GCSA	Accepted
H4c	The use of technology in worship has a positive and significant influence in attracting and retaining the young adults in the GCSA	Accepted
H4d	The use of modern liturgy has a positive and significant influence in attracting and retaining the young adults in the GCSA	Rejected
H4d	Social media has a positive and significant influence in attracting young adults to the GCSA.	Accepted

Note. Twelve hypotheses for the quantitative phase of the study.

5.2 Seven Additional Qualitative Outcomes of Youth Church Dropouts

Eight qualitative data were further grouped under seven families as additional potential factors responsible for the youth church drop in Sydney in the Ghanaian churches (*Figure 3*).

Figure 3: The extra findings discovered through the qualitative data.



Note. The additional findings from the qualitative data include lack of relationship, language barrier, poor time management, societal/peer influence, lack of unity in the church, hypocritical and judgmental attitudes as well as migration and economic security.

5.3 ATLAS.ti Outcome of Young Adults Retention Strategies in the GCSA

The research question, “*what strategies should the Ghanaian churches in Sydney use to retain young adults?*” helps to solicit views on the way forward in retaining the ministry to the young adults. As indicated, the quantitative data was organized based on the hypotheses. Twenty-one Biblical Youth Retention and Attraction Strategies were discovered. This question had three major sub-questions for the qualitative study. *What is the impact of Christian education on the attraction and retention of young adults in the GCSA?*

5.3.1 *What is the impact of Christian Education (including faith formation, discipleship, and mentorship) on the attraction and retention of young adults in the GCSA?*

The study showed that educational influences impact youth church attraction and retention relating to this research question. The four items, Christian education, faith formation, discipleship, and mentoring measured under the educational influence, proved positive on youth church attraction and retention factors in the GCSA. The details include,

- **Christian education.** It was found that Christian education is an integral part of every successful congregational ministry that lays a firm foundation for discipleship, faith formation, and spiritual growth permissible in a healthy relationship. Therefore, the study accepted the hypothesis, *H1b: Christian education positively influences youth Church participation in the GCSA.*
- **Faith formation.** The study has also revealed the fact that faith formation significantly impacts one's spiritual life and enlightens the intellect to keep a love for Jesus Christ. The hypothesis was proven/confirmed, *H1c: Faith Formation has a progressive and*

significant influence on youth church participation in the GCSA. This finding concurs with that of Osmer (2012, 35), Senter, Black, and Clark (2001, 2), and Weber (2014, 250).

- **Discipleship.** It was found that discipleship assists in the faith development and growth of the youth. This means that modeling young people through training and teaching to become faithful followers of Christ is necessary for their involvement in the church. The study accepts hypothesis *H1d: Discipleship positively influences young people's Christ-centeredness and church participation in the GCSA.* Other scholars who discovered similar findings include Nel (2018, 295–296), and Weber (2015, 1, 6).
- **Mentorship.** It was revealed that proper investment in commitment to biblical mentoring is pivotal to the sustenance of the young adult ministry. Thus, hypothesis *H1e* was confirmed; that is, *mentoring has a positive and significant influence on youth development and involvement.* Other scholars like Brailey and Parker (2020, 120), Chiroma (2015, 73, 82), Cole and Halsell (2021, 20–21), and Ncube (2020, 56–57) discovered related outcomes in their research.

5.3.2 Do human influences (including caring, pastor-youth-relationship, and youth-based leadership) impact the attraction and retention of young adults in the GCSA?

The question concerning human impact revealed statistically that the influences of humankind positively aid young adults' involvement in church activities. Out of the five hypotheses under the human impact heading, three were accepted, and two were rejected. However, the qualitative analysis established the two that were rejected were critical sub-

themes. This meant that the participants understood the questions during the interview.

- **Church members' attitude.** The study disclosed that congregants' behavior at church is crucial for expansion and the church's growth. A positive attitude builds a congregation, and a unified church is a Christlike church. Though the quantitative statistical values rejected the hypothesis *H2b: Church Members' Attitude has a positive and significant influence on youth development and church involvement in the GCSA*, the qualitative data ranked it as a substantial approach to youth church involvement. Since I used the mixed research methods, it is indisputable that merging the two different sets of data makes it relevant that members' positive attitude grows the youth ministry in the GCSA. Scholars like Clark (2011, 193–197), Cole and Helsel (2021, 9), and Gaines (2017, 118–119) made similar observations, that is, the congregants' attitudes impede adolescents' development.
- **A caring congregation.** The study revealed that care as a human factor has a positive impact on the development of young adults in the church. When attention is given to the young adults, it connects them to be active in the church. This finding reflects the work of some practical theologians like Anderson (2001, 260), Clark (2018, 14), Rainer and Rainer (2008, 52), Senter III, Black, Clark, and Nel (2001, 55–56), and Zirschky (2015, 97), who emphasized that the primary function of the church is to be empathic and care for one another. Therefore, the study accepts the hypothesis *H2c: Care has a positive and significant impact on youth church retention in the GCSA*.

- **Pastor's relationship.** In assessing the pastor's role using the rapport characteristics, it was disclosed that the shepherd has the mandate to oversee the flock and impact a community. A good rapport between the congregational pastor and the youth stimulates their involvement in the church. This finding is congruent with the discoveries made by Chandler (2021, 112, 119–124), Nel (2018, 45), Weber (2014, 22), and Wyngaard (2015, 400–411). As a result, the study accepted the hypothesis, *H3d: Pastor's Relationship (PR) positively and significantly impacted young adults' church retention in the GCSA.*
- **Youth leadership.** In considering the extent to which youth in leadership influence young adult participation, the data did not support the hypothesis; hence *H3e* is rejected, indicating that youth leadership does not positively and significantly affect youth church participation and attraction in the GCSA. However, the qualitative data upheld the position of youth leadership, emphasizing that when the youth are in control of affairs, it promotes young adult ministry. Young people understand their language, hence as they lead their peers, they devote themselves to discharging their duties, developing skills, and committing to the church. This finding concurs with the works of Carroll and Firth (2021, 6), Jones (2020, 117), Koduah (2018, 94, 104), McCorquodale (2021, 8), Weber (2014, 163, 201), and Wyngaard (2015, 410, 422); they also state that an excellent rapport between the shepherd/leadership and the youth is healthy in youth ministry.
- **Adapting to Changes.** The study revealed that change is required to boost the young generation's involvement. When justifications accompany changes, and the intent of those changes is made

known in advance, it fosters transformation. Change in attitude to spiritual maturity leads to submission to God and leading a godly life. Though the study confirms that change is good in developing the young adults ministry, precautions must be taken when introducing change since it may result in conflict when not introduced gradually.

- **Valuing Gifts and Talents.** The study uncovered the recognition that young people's gifts and talents are the fundamental acts of their development and church participation. As the church allows the Holy Spirit to operate, it must also appreciate those who possess such giftings. The more we involve the youth in the management of the local congregation, the better they activate their gifts and talents in achieving Christ's mission. Seasoned youth advocates like Clark (2018, 15), and Zirschky (2015, 114) have upheld similar findings on identifying and utilizing young people's spiritual gifts and talents.

5.3.3 Does a peer/youth-friendly congregation (including utilization of technology/modern liturgy) attract and retain young adults in the GCSA?

The peer/friendly church factors revealed the supporting influences as follows.

- **The welcoming congregation.** To reiterate the result, a hospitable church has a positive and significant influence on attracting and maintaining young adults in the GCSA. Hence, hypothesis *H4b* is accepted. A youth-friendly church has the potential to become the home of the younger generation. When church structures are modernized, it attracts the youth. A welcoming church pays

attention to the welfare of members and the hospitality shown to them. Other researchers harnessed how hospitality and love impact the youth ministry; this concurs with the findings made by Cannister (2018, 197), Nel (2018, 111), Weber (2014, 257), and Zirschky (2015, 93).

- **Technology in worship.** The study confirmed hypothesis *H4c*: *The use of technology in worship has a positive and significant influence in attracting and retaining the young adults in the GCSA.* Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. The use of technology in ecclesiology adds value to the service and it makes technology relevant to the context. Young adults want to see on the screen what is being discussed. Incorporating mobile technology into worship will potentially make sermon delivery easier. Some contemporary theologians who have echoed this finding include Asamoah-Gyadu (2015, 190), Carroll and Firth (2021, 6), and Wyngaard (2015, 410, 422).
- **Social media.** The degree to which social media impacts young adults' church attendance and interactive skills was assessed and proved significant. Since the internet is reasonably affordable overseas, it does become a modern-day standard of communication, and when the church uses the medium it may promote its activities. The strategic usage of social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, WhatsApp, Websites, YouTube, and so on, will interest the youth and help their spiritual development. Some scholars like Carroll and Firth (2021, 14), and Wang (2021, 282) have lauded the use of social media in this development. The church's social media presence attracts the youth into the church; hence the study accepted the hypothesis *H4d: social media has a positive and significant influence in attracting young adults to the GCSA.*

- **Modern style of worship.** On the modification of worship style, the study uncovered that modern liturgy attracts the youth, as they feel comfortable taking part in the service. Though the quantitative data did not support this finding, the thorough interviews at the quantitative stage refuted that result. When worship is blended with more modern music, a good sound system, Christ-centered sermons, brief announcements, and more interactive teachings this motivates the younger generation and sustains their interest.
- **Youth programs.** The findings established that youth activities have a significant positive effect on their retention in the church. When the youth are involved in planning their activities, it arouses their interest and builds their leadership skills. Modern church activities boost youth participation. The youth are enthused when they see some adults wear youth-style branded t-shirts to support them in their activities. Correspondingly, Awuku-Gyampoh (2021, 5–7), and DeVries (2010, 19) have argued that dynamic youth programs engage the youth in the church.
- **Counseling.** The study found that counseling is vital in youth identity formation, discipleship, and mentorship. The youth have specific needs and demand the correct answers to fulfill God's given purpose on earth. Through counseling, they learn how to relate to God and their peers. The findings remind us of Ncube (2020, 56–57), Nel (2018, 234), and (Anderson, 2003, 55), who advocated in a loud voice the need to consider counseling in youth ministry.

6. Conclusion

The main research question focused on identifying the measures that can be adopted to curtail the youth church decline in the GCSA. As well as the

twelve hypotheses grouped under human influence, education influence, and peer/youth-friendly church, the qualitative study unearthed an additional theme of parental responsibilities. Parental roles dominated the data, meaning that when the parents are committed to the church, their children are likely to emulate them. Parental Christ-like guidance/coaching serves as a platform for faith formation.

Therefore, the qualitative study concluded that four strategies will attract and retain young adults in the GCSA. They include,

- Human influences (adopting changes, caring, relationship building, leadership skills/ youth leadership).
- Educational impact (mentoring, sermon/language, evangelism, discipleship, cell group, active children service, teaching, and faith formation).
- Peer/friendly Church (youth programs, technology/social media, welcoming church; all these identified areas need the support of the entire church).
- Parental influences (cultural differences, counseling, motivation, creating opportunities to partake in decision-making, loyalty/faithfulness, and strategic youth management).

When the parents are loyal, children's loyalty may be assured as they learn from them. So, whenever they create opportunities for the youth in the home, they explore under their guidance. If parents are involved and live by example, it positively affects the children.

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Meredith Kline's Covenant Theology as Architectonic Substructure of the Reformed Two-Kingdom Project

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Abstract

The Reformed Two-Kingdom project has generated a great deal of literature. However, this literature is often characterized by inflamed rhetoric. Further, though it is standard fare to assume that Kline was the architect of the project, in reality, there has been very little scholarly examination of this point. In response, Kline's system is analyzed through the means of a dialectical discourse with three different models within the Reformed tradition—the Theonomist, Perspectivalist, and Dooyeweerdian schools. Through this means, the study keeps away from surface-level polemics and instead directs readers to the critically important substructural level of current discussions. While clarifying some of the key differences between Kline and his interlocutors, often overlooked points of nuance are also highlighted. These points are shown to be important in that they present the potential to lessen frustration and impasse in the ongoing dialogue.

1. Introduction

Clarity regarding the church's ministry, mandate, and the cultural task are necessary as the church moves into an increasingly secular and pluralistic age. Within the Reformed tradition, one such attempt to find clarity has been represented by the Reformed Two-Kingdom project. Sometimes referred to by detractors as "Escondido Theology" (Frame 2011), the Reformed Two-Kingdom project arises from a group of influential theologians, mainly from Westminster Seminary in Escondido (Frame 2011, 10–12; Gruggett et al. 2017, oc. 417–471). While seeking to show continuity with prominent past thinkers (VanDrunen 2010b; cf. Jooste 2013; Tuininga 2017), these theologians advocate a version of the historic two-kingdom paradigm that is connected to a specific stream of covenant theology (Horton 2002; Stellman 2009; Horton 2011a; VanDrunen 2010a, 2014; cf. Wind 2015).

Theologians of the above project argue that, while Christ rules over all, he does so through the means of two distinct kingdoms that are regulated by two different covenants (VanDrunen 2010a, 29). They, therefore, offer an ongoing critique of the more Neo-Calvinistic understanding of redemptive history, along with its transformationalist agenda (Meeter 1990; Miller 2009; cf. VanDrunen 2010a, 24–25; Balserak 2016, 33–43). Wind points out that one's choice of "a two-kingdoms or a Neo-Calvinist paradigm has implications for a whole host of theological issues, including issues of Christology, anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and missiology" (2015, 33). However, the most pressing implications pertain to the fields of ecclesiology, missiology, and Christian worldview.

The emergence of the Reformed Two-Kingdom project has generated a great deal of discussion. Even so, it is regrettably the case that heated and uninformed polemics have come to characterize the literature (Frame 2011; cf. Godfrey 2012; Horton 2012; cf. Karlberg 2001). Further, while

these discussions reveal substructural tensions pertaining to covenant theology (Wind 2015), it is often assumed that Old Testament scholar Meredith Kline was the founder and architect of the Reformed Two-Kingdom doctrine (cf. Frame 2011, 152; Miller 2014, 173). Even so, there has been strangely little examination of this point (cf. Miller 2014, 173; Crouse 2017, 218).

As the above question is of such basic importance to the subject, the following summarizes an investigation into the nature of Kline's covenant theology, particularly as it stands concerning the central proposals of the Reformed Two-Kingdom project. Stated more specifically, the inquiry that is summarized below concerns an answer to the following main research question: in what ways does Meredith Kline's covenant theology supply a valid architectonic substructure for the Reformed Two-Kingdom project? As differences between the Two-Kingdom and Neo-Calvinist positions have come to represent a point of deep contention within the Reformed community, the purpose of researching this topic has been to contribute to the ongoing conversation in such a manner that promotes further understanding and fosters forward movement.

2. Summary of the Research Process

As it is well suited to allow for an exploration of Kline's thought in light of its competing perspectives within the Reformed tradition, the chosen method for the study is a modified form of the dialectic inquiry research methodology (Berniker and McNabb 2006). The individual research steps, as well as their corresponding research questions, are summarized in what follows.

The first research step provides the literary context for understanding Kline's covenant theology and its relationship to the

Reformed Two-Kingdom Project. The secondary research question answered at this point is as follows: how does the recent scholarship provide context to Meredith Kline's covenant theology and its relationship to the Reformed Two-Kingdom Project? Here, it is shown that from the earliest points of the Reformation, a complex relationship has existed between the subjects of covenant theology, mission, and cultural engagement. Within this context, Kline may indeed be seen to have contributed to the historical development of a broader two-kingdom paradigm (VanDrunen 2010a, 35–77–98; 2010b, 413, 417, 419–420). More specifically, his particular contribution to federalism (Kline 1975; 1994; 1999; 2001; 2006a; 2006b; 2016; 2017) earmarks close associations to the Reformed Two-Kingdom project itself (cf. Fesko 2007; 2013, loc. 5961–5982; Horton 2009b, 8, 54; 2016, ix–xii; Stellman 2009, 40, 53–57, 61–62, 118–123, 182; cf. Frame 2011, 151; Miller 2014, 173; Bristley, Gruggett, et al. 2017, loc. 81; Crouse 2017, 218).

The second step offers a working description of the thesis. In that regard, it proposes the following secondary research question: what is a working description of Meredith Kline's covenant theology, especially as it relates to the Reformed Two-Kingdom project? In response to this question, it is demonstrated that Kline's articulation of a works-based parallel between the *foedus operum* (covenant of works) and the *pactum salutis* (covenant of redemption) is of central importance (Kline 1993; 2006b, 139–140; cf. Caughey 2008, 79–80; VanDrunen 2010a, 34). It means that the cultural task that was first given to Adam as part of the *foedus operum* must be understood in relation to the fulfilled redemptive task of the last Adam in the *pactum salutis* (Kline 2006b, 69–82, 100; Edgar 2007, 284). Further, because Kline understood the Mosaic covenant as a typological republication of the *foedus operum*, he did not see it as holding forth a normative model for the church today (Kline 2006b, 109, 157, 332, 352; cf.

Karlberg 2007, 245–256). Finally, Kline's formulation of *gratia communis* (common grace), while subservient to the ultimate purposes of the *foedus gratiae* (covenant of grace), is itself understood to be non-holy, and thus, non-redemptive (Kline 2006b, 157, 171, 251, 262; Irons 2015a, 19). Together, these points show that Kline's covenant theology does indeed provide an important substructural basis for the Reformed Two-Kingdom project (cf. VanDrunen 2010b, 415; 2014, 131, 154, 166, 189, 252, 272, 276, 304, 307, 402, 502; 2020, 65, 292, 320; cf. Horton 2002; 2011a; 2011b, 537–546).

With the above in mind, the third research step begins the process of dialectic analysis. The first part of this process is concerned with an analysis of the above thesis. It thus places Kline's theology into the discussion with three different models within the Reformed tradition. Specifically, Kline's response to the Theonomist, Perspectivalist, and Dooyeweerdian schools are each considered. The subsidiary research question at this point is as follows: in what ways does Meredith Kline's covenant theology, as architectonic of a two-kingdom paradigm, compare and contrast with other covenantal paradigms in the Reformed tradition?

In answer to the above question, it is shown that Kline's model (1) most clearly reflects the employment of a Vosian biblical-theological methodology (Vos 2003, 16; Vos 2003, 125–126), and (2) is most able to account for a works-grace antithesis, (3) provides the sharpest distinction between the cultural mandate and the great commission (Kline 1964, 51–55; 1978, 183; Kline 2006a, 157, 164; 2017, loc. 232–236; *contra* Frame 2008, 307), and finally, (4) gives least primacy to philosophical abstraction in the development of his system (Kline 1986; Kline 2006b, 170).

As a counterpart to the preceding, the fourth research step presents the second stage of dialectic analysis. At this point, the responses of the above schools are considered. The research question reflecting this

concern is as follows: in what ways have other theologians responded to Meredith Kline's covenant theology, specifically as it stands concerning the two-kingdom paradigm? In answer to this question, a few subsidiary issues are considered. These include aspects such as the potential overuse of Ancient Near Eastern treaties, as well as the difficulty of the categorization of covenant children when limited to the binary option of either holy or common. However, the primary concerns are shown to involve (1) alignment with Reformed orthodoxy (Gentry 2005, loc. 2339–2450; Frame 2011, xxxix, 16; Dennison, Sanborn et al. 2009, 3, 4; Bergquist, Elam et al. 2014, 133), (2) differing exegetical and theological methodologies (Frame 1985; 2011, 154; Kline 1986), and (3) differing readings of the cultural mandate (Kline 1955; 2006b, 156–157; Dooyeweerd 1979, 38; 2012, 143–144; cf. Frame 2005, 6–7; 2011, 315–324; Wolters 2005; Gentry 2005, loc. 341; Miller 2009, 60–64, 67; Smith 2012, 123; Barber 2014, 87). The last of these points, in particular, prompts the specific focus of the next step.

The fifth step of the research process involved a biblical-theological examination of the cultural mandate itself. The question answered here is this: what might a biblical-theological examination of the key passages reveal about Meredith Kline's covenant theology? As an answer, the study suggested that a refractionist view of the cultural mandate is most in line with the relevant biblical data. This means that, on the one hand, the examination stood in general support of Kline's formulation of both the *foedus operum* and the *pactum salutis* (cf. Kline 2006a, 65, 71). On the other hand, an examination of the seed motif suggested some tension with Kline's view, specifically regarding the place of the covenant family concerning common grace culture (cf. 2006b, 202–203; Mattson 2018, loc. 674; cf. Godfrey and VanDrunen 2016). Finally, the study of the rest and realm motifs lent strong support to Kline's understanding of protological eschatology (cf. Kline 2006b, 70).

In response to the above, the last step of the research process could ensue. It stands as the capstone evaluation of the thesis objective. However, as the secondary research question overlaps with the main one, the salient findings of the study are first briefly considered in what follows.

3. Salient Findings of Research

3.1 *Findings concerning the dialectic*

3.1.1 Kline and theonomy

Kline's covenantal system was first considered in relation to theonomy. His response reveals a sharp disagreement (Kline 1978; Bahnsen 1980). Kline argued that the Mosaic covenant was a unique and subservient element of the *foedus gratiae* rather than a normative part of its administration (Kline 1983; Kline 2006b, 352). Closely related to this, Kline's concepts of eschatological intrusion and *gratia communis* sharply distinguish his position from the theonomists (cf. Kline 1953; Kline 1978, 184; Kline 1997, 162; 2006b, 159; Bahnsen 2002, 563; cf. North 1976, 13–47).

Kline believed that Israel's theocracy was to be understood as a unique revelation of the final eschatological kingdom and not, as theonomists advocate, a blueprint for government (1978; cf. Gentry 2005, loc. 538–543). Finally, Kline's response was shown to challenge various monocovenantal aspects that have become increasingly associated with theonomic doctrine (cf. North 1994, 208; Bahnsen 2002, 202, 232). In this way, Kline is seen to further reinforce the connection between covenant theology, missiology, and cultural engagement. He reveals that a theonomist foundation leads to both a distortion of the church's gospel message and opposition to the church's central tasks.

3.1.2 Kline and perspectivalism

Kline's interaction with Frame and Poythress was seen to highlight key problems in the perspectivalist hermeneutic. He shows that a hermeneutic which allows the normative and situational perspectives to be coordinated cannot be held in check by the rule of faith. For this reason, Frame's method prevents him from properly appreciating progressive canonical elements of situational historicity (Kline 1986; cf. Jeon 2006, 20, 106). This, in turn, leads Frame to see the church's mission and mandate in terms of a reapplied and timeless norm (Frame 2008, 308–311). Kline's response to Frame, therefore, highlights how the perspectival method necessarily leads to functional monocovenantalism and thus to a semi-theonomic, transformationalist, and one-kingdom perspective (Kline 1986; cf. Barber 2014, 184–185).

Offering a correction to these problems, Kline showed that, within canonical history, the situational perspective is a subordinate component of the revealed norm itself. In this, Kline not only adheres to a Vosian method of biblical-theology, but he shows how this method is important in yielding the specifics of covenant theology (Kline 2006b, 7; cf. Karlberg 2007, 238). One such specific concerns the covenant lordship of God and the implementation of a cultic boundary. Contra Frame, Kline shows that the common grace order and the holy redemptive kingdom are distinct, separated by a cultic boundary (Kline 2006b, 171, 180; cf. Frame 2008, 416–420, 534–540, 593–621; 2011, 173). Regarding Frame's approach to the application of the Scripture in all of life, Kline shows that the question is not whether God's Lordship over all things is honored, but rather how the Lord himself demands that this honoring take place (Kline 2006b, 171; cf. Frame 1987, 81; 2011, 132, 322–323, 146).

3.1.3 Kline and Dooyeweerdianism

Where Kline saw the previous positions as fundamentally flawed when critiquing Dooyeweerdianism he affirmed the basic goals and categories of the greater Kuyperian tradition (Kline 2006b, 169). Indeed, the interaction between Kline and the Dooyeweerds showed that they are formally aligned on matters of Christ's sovereign Lordship, the goodness of the created order, and the directional antithesis that sin had introduced (Tuininga 2012; Wolters 2005, loc. 973). In this vein, Kline saw his response to Dooyeweerdianism in terms of an intramural discussion within the broader Kuyperian tradition. He showed appreciation for the value of a structure-direction distinction, the cosmonomic philosophy, and the use of general worldview language (Kline 2006b, 169–171).

Even so, where Dooyeweerds are emphatic that the created order be viewed in terms of a structural monism, Kline argued that—in light of the biblical data—post-fall structural duality could not be avoided. While the integration and unity of Kline's overall system do not allow the charge of dualism to stand against him, the Dooyeweerdian prioritization of a philosophical monism over this biblical data is indeed problematic. Even so, Kline's proposal allows for the more abstract features of the broader Kuyperian project to be brought into closer alignment with the specifics of Scripture without having to abandon all of the distinctives of Kuyperian and even some Dooyeweerdian thought (cf. Kline 2006b, 169).

Kline's argument for post-fall structural duality supports seeing a clear distinction between the common kingdom of creation and the redemptive kingdom of new creation. He, therefore, provides sure substructural support for Reformed Two-Kingdom thinking. Yet, it was also seen that Kline's sensitivity to distinctive elements of Dooyeweerdian thought means that, with certain caveats in place, his covenant theology

is also able to offer some substructural support for the development of softer forms of Neo-Calvinism. In this regard, of the three comparisons considered, Kline's response to Dooyeweerdianism reveals the most potential for catalyzing fruitful discussion between Neo-Calvinist and Reformed Two-Kingdom theologians.

3.2 Findings Concerning the Biblical-Theological Examination

In their responses to Kline, the above three schools of thought all showed important alignment in their continuationist reading of the cultural mandate (cf. Frame 2005, 6–7; 2011, 317; Wolters 2005; cf. Smith 2012, 123; Dooyeweerd 2012, 143; cf. 1979, 38, 130; Barber 2014, 87). In light of this point, a biblical-theological examination of Genesis 1:28-2:3 revealed important covenantal relationships within the greater canonical sub-motifs of the cultural mandate. These sub-motifs are seen to develop in terms of two basic categories. The first category deals with mankind's covenant service as it relates to being made in the image of God. The two elements within this service were shown to involve dominion and procreation. The second category deals with mankind's covenant eschatology as it relates to being called to rest in the Sabbath of God. The two prominent elements within this second category involve the final state of mankind and the final state of the created realm.

In terms of the first pair of motifs (dominion and procreation), Adam and Eve were shown to be tasked to rule and multiply under God. Importantly, the task of dominion should be considered in an absolute sense. Also, the dominion motif is seen to be paired with the seed motif from the beginning—Adam and Eve were tasked to fill the earth with newly-created humanity who reflected the glory of God. If this task could not be completed, the mandate could not have been said to be achieved.

In terms of the second pair of motifs (realm and rest), it was seen that the Sabbath concept was intended to indicate an absolute eschatological goal. This goal involves a state that is beyond probation in the realm of an eternal and consummated cosmos.

Concerning the greater study, Kline's approach to covenant theology was shown to provide the most satisfactory systematization of the above biblical-theological data. Specifically, his system was seen to exceed the competing models in being able to account for both continuity and discontinuity in the cultural mandate.

4. Response to the Main Research Question

With the above data in place, together with the findings of the preceding dialectic analysis, a final evaluation of Kline's covenant theology can be presented. In this regard, as the secondary research question in this final step overlaps with the main research question, it is worthy of repetition at this point. In what ways might Meredith Kline's covenant theology supply a valid architectonic substructure for the Reformed Two-Kingdom project?

The findings of the study suggest that there are three main ways. These may be summarized in terms of (1) methodological validity, (2) historical validity, and (3) functional validity. Each of these points will be expanded below.

First, Kline's covenant theology presents an architectonic substructure that, by Vosian standards, is methodologically valid. This was primarily reinforced by the findings of the biblical-theological examination and its focus on the cultural mandate. In consideration of four key motifs, the study revealed important elements of discontinuity. Specifically, this discontinuity concerned (a) the pre-fall and post-fall dominion mandate, (b) Old Covenant Israel and the New Covenant church, and (c) the Noahic

cultural mandate and the Great Commission. These points are all accounted for in Kline's covenant system and undergirding hermeneutic. In line with a Vosian method, Kline takes seriously the various points of situational historicity in redemptive history (cf. Vos 2003, 16, 125–126; Kline 2006b, 7; Karlberg 2007, 238). He, therefore, offers a base from which to build a view of mission and cultural engagement that does not fail to take into account these points of significance within the unfolding of redemptive history.

Second, Kline's covenant theology presents an architectonic substructure that, by Reformed standards, is historically valid. This point was primarily reinforced by the findings of the dialectic inquiry. During the exchange with all three schools, it was seen that the legitimacy of Kline's place within the Reformed tradition was called into question. As detractors of the Reformed Two-Kingdom doctrine are well aware, the outcome of this issue has a major bearing on whether, or not, the Klinean project can legitimately claim to be a valid expression of this Reformed thought. This is especially the case because a distinctive claim of the Two-Kingdom project is not only that its doctrine arises from the general Reformed tradition, but rather that it arises directly out of its very architectonic principle—namely, covenant theology (cf. VanDrunen 2004; 2010a, 24–26; 2010b, 21; 2014; Horton 2002; 2011a; Stellman 2009, xvii–xxviii; Wind 2015; Balserak 2016, 34–43).

For the above reason, attempts to identify Kline's covenant theology as that which falls outside of the bounds of the Reformed tradition do indeed have the potential to show Kline's inability to provide a valid base for the Reformed Two-Kingdom doctrine (cf. Frame 2011, xxxix, 11; Ramsey 2004, 384). Yet, the findings of the dialectic inquiry have revealed that all such arguments lack efficacy (Venema 2017, 140; cf. Collingridge and McNeill 2013, 79; Horton 2012). More specifically, attempts to dismiss Kline's

Reformed orthodoxy, or see him grouped with Luther's thought-trajectory, have been shown to lack theological nuance (cf. Cooper 2016; Biermann 2017, xx). The same can be said concerning Kline's supposed dualism (cf. Fesko 2019, 182). While Kline's view, at worst, represents a minority position, he is nevertheless representative of a legitimate approach to Reformed covenant theology (cf. Ferry 2009, 104; Kim 2013; Venema 2017, 140; cf. Collingridge and McNeill 2013, 79). His system can therefore be said to offer a non-dualistic, covenantal basis upon which to distinguish between common grace and redemptive grace. It does therefore provide a historically valid—and properly Reformed—substructure for the Reformed Two-Kingdom project.

Third, Kline's covenant theology presents an architectonic substructure that, by current standards, is functionally valid. This point was primarily reinforced by the findings of the final section of the evaluation. Moreover, because Kline himself never addressed the matter of the Reformed Two-Kingdom project directly, this section should be seen to present an important point of connection. In other words, if Kline's system showed little consequence for the current formulation of the Reformed Two-Kingdom doctrine, then while it may be valid enough as a covenant system, it would not necessarily be valid as an architectonic substructure for the Reformed Two-Kingdom project.

Even so, the findings of this study not only show that Kline can withstand the critique of his interlocutors, but that his covenant theology has a clear bearing on current discussions between Reformed Two-Kingdom and transformationalist groups. Kline presents a covenant theology that not only challenges monocovenantal conceptions of Reformed thought but in so doing, shows a clear connection between soteriology, missiology, and cultural engagement. Added to this, it was seen that Kline's protological

eschatology, along with his insistence upon a basic level of structural duality, prevents a conception of the cultural task that falls prey to triumphalism and over-realized eschatology (cf. VanDrunen 2010b, 367).

Finally, it was seen that while Kline has presented a basis for the Reformed Two-Kingdom project, this basis is nuanced enough to incorporate many elements of emphasis within the Neo-Calvinist project. To the degree that theologians of the Reformed Two-Kingdom and Neo-Calvinist projects make better use of these potentially mutual elements within their substructures, new possibilities for future discussion may be seen to emerge. One such possibility is the formulation of a less simplistic taxonomy in terms of the Reformed approaches to cultural engagement. Another possibility is that Reformed discussions become less dependent on overworked expressions and loaded terminology. Even so, this potential in Kline's covenant theology reinforces the relevance of his thought to current proposals. Further, it reinforces the validity of his system as an architectonic substructure for the Reformed Two-Kingdom project.

To be clear, Kline's thought does indeed provide a basis for the specificity of current Reformed Two-Kingdom proposals. However, the above suggests that these proposals do not present the full range of possibilities that could legitimately arise from Klinean soil. Specifically, current Reformed Two-Kingdom explorations regarding the place of natural law within *gratia communis* should not be seen to hamper the potential for diversity within the same greater project. This is because, if placed within the delimitations of a refracted cultural mandate, a Klinean substructure could also allow for certain explorations concerning the application of cosmonomic philosophy.

Put differently, even though VanDrunen's natural law proposals draw from one set of conceptual resources (specifically, those provided in Kline's formulation of the Noahic covenant), this should not stop further

exploration in ways that draw from other emphases within this same greater system. While such exploration would necessarily take a different approach to that of the current Reformed Two-Kingdom proponents, all efforts that flow from a Klinean substructure would be joined in their attempts to distinguish between the common and redemptive realms. Further, due to the Klinean basis, explorations such as these would enjoy a mutual safeguard against the dangers of triumphalism and over-realized eschatology.

5. Significance of Research

5.1 *Implications for the church*

The first implication for the church's mission and mandate flows from Kline's argument for a works-based parallel between the *foedus operum* and the *pactum salutis*. This parallel shows that the cultural mandate, first bound up with the pre-fall arrangement, cannot be taken up by either fallen mankind or redeemed mankind. Rather, it can only be taken up by another Adam, under another work-rest covenant. At the fall, the original cultural project (what Kline refers to as the building of Megapolis) was terminated. Mankind's hope for the promised eschatological telos of the creation (what Kline refers to as Metapolis) was, at that point, placed upon the person and work of the Messiah alone (cf. Kline 2006b, 100; Heb 11:10).

The second implication for the church's mission and mandate flow from Kline's doctrine of *gratia communis*. It was seen that the divine bestowal of this order subserves the accomplishment of redemption and provides the interim possibility of "a pragmatic cooperation between believers and unbelievers for the achievement of certain temporal ends such as physical safety, rule of law, criminal justice, and self-defense" (Irons

2004a, 105). Unlike the theocracy of Eden, or the theocracy of the New Creation, the common grace order calls only for judicial action against sins of a horizontal nature. It therefore not only precludes the validity of a theonomic posture in the church but also shows these attempts to represent a troublesome version of over-realized eschatology (cf. Kline 1978, 183–184, 186; Kline 2006b, 157–162, 248).

Regarding the above, Kline’s covenant theology proves vital in highlighting the contrast between the cultural life of the covenant community both before and after the Mosaic period. In other words, before and after the theocracy of Israel, the covenant community shares the world with non-believers under the terms of *gratia communis*. Rather than engaging in the task of redemptive city-building, they are a community of pilgrims who wait for the final city “whose designer and builder is God” (Heb 11:10). The significance of this idea is that it shows the patriarchal period, together with the later time of Babylonian exile, to form important anticipation of cultural engagement in the New Covenant (Kline 2006b, 358; 2016, 135).

In Israel’s theocracy, the principles of *gratia communis* were suspended. Rather than a pilgrim people who awaited the promise, Israel was to view themselves as a holy theocratic army who had already entered some aspects of promise and fulfillment (Irons 2015b, 17). Further, Israel’s possession of the land initiated a critical parallel with Adam. The key implication that results from Kline’s thought at this point is that the Mosaic theocracy should be regarded as a unique typological administration of the *foedus operum*. It must therefore be insisted that it cannot provide a normative model for the church’s administration. Instead, it should be viewed as (1) a national replica of Adam’s failure in the *foedus operum*, and (2) a type of the eschatological kingdom brought in by the success of the

true Davidic king under the terms of the *pactum salutis* (cf. Kline 1953; 1978, 176, 184; 2006b, 158, 352–353; Irons 2015b, 17).

Also pertaining to Kline's doctrine of *gratiae communis*, the concept of refraction was seen to carry great weight in terms of its implication for an understanding of the Christian's place within the culture (cf. Kline 1955, 49; 2006b, 157, 251). In other words, while Genesis 1 was issued again in Genesis 9, this issue must be understood in a refracted sense only (cf. VanDrunen 2010b, 415; 2020, 65, 292, 320; Horton 2011b, 386). The command to subdue the creation as well as the attachment of a Sabbath promise is notably omitted (Kline 2006b, 78, 155; cf. Irons 2015a, 16). There are two important implications. First, the task of cultural stewardship is indeed from the Lord and therefore must be taken seriously by every Christian. As Kline says, for the covenant community there can be “no excuse for lethargy in prosecuting the cultural commission” (1955, 49). However, with equal emphasis, the cultural labors of believers under this mandate can never be said to redeem creation, bring in the kingdom of God, or create a reality that is directly continuous with the eternal city. Simply put, although it is important, the cultural mandate is not redemptive. It must therefore be clearly distinguished from the mission of the church (cf. Kline 2006b, 156–157, 169).

In light of the above, it can be said that Kline's covenant theology calls for what may best be termed a refractionist position. That is to say, while individual believers of the New Covenant are indeed in possession of a refracted cultural mandate, this mandate is not directly continuous with the mandates given to either Adam or Israel. Rather it is continuous with the mandate that was issued to all humanity in Genesis 9. Conversely, the unique mandate that is given to the church should be understood as the mandate of the new humanity and the new creation. Unlike that which was

issued in Genesis 9, the mandate of Matthew 28, 18–20 flows from Christ’s fulfillment of the *pactum salutis* and now advances his semi-eschatological reign through the means of the church’s gospel proclamation.

5.2 *Contribution to current discussions*

Regarding the dialectic between Kline and theonomy, the conclusions of this inquiry are in basic alignment with the consensus voiced by the larger Reformed community (cf. Barker and Godfrey 1990). However, it was also noted that Kline himself goes further in his critique. He shows that the theonomist proposal is not only out of step with the general Reformed ethos but that it runs against the basic mission of the church. Even though theonomists have argued that their appeal to the Mosaic law does not replace or remove the task of evangelism, Kline reveals this to be a point of contradiction in their position. While the theonomist movement no longer has the momentum that it used to have, there are some indications that it could yet experience a renaissance (cf. Boot 2016; Walker 2021; Durban and White 2021; Gribben 2021). In this regard, Kline’s rebuttal has direct and ongoing relevance.

In the dialectic with perspectivalism, it was seen that overstated accusations against both Kline and Westminster Seminary in California have diminished the efficacy of Frame’s response. In this regard, Horton has some precedent for seeing Frame’s critique as “a new low in intra-Reformed polemics” (Horton 2012; cf. 2009a; 2009c; 2013). Similarly, Godfrey speaks of being “shocked and saddened” by Frame, who he believes has both misrepresented and misstated the true doctrinal distinctives of the Escondido school (Godfrey 2012). The above notwithstanding if the dialectic can be seen as a means through which to make covenant theologians more aware of the problems that arise when the progressive nature of redemptive

history is not properly accounted for, an important contribution can yet be said to have arisen from this interaction.

Finally, regarding the dialectic between Kline and the Dooyeweerdians, it has been noted that both sides are emphatic that Christianity is meaningful, not for the faith-sphere only, but for all of life. Added to this, neither schools have a problem with the task of thinking Christianly about all of life. Further still, both Kline and Dooyeweerd were seen to affirm that—in regeneration—redemption involves an objective redirection of the lives of the regenerate. However, while both sides affirm the structural goodness and integrity of the original creation, Kline insists that the common grace order cannot be objectively sanctified and thus thought of as the new creation and the kingdom of God (Kline 2006b, 169; cf. 1955). This, in turn, yields a key point. Under the Klinean rubric, elements of the Dooyeweerdian cosmonomic philosophy can indeed be utilized, as long as a basic structural duality is always kept in place. That is to say, all attempts to align to creation norms should be applied under a mandate of *gratia communis* rather than the mandate of the *foedus gratiae*. In this way, cultural tasks are always kept from being outweighed with an undue eschatological burden (cf. VanDrunen 2010b, 367).

Further to the above, one of the most valuable contributions to arise out of the dialectic was that it brought into focus the often-overlooked matter of protological eschatology in the original covenantal task. A central concern of Neo-Calvinist theologians is to show that, due to Christ's work, God's covenantal creation program has not been interrupted. However, the above focus on protological eschatology counters this concern by asking a vitally important question: what program? Was the cultural task a part of the covenantal arrangement of the *foedus operum*? Is it agreed that this arrangement was, at first, eschatological?

In this regard, two key Klinean terms are (a) Megapolis, and (b) Metapolis. Regarding the former, Kline derives the term Megapolis from the Greek words *μεγά* (great) and *πόλις* (city). He uses this neologism to refer to the zenith of man's cultural accomplishments before any final eschatological consummation. Similarly, the term Metapolis is derived from the Greek words: *μετά* (beyond, after) and *πόλις* (city). However, Kline uses this term to refer to the accomplishment of God after, or beyond, the points of the final eschatological consummation.

Put in Klinean terms then, the main questions moving forward are these: Was the protological program merely a program to develop Megapolis? Or was Metapolis always to be seen as the ultimate goal? Positively, it may be said that questions such as these provide a vital focus for future discussions between contemporary Neo-Calvinists and Reformed Two-Kingdom theologians. Negatively, it can be said with equal clarity that these discussions will not be productive unless they are willing to account for the covenant protology that undergirds and informs their respective positions.

6. Conclusion

A voluminous body of theological material has been produced as a result of the proposals of the Reformed Two-Kingdom project. However, there has been a clear gap in this literature. While it is typically assumed that Kline was the founder, architect, and militant adherent of the Reformed Two-Kingdom doctrine, very little has been done to examine this point in more detail.

The current study has sought to take one step toward addressing this problem. After researching the matter via the means of a dialectic inquiry, it has been concluded that Kline's theology does indeed provide

a valid substructure for the Reformed Two-Kingdom project. However, in so doing, this study has also brought to attention important elements of nuance that are not properly represented in current discussions. Although Kline is typically spoken of as the father of the Reformed Two-Kingdom project, it is not as readily acknowledged that Kline himself stood in a formal agreement with key features of Kuyperian and Dooyeweerdian thought.

While the above does not deny the important differences that emerge between Neo-Calvinist and Reformed Two-Kingdom adherents, the study underscores the need for care when dealing with this topic. It shows that, while Kline's work can be seen to support contemporary expressions of the Reformed Two-Kingdom doctrine, it is anachronistic to understand this as though he advocated all the details of these proposals. By providing clarity on this point, this study assists in reducing facile and overstated argumentation. More positively, it takes the focus off simplistic labels and instead directs future inquirers to the more central substructural issues that are at play.

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Rebirth of Theological Pitfalls in Africa: Byang Kato's Theological Legacy and Contemporary Resonance

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Abstract

Byang Henry Kato (1936–1975) reputed to be the father of Evangelical Theology in sub-Saharan Africa, was known for his opposition to and contestation of what some theologians of his time espoused in the name of African Theology. Kato perceived the work of these others as syncretistic universalism. An analytical biography of Kato, using primary and secondary literary sources and qualitative empirical studies, demonstrates the defining contours of Kato's own theological legacy, especially his hermeneutics, understanding of African Christian identity, and contribution to evangelical theological education. The research formulates a theological model—Katoan Theology—in response to the main research question. The study also highlights the relevance of Kato's theological legacy to contemporary challenges in the church in sub-Saharan Africa, as a practical biblical guideline to harmonize biblical beliefs with praxis.

Kato demonstrates a worldview change from African traditional beliefs to a biblical Christian worldview, a critical need for the majority African Church in global Christianity.

1. Introduction

Byang Henry Kato's (1936–1975) birth, upbringing, and spiritual and religious encounters typify an African traditional religionist. The tendency for many African Christians is to accept the dominant and prevailing African traditional worldview, rather than a biblical perspective (Chalk 2013, 3; Turaki 2020, 7). The profession of the Christian faith may not match with praxis. Kato's reception of the gospel message and the radical transformation of a worldview change to inculcate a biblical worldview was commendable.

Kato hailed from rural Northern Nigeria and was dedicated as a fetish priest as a child (Macdonald 2017, 18; Kato 1962). Kato became a Christian at the age of twelve, and at the time of his death, he was reputed to be the father of evangelicalism in the contemporary church in sub-Saharan Africa (Ferdinando 2007; Kapteina 2006; Ngong 2007, 128; Shirik 2019; Haye 1986, 17; Bowers 2008).

Consideration of how he achieved the shift could contribute immensely to enhancing discourse and the maturation of the Church, from an evangelical perspective. However, Kato's theological contribution has not been fully articulated. His opponents say he had no theology of his own but was only critical of the theology of others. According to Bowers (2008, 5; cf. Shirik 2019), there is a gap in exploring Kato's contribution to evangelical Christianity in Africa and he states: "One might think that all there is to know about Kato has already been well rehearsed over the years. But not so. The fact is that not everything relevant about Kato has yet been

adequately surfaced or sufficiently pursued. There is still room for further fruitful inquiry, rich opportunity for further professional research and exposition.” This research is an attempt to respond, albeit in part, to this need.

At a time when many budding African theologians saw the need to de-Europeanize the Christian faith and practice, the tendency was to shield the faith in African traditional religious beliefs. The uniqueness of the gospel message and its claim for salvation through Jesus Christ alone was in contention. Kato contended against what he perceived as syncretism¹ and universalism² and opposed much of what other theologians were writing in his time. Nevertheless, in his disputations with the other theologians, Kato could have well espoused what could have been the defining contours of biblical orthodoxy or evangelicalism from an African perspective. Adeyemo et al. (1996, 135) opine: “The late Dr Byang Kato has left a lasting mark on the Christian Church in Africa. Little does the younger generation understand the rich legacy which he has imparted, both in his life and in ministry. His commitment to the Word of God and the living Gospel of Jesus Christ is a model for us to follow.”

This study explores three aspects of Kato’s theological legacy, that is, Kato’s biblical hermeneutics, his perspective on the question of African Christian identity, and his contribution to theological education.

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- 1 Syncretism: What Kato described as syncretism was the attempt by proponents of African theology seeking to discover what the traditional religions are saying and to wed these pre-Christian, pre-Muslim religions with contemporary faith; an attempt to synthesize Christianity with African traditional religions (Kato 1975a:55).
 - 2 Universalism. According to Kato: universalism means the belief that all men (sic) will eventually be saved, whether they believe in Christ now or not. Kato saw these two concepts (syncretism and universalism) as heresies and focused on bringing these to the attention of the Church in Africa.

The purpose of the study was a biographical sketch of Kato's life and time with a special focus on his debates with other theologians, deducing his theological beliefs and assessing these with classical evangelical tenets. In critiquing what he saw as syncretistic universalism, promoted by other theologians, Kato advocated for authentic biblical Christianity in Africa (Kato 1975).

2. Research Design Methodology

In terms of discipline, the study falls within Historical Theology (Smith 2013, 138; Domeris 2014, 192), exploring the life and contribution of Byang Kato, the first African General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, in shaping evangelical theology in the Church in Africa. Given the range of issues for consideration, the study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, involving historical, sociological, and theological methods (Haokip 2014, 4; Lassig 2014, 147). Analytical biographical methods were used to respond to the main research questions, namely: What theological contribution does an analytical study of Byang Kato's life history and theological legacy of biblical hermeneutics, understanding of African Christian identity, and his contribution to evangelical theological education make to contemporary biblical Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa?

The research involved a qualitative single case study (Barnes III 2009, 86; Creswell 2012, 465). I sought to explore Byang Kato's life, his articulation of African Christian identity, biblical hermeneutics, and his contribution to evangelical theological education in sub-Saharan Africa. The theoretical foundation for case studies lies in the fact that important lessons could be learned from a single case (Sensing 2011, 143). Cases are learning tools that present narratives of lived and real experiences so that others can vicariously enter the experience of the character (156). In this

instance, the life and ministry of an African leader, rising from a traditional religious background belief to contributing to shaping evangelical Christianity in the African context is explored. The findings may be an important contribution to the development of the contemporary church in Africa, even more so as it is the majority church in global Christianity.

The life of Kato from birth to death was explored in a biographical sketch and the debates and critical engagements with other theologians of his time were examined. This tends to sharpen and clarify his theological stance and that of the protagonists (Creswell 2012, 465–84). Thus, the approach was descriptive, qualitative, and to a limited extent, ethnographic. The researcher is one of Byang Kato's successors at the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, even though several decades exist between them. Nevertheless, access to information, from people who were Kato's contemporaries and family members, and the fact that the researcher is going through similar experiences, enhances the depth of the exploration of Kato's life and theological contribution. The primary source of material was Kato's works and other comprehensive biographical material put together by Christien Breman and made accessible by the Association of Christian Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA Tool, Number 16). Empirical data was also collated from field interviews of a purposive group of people who knew Kato and were willing to voluntarily participate in the project. I will now turn to a brief biographical synopsis of Kato's life and ministry.

3. A Biographical Sketch of Byang Kato

Born and raised in Kwoi, rural northern Nigeria, Kato was exposed to traditional religious beliefs as a protégé under the mentorship of his father

before conversion to the Christian faith. His father was a fetish priest³ of a local deity known as Pop-ku (Baba 2017). A few months after Kato's birth, he was dedicated as a fetish priest, destined to succeed his father (Haye 1986, 17). Worship of a deity is common in African traditional religions (ATR). African spirituality or worship of the deity by African peoples has been referred to by various terms: animism, idol worship, paganism and heathenism, witchcraft, fetishism, magic, juju, primitive religion, or ancestral veneration (Kato 1975, 18–24). The Supreme Being and creator seems to be far removed from reality, and people relate to lesser gods in their worship, a distortion of the valid concept of a Supreme Being.

Kato explores the religion of his Jaba people as a paradigm of African traditional religions and states: “Jaba do not have the fully-developed polytheism scholars sometimes claim for West Africa. But they do have the concept of a Supreme Being, a notion of future life, and some views of sacrifice.” (Kato 1975, 29). However, Kato states further: “The chief object of their worship is not Nom, the Supreme Being. Apart from verbal references, nothing in practice is done in connection with Nom. They do not worship Nom though they have him constantly in their language.” (33) Thus, as in many other African cultures, the Supreme Being is approached through intermediaries or idols.

Kato demystifies African Traditional Religions, which bring fear and control the life of people. According to Kato, worship of the deity was humanistic, and its motivation was for material benefits. The cult promised power and control and protection (Kato 1974a, 38; cf. Turaki 2017, 37–39).

3 Fetish: According to Kato: “fetishism refers to a created object used by worshippers of African traditional religions. For example, use of charms and amulets, believed to inherit special spiritual powers for protection against malevolent spirits. However, fetishism is only an aspect of the ATRs as a whole.” *Theological Pitfalls...*1975, p.21–22

The goal is neither the glory of the Supreme Being nor even of the lesser gods, but that women and children may serve the needs of men (Kato 1975, 47). Followers believe that the world is full of spirits that are out there to hurt people, and there are hardly any good spirits (47). So, the life of the Jaba person is dominated by fear.

A critical evaluation of Kato's life and ministry no doubt includes, but is not restricted to the socio-cultural factors that shaped his worldview as well as his formative experiences before and during his time as a minister of Christ. Kato was born and raised during the colonial era in Nigeria (1900–1963) and witnessed the end of colonial rule when Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1963 (Turaki 2010, 113). Before the arrival of the British rulers in Nigeria, Islamic colonialists in the early 1800s imposed the Islamic religion, expanding the slave trade and creating a polarized society in the Northern states. There was a social divide between Muslims and non-Muslims, with the former being the dominant force and subjugating the latter. The non-Muslims were treated as second-class citizens by the Muslims (Byimui 2013, 22; Turaki 2017; Abar 2019). Northern Nigeria was divided into two different regions; the far north, dominated by Islam with Fulani and Hausa being the main people groups, and the Middle Belt region to the South dominated by Traditional African Religion, with several ethnic groups. The far North of Nigeria is surrounded by Islamic countries farther north, with links to Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, and the Maghreb, and is influenced by Arab civilization.

Kwoi, the birthplace of Kato, is the administrative headquarters of the Jaba people in the southern part of Northern Nigeria presently. Jaba people are believed to be descendants of Africa's earliest civilization, with the archaeological discovery of the Nok terracotta heads in the 1990s pointing to the existence of Nok culture, which dates to between 500 BC and

AD 200 (Abar 2019; Turaki 2010, 31; Byimui 2013). The Jaba was one of the ethnic groups that were resistant to Islam and mostly followed traditional African religion and therefore, was a target in the Islamic raids to enforce Islam and for slavery. The recent Boko Haram incidents in Northern Nigeria demonstrate the impact on the historical socio-political context of the region. Kato also lived through the Nigerian Civil or Biafra war, fought between the Federal Government and the Secessionist State of Biafra, from 6 July 1967 to 15 January 1970. The State of Biafra was mostly the homeland of the Igbo tribe or people from Southern Nigeria who felt they could not co-exist with the North-led Federal government.

Kato was educated in the Sudan Inland Mission (SIM) Christian mission school in Kwoi and at the same time was self-taught. He first heard the gospel message from a missionary lady in the village square and followed his friend to the Sunday school to hear more of the gospel message. Despite his father's objection, he would eventually enroll in the primary school of the Christian mission. Kato's heart was stirred when he heard a Bible story, told by his Nigerian teacher, about Noah and the ark and God's plan of salvation in saving Noah and his family (Gen 6:9–8:22). Kato's understanding of the story made him come to appreciate the need for the salvation of humans from the devastating consequences of sin, and the way of escape or salvation offered by God in Jesus Christ. He saw the need to make a personal choice of accepting Jesus Christ as his Savior that day, to escape the wrath of God as a sinner (Breman 1995, 37; Hays 1986, 19). Testifying about his conversion, Kato wrote:

Finally, a day came when I knew I had to decide what I would do. I had to face these facts: Juju could not save my soul. Juju demands bloody sacrifices—often human sacrifices. Juju demands torture, keeps women and children in fear. Juju

priests claim they have the power of life and death over anyone who fails to give the required number of goats, rams, and cocks. These priests are a terror to everyone! (Kato 1962, 13).

Kato worked hard to complete his primary grade. His next step was to study on his own, and he took correspondence courses to sit and pass the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary and Advanced level examinations, to gain entrance to Igbaja Theological Seminary in Nigeria and the London Bible College, respectively (Haye 1986, 30–34). He was one of the first African students to graduate from the famous London Bible College (now London School of Theology) with a Bachelor of Divinity, and the first African evangelical Christian to earn a Doctor of Theology degree from Dallas Theological Seminary in the United States of America (Bowers 2008, 5).

He raised a family of his own, with a Nigerian spouse and three children in the same community in which he was born. He also worked among his compatriots as a teacher, had a career in print media as a writer and counselor, and was a pastor and denominational leader, before launching on the international scene, for further and higher education and ministry (Haye 1986; Breman 1995, 36–48). The avant-garde event of Kato's short earthly career was his role as the first African General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar—AEAM (now Association of Evangelicals in Africa—AEA). As General Secretary, Kato also held the position of Executive Secretary of the AEA Theology Commission (Bowers 2016, 2; Tienou 1982). Kato's work and contribution to the church earned him the distinction of Father of evangelical theology in Africa (Kapteina 2006, 61; Palmer 2004; Shirik 2019). Kato's role as General Secretary of AEAM lasted only about two years, before he died a tragic death, by drowning in the Indian Ocean at Mombasa, Kenya (Haye 1986, 91; Bremen 1995).

Kato is remembered more for his concern about the theological trends and malaise in the Church in Africa and his vision of possible solutions to certain theological pitfalls (Kato 1975). He took a critical and radical view of the theological trends espoused by many of his fellow African theologians, like John Mbiti, Bolaji Idowu, and Harry Sawyerr. Kato, for example, had concerns about nationalistic loyalties being exalted above biblical fidelity, the uncritical merging of African traditional religious beliefs with Christianity and beliefs, and practices of African Christians that were inconsistent with the Bible. Kato took on the church establishment in contending for a theological direction different from the other theologians. I will turn to his theologian legacy, along the lines of the thematic areas selected in this study.

4. Kato's Theological Legacy

To discern Kato's theological perspectives, the researcher needed to explore his personal development, his hermeneutics, through the lenses of the theological debates, and his contribution to promoting sound evangelical theological education in sub-Saharan Africa.

4.1 Kato's Biblical hermeneutic

4.1.1 Biblical doctrine

At the heart of Kato's theology is the place of the Bible itself. He elevated the place of the Bible for theologizing and made a clear distinction between African traditional religions and Christianity. The assumptions people have about the Bible itself are a critical defining factor in the interpretation and application of Scripture. Kato insisted that the Bible was the sole source of Christian theology. He was unwavering in his belief and doctrine

of the Bible (Biblicism). Kato held a high view or orthodox view of the Bible as opposed to the liberal and neo-orthodox views of many of the other theologians. The Bible is God's special revealed and inspired word, as originally recorded in Scripture (the written word) and revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ (2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Pet 1:20–21).

The liberal view holds that the Bible is a record of human religious experience and the history of human interaction with God. Proponents question the veracity of miracles and prophecies. For the liberals, the inspiration of the Bible is not different from other works of people and therefore, subject to error and fallibility. They rely on scientific and rational explanations of biblical narratives. The third position is neo-orthodoxy. These may partially affirm orthodox beliefs and reject liberalism. However, the neo-orthodox do not affirm the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture and rely on allegorical tools for the interpretation of the Bible (Kunhiyop 2012, 6–7; Kato 1975). According to Kato (1974b, n. p.), the liberals accept some parts of the Bible and reject others. The evangelicals accept all the sixty-six canonical books of the Bible as God-breathed, without error in the original manuscripts, faithfully transmitted, and trustworthy (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19–21; Exod 7: 1; Jer 1:9; Matt 1:22).

Some critics view the biblist's view of the Bible as naïve but often they do not give the rightful place to the Christian Scripture. Bomboro writes:

A truly evangelical reading of Scripture would be a gospel-oriented reading of Scripture, where the Bible's in-built hermeneutic of Christocentrism would override special interest interpretations; that self-presenting biblical hermeneutic already stands codified in at least two other extra-biblical sources of authority—'the canon of Truth,' and the classic,

consensual interpretation of Scripture. These three things, together, preserve the Bible's authoritative witness, nature, and content from fraudulent biblicist manipulations and misappropriations. (Bomboro 2014, 84).

Kato advocated for authentic reading and interpretation of Scripture and did not see much value in linking biblical understanding with African traditional religious worldview system, as then advocated by others.

4.1.2 Kato's exegetical approach

Another aspect of Kato's hermeneutics is his exegetical approach. This is informed by his spiritual formation, which started with hearing the gospel for the first time, in his mother tongue, in the village. Kato pursued advanced theological training in important evangelical seminaries in Africa, Europe, and the United States of America, from undergraduate to postgraduate or doctoral level.

Kato believed in the literal approach to the interpretation of Scripture, interpreting words and sentences in their ordinary and usual understanding (Kato 1975, 78). Kato was convinced that the literal approach was consistent with biblical characters from the Old Testament, like Ezra, through the Desert Fathers, and the reformers, like Tertullian, Luther, Calvin, and others (80). Expounding on the meaning of literal interpretation, Ice (2009, 1) writes: "This means interpretation which gives to every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking". This approach is also known as the literal grammatico-historical interpretation of Scripture. According to Kato (1975, 78): "Only by following the normal grammatico-historical interpretation would one be free from extreme subjectivism. To follow the

allegorical method or to spiritualize normal concepts necessarily leads to the subjectivism and preconceived notions". The literal approach is a well-established tradition for Bible interpretation and does not mean literalistic interpretation but taking the word of God at face value.

Kato also held the dispensational view of eschatology, a doctrine with a diversity of opinions among Christians. Opinions are split between postmillennialism, amillennialism, and premillennialism with belief in the second advent of Christ (Kato 1975, 81–82; cf. Ice 2009). Kato was also Christocentric and observed the daily discipline of reading and studying God's word seriously. He also encouraged family members to do the same, in addition to daily corporate prayers as a family.

4.1.3 Biblical interpretation and application

Kato's Bible doctrines and exegetical approach informed his Bible interpretation and application. This was demonstrated in his confronting some theological issues many African theologians espoused and contending for what he believed was the biblical position. These included the relationship between African traditional religion and Christianity, the conception of sin and salvation, ancestor veneration and true worship, liberal ecumenism and unity of the church, and the controversy about the continuity or discontinuity of the African traditional religious beliefs with the Christian faith. Kato singularly had an opposite view on these issues to the views of many of the contemporary theologians of his time.

Kato established a clear theological divide between liberal Protestant or mainline church theologians and evangelicals. Several theologians in Africa advocated linking African traditional religions with Christianity, in ways that Kato thought were syncretistic. He contended for

the uniqueness of Christ as the only way for salvation, the discontinuity of African traditional religions, and emphasized the all-sufficiency of the gospel message for faith and conduct. He argued for the Bible as the only source of Christian theology and rejected African traditional religion as a source for Christian theology, especially as espoused by proponents of African theology.

The knowledge of God in African traditional religion was not enough to connect with the Supreme God, except through lesser gods, created by humans and with no efficacious means for salvation. African traditional religions claim to give worship to the Supreme God but are also characterized by ministrations to spirits and ancestors and worship of the Supreme God including intermediaries. Mbiti writes:

Sacrifices and offerings constitute one of the commonest acts of worship among African peoples ... 'Sacrifices' refer to cases where animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal, in part or in whole, to God, supernatural beings, spirits or the living dead [*ancestors*, my addition]. 'Offerings' refer to the remaining cases which do not involve the killing of an animal, being chiefly the presentation of foodstuffs and other items. In some cases, sacrifices and offerings are directed to one or more of the following: God, spirits and living dead. Recipients in the second and third categories are regarded as intermediaries between God and men, so that God is the ultimate Recipient whether or not the worshippers are aware of that. (Mbiti 1989, 58).

Thus, the question of salvation and the unique and exclusive claim for the sacrificial death of Christ as the only means of salvation and access to God was placed in doubt. Kato appeals to Scripture to counter Mbiti's assertion for continuity and writes:

In advocating that non-Christian beliefs [*like ATR*, my addition] be left to exist, Mbiti gives the impression that both Christianity and non-Christian [*ATR*] religions are valuable and deserve co-existing. The Apostle Paul declares, 'And for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here' (2 Cor 5:17, Jerusalem Bible; cf. Eph 2:1-3)' (Kato 1975, 70).

Any notion of using African traditional religion or any other religious belief and means, apart from the unique revelation of God in the Bible and Jesus Christ, was rejected. Kunyhiop (2012, 79) observes: "It is too optimistic to think that the perception and understanding of God in the African worldview is the same as the understanding we derive from the bible". Kato believed that Christianity cannot and should not cohabit with any other religion.

Kato's views would earn him praise from his followers but be derided by his opponents. He was charged with naivety and that he was a mouthpiece for Western missionaries who discarded African traditional values and religions (Bediako 1992; Oduyoye 1986). Kato was denounced for criticizing the theology of others and he was deemed to have no theology of his own. Some questioned his Africanness, even though Kato's African identity in terms of "ethnicity, affiliation, ancestry, and geography" (Turaki 2010, 169) was well established. He was probably more African, in this respect than some of his opponents. I will now turn to Kato's response to the African Christian identity question.

4.2 African Christian identity

Kato prided himself as a Christian African. Of prime importance, was his commitment to his faith as a Christian and less so that he was African; not to

talk about his nationality or tribe (2 Cor 5:17; John 1:12). Like Saint Paul in the Letter to the Philippians, Kato had reason to boast about his African nativity or ancestry, but considered that worthless, because of his new life in Christ (Phil 3:4–7). African intellectuals had given high priority to the subject of African identity in every area of endeavor. The key assumption is that the influence and maltreatment of their slave masters and colonizers had led to a split personality or loss of identity. In the struggle for independence, selfhood and cultural revival were critical elements of the beliefs of burgeoning Pan-Africanists. Africa was characterized by an overwhelming commitment to self-direction and a revival of interest in Africa's heritage. Bowers (2008, 3) observes the need to seek and explicate an African identity and authenticity against the domineering influence of Europe. Along with this came the determination to critique and renounce the West and affirm Africa's traditional life and assert African distinctive dignity and worth. This commitment to self-identity and resistance to its unwelcome political, economic, and cultural embrace, became the fundamental force for African self-reflection for much of the second half of the twentieth century (Bowers 2008, 5). When African intellectuals ask questions about what it means to be African, African Theology sets itself to respond to the question about what it means to be an African Christian. And when the African intellectual turns to African traditional cultural heritage to explain its distinctiveness, African Theology proposed to look to Africa's traditional religious heritage for framing its own distinctive identity (Bowers 2008, 6; Ngong 2007, 114).

For African theologians like Idowu, Mbiti, Mugambi, and Bediako, answering these questions has been taken to be the defining task of African Theology (Bowers 2008, 6). In the quest for Africans to deliver themselves from the self-identity challenge, Kato argues for a third race, salvation in Christ. It is only in Christ that he finds true liberation and identity—

authentically Christian and truly African—Christian African (Kato 1974a; Breman 1995, 366). Kato certainly valued his African identity and was never separated from his people and reached out to connect them with the gospel to win them to Christ. Ngong observes: “There is no doubt that the past is important but to tie anyone’s identity essentially to the past is biblically, theologically, and philosophically problematic (Ngong 2007, 135).

Kato strived to promote sound biblical theological education on the content, to address the theological malaise that was creeping into the church in Africa.

4.3 Contribution to evangelical theological education

Kato planted the seeds for evangelical theology in his seminal work: *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kato 1975). Among other contributions, Kato crafted the blueprint for evangelical theological education in Africa (Nystrom 2020). His plan resulted in the establishment of the first two postgraduate theological schools to serve the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, an institution for the standardization and accreditation of theological education in Africa—Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa, (now Association of Christian Theological Education in Africa)—ACTEA and the Christian Learning Materials Center (CLMC), which produced curricula and Sunday school materials for the nurture and development of children by the Church (Breman 1995; Bowers 2008, 4–5; Ferdinando 2007, 3).

Kato’s contribution to theological education went beyond Africa. He led the African delegation to the inaugural Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974. He was not only one of the plenary speakers at the Congress but also was a member of the Lausanne continuing committee. At the Lausanne forum, Kato is credited with having introduced the subject

of contextualization in evangelical theological discourse (Bowers 2008, 4; Kato 1974c, 1216–1228). Kato was also appointed secretary of the executive committee of the World Evangelical Alliance (then World Evangelical Fellowship—WEF) and the first Chair of the WEF Theology Commission (Haye 1986, 116–7). Like ACTEA, the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) was the brainchild of Kato (Bowers 2008).

5. Assessment of Kato's Theological Beliefs

The study sought to assess Kato's theological beliefs against established biblical and evangelical tenets. A brief survey of some classical or orthodox literature, consistent with mainstream evangelical understanding, about biblical hermeneutics, African Christian identity, and theological education was explored. This was to determine whether the orthodox teachings and beliefs of the Church, rooted in the Apostolic teachings in the NT Church, and handed down to the contemporary church were in resonance with Kato's teaching. No one theologian or person has the final word or has a flawless theology. "All theology involves fallible human beings interpreting God's word and will. Although we rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth, our limited knowledge and sinful nature make it possible that our interpretation is incorrect or imperfect." (Smith 2013, 39).

While Kato had his theological pitfalls, most of his submissions were not novel constructs, but restatements of what Christians have always believed, everywhere and from the time of the Apostles in the New Testament, the Reformation era, and throughout the history of the Church. John Langlois observes:

On 31st October 1517 Martin Luther triggered the Protestant Reformation by nailing ninety-five theses to the door of the

university church in Wittenberg, Saxony, Germany. These theses were not novel ideas but a restatement of fundamental truths which had been the bedrock of Christian belief since the time of the Apostles, but which had been corrupted over the centuries. Every generation has to restate the pillars of fundamental beliefs on which its society rests (Langlois 2021, 1).

Kato's perspectives were in resonance with the works of the evangelical scholars reviewed in the study and were in tandem with mainstream evangelicalism. Kato's theological propositions were mostly consensual, and Christians in other parts of the world could understand and relate to his teachings (Shirik 2019). This is an important consideration if the church in Africa could take seriously the call to reach out to other regions of the world with the normative Christian gospel, as the leading majority Christian region in the current era (Walls 1996). The study culminated in synthesizing theological constructs that characterized Kato's beliefs. I dubbed these, *Katoan Theology*.

6. Kato's Theological Corpus

Kato's life history, teachings, and apologia, explored in this study, identify some theological themes. The themes that were identified as characterizing Kato's perceived theology include eight main theological constructs, namely; (1) Personal conversion (Soteriology), (2) Radical Discipleship (Christian formation), (3) Bible Centeredness (Bibliology), (4) Christ-centered (Christology), (5) Christian-African Identity (Ecclesiology), (6) Safeguarding biblical Christianity in Africa (Missiology), (7) The Second Coming or Personal return of Christ to earth (Eschatology), and (8) Power of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology).

Analysis of the data or information in the study comprised several themes and sub-themes. These were coded to arrive at the eight core themes. The core themes were defined and described, drawing out relevant theological implications for the church, especially in the African context. Thus, in response to the research question, Kato provides a corpus of theological constructs that are important learning material for the contemporary church in Africa. These would make an important contribution to enhancing biblical Christianity and engaging the dominant African traditional religious worldviews for the maturation of the church in Africa. The *Katoan Theology* focused on an apologetic defense of the historic Christian faith. Kato defended the integrity and authority of the Bible, the unique person of Jesus Christ; incarnate, crucified, resurrected, ascended, and soon returning Son of God and as the only way to salvation. He defended the distinctiveness of the Christian faith from African traditional religions and the clarity of the gospel message in contextualization. Van der Walt (2011, 928) observes: “There are very few contemporary African theologians who emphasize the discontinuity between the Christian faith and the traditional African religions and cultures. The greater majority are in line with some form of synthesis; pleading for various degrees of continuity between the gospel and traditional African beliefs.” Thus, the unique but mainstream evangelical articulations would constitute an important lesson for the evangelical church in Africa.

7. Conclusion

In exploring Kato’s life and theological legacy, the research findings make an important contribution to African theological discourse and missionary activities in global Christianity. This is particularly important, given the status of the African church, evangelical and Pentecostal in persuasion,

as the majority church in global Christianity. The seeming controversy Kato sparked in theological circles in Africa has not gone away. Even those theologians of the evangelical persuasion, who hail Kato for the defense of a biblical worldview, tend to hold a middle position. Many do not seem to have a clear stance on the uniqueness of biblical claims and are straddling opposing positions, between leaning toward ideas espoused in African traditional religions and the uniqueness of the biblical message, as the supreme and all-sufficient premise for authentic biblical Christianity Kato contended for.

The study contributes to scholarship and the mission of the church in the following main ways: (1) It paints a portrait of Byang Kato, an important theological leader, to be visible and accessible, as a mirror for reflective practice, especially in the African context. Kato's journey in overcoming prevalent traditional religious worldviews is a useful example of appropriating the transformative power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (2) Given Byang Kato's stature, this may not be the last word on exploring Kato, and therefore, the study provides a substantial bibliography for future studies on Kato.

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A Theological-Biblical Anthropology of Sin in light of a Kierkegaardian Philosophy of Human Subjectivity

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Abstract

This article proposes a new approach to the anthropology of sin using the concept of subjectivity from the philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard. The degradation of the theme of sin in society calls for its rethinking by theology. This research argues for a self-evident approach, considering human subjectivity as the key to a new anthropology of sin. It also claims a self-evident approach, considering human subjectivity as the key to contemporary anthropology of sin. While the first section defines the scope of this research, the second analyzes Kierkegaard's anthropological insights, with particular emphasis on sin and subjectivity. It focuses on his concepts of anxiety, despair, untruth, and the self. In the third section, his ideas are theologically evaluated throughout history, considering selected theologians' thoughts, also raising new insights. The fourth submits the concepts under the biblical evaluation, proposing new concepts for the

anthropology of sin. Finally, in the fifth section, a theological formulation is elaborated, presenting new approaches for the anthropology of sin and raising some implications for theology.

1. Introduction

This article develops theological anthropology that deals with the problem of sin from the perspective of Kierkegaard's thoughts on subjectivity. It departs from Kierkegaard's thinking but is not restricted by it. It is an anthropology of sin because sin has no objective existence outside of human life. Sin is not an entity disconnected from the human, even though Scripture addresses it also objectively.

The development of an anthropology of sin that is both biblical and philosophical, considering human subjectivity, can help theology acquire an up-to-date approach that is more sensitive to the demands of the contemporary human being. The very meaning of the term sin has been degraded, to the point of generating a "sinless society," as well argued by Mann (2015). Studying sin's subjectivity based on Kierkegaard's philosophy can help restore the proper theological value of the subject. While one must recognize those traditional definitions of sin such as "transgression" and "missing the mark" are defined in ethical and legal terms (e.g., Grudem 2021, 403–421; Champlin 2018, 1318; Berkhof 2001, 214–216), they should not be abandoned. However, today's society has misunderstood and rejected these definitions.

Postmodernity is the age of hysterical subjectivity, which, by "killing God" with the philosophy of Nietzsche, Freud, and others, also murdered objective truth, thereby losing the frames of reality. This relativistic subjectivism is emerging in society, requiring theology to reemphasize the pillars of truth that sustain it. However, I argue, that theology must do this

in constant relation to human subjectivity. Theologians must transcend their preconceptions about subjective thinkers because many of them were influenced to find answers for genuine human anguishes. Their answers shaped this relativistic era, maybe because they approached something on which the church was silent. While it is vital to understand their questions as human longings expressed philosophically, theology is not compelled to accept their answers. Theology can rethink the problem more appropriately.

Thus, Kierkegaard's philosophy is particularly important for emphasizing human subjectivity from a Christian perspective without neglecting its objectivity. For Kierkegaard (2009, 29), "Christianity is spirit; spirit is inwardness; inwardness is subjectivity." For him, subjectivity is always relative to the self, while objectivity is external, independent of the individual (Stewart 2017, 53). Kierkegaard considered objective truth as uncertain, for history and science as sources of objective truths are constantly changing (Kierkegaard 2009, 21–30; Watkin 2010, 259). It is not that he despised history, but he argued that historical knowledge is always by approximation, for no one has all the objective information about it. Even if someone knows everything about a biblical historical account, this knowledge will have no eternal value, for what is necessary is its subjective appropriation. To speak of subjective truth is to talk about a reality that can be appropriated and checked inwardly. As Stewart (2017, 55) commented, "The key point in this is that the individual, with its own reason, must test whether what has been stated is true." Therefore, it is necessary to understand Kierkegaard's argument detached from relativism.

Due to this article's philosophical and theological nature, the next section will analyze Kierkegaard's philosophy concerning the anthropology of sin. The third will be a study of the subject in Christian history. The fourth conducts a theological-biblical examination, raising crucial concepts from

Scripture. The fifth summarizes, formulating an anthropology of sin based on the insights presented before, and some implications.

2. The Kierkegaardian Anthropology of Sin

2.1 Life and influences

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen on May 5, 1813, dying in the same city on November 11, 1855. At that time, Copenhagen was a poor city in a poor country (Stewart 2017, 23). His father, Michael Pederson Kierkegaard, married Ane Sørensdatter Lund shortly after the decease of his first wife. Ane worked at Michael's house, and shortly after the death of his first wife, the two had an affair, resulting in her pregnancy (Lowrie 2013, 22; Rae 2010, 9; Watkin 2000, 7). Michael married Ane just thirteen months after the death of his first wife, with Ane pregnant with a girl, who was born just four months after the wedding. The couple had seven children, Søren being the youngest. These events produced a feeling of guilt in Kierkegaard's father during his whole life, which directly affected Søren's upbringing. His interest in the subject of sin, guilt, and anxiety would accompany him throughout his life.

Kierkegaard's melancholic mood would influence his writings, something that he called a "thorn in the flesh" (Watkin 2010, 165). However, this melancholy was not depression but the result of an awareness of his duty and the burden of fulfilling the obligations he thought were imposed on him. In one of his journals, he wrote: "Something new has been born within me, for I understand my task as an author differently" (Kierkegaard 2015, 371). Kierkegaard (2004, 496–509) believed that everyone has an existential task to be accomplished and saw his task as that of Socrates, whose mission as a "midwife of the truth" influenced him (Plato, *Theaet.*

148e–149a; Kierkegaard 2009a, 341). Indeed, as Watkin (2010, 165) argues, Kierkegaard’s task was the ostensive writing in opposition to the corrupted Christendom in Denmark.

In Kierkegaard’s thesis about irony, Socrates is presented as an ironist whose task was to destroy the illusions of those who think they know something (Kierkegaard 2015a, 204–205; Söderquist 2015, 352). Like Socrates, Kierkegaard would use irony to question people’s erroneous beliefs, bringing them to the awareness of their inwardness. This background is necessary because Kierkegaard used a subjective approach, leading people to evaluate the truth of their Christianity for themselves (Watkin 2000, 50). Consequently, sin was one of the main subjects addressed by Kierkegaard, because it is the point of departure for an authentic religious existence. He claimed that no relationship with God is possible without recognizing sin and having the conscience of existing before God (Kierkegaard 2010, 103–107; Rae 2010, 90).

2.2 Kierkegaard’s Anthropology

To systematize some of Kierkegaard’s thoughts, one must be aware that many of his ideas are scattered in different books. As each book was intended as part of his life project, it is crucial to see them intertwined.¹

2.2.1 Kierkegaard’s Concept of the Self

Kierkegaard opens *Sickness unto Death* with an astonishing and reflective statement (Kierkegaard 2013, 13). He defined in metaphysical terms the biblical teaching that the human is the synthesis between the physical and

¹ Although many of Kierkegaard’s books were written using pseudonyms, I consider them the opinion of Kierkegaard, as he admits (Kierkegaard 2009, 210–251).

the psychical; however, he is more than just a body merged with a soul because this synthesis also relates to itself, meaning that it is self-conscious (Evans 2019, 5,11; Rae 2010, 92–93). Besides, the synthesis self-related is also related to the one who established the relation, God.

For Kierkegaard, the self is a human being, but not every human is a self; for the self is the authentic human (Kierkegaard 2013, 79). Every human has the potential to become an authentic self, but only those who consciously relate to themselves, and God, exist in authentic selfhood (Davenport 2015, 230). Therefore, a kinetic nature of the self can be identified.² The human being inwardly changes from a simple physical-psychical synthesis to a self-conscious synthesis and then to an authentic self that relates appropriately with God. For him, this authentic self is a person inwardly becoming Christlike (Jochen 2018, 1–6; Rae 2010, 93). Kierkegaard's famous theory about the stages of the self is related to this concept (Davenport 2015, 230; Glenn 2007, 5–21).

Kierkegaard's concept of the spirit is synonymous with the self, for the self is the spirit (Evans 2019, 5–6; Watkin 2010, 240–241). He emphasized that only faith in Christ can change human nature from a spiritless to a spiritual person (Evans 2019, 41; Jochen 2018, 102–105; Rae 2010, 56). Kierkegaard's kinetic definition of the spirit is coherent with the Bible, as the term refers to the aspect of the human being related to God (Wolff 2007, 67–68; Schultz 1996, 744). Moreover, his argument that a human can be alive and yet not be a self is also coherent with Scripture (e.g., Matt 8:22; Rom 5:12–14; Eph 2:1; Col 2:13).

2 From the Greek κίνησις (movement; motion).

2.2.2 Kierkegaard's Concept of Sin

Kierkegaard dealt with sin in most of his writings. He used different vocabulary from the theological, occasionally using indirect communication, sometimes philosophical reasoning, and at other times speaking as a faithful preacher delivering a sermon. However, he always wrote as a Christian thinker (Jochen 2018, 34; Rae 2010, 1; Kirkconnell 2012, 1).

In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard (2011) developed a psychological approach to argue that anxiety is the middle term between innocence and guilt, explaining not only how the original sin occurred but also every sin. He defended that “innocence can only be nullified by guilt” because sin only occurs through an act of the individual (Kirkconnell 2012, 45–46; Walsh 2009, 89; Dunning 1985, 13). Anxiety is therefore not sinful but the “becoming of sin,” a tension of wanting and not wanting, a type of dizziness for the soul (Kierkegaard 2011, 67). Kierkegaard also differentiated objective anxiety from subjective (62–89). For him, objective anxiety is present outside, in the world, while the subjective is an inward consequence of sin (Rae 2010, 91; Dunning 1985, 15–16). The increase of anxiety through generations explains how everyone sins, substituting Augustine's theory of biological transmission of guilt, but without conflicting with personal responsibility (Walsh 2015, 301; Barrett 1985, 59). While Kierkegaard believed in hereditary sin, he rejected its traditional interpretations, calling them “dialectic-fantastic” and “historical-fantastic,” stating that Adam was “fantastically” placed outside history (Kierkegaard 2011, 27; Walsh 2009, 84; Barrett 1985, 52).

While anxiety explains the “dizziness” of how sin arises, Kierkegaard's concept of despair tackles the sin itself (Kierkegaard 2013). He declared that “dizziness corresponds, in the category of the psychical, to what despair is in the category of the spirit” (16). Based on his concept

of the self, Kierkegaard argued that the lack of one or more relations causes an inward imbalance (Evans 2019, 13; Watkin 2000, 28). Despair is, therefore, sin in existential mode. It is the misrelation of the self with itself and with God, for which the only solution is faith in Christ (Evans 2019, 13, 19; Watkin 2010, 238). Despair is an internal betrayal of the self with himself (Hühn and Schwab 2015, 80). For each one of the relations constituting the self, Kierkegaard highlighted different types of despair. They are essential categories to understand different expressions of subjective sin.

Finally, Kierkegaard (2019, 33–36; 2009, 175) also defined sin as untruth. For him, untruth is the subjective inconsistency, the alienation from the one who is the Truth (Rae 2010, 90). Although Kierkegaard (2009, 174–175) agrees with Socrates that subjectivity is truth because it is examined inwardly, he also asserted that, because of sin, subjectivity is also untruth (Walsh 2009, 42–43). He argued that from the moment the individual sins, untruth becomes a reality in the will and desires, imprisoning entirely (Kierkegaard 2019, 34–36). Only a savior can free the individual from this captivity, reconciling with the truth. Therefore, he maintained that the solution to untruth is not recognizing objective knowledge, as the Greeks believed, but the subjective appropriation of truth. The acquisition of knowledge, like a mathematical theorem or historical facts, will have no eternal, ultimate value for the individual to solve his untruth (Westphal 2014, 126; Rae 2010, 52). The solution is Christianity, not because it can be understood through different dogmas, but because it is spiritual and should be subjectively appropriated.

3. A Panoramic Overview of Sin and Subjectivity in Church History

This section is a critical overview of the main ideas regarding the anthropology of sin in church history. It is an important step to relate Kierkegaard's thoughts with others throughout history.

3.1 *The Human as God's image*

Some church fathers, like Irenaeus and Tertullian (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.6:1; 3.23:5; Tertullian, *Adv. Praxeas.* 12), interpreted a difference between image and likeness of Genesis 1:26. Irenaeus argued that humanity lost God's similitude by sinning but kept his image. God's likeness would be restored only through Christ (Irenaeus, *Epid.* 22, 55). For Tertullian and Origen, God's image was the reason (Tertullian, *An.* 16; Origen, *Princ.* 1.1.5). For Augustine (*Trin.* 11.11–12), it was the soul, envisaged as a trinity of intelligence, memory, and will. Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* 1.93.6) also equated the image with the soul in terms of rationality and will. They rationalized the soul avoiding other aspects of God's image in humanity.

For Luther, God's image would be recovered by the Christian only after death, because humanity lost it by sinning (Raunio 2010, 35–36; Luther 1904, 115). Karl Barth rejected the previous theology that considered the *imago Dei* to be some analogy between God and man, claiming that God's image was an existence of dialectical confrontation (Barth 2004b, CD III.1, 184, 195). Barth was probably influenced by Heidegger's philosophy in this (Webster 2004, 59; Oshima 1973). Finally, for Pannenberg, God's image was not revealed in the creation, but only in Christ, who is God's eschatological image for humanity (Echeverría 2013, 748; Pannenberg 2009a, 316–317). For him, God's image was the task of human beings.

Thus, historically, three main interpretations of God's image can be recognized: essentialist (similitude in man's essence), relational (similitude as a dialectical relation), and functional (similitude as a function or a task; Jančovič 2019). Each perspective has a value that should not be rejected, for all depict different angles of the same subject revealed in the Bible. Nevertheless, it is necessary to develop an integrated perspective that considers the three approaches (Hoekema 2018, 81–118; Garrett 2014, 463). Later it will be argued that this integrated perspective of God's image is possible when the human is understood as God's theomorphism.

3.2 A brief history of the theology of original sin

Scriptures affirm that all men sinned, falling short of God's glory, receiving death as a reward (Rom 3:10, 23; 6:23). Thus, teaching the universality of sin is a necessary truth not to be neglected (Garrett 2014, 553–556). There are three interpretations of the universality of sin and its relation to Adam, represented in Pelagius, Augustine, and the Eastern Fathers (Farris 2020, 140; Garrett 2014, 559).

Pelagius denied the kinship between Adam's sin and humanity, defending that sin was learned only through example (Champlin 2018, 1320; Cross and Livingstone 2005, 1257). His solution valued man's freedom but annulled humanity's collective relationship with Adam (Thiselton 2002, 108; Farris 2020, 141). Augustine's interpretation did the opposite, seeing humanity as part of a collective that was all present in Adam (Augustine, Civ. 13.14, 1; Houck 2020, 19). When Adam sinned, all humanity sinned in him; therefore, everyone inherits Adam's guilt and sinful nature. Similarly, Aquinas stated that original sin is the lack of Adam and Eve's original justice (Thom. Sum. 2.82.1). The reformers' interpretations were analogous to Augustine's, as John Calvin proposed that Adam sinned as the head,

representing humanity (Farris 2020, 141). Jonathan Edwards developed a similar reading but using a metaphysical approach, treating humanity as a branch from the same tree as Adam (Edwards 2009, 219–223; Rea 2011, 332–345). Both Calvin and Edwards reframed in their own way, the same Augustinian idea. For them, every person inherits Adam's guilt and his sinful nature.

The third interpretation did not affirm the transmission of Adam's guilt to the offspring, but only sinfulness, arguing for individual responsibility. This was the perspective of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus (Justin, 1 *Apol.* 61, 10; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.2, 7; Farris 2020, 145–146). According to them, man inherits Adam's corrupted nature, but not his guilt, because guilt is related to personal sins. This is also the Arminian and Wesleyan interpretation (Farris 2020, 146). While the Pelagian view emphasized the individual over the collective, and the Augustinian the collective over the individual, the third interpretation synthesized the collective and the individual, arguing for the universality of sin, but not the inheritance of guilt. This third interpretation is coherent with Kierkegaard's argument.

A fourth interpretation was raised by Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg, who rejected the doctrine of original sin, explaining sin using Kantian and Hegelian arguments (Hocknull 2016, 91–92; Peters 2014, 378; Pannenberg 2009a, 378–380; Barth 2009, 265; 2004, *CD* IV.1, 501; Buckley 1995, 367). Kant and Hegel implied that sin was an inescapable process necessary for developing the spirit, an argument denounced by Kierkegaard (Kirkconnell 2012, 42). Barth and Pannenberg ignored parts of Scripture to reject the original sin.

3.3 Sin and Subjectivity

In the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, the human being is addressed in terms of interiority and exteriority (e.g., *Ign. Magn.* 13; *Ign. Trall.* 1; *Ign. Philad.* 11), reminding the churches that faith involves the entire existence (Vall 2013, 121). He longed to evidence externally his inward faith through martyrdom (*Ign. Magn.* 14,15; *Rom.*, 2). Nevertheless, the concept of faith gradually changed to a rationalized one, pictured as an acknowledgment of Christian truths.

One can perceive a departure from apostolic anthropology and an approach to the Greek. First, from Justin Martyr, through Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Augustine, the Hellenization of theology was a growing process. The human being became dichotomized and trichotomized, and the soul was equated to reason (Justin, *2 Apol.* 10,1; *Triph.* 4,1,2,5; Tertullian, *Adv. Praxeas.* 5; Augustine, *Lib.* 1.16.34; *Quant. An.* 13.22).

Secondly came a movement away from the Hellenized theology. Luther rebuked scholasticism for using Greek philosophy as a theological lens, proposing a return to the Bible (Raunio 2010, 30; Hagglund 1981, 182). However, Luther dichotomized faith and reason by isolating theology into a ghetto that eventually created the conditions for the appearance of liberalism. Barth and Pannenberg also rejected the Hellenized theology but approached German idealism, bringing liberal elements to their theology (Barth 2004a, *CD* III.3,14; Rae 2019, 133; Frame 2015, 265). Pannenberg (2008, 134) accused Augustine of being responsible for the church's repressive emphasis on the body, and stigmatizing sexuality. He agreed with Nietzsche's accusation that Christianity repressed human instincts, redirecting them inwardly in the form of self-aggression.

Throughout history, sin has been sometimes identified in subjective categories that need to be considered. Justin Martyr approached it as a type

of negative faith, whereas Eve believed in the serpent's *logos* (Justin, *Triph.* 100, 5, 6). Augustine considered pride as an exacerbated self-love, the source of every sin (Augustine, *Civ.* 14.13). Barth argued about three expressions of sin as pride, sloth, and falsehood (Barth 2004, *CD* IV.1, 142–146). Finally, Pannenberg claimed that sin is also self-aggression (Pannenberg 2009a, 361–362; Hocknull 2016, 90). The depictions of sin as a negative faith, pride, sloth, falsehood, and self-aggression provide a rich approach to sin. I argue that these and other categories of subjective sin are depicted by Kierkegaard (2013) under the category of despair, and they need to be considered.

4. A Theological-Biblical Examination of Human Subjectivity

The Bible was not written systematically but through narratives, with God interacting with people and nations in historical events. It should be noted that the Creator chose to disclose himself and his will mainly through his relationship with patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. Besides, God's truth is perceived amid the intersubjective dynamic created between the reader and the biblical narrative; between the one approaching the Scriptures with faith and the biblical characters whose lives are portrayed.

This intersubjective relationship arises through the empathy imprinted by God on human beings, which is the ability to put oneself in the other's shoes. This empathy relates to the human capacity for recursivity, a concept well known in mathematics, linguistics, and psychology (Beckstead 2015; Corballis 2014; Watumull et al. 2014; Chomsky 1998; 2010). A reader can recursively place himself in Abraham's shoes, sharing his emotions while walking to sacrifice Isaac. Recursively, the reader can experience the anguish of Jesus in the Gethsemane and is even able to put himself in Judas's shoes, feeling his bitterness. Recursivity is thinking and thinking about thinking because the human consciousness itself is recursive

(Beckstead 2015, xxvi; Watumull et al. 2014). In every new moment, the mind dives into its consciousness bringing new ideas, acts, memories, feelings, and consequences from the decisions previously concretized. Human consciousness recursively interacts with itself, self-developing, self-shaping, self-repressing, and self-accusing. Kierkegaard developed this idea of a self-interacting consciousness, where the individual can self-transcend, addressing himself as an object or imagining himself in different contexts (Kierkegaard 2010; Evans 2019, 11).

4.1 The Old Testament's Anthropology of Sin

4.1.1 Human beings as God's theomorphism

In the account of the creation, man and woman are fashioned in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26–28). Different approaches were developed around this biblical truth, as described in the last section. However, an integrated perspective of God's image only becomes evident when human beings are theologically conceived as God's theomorphism.

Humans are God's theomorphism because it was not God who was made after man's image, but humanity who was made after His resemblance. Abraham Heschel (2001, 344–357) addresses this by reasoning on Anthropopathy, the idea of whether God has feelings or not. Interpreting the prophets, he argued that “God's unconditional concern for justice is not anthropomorphism. Rather, man's concern for justice is a theomorphism” (349). For him, there are two opposite risks regarding God's passions: one that levels God to the human, humanizing the Creator as an ally of man whether doing right or wrong; and the risk of anesthetizing God by reducing him to a disconnected abstraction from human emotions (353–354). The annulment of God's passions happened through the teaching of

God's "impassibility," a Greek concept absorbed by some church fathers (Augustine, *Lib.* 1.8.18; 1.9.19; *Civ.* 9.3–5; 14.9; Cross and Livingstone 2005, 82; Heschel 2001, 325–326).

Following Heschel's argument, considering human subjectivity as a divine projection in humanity in terms of love, passion, concern for justice, and even wrath, points to something transcendent, with higher significance. If God's emotions in Scripture, like mercy, anger, and love, are mere anthropomorphisms, such texts become deceptive depictions of God. However, this is not what Scripture reveals, pointing to emotions as mediums for humanity to understand God's message. Human subjectivity is an existential bridge to grasp God's transcendency inwardly. As the ultimate theomorphic revelation, Jesus reveals together God and what it truly means to be human. Through Christ, it is revealed that human passions, as part of God's image imprinted on humanity, have significant theological meaning.

4.1.2 Creation of the self

The second important concept is that God created the human being as a self (Gen 1:26–28; 2:7,18–25), considering the inward dimensions of existence. Unlike animals, Adam was shaped from the dust merged with the breath of God (West 2018, 47; Mathews 1996, 196). As Kierkegaard (2013, 13) stated, the human is a synthesis between the finite and the infinite. As a synthesis between body and soul, a psychosomatic unity, human beings have an aesthetic dimension. The senses interact through the body with the world, leading the mind into imagination and passions. This aesthetic-self deals with desire, emotions, and imagination.

However, the human being is more than a psychosomatic synthesis. This synthesis is also self-related, meaning self-conscious, which generates

the ethical dimension in the self (Evans 2019, 11). The law is an essential aspect of this dimension; after all, humanity was created in a world immersed in God's laws. The law is the medium between the self and himself, through which self-evaluation happens, also the medium between the self and the other, and the self and God! God established objective laws for Adam and Eve, such as the order to dominate and subdue creation (Gen 1:28), cultivate the garden, and not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge (Gen 2:15–17). Assertive laws, in terms of what they should do, and prohibitive, of what they should not do. Therefore, the ethical self arises enabling human evaluation of what is right and wrong (Watkin 2010, 77).

Finally, as the human being was created by God, his existence utterly depends on his relationship with God. As Augustine (Augustine, *Conf.* I.I.I) stated, the human soul is restless without God. The God-relation is what constitutes the self as spiritually aligned with Him. While the spiritual man is grounded in God, the spiritless is grounded in nothingness. Both need God to exist, but while the spiritless resists the God-relation, the spiritual one submits. Without Christ, who restores the God-relation, humans exist in self-contradiction for resisting the Spirit who gives them life.

Based on these three dimensions, Kierkegaard defined selfhood in three different centers of gravity around which the fallen man orbits (Kierkegaard 2004; 2013a; Obinyan 2014, 4; Rae 2010, 83–84). Kierkegaard's aesthetic, ethical, and religious spheres are consistent with how the apostle Paul wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians about the σάρκινοϛ (1 Cor 3:1), ψυχικός (1 Cor 2:14) and πνευματικός (1 Cor 2:15), meaning the carnal, psychical and spiritual person (Swanson 1997a, §4461, §4921, §6035; Louw and Nida 1996, §12.20, §41.42, §79.5).

4.1.3 The Fall and the Subjective Disruption

The serpent led Eve to imagine what she could not think, as Irenaeus (*Epid.* 14,16) argued. The serpent “impregnated” Eve’s mind with a lie, as claimed by Justin Martyr (*Triph.* 100, 5,6). Kierkegaard (2011, 32–37) claimed that what can be understood from the original sin is the anxiety that inwardly pressured Eve. Looking at the fruit (Gen 3:6), three different anxieties are evidenced in the text, for “the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom” (Gen 3:60). The desire of the flesh, the eye, and the pride of life, longings were imprinted in humanity as aesthetic longings, as perceived by the apostle John (1 John 2:16).

After the first sin (Gen 3:6–7), a subjective disruption happened within Adam and Eve. The human became fragmented. After eating the fruit, sinfulness was posited, and the human objective perception became distorted, evidenced in the flawed perception of their nakedness (Gen 3:7). Something unknown for Adam and Eve was affecting their consciousness. Through the qualitative leap suffered through sin, they started seeing the sensual world through the lens of their subjective anxiety (Dunning 1985, 16). Some strange feelings in Adam and Eve become evident in the narrative. They covered their nakedness (Gen 3:7), hid from God with fear (Gen 3:10), and projected their responsibility with anger on God and the woman (Gen 3:12–13). Even though some affirm that Adam and Eve felt guilt (e.g., Nicholls 2001, 236; Muller 2013, 152), neither Adam nor Eve recognized their fault in front of God (Hamilton 1995, 14). Their guilt is perceived by the reader, who already knows its meaning.

While shame, fear, and anger are direct consequences of sin subjectively experienced by Adam and Eve, guilt is objective, revealed by the Mosaic law. Guilt is a forensic term that requires God’s revelation (Champlin 2018, 392; Stenschke 2000, 529). The law objectively reveals

guilt, which brings meaning to the subjectivity of fear, shame, and anger. As Mann (2015, 16) claimed, there is no concept of guilt in a society without the awareness of God.

Western theology became blind to worldviews not oriented by guilt, as some missiologists argue (Georges 2017, 10–11; Georges and Baker 2016, 22). However, the problem is not the theological emphasis on guilt but the lack of an approach that considers the subjectivity of shame, fear, and anger.

4.2 The New Testament's Anthropology of Sin

4.2.1 Jesus's Subjective Approach

As God spoke in “various ways” (Heb 1:1–2; NIV), Jesus also spoke in different ways. Vanhoozer (2010, 21–22) talks about a “divine system projection,” where Jesus is the perfect projection of God. He is the accommodation of God’s communication to the human level, where he self-reveals to humanity mainly through indirect communication (191). Vanhoozer asserts that this resembles Kierkegaard’s indirect communication concept, concerned with showing, not telling. More than talking about God, Jesus disclosed him.

Jesus used indirect communication when he talked about the need for eating his flesh and drinking his blood (John 6:51–54) and when talking about a river of living water flowing from inside (John 7:37–38). Instead of answering the disciples of John the Baptist objectively, he urged them to “hear” and “see” what he was doing (Matt 11:2–6; Luke 7:18–23; Kierkegaard 1991, 94). His use of parables also evidences his emphasis on the use of narrative, approaching the human recursive nature, and ministering subjective truths.

Moreover, Jesus approached the problem of sin as a longing, addressing every one of the aesthetic desires. In his sermon on the mount, he taught how to satiate the human yearnings and become a “blessed” person (Matt 5:1–11). Christ addressed human craving by talking about hunger and thirst for justice (5:6). Also, when he made the Samaritan woman perceive her inward thirst evidenced in her multiple relationships (John 4).

Jesus also evidenced that anxiety is a condition that every human faces, which is not sinful, by experiencing himself in the Gethsemane (Matt 26:36–46; Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:39–46). In that garden, Jesus faced fear, imminent shame, and the temptation to escape God’s wrath. However, by overcoming that crushing anxiety, Christ submitted to God’s will, avoiding guilt (Lopes 2017a, 630–635; Marshall 1978, 831).

Sin as spiritual hunger is not solved by cognitively knowing sin and salvation, as hunger is not satisfied by reading about food. Jesus showed that the proper way to treat sin is not by merely forbidding what should not be done, but by positively, showing how the existential hunger can be truly satisfied.

4.1.2 The Apostle’s Teaching About the Subjectivity of Sin

The apostles addressed human subjectivity throughout their letters. The apostle Paul, for example, treated sin as works of the flesh, using aesthetic vocabulary, relating sin with ἐπιθυμία, desire (Gal 5:17, 19). He stated that the Christian only ceases to seek gratification in the flesh when seeking satisfaction in the spirit (Gal 5:16; Bedford 2016, 169; George 1994, 385).

In Romans 1, Paul also addresses the aesthetic sin, arguing that passion became a medium of God’s wrath, experienced in the body (Rom 1:27), consequently promoting anguish (Rom 2:8–9; Champlin 2020, 686; Mounce 1995, 81). Thus, God’s wrath is aesthetically revealed within humans

as an endless search for an unsatisfying pleasure. This anguish points to Kierkegaard's (2011, 66–89) concept of subjective anxiety.

Two theological approaches to the problem of sin can be evidenced in the apostolic letters, one tackling the aesthetical and the other the ethical. While the aesthetical self is treated in the dialectic between flesh and spirit, the ethical is treated in the subject of law and grace. Whether it is the subjective law within the self (Rom 7:21–23), the divine law revealed (Rom 2:17–29; Gal 3:10–13), or the social law between the Christian and the other (Gal 5:14), the law is essential. The law's importance is evidenced in words referring to sin and sinners throughout the letters. Words like ἁμαρτία, παράβασις, ἀνομία, ἀδικία, and παράπτωμα, can only be understood through its connection with the law.³ Therefore, guilt is the appropriate concept to position the sinner in front of God's law, giving theological meaning to the subjective reality of fear, shame, and anger.

Paul wrote that the “requirements of the law” are written in the hearts; therefore, people are inexcusable (Rom 2:1–16; NIV). First, Paul states that Gentiles are without excuse for rejecting God's general revelation; second, he claims that Jews are without excuse for denying the law in special revelation (Lopes 2017, 101–102). Each one is judged according to the light received (Champlin 2020, 711–712; Lopes 2017, 113; Boa and Kruidenier 2000, 79). Therefore, the human conscience is the inward witness called by Paul to testify about sin (Rom 2:15). Besides, Paul teaches that sinners suppress God's truth (Rom 1:18). Kierkegaard (1985, 192–192) also stated that people are “unwilling to let what they know (that God exists) get control of their minds.” For, as man has the truth of God's existence inwardly, the denial is a self-contradiction, or in Freudian terms, a “repressed knowledge”

3 Coenen and Brown 2000, 1602, 1608, 1611–1612, 1599; Swanson 1997, §94 §281, §490, §4126, §4183; Louw and Nida 1996, §36.28, §88.21, §88.139, §88.289, §88.297).

(Evans 2019, 52), or a “cognitive dissonance,” as stated by Pearcey (2018, 31). Ethically speaking, sin is this subjective repression of knowledge, leading to the state of existential inconsistency. This repressed knowledge is forgotten, and the inconsistency is pushed to the unconscious, becoming a hidden force. As deception dominates conscience, the self is alienated from God and himself, producing an unconscious law that the apostle Paul identified within (Rom 7:21–23). The apostle wanted to do what was right, but he did what was wrong. Freud’s concept of unconsciousness seems to tackle this issue of hidden drives (LaPine 2020, 294; Freud 1990, 428). As a sum of impulses, Freud’s unconsciousness is rooted in the body, as a hidden law in the “members” (Rom 7:23). Nevertheless, differently from Freud’s immanentism, the apostle teaches that only the transcendence of faith in Jesus can deliver from this hidden law (Rom 3:21–26; 8:1).

5. A Theological Formulation for a Contemporaneous Anthropology of Sin

This section considers the insights identified in the last sections. First, it is important to restore the human theomorphic character. As theomorphism, the man was created as an analogical expression of God. Humans better reflect God’s image only when in relation to the Creator. Moreover, the human is a kinetic self, inwardly constituted as the aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual self. Finally, it is crucial to see the human as a recursive self. Self-consciousness enables self-recursivity, allowing empathy and imagination, also producing alienation through sin.

Regarding sin, understanding its relation to human subjectivity is vital to grasp its embodiment as man’s untruth. Sin is the synthesis between the human and nothingness, bringing evil into existence. This subjective evil is embodied as the aesthetic and ethical sin. In aesthetic sin, desires,

passions, and human imagination are biased. Now, the human curves in upon himself, seeking to satisfy the insatiable appetite of the flesh, eyes, and the pride of life. Imagination becomes captive to a sinful recursivity affecting the mind, and the body becomes a slave to immanent and mechanical desires. Humanity became subjectively compelled to re-live the same mistakes. The aesthetical sin submits the individual to the ever-changing heart. Ethical sin manifests as fear, shame, anger, and guilt. While the aesthetical appeals to the heart, the ethical pressures conscience.

I argue, following Kierkegaard, that only sinfulness, and not guilt, is hereditary—as guilt is a legal category. However, sinful subjectivity is transmitted to offspring.

I believe that there are many repercussions of this anthropology of sin. First, it can help produce new answers for a society that, while haunted by shame, fear, anger, and guilt, is addicted to the aesthetic pleasures that increase despair. Second, it must produce a self-evaluation in the Church. I argue that the existence of disciplines such as clinical psychology, psychoanalysis, and psychiatry is evidence that the church neglected the need for subjective reasoning. In third place, comprehensive and biblical anthropology of sin can reveal the theological danger of using psychologies, anthropologies, or sociologies that are not biblically coherent. Any human science not grounded on coherent theological anthropology should be rejected because it promotes theological developments that contradict the Scriptures, submits the Church to deceiving ideas, harms the human being, alienates society, and justifies sinfulness.

The Church can give what society thirsts for; however, it must be done through incarnational demonstration. As the human essential longing is for God, when a Christian embodies Christ becoming an authentic spiritual human, God again becomes visible and attractive to the world.

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Poder pastoral y función paternal: un análisis de las prácticas pentecostales a la luz de las representaciones del poder en Jesús en el ambiente joanino

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Resumen

Esta investigación analiza el poder pastoral y la función paterna y su relación con la praxis pastoral a la luz de las representaciones del poder en Jesús en el ambiente joánico. Revisa la literatura sobre el poder pastoral y el papel paterno en psicoanálisis en Michel Foucault, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Donald Winnicott y Pierre Bourdieu. La tesis hace apuntes históricos sobre los orígenes y desarrollo del pentecostalismo en Brasil y en la ciudad de Londrina (PR). Analiza las prácticas de tipologías pentecostales en Brasil. Investiga, a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas, el poder y el papel paterno en el campo religioso a partir de la praxis pastoral pentecostal

en la ciudad de Londrina (PR). Aborda el concepto de poder en Jesús en la literatura y el entorno joánico, en el contexto de las tensiones de poder en la Palestina del primer siglo. Trata la relación de Jesús con el Padre en la literatura joánica, con especial atención a los aspectos teológicos.

1. Introducción

La tesis elaborada buscó analizar los orígenes y concepciones del poder pastoral que rigen su ejercicio en el campo religioso o en el ámbito eclesiástico. Para ello, el capítulo uno es la presentación general de todo el trabajo, es decir, la señalización de lo que encontrará el lector del texto en el desarrollo de la investigación a partir de los lineamientos metodológicos de la investigación.

En cuanto a cuestiones metodológicas, destacamos inicialmente que, con base en las observaciones, existe una práctica pastoral de tipologías pentecostales que involucra el ejercicio del poder, prácticas proféticas y manifestaciones milagrosas consideradas como efectos de magia y que el campo pentecostal publica una teología que incluye la búsqueda por bendiciones, riquezas y respuestas inmediatas a las situaciones sociales y económicas de una población cada vez más carente de asistencia social, de salud, de empleo y de ascensión a estratos sociales de mayor poder adquisitivo. En particular, el pentecostalismo y sus tipologías surgen en medio de un contexto social olvidado por el gobierno que no responde positivamente a sus responsabilidades de cuidar a las personas, ofreciéndoles salud, educación, seguridad y trabajo. Ante esto, los líderes de estos segmentos encontraron una excelente oportunidad para difundir una teología reciente en respuesta a los deseos y necesidades de la gente. Sin embargo, al reunir a muchas personas de este contexto social necesitado, desarrollaron una práctica pastoral que les permite actuar como figuras

representativas construidas en el imaginario de los fieles, que hacen uso de las relaciones de poder y control sobre las personas y las comunidades.

La decisión final por el título de esta investigación, PODER PASTORAL Y FUNCIÓN PATERNA: UN ANÁLISIS DE LAS PRÁCTICAS PENTECOSTALES A LA LUZ DE LAS REPRESENTACIONES DEL PODER EN JESÚS EN EL AMBIENTE JOANINO, refleja el interés suscitado por la investigación y la importancia de analizar la pastoral práctica en general, pero, específicamente aquí, del campo religioso pentecostal y sus tipologías.

Además, también representa el interés personal del investigador en los conceptos fundantes del marco teórico. El poder pastoral y el poder fueron vistos a través de los ojos del sociólogo y filósofo Michel Foucault y del sociólogo Pierre Bourdieu. Otro término fundacional que también aparece en el título de la investigación es el de función paterna que tiene su origen en el Psicoanálisis y es analizado desde Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan y Donald Woods Winnicott. La paternidad nos ofrece, en este contexto de las teorías psicoanalíticas, argumentos/bases para la discusión sobre el papel de la figura paterna y sus implicaciones en la formación de la personalidad con consecuencias para sus acciones en la vida adulta.

2. Resumen del análisis bíblico, histórico y teológico del contexto joánico

El ambiente joánico, como discusión bíblica, nos ofrece, considerando los conceptos de poder, poder pastoral, función paterna e investigación con los pastores, un análisis de las representaciones del poder en Jesús, como aquel que, siendo hijo, mantiene con el padre una relación de sumisión integral y desde esta condición ejerce su ministerio con autoridad, marca autenticada por el primero. Al mismo tiempo, se presenta como un modelo

más allá de la sumisión y el servicio. Jesús tiene acciones que confrontan el status quo de la religión judía, así como el *modus operandi* de su autoridad, con el poder político dominante en Palestina en el siglo I.

En cuanto al contexto religioso de la investigación, cabe señalar que la ciudad de Londrina y su campo evangélico nos brindaron un ambiente propicio para desarrollar el estudio y análisis del poder pastoral. La ciudad tiene una fuerte expansión del pentecostalismo, estando entre las ciudades más grandes de la región sur de Brasil, estado de Paraná, con aproximadamente quinientos ochenta mil habitantes y con fuerte presencia tanto del catolicismo como del protestantismo, desde los orígenes históricos que comenzaron en la década de 1930, cuando colonos de la Companhia Inglesa llegaron al norte de Paraná y comenzaron a vender la tierra. Según Proença (2004), justo al inicio de la ciudad, encontramos la presencia evangélica femenina de Maria Thereza Vieira, vinculada a la Iglesia Presbiteriana Independiente de Brasil, procedente de la ciudad de Paraguaçu Paulista, estado de São Paulo.

Posteriormente, llegaron otras denominaciones históricas, como el metodismo y el presbiterianismo (este último vinculado a la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Brasil), para ejercer el ministerio cristiano de propagación del evangelio. De la misma manera, llegaron iglesias de tipologías pentecostales (clásica, neoclásica y neopentecostal y comunidades independientes). Hoy la ciudad es considerada como una de las que tienen un fuerte porcentaje de evangélicos, con cientos de templos, en los cuales los pastores atienden pastoralmente a la gente y desarrollan actividades eclesiales encaminadas a la predicación de la Palabra de Dios y la práctica de proyectos sociales en beneficio de la sociedad, en particular, las personas que viven en la periferia.

Por lo tanto, de lo descrito anteriormente sobre el contexto religioso de la investigación, se puede apreciar que nos encontrábamos ante un

rico ambiente de búsqueda de información a través de instrumentos de investigación respecto al objeto de estudio.

De manera particular y de acuerdo a la delimitación, la investigación nos muestra que existe una importante presencia pastoral en la tipología pentecostal en la ciudad de Londrina. Esta presencia tiene su origen histórico cuando, en el nacimiento de la ciudad, llegaron allí los primeros cristianos evangélicos, primeramente con personas vinculadas a iglesias tradicionales, como la Iglesia Presbiteriana Independiente de Brasil, Iglesia Presbiteriana de Brasil, Iglesia Metodista, Iglesia Episcopal Brasileña, seguida por la Iglesia Evangélica Asamblea de Dios y la Iglesia Evangélica de Renacimiento Bíblico, entre muchas otras del pentecostalismo clásico. Además de estas, llegan después a la ciudad las iglesias del pentecostalismo neoclásico, entre ellas la Iglesia de Dios es Amor, Iglesia O Brasil para Cristo, Iglesia del Evangelio Cuadrangular e Iglesia Casa de Oración para Todos los Pueblos, Ministerio Sagrado Misiones. En la tipología pentecostal ligada al neopentecostalismo y a las comunidades independientes, encontramos la Iglesia Nueva Alianza, la Iglesia Bautista Gloria y la Comunidad Deus Vivo. En las últimas décadas han surgido numerosas iglesias, ya sea por la planificación del crecimiento de ciertas comunidades o por divisiones.

3. Resumen de análisis sociológico, psicológico y psicoanalítico

La observación informal del ejercicio del poder pastoral desplegado por los pastores evangélicos como instrumento adicional al cuidado pastoral que exigen los principios bíblico-teológicos —o las normas institucionales— fue el elemento motivador inicial para la realización de esta investigación. Sabiendo, entonces, que el empoderamiento de las figuras pastorales gana cada vez más adeptos al asumir espacios de proyección y poder eclesiástico, se reforzó el interés por el análisis del discurso religioso de los líderes

pastorales, particularmente en iglesias de tipologías pentecostales.

Por lo tanto, nos interesó en esta investigación analizar —articulados con las nociones de poder en el ámbito epistemológico del Psicoanálisis— los conceptos campo y poder simbólico de Pierre Bourdieu, junto con los términos poder y poder pastoral en la obra de Michel Foucault, que nos ofreció elementos teóricos para comprender las representaciones simbólicas del poder y sus relaciones, observadas en las prácticas pastorales, en particular, con pastores vinculados a iglesias de tipología pentecostal.

El propósito de este estudio fue investigar la relación entre el poder pastoral y la función paterna y las representaciones simbólicas de las figuras pastorales en el campo religioso, a partir del análisis de la praxis pastoral de la tipología pastoral en la ciudad de Londrina, teniendo como apoyo la literatura de revisión, la obra de Michel Foucault, el pensamiento del Psicoanálisis, representado por Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan y Donald Woods Winnicott y bajo el pensamiento de Pierre Bourdieu.

Así, se planteó la pregunta: ¿qué elementos de la práctica pastoral de los líderes de tipologías pentecostales caracterizan la proyección de poder de la figura paterna y qué nociones comparativas se pueden hacer de estos aspectos con las representaciones del poder en Jesús?

Para dar respuesta a esta pregunta se establecieron seis objetivos específicos. El primero fue identificar el concepto de poder pastoral en la obra de Michel Foucault, de función paterna en el pensamiento del Psicoanálisis, en la lectura de Freud, Lacan y Winnicott, es decir, presentar los aportes de la obra de Foucault y del Psicoanálisis para la capacitación la pastoral.

En segundo lugar, se destacaron los aportes de Pierre Bourdieu sobre el poder pastoral en la dinámica del campo religioso. A continuación, ya partir de la referencia bibliográfica y marco teórico, se investigó,

mediante la aplicación de entrevistas semiestructuradas, la praxis pastoral de pastores de iglesias de tipologías pentecostales.

El cuarto objetivo específico de la investigación destacó los orígenes históricos, el desarrollo y las prácticas del pentecostalismo en Brasil, con especial atención a la ciudad de Londrina, según la delimitación de la investigación.

Quinto, a partir de las respuestas a entrevistas semiestructuradas, se analizó la conducta de pastores de iglesias de tipologías pentecostales. Finalmente, se destacó el concepto de poder en Jesús en la literatura del ambiente joánico, ofreciendo así recomendaciones como herramientas/recursos para la reflexión, propuestas de prácticas pastorales que son aportes al cumplimiento de la misión de la Iglesia, desarrolladas y practicadas por pastoras y pastores.

Siguiendo la conducción de la metodología de investigación científica se formularon tres preguntas de investigación, cuyas respuestas produjeron el texto de los capítulos de tesis. La primera pregunta fue: ¿qué conceptos filosóficos, psicológicos y sociológicos nos ayudan a investigar la relación entre el poder pastoral y la función paterna? A continuación se preguntó ¿cuáles son las representaciones simbólicas de la práctica pastoral en las iglesias de tipología pentecostal? Finalmente, se planteó la siguiente pregunta: ¿cuál es el concepto de poder en Jesús en la literatura y el ambiente joánico?

La investigación se delimitó bajo tres aspectos importantes para una investigación de esta naturaleza y propósito: primero, fue el tema general Poder Pastoral y Función Paternal en el Campo Religioso, que orientó todos los movimientos metodológicos posteriores. A continuación, se delimitó el objeto de análisis, que tuvo como referencia las primeras comunidades cristianas descritas en los escritos joánicos, entre ellos el Cuarto Evangelio,

las cartas joánicas y el libro del Apocalipsis. Finalmente, como punto correlativo, se estableció la praxis pastoral de las tipologías pentecostales y, por obvias razones de ubicación, conocimiento y contactos personales, se delimitó la ciudad de Londrina-PR como campo de investigación.

El capítulo dos revisa la bibliografía y señala su marco teórico representado en el pensamiento de los siguientes autores: Michel Foucault sobre los conceptos de poder y poder pastoral; Sigmund Freud, Jaques Lacan y Donald Woods Winnicott – teóricos íconos del Psicoanálisis, particularmente en esta investigación sobre la función paterna; y Pierre Bourdieu, quien discute cómo la religión y sus agentes, a través de un discurso bien elaborado, logran representación en la sociedad y prácticas de dominación en el campo eclesiástico.

En cuanto a la revisión bibliográfica que trata sobre la obra de Michel Foucault, la investigación evidenció el concepto de poder en tres vertientes en la modernidad tal como la entiende este autor. En primer lugar, Foucault nos introdujo en el concepto de poder disciplinario como forma de control y poder disciplinario desde las prácticas sociales y jurídicas, mostrando que la relación entre poder y saber sirve como instrumento para el funcionamiento de la sociedad.

A continuación, Foucault, siguiendo su genealogía del poder, nos ayudó a comprender el significado del biopoder, una tecnología sobre los cuerpos que pretende, como dice el propio autor: “gobernar la multiplicidad de los hombres en cuanto esta multiplicidad puede y debe resultar en cuerpos individuales que deben ser vigilados, entrenados, utilizados, eventualmente castigados” (1989, 289).

En tercer lugar, el citado autor, al tratar de las funciones del Estado, tomó como base el término poder pastoral, habiendo buscado sus características y funciones en la figura de un pastor que utiliza técnicas

de poder dirigidas a los particulares. Por un lado, si el Estado ejerce un poder centralizador, por otro lado, el poder pastoral lo hace de forma individualizada.

El segundo gran concepto de la revisión bibliográfica de esta investigación es la función paterna. Término de origen médico, pero desarrollado conceptualmente por el psicoanálisis y define el papel que juega la figura paterna en su rol central en el desarrollo y estructuración del psiquismo y la personalidad del niño. En estas referencias bibliográficas, en particular el concepto de función paterna, la investigación presenta a los tres principales autores psicoanalíticos que contribuyeron con sus estudios a la comprensión e implicaciones de la presencia real, imaginaria o simbólica del padre en el proceso de desarrollo del individuo.

El tercer concepto como referencial teórico de esta investigación fue “las representaciones sociales del poder” vistas desde la perspectiva del sociólogo Pierre Bourdieu, quien entendió que tales representaciones se producen a partir de intercambios comunicativos, del compartir social cargado de significados, de simbologías que forman un conjunto estructurado de creencias, imágenes mentales correlacionadas con prácticas sociales.

Los tres conceptos señalados anteriormente son fundamentales para comprender el objeto de la investigación, ya que el campo investigado y sus representantes se ocupan, implícita o explícitamente, de las relaciones de poder en el ejercicio del pastorado. Sin embargo, los entrevistados no tienen una comprensión de lo que significa la praxis del poder pastoral. Por otro lado, también existe una negativa por parte de los entrevistados a admitir que ejercen tal poder.

En el capítulo tres, Metodología para el análisis de las tipologías pentecostales, presentamos inicialmente una conceptualización teórica

e histórica de los orígenes y desarrollo del pentecostalismo en Brasil, sus prácticas y respectivas bases bíblicas relacionadas con el bautismo del Espíritu Santo, manifestaciones de dones, sanidades, milagros, el regreso (escatología) de Jesús y las formas utilizadas en la predicación del evangelio. En cuanto a las prácticas pentecostales, se observaron aspectos importantes en sus representaciones del poder, ejercido en el uso de recursos y herramientas, tales como la realización de eventos multitudinarios, denominados “cruzadas”, el uso de los medios de comunicación, la enseñanza de la teología de la prosperidad vista como un medio para transformar el espacio sagrado del templo en teatro y mercado, según Campos (1997), y el uso de objetos ungidos como instrumento de bendición.

Veremos también en este capítulo cómo la predicación del evangelio está asociada a una investidura de poder en el ambiente pentecostal, siendo justificada principalmente por el fundamento misionero dado por Jesús a sus discípulos, como atestigua el autor del Evangelio de Marcos (16:15). Además, según Xavier (2012, 19), la venida del Espíritu Santo el día de Pentecostés “es el punto culminante de la secuencia de los acontecimientos... tiene un sentido práctico y dinámico, traducido en términos de nacimiento y misión de la iglesia del Nuevo Testamento”. Esta fuerza dinámica producida por el Espíritu Santo es la que ha impulsado, desde sus orígenes, el pentecostalismo instalado en Brasil y América Latina y, por sus características adaptadas al contexto y a las demandas sociales, económicas, religiosas, políticas y culturales, según Alencar (2015, 48), ha logrado influir en la cultura y la política del continente sudamericano.

El capítulo cerrará con breves reseñas históricas de las denominaciones de tipología pentecostal en la ciudad de Londrina, con especial énfasis en la descripción de entrevistas semiestructuradas y sus respectivos análisis.

El cuarto capítulo trata de un fundamento bíblico que analiza el poder y la autoridad de Jesús en la literatura joánica, incluido el Cuarto Evangelio, las Cartas y las primeras comunidades cristianas, las llamadas Siete Iglesias de Asia, descritas en el libro del Apocalipsis. Sin embargo, inicialmente destaca el contexto palestino que es el “escenario” del surgimiento de Jesús y los movimientos involucrados entre poder y política, la situación de la sociedad judía y la religiosidad, así como la economía y las condiciones de vida de la población. En este mismo capítulo también se abordará la figura de Jesús y su relación con el Padre en la literatura joánica, destacando el poder en conflicto entre Jesús y el Imperio Romano, el concepto de poder en Jesús en el Evangelio de Juan, teniendo como discusión teológica la relación de Jesús con el Padre desde el Logos, Jesús y su relación con el Padre en la óptica de Juan Bautista, el significado teológico del Hijo y del Padre, la condición de Jesús como enviado de Dios y la relevancia de la paternidad en las reinterpretaciones teológicas.

El último capítulo de esta investigación realizada con pastores de tipología pentecostal en la ciudad de Londrina presenta la comprensión de la investigación, considerando los conceptos revisados en la bibliografía de destacados sociólogos (Foucault y Bourdieu) y los psicoanalistas Freud, Lacan y Winnicott. En Foucault, se entendió que existe, inevitablemente, la práctica del poder pastoral, a pesar de las negaciones de los entrevistados.

Bajo la conceptualización psicoanalítica de la función paterna, las entrevistas resultaron concluyentes en particular las respuestas sobre la relación de los pastores con sus respectivas figuras paternas, algunos de los cuales se presentaban con historias positivas y otros con cuestionamientos conflictivos en el aspecto relacional de los entrevistados. En general, para todos los entrevistados hay una transferencia de la figura del padre humano a la figura del padre de Dios, como el padre perfecto.

Un dato interesante de la investigación sobre el aspecto influyente de la pastoral vocacional destaca la importancia de los pastores y líderes de los entrevistados, quienes fueron vistos como modelos de pastores que, en sus prácticas, jugaron la figura paterna - el padre-pastor.

El trabajo de investigación finaliza con las recomendaciones que servirán para la reflexión sobre la acción pastoral considerando la realidad de la relación entre la pastoral y el servicio. Por otro lado, también servirá para señalar acciones que contribuyan a la formación de pastores y líderes comprometidos con la misión de Dios.

4. Conclusión

La primera recomendación sobre el proceso de formación teológico-pastoral contempla la participación de la familia en la vocación, considerando que el ámbito familiar es el primer espacio de preparación para la vida de las personas, a través de la convivencia afectiva y las prácticas educativas. En las familias existen apoyos sociales, económicos, culturales y religiosos que contribuyen significativamente al desarrollo psicosocial y vocacional, independientemente de la carrera profesional a seguir.

La segunda recomendación incluye a la iglesia o denominación a la que pertenece la vocación. Cada institución, iglesia local o denominación, tiene un proceso particular de derivación de sus miembros al proceso de educación y formación teológica y pastoral. Corresponde, pues, a cada uno desarrollar un programa de enseñanza y formación que facilite a las personas, en general, el aprendizaje de las disciplinas elementales de la vida cristiana.

Como tercera recomendación, señalamos la importancia de las instituciones formadoras, ya sean institutos bíblicos, seminarios o facultades teológicas, que en los últimos veinte años ganaron esta nomenclatura

debido al reconocimiento de la teología como área de conocimiento por parte de los gobiernos brasileños. Estas casas de formación, por tanto, contribuyen a la formación teológico-pastoral con diversas acciones y servicios.

En primer lugar, consideramos fundamental que la matriz curricular de las instituciones incluya materias teóricas, prácticas y vivenciales que promuevan una enseñanza de calidad a sus estudiantes.

De esta forma, es de esperar que las matrices curriculares incluyan asignaturas en las áreas de Biblia y sus áreas correspondientes, Teología y sus ramificaciones, Análisis de la Realidad, teniendo como soporte y discusión interdisciplinaria, disciplinas de Psicología, Antropología, Sociología, Historia y Filosofía. Además, las disciplinas de la práctica pastoral, tales como: consejería bíblica, consejería hospitalaria, consejería de pareja y familia, práctica de predicación y comunicación, desarrollo de proyectos sociales, pastoral en contextos urbanos, entre otras.

En cuanto al aspecto experiencial del estudiante de teología, las instituciones deben ofrecer eventos que incluyan actividades sociales entre la comunidad estudiantil y docente, buscando la integración entre los estudiantes y entre estudiantes y profesores. En cuanto al desarrollo de la espiritualidad individual y comunitaria, la realización de retiros espirituales también contribuye significativamente al crecimiento personal y colectivo, a través de actividades devocionales o ejercicios espirituales.

Otro papel importante de las escuelas teológicas es ofrecer servicios complementarios al proceso formativo. Destacamos cuatro que se consideran esenciales. La primera se ocupa del seguimiento pedagógico de sus alumnos, a través de evaluaciones, además de las que se realizan en cada asignatura. Es decir, el cuerpo docente de la institución busca desarrollar evaluaciones más detalladas con base en el desempeño académico de

los estudiantes, considerando su participación en el salón de clases, sus respuestas a las tareas solicitadas y los comportamientos verificados por los profesores sobre sus estudiantes, ya sea por falta de atención a las clases, dificultades de aprendizaje o incluso problemas cotidianos que influyen en el rendimiento de los estudios.

Las instituciones teológicas serían de gran utilidad en el proceso de formación teológico-pastoral si contaran con la prestación de asistencia psicológica a los estudiantes y familiares, mediante la contratación de un profesional o servicio en alianza con una clínica docente.

Fundamentalmente en temas relacionados con la fe, las creencias, la divinidad y la humanidad, las instituciones teológicas deben ofrecer el servicio de capellanía, también conocido como tutoría espiritual. Además de realizar servicios comunitarios, las reuniones individuales con una figura pastoral asignada a esta tarea ayudan a los estudiantes con sus problemas de fe y con sus dilemas personales, familiares y profesionales, ofreciéndoles tiempo de calidad, orientación bíblica, oraciones y ejercicios devocionales para ser un estímulo para ellos

En cuarto lugar, las instituciones teológicas juegan el papel de mediadores entre los estudiantes de teología y las iglesias, asociaciones de servicio social, hospitales, escuelas y prisiones, ofreciendo pasantías extracurriculares que son parte del proceso formativo de quienes –futuros clérigos o laicos– ejercerán ministerios en las comunidades cristianas.

Como se destaca al final del capítulo de Conclusiones y Recomendaciones, este conjunto de procesos y recursos formativos aportan al vocacionado un mayor sentido de su existencia y vocación, así como una mejor comprensión de su propia estructura de personalidad y de las formas más elaboradas para tratar las situaciones de vida, vida y ministerio pastoral, en particular, lo que tratamos en esta investigación, es decir, la

praxis pastoral desde los conceptos de potestad pastoral y función paternal. La investigación, por tanto, nos muestra —metodológicamente— cuáles son los conceptos fundamentales discutidos tanto en la lectura y análisis de las entrevistas a pastores de tipología pentecostal, como en la discusión bíblica a partir del análisis del poder en Jesús en el ambiente joánico, como, así como en las conclusiones y recomendaciones realizadas en base a los resultados encontrados en su objeto.

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Factores de resistencia y receptividad a la conversión cristiana evangélica en el contexto sevillano-español

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Extracto de la investigación

Se cree que una de las razones para que la iglesia evangélica no se haya implantado más ampliamente en España es porque faltan estudios que analicen la sociedad a la que se dirige. Por lo que la razón de fondo de esta investigación ha sido conocer los factores de resistencia que están obstaculizando y aquellos otros factores de Receptividad que podrían facilitar la conversión a Cristo, en el contexto sevillano-español. Este tema no ha sido analizado en profundidad, ni estudiada la problemática que aborda.

El enfoque por ser el más adecuado al logro de la investigación, es la metodología cualitativa, con una perspectiva misiológica y sociorreligiosa que ayude a analizar el comportamiento. La respuesta que enfoca y dirige este estudio es: ¿cuáles son los factores de resistencia y receptividad a

la conversión cristiana evangélica en el contexto sevillano-español? El objetivo general busca descubrir cuáles son los factores que influyen, obstaculizando o facilitando las conversiones de los ciudadanos.

Para encontrar los factores que inciden en las conversiones, esta investigación se realiza en la ciudad de Sevilla, al sur de España.

En esta investigación se encuentra la introducción a la tesis (capítulo 1, también un estudio del contexto social y religioso (capítulo 2); y se enfoca en tres áreas distintas pero relacionadas: el área eclesiástica (capítulo 3), el área misional (capítulo 4) y el área social (capítulo 5) esta última área, en tres barrios principales de la ciudad: barrio de Los Remedios, Barrio de Pino Montano, Barrio de Sevilla Este. La aportación de esta investigación es que las opiniones de los participantes, convertidas en datos, se mantienen a lo largo de todo el proceso de análisis que resulta en describir factores de resistencia y de receptividad, presentados en forma sintética (capítulo 6).

Las observaciones y sugerencias a tener en cuenta se dan desde una visión autóctona (capítulo 7), después de haber considerado la idiosincrasia, las tendencias sociales, la religiosidad popular y la psicología social religiosa de tradiciones y simbolizaciones habiéndonos acercado al sentir del pueblo y descubriendo los factores que inciden en la respuesta de conversiones cristianas.

Esta investigación da respuesta a la gran pregunta y logra los objetivos de este estudio al encontrar factores de resistencia y receptividad que inciden en la conversión a Cristo de los sevillanos-españoles.

1. Introducción general: descripción de la investigación

Los obreros de Dios, personas dedicadas a la evangelización de España, comentan y reconocen que, en cualquier parte del país hay poca respuesta al evangelio de Jesucristo. Se habla, por tanto, del escaso resultado en conversiones.

1.1 El tema de investigación como problema

Se da la implementación de modelos de evangelización, pero con muy escasos resultados, lo cual es sufrido tanto por líderes extranjeros como por el liderazgo español. Los misioneros extranjeros implementan modelos que funcionan en sus países, pero no han funcionado aquí. Los españoles implementan planes extranjeros y propios, pero no logran despertar significativamente las conversiones autóctonas.

Creemos que una de las razones para no habernos implantado más ampliamente, es porque faltan estudios que analicen la sociedad a la que nos dirigimos con el evangelio. Por lo que la razón de fondo en esta investigación ha sido conocer los factores de resistencia que están obstaculizando y aquellos otros factores de receptividad que podrían facilitar la conversión a Cristo, en nuestro contexto sevillano-español. Este tema no ha sido analizado en profundidad, ni se ha presentado ningún estudio que aborde la problemática de la escasez de conversiones de autóctonos, a pesar de los esfuerzos que se realizan en la evangelización.

1.2 Planteamiento de la investigación y justificación

El enfoque escogido, por ser el más adecuado al logro de la investigación, es la metodología cualitativa, con una perspectiva misiológica y socio-religiosa que ayude a analizar el comportamiento y las creencias sociales.

Existen razones importantes para desarrollar esta investigación, debido a su evidente pertinencia, ya que una de las razones para que la iglesia del Señor no se haya implantado más ampliamente en España es porque faltan estudios que analicen la sociedad. Dichos estudios producirían un mayor entendimiento de la realidad social a la que nos dirigimos con el evangelio y nos permitiría conocer de forma suficiente las resistencias a la

conversión que operan en nuestro contexto. Por otra parte, nos ayudaría a ver la posible receptividad que podría facilitar un mejor acercamiento a la espiritualidad del español.

La actividad evangelizadora en España, se ha hecho creyendo que es suficiente para evangelizar, el estar dispuestos e ilusionados con llevarlo a cabo. Pero la realidad es que, no se ha tenido en cuenta que, la evangelización en España sea hecho con demasiada influencia y metodología importada de otros países, sin ser debidamente contextualizados sus métodos.

Inicialmente la investigación es pertinente porque el tema propuesto para estudio no ha sido antes analizado en profundidad para abordar la problemática de la escasez de conversiones de autóctonos en España.

Buscamos, por tanto, con esta investigación, contribuir a reflexionar y aportar nuevas directrices que orienten a la Iglesia Evangélica para guiar al ciudadano español a la conversión cristiana.

1.3 La gran pregunta

La pregunta que dirige este estudio es la siguiente: ¿cuáles son los factores de resistencia y de receptividad a la conversión cristiana evangélica en el contexto sevillano-español?

1.4 Los objetivos

El objetivo general busca descubrir cuáles son los factores que influyen obstaculizando y facilitando las conversiones de los ciudadanos.

Los objetivos específicos se quieren lograr en las distintas áreas en las que está dividido el estudio. En el área eclesial se busca analizar cuáles son los factores en la vida de la iglesia que obstaculizan o facilitan una

mayor respuesta en conversiones. En el área misional se busca verificar la misión evangelizadora de la iglesia comprobando cuán favorable o no resulta a la conversión cristiana del ciudadano. En el área social se busca conocer cuál es el concepto actual de conversión que tiene la ciudadanía y cuán resistente o receptivo es hacia la conversión a Cristo.

1.5 La literatura relacionada

Nuestro tema de estudio en la literatura ya existente no ha sido encontrado en investigaciones previas referidas al contexto español, solo algunas ideas de otros países.

1.6 La Metodología

Esta investigación se realiza en la ciudad de Sevilla, al sur de España. En ella se quieren encontrar los factores que inciden negativa y positivamente en las conversiones de ese contexto. Se escogieron instrumentos adecuados para obtener las opiniones que faciliten una mayor reflexión sobre nuestra temática de estudio.

Esta investigación se enfoca en tres áreas distintas pero relacionadas:

El área eclesial: estudia la vida de la Iglesia Evangélica y los factores de resistencia y receptividad a la conversión cristiana en ella. Porque la vida de la Iglesia Evangélica incide por su estilo de vida, como agente de misión, ya que es ella a través de su liderazgo y membresía los que dan el mensaje del evangelio a las personas en la evangelización.

Quisimos comprobar cómo la iglesia vive de forma interna su propio llamado a la conversión y cómo presenta su creencia y acción a la sociedad, afectando el número de conversiones a Cristo. Elegimos el instrumento de la entrevista que se hizo a un número de 35 participantes

que formaban parte activa de la iglesia en sus diferentes grupos internos: liderazgo, creyentes, y jóvenes, en el seno eclesial.

El área misional: estudia la metodología de evangelización y los factores de resistencia y receptividad a la conversión en la propia evangelización. Esto es así porque la conversión se lleva a cabo por la labor evangelizadora.

Se buscó conocer dicha labor de la iglesia como agente de misión llevando el evangelio y su acercamiento a la sociedad, reflexionando sobre los métodos más usados para dar el mensaje, queriendo comprobar cuánto de esa metodología de evangelización era autóctona o foránea. El instrumento escogido fue la entrevista. El número de participantes fueron de 20 personas comprometidas y dedicadas a la tarea de la evangelización tanto nacionales como extranjeros.

El área social: estudia el concepto de conversión que tiene la ciudadanía y los factores de resistencia y receptividad a la conversión cristiana inmersos en este contexto.

Debido a que la sociedad es la receptora del mensaje, a la que va dirigida la evangelización que la iglesia comparte, conocer cuál es el concepto de conversión que la ciudadanía tiene resulta necesario, comprobando cuán lejos o cerca están en el entendimiento de la conversión bíblica y evangélica que se les predica.

El acercamiento en esta área fue más socio-religioso, buscando captar el concepto de conversión que tiene la sociedad en la actualidad. El instrumento fue la encuesta a 87 participantes, en tres barrios principales y diferentes de la ciudad: Barrio de Los Remedios, Barrio de Pino Montano, Barrio de Sevilla Este. Aportando cada uno de ellos un perfil diferenciador: uno más religioso y conservador, de política de derecha; otro más obrero y de política de izquierda; y el último más joven y de filosofía de vida

postmoderna y pluri religiosa. Por sus características cumplen los requisitos que se buscan en este estudio, aportando variedad en el perfil ciudadano.

Proceso del análisis de los datos: el instrumento de la muestra usado en los capítulos 3 y 4 fue la entrevista y en el capítulo 5 fue la encuesta. Estos instrumentos, con sus preguntas, se transforman en unidades iniciales para dar paso al tratamiento de los datos. De éstas surgen las unidades de análisis, de las que se desprenden las primeras categorías, que una vez agrupadas y vinculadas se llevan hasta saturación, dividiéndolas en las que expresan Resistencia y las que expresan Receptividad a la conversión cristiana. El análisis de las categorías vinculadas y saturadas se llevó a cabo en cuatro divisiones mayores y diferenciadas de las cuales surgieron finalmente los diversos factores de resistencia y receptividad a la conversión cristiana.

Una aportación importante de esta investigación es que las opiniones de los participantes, convertidas en datos, se mantienen a lo largo de todo el proceso de análisis, que finalmente resulta en describir los factores de resistencia y receptividad.

1.7 Descripción de los capítulos

Esta tesis está dividida en siete capítulos, tres de los cuales (Cap. 3, 4 y 5) presentan el grueso de la investigación:

Cap. 1 Introducción general. Descripción de la investigación. Cap. 2 Referentes teóricos de la investigación. Cap. 3 Área Eclesial. La Vida de la Iglesia Evangélica y factores de resistencia y receptividad a la conversión cristiana. Cap. 4 Área Misional. La Metodología Evangelizadora de la Iglesia Evangélica y factores de resistencia y receptividad a la conversión cristiana. Cap. 5 Área Social. El Concepto de conversión en la sociedad sevillana-española y factores de resistencia y receptividad a la conversión cristiana. Cap. 6 Área de Aportes de factores encontrados. Contribución

de la tesis al conocimiento por el resultado de factores encontrados. Cap. 7 Área de Proyecciones. Cuestiones finales. Observaciones y sugerencias misiológicas.

2. Referentes Teóricos de la Investigación

Este capítulo recoge una serie de referentes teóricos con los que evaluar e interpretar los resultados de la investigación (Cap.6). Se presenta la necesidad de esta investigación desde la perspectiva social donde el cristianismo está en retroceso y antiguas y nuevas filosofías de vida aparecen, llevando al ciudadano lejos de la conversión a Cristo. La Iglesia Evangélica y su arraigo, también es presentada, así como las dificultades de ser evangélico y protestante en España.

2.1. Referentes bíblico-teológicos

La palabra conversión, desde la perspectiva religiosa, supone la aceptación de un sistema religioso de creencias. Pero en la Biblia fundamentalmente significa volverse hacia Dios. Una variedad de textos bíblicos de experiencias de conversión así lo demuestran. La conversión es a través de la sangre de Jesucristo, liberándonos del pecado y su poder, uniéndonos al autor de la vida.

La conversión es un cambio de rumbo y de conducta, un volverse de donde se estaba. El concepto de conversión desde su significado bíblico primario se relaciona con las palabras de: arrepentimiento, cambio y enmienda; ellas expresan un momento concreto, aunque también hacen referencia a un proceso o tiempo, en el cual el ser humano se vuelve a Dios para ser restaurado y experimentar la relación con él.

El arrepentimiento supone un cambio de corazón y en los pensamientos, produciéndose un cambio de vida, intención y proyecto. El

cambio es profundo. La enmienda, es mejorar las obras, produciéndose una tristeza por haber obrado mal.

La conversión en el A. T. se producía cuando el pueblo elegido de Dios era gente justa que vivía en la voluntad de Dios expresada en la Torah. Aunque ellos fallaran, demostraban por esa conversión, la intención de querer vivir según la ley de Dios, cumpliendo sus estatutos y siguiendo sus enseñanzas.

La conversión en el N.T. implica que toda persona hombre y mujer, judío o gentil, necesita ese “volverse a Dios”, asegurando su salvación. Es un volverse único de una sola vez para adorar al Dios vivo. En ese volverse, se pide tanto la fe en Jesús como el arrepentimiento de pecado, lo cual implica un cambio para creer a Dios. La conversión es un volver hacia atrás, un retornar o darse cuenta, o dar la media vuelta. La conversión en el N.T. es tanto una obra de Dios, como una decisión humana frente a la obra que Dios ha hecho. Para que dicha posibilidad de conversión se haga efectiva se necesita la decisión de creer y de poner nuestra fe en la Palabra de Dios, que señala a Jesucristo y su obra en la cruz, siendo la conversión una obra del Espíritu Santo.

Las experiencias relacionadas a los factores de resistencia a la conversión según la Biblia son, entre otros: (1) errores sobre la vida espiritual. (2) Influencias de otras personas que impiden la experiencia de conversión. (3) Limitaciones personales en el entendimiento o las circunstancias. (4) Pecados que dirigen la vida. (5) Otros intereses que no son espirituales y que estorban, al alejarnos o posponer la conversión.

Las experiencias relacionadas a factores de receptividad, son: (1) búsqueda de la vida espiritual. 2) Capacidades y actitudes personales. (3) El contexto social y religioso que puede favorecer. (4) Intervenciones divinas. (5) La participación de otros.

2.2. Referentes del eje resistencia y receptividad en la teología de la misión

La revisión de literatura ayuda a conocer el estado de conocimiento al que se ha llegado a través de otros estudios sobre el tema elegido para la investigación.

2.2.1 En la literatura evangélica de autores de habla inglesa

Existe una amplia variedad de autores que aportan referentes a nuestro tema de investigación, como son: Donald McGavran, Peter Wagner, John Morris, Toot Benkert, John Travis, Thom Steffen, George Hunter y una variedad de otros autores. En el libro de Dudley Woodberry (1998) *Reaching the Resistant*, son especialmente útiles los comentarios de Charles van Engen sobre la resistencia. Todos estos autores enfatizan la existencia de una amplia variedad de resistencias a la conversión en nuestras sociedades, como la secularización, globalización, materialismo, post-cristianismo, laicismo, junto a tendencias, filosofías e ideologías políticas y sociales contrarias al cristianismo.

2.2.2 Referentes en la literatura evangélica de autores de habla española

Hablando de resistencias a la conversión en la sociedad española tenemos a: Antonio Cruz, Juan Blake, José Grau, Machado, Miranda, Bertuzzi, Costas, Cesar Vidal, Gabino Fernandez. Hablando de receptividad están: Blake, Lopez y Machado.

2.2.3 Referentes en la literatura católica española

Los que tratan la resistencia hacia la Iglesia Católica y el cristianismo son: Alberto Iniesta, Ignacio Sotelo, José María Mardones, Fernández Benayas, Bueno de la Fuente y Juan Bedoya. Los que tratan resistencia contra el protestantismo son: Grande Caballero y Juan Manuel de Prada.

2.3 Referentes sobre resistencia y receptividad en la literatura secular

Los estudios científicos sobre el hecho religioso de las minorías en España son casi inexistentes. Existen resistencias a la conversión cristiana desde la perspectiva laicista, así se expresa Salvador Giner que aboga por no excluir el concepto de lo sagrado en la sociedad, pero no vinculándolo a ninguna deidad sino a valores sociales como la libertad, la vida y los derechos cívicos. Otros autores como Aurelia Martín, Manuel Barrios enfatizan el sentir social sobre lo religioso que es mayoritariamente nominal. Stanley Payne, Earlham y Richards dan una perspectiva histórica desde el siglo XX a eventos que prefiguran la resistencia de la sociedad española a la conversión a Cristo.

Finalmente, José Luís Abellán presenta en su libro *Los españoles vistos por sí mismos* (1986) una perspectiva de cómo los españoles piensan su nación y a sus compatriotas, mostrando su idiosincrasia y cultura referidas al plano religioso.

Existe también posibilidad de receptividad en unos pocos autores que señalan el carácter abierto y comunicativo del ser español y del sevillano en especial; así como ciertas características de su personalidad social: su interés por las actividades personales y la necesidad que tiene de identificarse con el mensaje para, al fin, tocar su alma.

2.4 El estado del contexto sevillano-español

La sociedad sevillana es religiosa y la manifestación de su religiosidad es popular con una periodicidad anual en la vía pública; mostrada por los medios de comunicación locales y nacionales.

2.4.1 Características contextuales

Dentro de este contexto se aprecia que: (1) Europa, España y Sevilla se alejan del cristianismo. 2) La fe está unida a un concepto de institución. (3) Aumenta la no creencia en Dios. (4) Se produce un alejamiento ético y moral. (5) Las nuevas generaciones rechazan a la iglesia. (6) Giro hacia el orientalismo filosófico y religioso. (7) Nuevas filosofías de vida posmoderna. (8) Desarrollo de tesis feministas. (9) Creciente práctica del aborto. (10) Diversidad de formas de ser familia. (11) Implantación de la ideología de género. (12) Continúa el apego a las fiestas religiosas anuales. (13) Apego creciente a las imágenes religiosas.

2.4.2 Estado del contexto eclesial evangélico

El cristianismo llegó a España en los primeros siglos de nuestra era cristiana. Siempre existieron comunidades, grupos y personajes en nuestro país que tuvieron un anhelo de seguir las enseñanzas de Cristo, al margen de lo que dictara la iglesia oficial.

La historia de la Iglesia Evangélica en España está ligada a la Reforma protestante del siglo XVI y fue en la ciudad de Sevilla donde se inició el protestantismo español. Los creyentes perseguidos por la Inquisición española pagaron con sus bienes y vida el atrevimiento de creer y vivir a Cristo de otra forma que la de la Iglesia Católica Romana.

En el siglo XIX permanecían en España, implantadas, la Iglesia Evangélica Española y la Iglesia Española Reformada Episcopal. La implantación en Sevilla, en el año 2019, supone 140 congregaciones en la provincia, con un total de 8500 personas.

Ser evangélico y protestante en la España actual es pertenecer a un grupo minoritario en la sociedad. La conversión en España hasta ahora implica adherirse a una minoría religiosa. Hay una variedad de efectos para el convertido, una diversidad de áreas que con seguridad operarán en contra de todo el proceso de desvinculación de los nexos anteriores, religiosos o no; la conversión a Cristo supone dificultades para la adhesión de los nuevos convertidos a la vida de la iglesia. Estas dificultades están localizadas en el ámbito familiar, las amistades, y los ámbitos laboral y social.

El espíritu de la Contrarreforma contra el protestantismo, aún no ha cesado en España. La Iglesia Católica vuelve una y otra vez a recurrir a las vivencias de la Contrarreforma para parar el avance de la Iglesia Evangélica (protestante) en España; siguen dirigiendo a las personas a la Virgen María y no a Cristo el Señor.

3. Área eclesial: la vida de la iglesia evangélica y factores de resistencia y receptividad a la conversión cristiana

El análisis de los datos arrojó las siguientes categorías que una vez operacionalizadas se convirtieron en factores —a los que sigue un comentario interpretativo—.

Parte I. Resistencia relacionada con: 1. La iglesia desconocida; 2. La iglesia rechazada; 3. La iglesia impedida; 4. La iglesia sin potencia; 5. La iglesia sin profundidad; 6. La iglesia en lucha con la religiosidad.

Parte 2. Receptividad relacionada con: 1. La iglesia aceptada; 2. La iglesia en misión; 3. La iglesia que atrae; 4. La iglesia que está en lucha; 5. La iglesia y sus recursos; 6. La iglesia transformadora social.

4. Área misional: la metodología evangelizadora de la iglesia evangélica y factores de resistencia y receptividad a la conversión cristiana

El análisis de los datos arrojó las siguientes categorías que una vez operacionalizadas, se convirtieron en factores a los que sigue un comentario interpretativo.

Parte 1. Resistencia relacionada con: 1. Los métodos: La evangelización pensada y activa; 2. Los efectos: La evangelización realizada; 3. Los trabajos posteriores: La evangelización cumplida; 4. Los medios: La evangelización facilitada; 5. Nuestra incapacidad: La evangelización espiritual; 6. Los recursos: La evangelización impedida.

Parte 2. Receptividad relacionada con: 1. Los métodos: La evangelización con posibilidades; 2. Lo experimentado: La evangelización con resultados; 3. Con mucho la diferencia: La evangelización espiritual; 4. El método principal: La evangelización poderosa; 5. La necesidad: La evangelización a través del avivamiento; 6. La unidad: La evangelización en un mismo sentir de todos.

5. Área social: el concepto de conversión en la sociedad sevillana-española y factores de resistencia y receptividad a la conversión cristiana

El análisis de los datos arrojó las siguientes categorías que una vez operacionadas, se convirtieron en factores —a los que sigue un comentario interpretativo—.

Parte 1. Resistencia relacionada con: 1. Lo que es la conversión religiosa; 2. Dios pide la conversión a él; 3. La Biblia dice cómo convertirnos a Dios; 4. Saber cómo estar a bien con Dios; 5. Dejar su creencia por otra es traición; 6. Convertirse a otra fe no católica romana.

Parte 2. Receptividad relacionada con: 1. Encuentro con una nueva fe; 2. Conversión y Dios; 3. Conversión y Biblia; 4. Nuestra relación con Dios; 5. Deslealtad en la conversión religiosa; 6. Conversión religiosa e identidad ciudadana.

6. Contribución de la tesis al conocimiento por los factores encontrados

6.1 Área eclesial: vida de la iglesia evangélica

Resultado de la investigación sobre vida de la iglesia evangélica: sintetizando el resultado explicativo de la investigación sobre la vida de la iglesia evangélica han sido encontrados seis factores de resistencia y seis factores de receptividad a la conversión cristiana dando doce factores en total.

Los factores de resistencia presentados en forma sintética son: F.1. La Iglesia Evangélica en la sociedad es desconocida en sus creencias y prácticas, aunque se conoce que existe. F.2. Es rechazada por algunas de sus creencias bíblicas. F.3. La iglesia se siente impedida en su ser interno. F.4. Vive la vida cristiana sin potencia del Espíritu. F.5. La iglesia sin profundidad por falta de estudio bíblico. F.6. Supone una lucha histórica con la religiosidad imperante y sus tradiciones (114 opiniones).

Los factores de receptividad presentados en forma sintética son: F.1. La iglesia evangélica es aceptada como creencia más sincera. F.2. La iglesia en misión puede hacer viva la Palabra. F.3. La iglesia atrae al dar testimonio de como Dios obra en ella. F.4. La iglesia está en lucha con los

poderes espirituales de maldad y su influencia. F.5. Sus recursos son el mensaje bíblico, el testimonio personal, el poder de la fe. F.6. La iglesia es transformadora social impactando en la familia, amistades y diversos entornos (57 opiniones).

6.2 Área misional: metodología evangelizadora

Resultado de la investigación sobre la metodología evangelizadora: sintetizando el resultado explicativo de la investigación sobre la metodología evangelizadora han sido encontrados seis factores de resistencia y seis factores de receptividad a la conversión cristiana dando doce factores en total.

Los factores de resistencia presentados en forma sintética son: F.1. Utilizamos demasiados métodos foráneos, que no contactan con nuestra gente. F.2. Damos una impresión de secta y proselitismo al ciudadano al evangelizarlo. F.3. No llevamos bien y abandonamos la tarea con los contactos. F.4. No seguimos el modelo de Jesús pues necesitamos su corazón. F.5. La iglesia no se prepara para un obrar poderoso y sobrenatural de Dios en la evangelización. F.6. Faltan recursos económicos y humanos para una acción evangelizadora más efectiva. (96 opiniones).

Los factores de receptividad presentados en forma sintética son: F.1. Los métodos de evangelización más acordes al carácter del ciudadano son las relaciones y las amistades. F.2. Se evidencia mayor resultado cuando nuestros métodos atienden a las necesidades físicas, emocionales y espirituales. F.3. La evangelización espiritual es con mucho la diferencia. F.4. La evangelización poderosa es evangelizar llenos del Espíritu Santo. F.5. El deseo de avivamiento nos prepara para evangelizar. F.6. Estar con gente apasionada por el Señor y avivada, sería un gran estímulo (80 opiniones).

6.3 Área social: concepto de conversión

Resultado de la investigación sobre el concepto de conversión en la sociedad: sintetizando el resultado explicativo de la investigación sobre el concepto de conversión en la sociedad, han sido encontrados seis factores de resistencia y seis factores de receptividad a la conversión cristiana dando doce factores en total.

Los factores de resistencia presentados en forma sintética son: F.1. La conversión religiosa no es aceptada, no es entendida y se cree no ser necesaria. F.2. La conversión es vista como si Dios no la pidiera, se burlan de esa idea, no lo han pensado nunca. F.3. La Biblia no es aceptada y tampoco es conocida. F.4. Estar a bien con Dios se confunde con estar a bien con uno mismo o con estar a bien con el prójimo. F.5. Se cree que dejar su creencia católica por otra es traición. F.6. La conversión si afecta a la identidad nacional como sevillano y como español y también afecta al trato que otros te dan. (204 opiniones).

Los factores de receptividad presentados en forma sintética: F.1. En la conversión religiosa se da una nueva fe que te transforma. F.2. Dios pide la conversión y la nueva religión puede pedirla. F.3. La Biblia dice como convertirnos a Dios. F.4. La relación con Dios es buena cuando usamos la Biblia y nos alejamos del mal. F.5. No es deslealtad dejar el catolicismo romano. F.6. Si se convierte a otra fe no católica, no afecta a su identidad (148 opiniones).

7. Cuestiones finales. Observaciones y sugerencias misiológicas

Las observaciones y sugerencias a tener en cuenta se dan desde una visión autóctona, después de haber considerado la idiosincrasia, las tendencias sociales, la religiosidad popular y la psicología social religiosa de tradiciones y simbolizaciones.

7.1 Para superar la resistencia hay cambios que son necesarios

Superar la resistencia exige cambios importantes en la vida eclesial, en la metodología de evangelización, y en nuestro acercamiento a la sociedad. A la vez que se hace uso de la receptividad que se presenta para facilitar la conversión.

Cambios en la iglesia.

Los creyentes deben ser más participativos, no solo el liderazgo. Algunos salen de la iglesia sin experimentar la conversión. La iglesia tiene sus propios defectos y pecados que debe corregir. Es necesario un cambio en el sistema y organigrama para un cambio de estructura.

Cambios en el liderazgo.

Es una de las claves para el crecimiento. El liderazgo ha de tener pasión por Dios y por las almas de los hombres. El liderazgo se carga con responsabilidades que corresponden a otros miembros. El liderazgo carga a la iglesia con actividades que no producen crecimiento.

Cambios en la evangelización.

La evangelización es la tarea insustituible para la iglesia. La post-evangelización requiere más atención y esfuerzo. Necesitamos mayor presencia en los medios masivos de comunicación. La mayoría de los métodos de evangelización no funcionan. Debemos examinar nuestras reuniones y actividades. El tema de la evangelización nos carga el corazón.

Cambios en las percepciones sociales.

La sociedad percibe a la Iglesia Evangélica en España como extranjera. El concepto que el ciudadano tiene de la conversión no es bíblico. No se entiende en la sociedad la figura de Jesús ni la necesidad de su cruz.

Cambios en ser más conscientes de la acción de los poderes espirituales.

Los poderes espirituales de maldad están en contra de la conversión. Su ataque se dirige contra la iglesia para que no pueda dar el mensaje de salvación. Quieren evitar la oración de intercesión a favor de la conversión.

Cambios en el acercamiento a las personas.

Se deben tener en cuenta las necesidades de las personas. Debemos crear formas muy naturales de evangelización. Se necesitan vidas atractivas de creyentes. Debemos predicar el arrepentimiento de pecado. Debemos presentar a la sociedad a Cristo y a este crucificado y solo eso.

Cambios en la unidad del cuerpo.

Debemos compartir y analizar entre la iglesia y el liderazgo lo que realizamos. La unidad es de gran importancia para el crecimiento, la misión y el reino.

7.2 Incorporación de un estudio de investigación etnográfica como método de preevangelización

Estamos convencidos de que una labor y una ayuda como la que aporta el estudio etnográfico solo tiene futuro y sentido en tanto que permita ver in situ algunas realidades que la mayoría de las veces no se tienen en cuenta —o no se le da importancia a la hora de la evangelización—. El estudio etnográfico, de la población a evangelizar, es de ayuda como método de preevangelización, teniendo en cuenta sus características. Necesitamos comprender:

¿Qué es un perfil etnográfico y para qué sirve? ¿Qué aspectos se investigan en el perfil etnográfico? ¿Qué tiempo se necesita invertir en el estudio y qué se hace después? ¿En qué manera el estudio etnográfico puede ayudar en plantar iglesias? No todos comprenden el valor del estudio

etnográfico para la evangelización. El estudio etnográfico de poblaciones como elemento de una misiología propia.

El Señor debe ser colocado nuevamente en el primer lugar de la vida del creyente y de la iglesia. Nuestra vida deberá estar guiada por el Espíritu de Dios para poder ver resultados.

En esta investigación se encuentra un número significativo de factores, con ellos se da respuesta a la gran pregunta y logra los objetivos de este estudio al encontrar aquellos factores de resistencia y receptividad que inciden en la conversión de los sevillanos-españoles. Se ha querido servir con ello al Reino de Dios y a su iglesia.

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Desenvolvimento Local Sustentável - Uma Análise a partir do ChildFund Brasil e suas Parcerias na Cidade de Santa Luz/PI, entre 2016 e 2020

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Resumo

Este trabalho tem como propósito compreender como o ChildFund Brasil (CFB) tem promovido desenvolvimento local sustentável (DLS) em parceria com igrejas, particularmente em seu programa de Transformação Social Sustentável (TSS), modelo de intervenção social desenhado para ser aplicado na localidade em 16 anos. O lócus escolhido para a pesquisa de campo foi a cidade de Santa Luz, localizada no Estado do Piauí, região Nordeste do Brasil. A pesquisa de campo teve como objetivo central verificar indícios de desenvolvimento e transformação nesta cidade, bem como entender o papel da igreja local nesse processo. Para isso, utilizou-se de cinco grupos focais e, a partir deles, foi elaborada uma narrativa que revela, de forma muito peculiar, o tipo e a abrangência do desenvolvimento que está acontecendo nesta localidade. Este estudo também fez uso da

pesquisa bibliográfica com foco na construção da fundamentação teórica, histórica, bíblica e teológica do DLS, bem como da pesquisa documental, de arquivos do CFB.

1. Introdução

Apesar da importância das Ciências Sociais para o desenvolvimento da igreja e o cumprimento de sua missão, é possível perceber, ainda hoje, na América Latina, muito estranhamento por parte da igreja quanto à utilização desse importante recurso (Paredes, 2000). No entanto, se queremos ser igreja relevante e cumprir nosso papel transformador na sociedade, precisamos aliar à nossa fé e espiritualidade os recursos e descobertas das ciências.

É com base nessa perspectiva que surge este estudo, cuja intenção é refletir especificamente sobre um dos aspectos fundamentais que sustentam e dão sentido à vida social: o desenvolvimento social e humano. O estudo se volta mais especificamente a uma das correntes do desenvolvimento, que é o desenvolvimento sustentável, com olhar particular ao seu aspecto local e comunitário.

Visando refletir sobre a contribuição da igreja para o desenvolvimento local sustentável, com olhar específico na experiência do ChildFund Brasil em parceria com igrejas, este estudo apresenta os fundamentos histórico, conceitual e bíblico do DLS, bem como indica os resultados de desenvolvimento promovido pela parceria supracitada na cidade de Santa Luz/PI, Nordeste do Brasil.

2. Perspectivas histórica e teóricas do desenvolvimento local sustentável

Com o fim da segunda guerra mundial, o capitalismo se instala no mundo. Várias nações que antes tinham sido assoladas pela guerra conseguiram,

com base neste modelo, se desenvolver e superar seu estado caótico e de miséria. A partir deste momento, adotaram o desenvolvimento econômico e industrializado como modelo a ser seguido e empenharam grandes esforços para que as nações subdesenvolvidas também o adotassem como modelo de desenvolvimento (Morin; Kern 2002; Padilla 2005; Scotto, Carvalho e Guimaraes 2007).

O modelo do capital logo começou a ser repassado para outras nações, e isso sem levar em conta as suas características, peculiaridades, riquezas, conhecimentos, sua cultura, sua forma de aprender e de ensinar, entre outros. Isso porque, aos olhos dos promotores dessa forma de desenvolvimento, essas características locais eram tidas como obsoletas, inferiores e empecilhos ao desenvolvimento. Com o tempo, ficou perceptível a impossibilidade da resposta desse modelo de desenvolvimento às necessidades das várias comunidades locais, habitadas pela maioria da população mundial.

Tendo em vista este contexto, Morin e Kern (2002), identificaram que “durante o século XX, a economia, a demografia, o desenvolvimento, a ecologia se tornaram problemas que doravante dizem respeito a todas as nações e civilizações, ou seja, ao planeta como um todo” (Morin; Kern 2002, 65). Esses quatro elementos foram apontados como os quatro principais desregramentos da sociedade deste século. Sobre o desregramento econômico mundial, identificam que desde o século XIX, o crescimento econômico foi tanto o motor como o regulador da economia e isso trouxe, entre outras consequências, a destruição das civilizações rurais, das culturas tradicionais e a perturbação no modo em que a vida se organizava. Quanto ao desregramento demográfico mundial, apontam para o problema no aumento populacional e afirmam que, em 1800, havia um bilhão de humanos no mundo, e que até 2050 está previsto 10 bilhões de pessoas.

Estes autores indicam, ainda, que a maior parte da população mundial atual vive nos países pobres e miseráveis e estão vulneráveis à fome.

No que diz respeito às perturbações no modo de vida, Morin e Kern (2002) apontam para a degradação da biosfera, a degradação de nossas vidas mentais, afetivas, morais, o que define como degradação da psicosfera, a mercantilização de todas as coisas, a perda da gratuidade e da doação, o interesse financeiro, a sede de riqueza, o desenvolvimento tecnológico que permite a produtividade e rentabilidade ao mesmo tempo em que aumenta o desemprego, a desregulação do ritmo da vida humano e a concorrência. Ao se referirem ao desregramento ecológico, relatam as catástrofes que ocorreram nos anos 80: a secagem do mar Aral, o problema com a usina de Chernobyl (que ultrapassou os limites do continente europeu), a contaminação da água nos países industrializados, o envenenamento do solo por excesso de pesticida e fertilizante, as chuvas ácidas, a desertificação, o desmatamento, a urbanização selvagem e a emissão de CO² que permite a intensificação do efeito estufa. “Desde então, a consciência ecológica tornou-se a tomada de consciência do problema global e do perigo global que aumentaram no planeta” (Morin; Kern 2002, 69).

Mesmo com os problemas apresentados por Morin e Kern (2002) presentes nas sociedades capitalistas, foi somente durante os anos 60 a 70 que o debate ambiental teve grande impacto mundial, e a crise no modelo de desenvolvimento com foco no capital sofreu duras críticas. Scotto, Carvalho e Guimaraes (2007), apresentam o pano de fundo do que mobilizou tanto o debate ecológico como a ampliação da crise do modelo de desenvolvimento vigente: O contexto pós Segunda Guerra Mundial, precisamente os anos 40, foi marcado pela crença no desenvolvimento compreendido como a possibilidade de crescimento ilimitado e pela ideia de progresso. Essa ideia foi um dos pilares da sociedade industrial desse

período. No cenário internacional, disputando o poder, estavam de um lado os Estados Unidos junto com a Europa, promovendo o capitalismo, e do outro a U.R.S.S., promovendo o socialismo. Essa disputa ficou popularmente conhecida como guerra fria. A política internacional tinha como característica a ideia de desenvolvimento, subdesenvolvimento e modernização, principalmente nos países capitalistas ocidentais.

O desenvolvimento foi então identificado com o crescimento econômico, tecnológico, urbano e a internalização da lógica da acumulação e da perda capitalista em todas as esferas da vida social. Um modo de vida desenvolvido ou “moderno” foi estabelecido como um caminho evolutivo, linear e inevitável a ser trilhado pelas sociedades subdesenvolvidas para superação da pobreza e do atraso. O paradigma de desenvolvimento a ser alcançado era a sociedade de consumo norte-americana. (Scotto, Carvalho e Guimaraes 2007, 16)

Ainda de acordo com os autores acima, inconformados com o modelo de desenvolvimento materialista, individualista, competitivo e destruidor do meio ambiente (os efeitos do modelo de desenvolvimento perverso), os movimentos ecológicos e contra culturais dos anos 60 questionam a sociedade industrial. “Esta preocupação indica a crise do modelo desenvolvimentista que prometeu o atendimento das necessidades humanas pela via do crescimento econômico e a modernização tecnológica” (Scotto, Carvalho e Guimaraes 2007, 17). “A consciência da crise ecológica nos anos 70 veio somar-se às constatações do fracasso do desenvolvimentismo na solução dos problemas globais, denunciando a exploração ilimitada dos bens ambientais e a insustentabilidade social e ambiental por ele gerada” (Scotto, Carvalho e Guimaraes 2007, 19).

Nos anos 80, marcados pela crise econômica e ambiental, cresce a crítica pelo modelo de desenvolvimento que tinha como marca central o modelo de supremacia ou hegemonia. Neste cenário, os movimentos ecológicos “[...] vão se contrapor a outros setores do movimento ecológico e das instituições internacionais que buscarão reformar o desenvolvimento, buscando incorporar à ideia de desenvolvimento, uma dimensão ambiental que este projeto, inicialmente, excluía de seu horizonte”. (Scotto, Carvalho e Guimaraes 2007, 19).

De acordo com Buarque (2002), alguns eventos marcaram a mudança de paradigma do desenvolvimento, trazendo novas formulações e propostas para essa percepção. Ele destaca que o primeiro grande impacto nessa mudança paradigmática ocorreu no final dos anos 60 e no início dos anos 70 como resultado do efeito da crise do petróleo e com a publicação do primeiro Relatório do Clube de Roma, “Os limites do crescimento, em 1969.” “Com uma crítica sólida e competente da concepção tradicional de uma natureza inesgotável e disponível à exploração da humanidade, o relatório mostrou perspectivas reais de esgotamento, a médio prazo, de importantes matérias primas e fontes energéticas” (Buarque 2002, 57). O autor destaca que, a partir desses dois eventos, iniciam-se debates sobre o estilo de desenvolvimento adotado até então, fomentando um amplo movimento ambientalista em países desenvolvidos. Um grande marco que abriu portas para tais debates foi a Conferência das Nações Unidas sobre o Meio Ambiente, realizada em 1972, na cidade de Estocolmo, Suécia.

A necessidade de novos paradigmas e de uma compreensão mais holística sobre o desenvolvimento, conforme apresentado acima, é o contexto que marca o surgimento do conceito de desenvolvimento sustentável, a partir de 1980. O conceito de desenvolvimento sustentável foi formulado em um documento intitulado “Our Common Future” (“Nosso

Futuro Comum”) (Scotto; Carvalho; Guimarães 2007). De acordo com este conhecido documento, o desenvolvimento sustentável foi definido da seguinte forma: “Desenvolvimento que é capaz de garantir as necessidades do presente sem comprometer a capacidade das gerações futuras atenderem também as suas” (CMMAD 1988, 9).

Para Bullón (2000, 75-76), o adjetivo sustentável tem a intenção de dar ênfase ao problema da relação do homem com a natureza, elemento essencial para o processo econômico. Esse adjetivo está relacionado com a preocupação da destruição do meio ambiente causada pelo sistema capitalista que, por natureza, tem explorado de forma demasiada os recursos naturais. Também está relacionado com a necessidade de garantir a vida sobre o planeta para que no futuro outras gerações tenham sua sustentação de forma apropriada. O autor relaciona o tema do desenvolvimento sustentável com os processos produtivos como o trabalho, o capital e a tecnologia, sendo, no entanto, o fator ambiental um elemento restritivo a este modelo tradicional.

De acordo com Cavalcanti (1997), “desenvolvimento sustentável significa qualificar o crescimento e reconciliar o desenvolvimento econômico com a necessidade de se preservar o meio ambiente” (Cavalcanti 1997, 41). Para a Rio+20, “desenvolvimento sustentável é o modelo que prevê a integração entre economia, sociedade e meio ambiente. Em outras palavras, é a noção de que o crescimento econômico deve levar em consideração a inclusão social e a proteção ambiental” (Rio+20, s. f.). De acordo com Binswanger (1997, 41), “o conceito de desenvolvimento sustentável deve ser visto como uma alternativa ao conceito de crescimento econômico”.

No que diz respeito ao desenvolvimento local, dois importantes acontecimentos sinalizam o surgimento e a aceitação deste conceito: sua afirmação científica no final de 1970, e seu reconhecimento político-

institucional a partir dos anos 1990. O primeiro surge pelas publicações dos trabalhos de John Friedman e Clyde Weaver, Walter Stohr e David Taylor, entre outros, e o segundo pelo Programa Iniciativas Locais de Emprego da Organização para a Cooperação e Desenvolvimento Econômico (OCDE), no fim dos anos 80, e sua importância assumida na organização das políticas públicas da Europa ao combate da pobreza, exclusão social e desemprego. O que é definido, hoje, por desenvolvimento local surge, inicialmente, com a terminologia de desenvolvimento comunitário, que era nada mais que resposta das comunidades locais ante à ineficácia do modelo econômico e mercantilista adotado por muitos países. Eram respostas das comunidades locais ante os problemas que elas mesmas precisavam enfrentar e que surgiram das crises econômica, política, tecnológica e ambiental. A ideia de desenvolvimento comunitário surge baseada em três pontos principais: primeiro, as necessidades das comunidades locais devem ser diagnosticadas com a participação das mesmas; segundo, a própria comunidade deve usar seus próprios recursos e capacidade para responder às necessidades locais; terceiro, tanto os problemas quanto as soluções precisam ser abordados de forma integrada (Amaro, Rogério 2009, 108 – 113).

Amaro (2009, 108) define o desenvolvimento local como sendo “o processo de satisfação de necessidades e de melhorias das condições de vida de uma comunidade local, a partir essencialmente das suas capacidades, assumindo a comunidade o protagonismo principal nesse processo e segundo uma perspectiva integrada dos problemas e das respostas.” Falando em características intrínsecas do conceito de desenvolvimento local, ele utiliza dez atributos:

- a) um processo de mudança, levando à melhoria do bem-estar e das condições de vida da população; b) centrado numa comunidade territorial de pequena dimensão, definida pela

existência (real ou potencial) de uma identidade comum, capaz de mobilizar solidariedades de ação (coletiva) e com pretensões a uma autonomia de afirmação do seu destino; c) que tem como uma das suas motivações fundamentais a resposta a necessidades básicas da comunidade que estão por satisfazer; d) a partir essencialmente da mobilização das capacidades locais; e) o que implica a opção de metodologias participativas e de “empowerment” da comunidade local (do ponto de vista individual e coletivo); f) contando também com a contribuição de recursos exógenos, capazes de mobilizar e fertilizar os recursos endógenos (e não de os substituir ou inibir); g) numa perspectiva integrada, na abordagem dos problemas e das respostas; h) o que exige uma lógica de trabalho em parceria, ou seja, de articulação dos vários atores, protagonistas e instituições locais para trabalhar no local; i) com impacto tendencial em toda a comunidade; j) e segundo uma grande diversidade de processos, dinâmicas e resultados. (Amaro 2009, III)

Para Buarque (2002, 25) “o desenvolvimento local pode ser conceituado como um processo endógeno de mudança, que leva ao dinamismo econômico e à melhoria da qualidade de vida da população em pequenas unidades territoriais e agrupamentos humanos.” Ele defende que, para que este tipo de desenvolvimento seja consistente e sustentável é necessário que: as potencialidades locais sejam mobilizadas e exploradas; haja investimento em oportunidades sociais, com viabilidade de competitividade local; que os recursos naturais da localidade sejam conservados; e que haja organização e mobilização da sociedade local.

Outro ponto a ser considerado no desenvolvimento local tem a ver com a globalização. Mesmo referindo-se ao desenvolvimento de uma

localidade específica, não se pode deixar de lado o fato de que somos um mundo globalizado. Querendo ou não, estamos conectados com essa rede macro que influencia todas as regiões do mundo, seja positiva ou negativamente. É neste contexto, entre o local e o global, que as ações para o desenvolvimento local precisam levar em conta a importância da singularidade da identidade local, de sua cultura, e de suas especificidades e vantagens competitivas, dentro de uma enorme homogeneidade (Buarque 2002, 30).

3. Perspectiva bíblica-teológica do desenvolvimento sustentável

Após traçar o panorama histórico e conceitual do desenvolvimento local sustentável, é necessário refletir agora sobre o tema a partir de uma perspectiva bíblica e teológica. Como trata-se de conceitos contemporâneos e ainda em desenvolvimento, parece apropriado perguntar se é possível encontrar tais perspectivas na Bíblia. Ou ainda, quais são os fundamentos bíblicos e teológicos que sustentam a ideia de desenvolvimento local sustentável?

3.1 Panorama do desenvolvimento local sustentável no Antigo Testamento:

Refletindo sobre a integração da beneficência social na missão de Deus a partir de uma perspectiva bíblica, histórica e contemporânea, Kuhn (2013) destaca que a Bíblia é o modelo da assistência e do desenvolvimento para o cristão. Do ponto de vista bíblico, desenvolvimento humano tem a ver com a transformação dos indivíduos e das comunidades em que estão inseridos, e que a vida e amor de Jesus Cristo deve ser a origem, o propósito e o princípio de ação para tais iniciativas de beneficência.

Tendo em vista o Antigo Testamento (AT), Kuhn (2013) aponta que pobres, doentes, e oprimidos devem ser regularmente considerados, mostrando que estes são o foco da responsabilidade do povo de Israel. “Israel devia auxiliar os fracos e oprimidos, tornando-se assim um modelo para as outras nações. A assistência e o desenvolvimento humano deveriam ser colocados em prática de modo que a nação eleita fosse o ideal do que Deus almejava para a humanidade” (Kuhn 2013, 12-13).

Já nas primeiras páginas deste livro, encontramos fundamentos para o desenvolvimento na perspectiva ambiental, econômica e social conforme tratamos neste estudo. Sobre a dimensão ecológica, um importante destaque deste livro está em sua narrativa ao informar que todas as coisas foram criadas por Deus e seu imenso poder (Gn 1:1-31; 2:4-17). Deus é apontado no texto como o soberano criador de toda a existência.

Para Walvoord e Zuck (1996, 29), o relato de Gênesis que aponta Deus como Criador de todas as coisas possui três grandes implicações: a primeira diz respeito ao fato de que tudo o que existe deve estar abaixo de seu controle, por isso “la creación debe estar sujeta a su creador. Las fuerzas de la naturaleza, los enemigos, las criaturas y objetos que se convirtieron en deidades paganas—nada de eso podía ser una amenaza para los siervos del Dios viviente”. A segunda implicação diz respeito ao fato desta narrativa ser a base para a Lei descrita nos livros posteriores e a terceira tem a ver com o aspecto redentor de Deus. “Em terceiro lugar, o relato revela que Deus é um Deus redentor.” (Walvoord; Zuck, 1996, 29, traduzido pelo autor)

Um outro destaque da narrativa deste livro está no fato de o Criador ter prazer e se ver satisfeito com a conclusão de sua obra: “*E Deus viu tudo o que havia feito, e tudo havia ficado muito bom.*” (Gn 1:31) e colocou Adão como cuidador e guardador de sua obra. “A lição bíblica é clara: Deus criou o primeiro ecossistema, dotou-o de todos os seus elementos, estabeleceu o

homem no seu contexto com a incumbência de zelar dele cuidar e guardar dele” (Brito; Mazzoni-Viveiros 2006, 51).

Também estabeleceu regras para o compromisso do homem com a natureza, a fim de manter o equilíbrio dinâmico, para que trabalhasse e desenvolvesse a horta de Deus (jardim), e para que este não se assenhorasse de sua criação, mas fosse como um rei pacífico que organiza e promove bem-estar aos animais (Brito; Mazzoni-Viveiros 2006, 51; Pikaza 2008). “A Bíblia não faz do homem um déspota que pode usar a vida dos animais a seu capricho, mas um rei pacificador, delegado de Deus que deve cuidar de sua criação, para que ela possa existir em harmonia, cada um sendo o que é” (Pikaza 2008, 106, traduzido pelo autor). “Deus nos deu a capacidade de dirigir o mundo e inventar os sistemas necessários para sermos bons administradores de sua criação ao conviver uns com os outros. Isso inevitavelmente nos levou ao que chamamos de desenvolvimento da cultura” (McCurry 1996, 226, traduzido pelo autor).

Este mandato divino para Adão e Eva diz respeito ao que tradicionalmente chamamos de mandato cultural. Aponta para a responsabilidade do homem com a natureza, do seu compromisso de lavrar e guardar o jardim de Deus (Lammé 2012, 147).

Além da responsabilidade humana para com a terra e os animais, o mandato cultural diz respeito ao compromisso do homem em potencializar as capacidades da terra ainda escondidas. Indica que o ser humano não é igual aos demais animais, pois é a coroa da criação, entretanto, não é o dono do mundo, por isso não pode fazer dele o que quiser (Lammé 2012, 152). Este mandato diz respeito a um desenvolvimento e prosperidade que não tem o homem e a mulher como propósito final, mas sim a glória de Deus e a liberdade humana (Lammé 2012, 153).

O início do livro de Êxodo inicia dando continuidade ao livro de Gênesis. Durante 400 anos os filhos de Jacó se multiplicaram no Egito sob

a proteção de faraó; tornaram-se fortes e foram considerados pelos egípcios uma ameaça (Porter 1986, 7), a ponto de serem escravizados com a finalidade de impedir seu desenvolvimento (Ex 1:7-14).

Para Potter, R. (1986) este livro trata da redenção e descreve o modo como Deus libertou seu povo da escravidão. Os quinze primeiros capítulos do livro de Êxodo nos narram a história do povo de Israel cativo no Egito e sua fantástica libertação do poder da opressão desta grande e forte nação. O capítulo 15 descreve o cântico de Moisés repleto de gratidão pelo grandioso feito de Deus e manifestação de seu poder ao libertar seu povo da mão opressora de Faraó, conduzindo-o para um futuro cheio de boas perspectivas.

A libertação descrita neste cântico, além de revelar a soberania de Deus sobre todas as estruturas e poderes humanos, enfatiza também sua supremacia sobre todos os deuses existentes. No entanto, essa narrativa não enfatiza apenas um Deus que liberta um povo da violência e opressão, mas também aponta para uma perspectiva que inclui a promoção de uma nova vida, um novo recomeço, uma nova sociedade com toda estrutura de leis e normas, forma de culto e cerimônias religiosas, festas e celebrações, entre outros, visando ao bem-estar pleno do povo.

A própria terra prometida por Deus para estabelecer seu povo é de solo bom, produz bons frutos, terá sustento, trabalho para todos, pois dela mana leite e mel (Êx 3:8). De acordo com a narrativa, Deus já tem, bem claro, um plano desenvolvimentista para seu povo após a libertação da opressão do Egito; uma terra que permitiria ao seu povo se estruturar de forma sustentável.

De acordo com Kuhn (2013, 21-22) “o Pentateuco apresenta a maioria das leis com respeito ao relacionamento apropriado entre Deus e Seu povo, entre povos e povos, e entre povos e a natureza ou o meio ambiente.” Ele

destaca que as viúvas, os órfãos, os pobres, os forasteiros e os necessitados, têm lugar especial nas instruções e regulamentos de Deus, o que nos aponta para as dimensões ecológica, econômica e social do desenvolvimento sustentável.

Vários textos sustentam a ideia de um desenvolvimento humano que seja sustentável no Pentateuco. Em Êxodo 22:21, 22; 23:9; Levítico 19:13-15, 33,34; Deuteronômio 10:17-19; 24:17-21; 26:12,13; 27:19 encontramos sérias orientações para não afligir os forasteiros, as viúvas e os órfãos, nem perverter seus direitos; em Êxodo, 23:6-8, orientações para o justo julgamento e para não perverter o julgamento do pobre; Êxodo 23:10,11; Levítico 19:9-15; Deuteronômio 14:28,29; 15:7:11; 24:14, 15, 19-21 indicam o cuidado e descanso da terra e subsistência para os pobres e os animais. Êxodo 34:26 orienta a não abater animais novos e Êxodos 16:12-16 e Números 11:32,33 a não matar animais para alimento além do necessário; Deuteronômio 22:6,7 orienta a não matar a ave-mãe quando estiver com filhotes; em Êxodos 23:10, 11; Levítico 19:9,10; 23:22; 25:3-55; Deuteronômio 14:28,29; 24:19-21 fala sobre o compartilhamento dos frutos da terra; Êxodo 21:7-11, 20, 26-32; 22:16,17; Deuteronômio 21:10-14; 22:13-30; 24:1-5 trata da proteção à mulher mesmo em vista de sua posição de subordinação social naquela sociedade; finalmente, Êxodo 22:21-27; Levítico 19:14, 33, 34; 25:35,36; Deuteronômio 23:19; 24:6, 12-15,17; 27:18 dá instruções contra a exploração e a opressão.¹

O ano de descanso, do Jubileu e as leis a favor dos pobres e dos escravos, fazem parte do capítulo 25 de Levíticos. Essa narrativa aponta

¹ Outros textos do Pentateuco que apontam para o desenvolvimento sustentável na perspectiva aqui discutida: Ex 20: 8-13; 21:2, 5,6, 7-11, 15-21, 26-32; 22:16-17, 21-27; 23:5, 10-12; 26:31, ; Lv 19:9,10, 14, 33,34; 23:22; 25:3-55; Dt 5:12-15,17; 14:28,29; 15:12-18; 21:10-14; 22:4,6,7; 23:19; 24:6,7,12-15,17, 19-21; 25:4 27:18.

para a vontade de Deus na manutenção da liberdade do seu povo, bem como para sua sustentabilidade ambiental, econômica, social e cultural. O princípio sabático e do descanso é também um importante sentido do ano do jubileu e nele estão contidas as ideias de cuidado, cura, manutenção e desenvolvimento dos seres humanos. (Kuhn 2013, 36)

No livro que se segue ao Pentateuco, vemos Deus conduzindo seu povo por meio de Josué para tomar posse da terra prometida. Além de apontar para o fato de Deus cumprir sua promessa, é importante destacar que a proposta de desenvolvimento indicado no Êxodo, quando Israel é libertado do Egito, começa a ter uma forma mais concreta no livro de Josué, visto que o povo ainda era nômade e suscetível às vulnerabilidades do deserto, mas que agora pode se organizar na terra prometida a eles.

Outras bases bíblicas para o desenvolvimento sustentável sobre as dimensões que optamos neste trabalho podem ser vistas também nos livros de Neemias, Ester, nos Salmos e nos profetas.

O livro de Neemias se apresenta como um importante exemplo de desenvolvimento comunitário, conforme temos abordado neste estudo. Dentre outros aspectos ligados a este tema é possível encontrar fundamentos que apontam para o diagnóstico social e comunitário, elemento indispensável para entender a realidade local e ponto inicial para qualquer ação de desenvolvimento (Ne 1:2,3; 2:11-16); mobilização comunitária e sua importância no processo de transformação social e a compartilha com o povo da real situação em que estavam vivendo (Ne 2:17-20).

Sobre o livro de Ester, em relação ao que nos cabe refletir aqui, é importante destacar sua ação como agente de Deus na salvação do povo de Israel. Vemos, nesse livro, que a lição da redenção está ligada ao interesse de Deus na vida de seu povo. O não extermínio e a vida de milhares de

pessoas é um tema fundamental na teoria do desenvolvimento humano e social.

Quanto aos livros Históricos², Salmos³, Sapienciais⁴ e Profetas⁵, Kuhn (2013) destaca que eles refletem o padrão contido no Pentateuco, onde os pobres, as viúvas, os órfãos e os forasteiros têm lugar especial, o que nos aponta, mais uma vez, para a dimensão social e econômica do desenvolvimento sustentável.

Para concluir, dois outros conceitos são importantes para a ideia de desenvolvimento aqui discutida no AT, o conceito de *shalom* e a esperança messiânica. Para Kuhn (2013), “os resultados de uma comunidade transformada, que experimentou o amor e a justiça, certamente serão saúde e paz, o que na sua essência é *shalom*” (Kuhn, 2013, p. 38). Ele destaca ainda que “*shalom*” é provavelmente um dos melhores conceitos ou princípios para os ministérios holísticos em qualquer contexto. Significa também perfeição e se relaciona ao bem-estar do ser humano na parte mais básica e mais física de nós” (Kuhn 2013, 39).

Para Shenk (1998), *shalom* descreve a natureza ideal do povo de Deus. Por meio do pacto, este povo pode se relacionar em paz com Deus,

2 Algumas referências dos livros históricos para a sustentabilidade do ponto de vida social e econômico: 1Sm 2:8; Neemias 8:10; Jó 22:9; 24:3,9; 29:11-17; 31:13-23; 31:21; 34:28; 37:23.

3 Salmos que tratam do desenvolvimento sustentável na perspectiva social e econômica: Sl 10:2, 12, 14, 18; 11:7; 12:5; 15:1,2; 33:5; 41:1; 45:4,7; 48:10; 68:5; 82:2-4; 89:14; 94:6; 101:3; 107:33,34; 103:6; 106:3; 109:12,31; 112:4-9; 113:7-9; 132:15; 146:9.

4 Desenvolvimento social e econômico sustentável nos livros Sapienciais: Pv 12:28; 13:23; 14:21, 31, 34; 15:9; 17:5; 19:17; 21:3, 7; 22: 2, 9, 16, 22,23; 23:10,11,21; 28:27; 29:7; 29:14; 31:8,9,20; Ec 3:16; 5:8; 9:3.

5 Referências nos livros proféticos que sustentam o desenvolvimento sustentável: Is 1:7, 16, 23; 3:14, 15;5:18; 10:1,2; 11:4; 29:19; 13:11; 58:6,7,9,10; Jr 2:34; 5:27,28; 7:5-7; 9:24; 12:4; 21:12; 22:3,13,16,17; 49:11; Ez 16:49; 18:7,12,16,17; 22:7, 29; Dn 4:27; Os 10:12; 14:3,6; Am 2:7; 4:1; 5:11,24; ; 8:6; Zc 7:10; Ml 3:5.

consigo mesmo, com os outros e com a criação. Deus os abençoava com *shalom* e os convidava a estabelecer um modelo de vida que cria e preserva essa *shalom*. A partir desta concepção, deveria haver grande preocupação com os pobres, as viúvas e os estrangeiros.

A esperança messiânica é um outro conceito importante que merece destaque. O messias do Antigo Testamento reuniria, em si, as três fundamentais funções do antigo pacto, a saber: ele seria profeta, sacerdote e rei. Além disso, estabeleceria o reino de Deus entre os homens e traria todas as bênçãos de Deus para os que criam (De Andrade 2002, 143). A vinda do messias tinha um caráter de esperança, mesmo em tempos de desastres. Israel, como povo de Deus, deveria ser luz para as nações; sua ação sanadora entre os povos deveria ser como a preparação da terra para a vinda do messias (Shenk 1998, 60).

3.2 Panorama do desenvolvimento local sustentável no Novo Testamento:

Não é difícil encontrar, também, no Novo Testamento (NT)⁶, elementos que sustentem a ideia de desenvolvimento conforme argumento neste estudo⁷. Acredito, fielmente, que a missão de Deus e da igreja têm como

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- 6 Lista de alguns textos do Novo Testamento que se conectam com a noção de desenvolvimento que estamos abordando neste estudo (boas obras, compromisso com o próximo, libertação, justiça, solidariedade): Mt 5:6,7,10,16, 20; 43-48; 6:33; 9:13; 35-38; 11:5; 12:7; 14:13-21; 19:21; 23:14, 23; 25:31-46; Mc 10:21; Lc 4:18; 6:32-36; 7:22; 9:10-17; 10:25-37; 14:13; 18:22; 19:8,9; Jo 8:36; At 9:36; Rm 8:19-22; 15:28; 2Co 9:9; Gl 2:10; Ef 2:10; Cl 3:12; 1Tm 6:11,17,18; 2Tm 2:19,22; Tt 2:7,14; 3:8, 14; Hb 10:24; Tg 1:27; 2:13; 3:17; 1Pe 2:12.
- 7 Além dos textos citados, questões como a inclusão da mulher na genealogia e no ministério de Jesus (Mt 1:1-17; 28:1-10; Lc 8:1-3; Jo 4:1-30), acolhida da criança (Mt 18:3; 19:13-15; 21:16; Mc 10:13-16; Lc 18:15-17), as curas e milagres (Mt 8, 9; 17:14-21; Mc 1:29-34; 5:24-34; 8:1-10; Lc 4:40,41; 5:12-14; 7:1-10; 8:22-39; 11:14-32; Jo 6:15-21) os pecadores recebem o evangelho, são incluídos no Reino de Deus e servem de exemplo para os judeus (Mt 15:21-28; Lc 7:1-10; 36-50; 10:25-37), o profetismo de Jesus denunciando as

uma de suas características fundamentais a promoção da libertação e do desenvolvimento holístico. Como fundamentação para essa afirmação, encontramos vários textos no NT, bem como fatos da história inicial do cristianismo.

O tema da redenção já contém o elemento de libertação e desenvolvimento; libertação da força do mal, do pecado, do império das trevas, da opressão (Cl 1:13; Jo 8:36; Rm 8:21, 2Co 3:17) e com implicações para o desenvolvimento dos indivíduos e de toda a sua cadeia de relações: novas pessoas, nova maneira de olhar a vida e de se relacionar com ela, nova forma de lidar com a natureza, de se viver em sociedade, de fazer política, de estruturar a economia, de se estruturar em família; a prática da solidariedade e da justiça como marcas da nova humanidade; enfim, desenvolvimento que abarca toda a esfera da vida (Padilla 2005).

Nos evangelhos, são vários os exemplos narrados sobre a atuação libertadora do ministério de Jesus e sua proposta de desenvolvimento humano, no mais alto padrão do que isso representa⁸. De fato, este é um dos elementos mais marcantes de sua atividade missionária. Diante dele, os poderes que escravizavam as pessoas eram desafiados e submetidos à atuação libertadora do seu poder: os pobres recebiam a mensagem de salvação, os cegos enxergavam, os doentes eram curados, os leprosos, além de serem curados eram reinseridos na vida pública, na vida familiar, na religião, na sociedade e no emprego, prova clara de inclusão social.

estruturas de corrupção e a elite dominante (Mt 23; Mc 12:38-40; Lc 6:24-26; 10:37-52; 11:37-52; 20:45-47), a inclusão dos gentios no Reino de Deus (At 8:4-40; 9:20-25; 10:1-48; 11:19-26; At 13-20), orientação de Paulo para o perdão de um escravo (Fm 1) e suas várias orientações para que a igreja siga um padrão de vida condizente com o evangelho.

8 Um pequeno exemplo disso ver: Mt 4:23-25; Lc 6:17-19.

As denúncias contra os dois poderes institucionais hegemônicos de sua época, a política opressora de Roma e a religião judaica alienante que escravizavam os judeus e impedia o desenvolvimento deste povo, são pautas de sua mensagem de salvação e ação; “o Cristo proclamado pelo evangelho como agente da redenção é também o agente da criação de Deus. E é simultaneamente a meta para qual se dirige todo o universo (Cl 1:16) e o princípio de coerência de toda a realidade, tanto material como espiritual (Cl 1:17)” (Padilla 2005, 16).

A narrativa de Atos 2:42-47 traz importantes informações sobre a vida da comunidade cristã primitiva, bem como a forma como eles estavam vivenciando os ensinamentos de Jesus. Esses novos cristãos foram profundamente impactados com o evangelho, se arrependeram de seus pecados, tornaram-se livres, receberam o Espírito Santo em Pentecostes e agora estavam desenvolvendo sua vida em comunidade.

Escrevendo sobre a relação entre o livro de Lucas e Atos, Barro (2002, 25) destaca que Lucas escreve seu segundo volume a partir da experiência de Jesus, e com base nessa experiência ele estabeleceu os fundamentos da comunidade nascente. De acordo com ele, “a práxis de Jesus será a práxis da sua comunidade. O conteúdo e o modelo já tinham sido dados. O próximo passo é a demonstração de como viver entre os contextos passado e presente”.

É possível encontrar e perceber indícios de desenvolvimento sustentável em outros textos do Novo Testamento⁹. No livro de Romanos, 1 e 2 Coríntios e Efésios por exemplo, após uma profunda explicação da obra salvífica de Deus, da doutrina da graça, da justificação pela fé, entre outros temas, esses escritos concluem sua argumentação apontando para

9 Alguns textos que trazem essa noção: Fp 1:9-11; 2:1-11; 4:5; 4:8; 4:11,12; Cl 3:5-17; 1Ts 1:3,6; 5:12-22; 1Jo 4:7-21; Hb 11 - 13; Tg 1:22-25, 26, 27; Tg 2:1,9; 14-26; Tg 3:13, 17, 18; Tg 5.

implicações concretas no que diz respeito ao estilo de vida da igreja no ambiente local em que os cristãos estavam inseridos (Rm 12 -15:21; 1Co 1:10; 1Co 13; 2Co 3:17, 5:17; 2Co 4; 2Co 5:18-6:3; Ef 2:10;4:-6:9).

4. O programa de transformação social sustentável

Dirijo agora o foco da reflexão ao universo do CFB, particularmente ao seu programa de desenvolvimento comunitário em parceria com igrejas. Aqui, dou início à dimensão mais empírica deste trabalho. Primeiro, um olhar na proposta de desenvolvimento sustentável desta organização, informações gerais sobre o CFB e alguns conceitos que ajudarão a compreender esse ambiente tão peculiar. Depois, apresento os resultados e comentários da pesquisa de campo.

4.1 Informações gerais sobre o ChildFund Brasil:

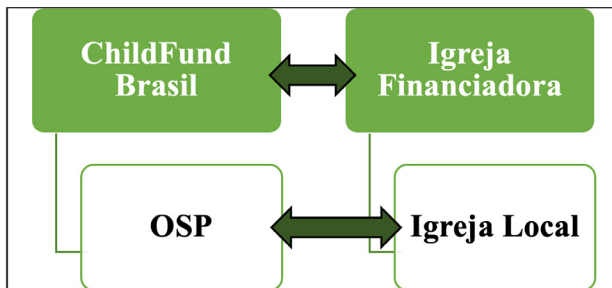
O ChildFund Brasil é uma organização de desenvolvimento humanitário, parte do ChildFund Internacional, instituição estabelecida em vários países do mundo e referência mundial no tema da proteção e do desenvolvimento da criança e do desenvolvimento e transformação de comunidades locais (ChildFund Brasil s. f., 1). Ela surgiu a partir da igreja como uma agência cristã de proteção às crianças órfãs, vítimas da guerra entre China e Japão. Tratando disso no sentido missiológico, o ChildFund Brasil surgiu com a concepção de se realizar missão em contexto de profunda violência, vulnerabilidade e carência humana. Ela se coloca efetivamente para trazer alento e esperança aos mais frágeis daquele contexto, as crianças.

A Transformação Social Sustentável (TSS) é o modelo de intervenção social usado atualmente pelo CFB, e que vem sendo implementado desde o ano de 2014. “Ela surge como uma estratégia programática do ChildFund

Brasil para atuar em novos territórios marcados pela situação de pobreza e vulnerabilidade social” (ChildFund Brasil 2019, 4). Tem como base a formação de parcerias com organizações eclesiais e instituições privadas e é denominada como Ponte Social, por construir ligações entre realidades distintas: uma mais vulnerável, em situação de pobreza e privação de direitos (a localidade e população alvo da intervenção do desenvolvimento) e a realidade do doador e financiador do programa, a igreja ou a empresa que se envolvem e se comprometem junto com o CFB para promover transformação na localidade escolhida, durante o período de 16 anos de atuação estratégica.

De modo operativo, a Ponte Social tem como intenção interligar duas realidades: contexto social de melhor condição econômica, conectando e promovendo desenvolvimento em ambientes sociais mais pobres e vulneráveis. Nesta lógica, as igrejas surgem como instituições estratégicas.

Figura 1: Funcionamento da Ponte Social na localidade.



Fonte: Elaborado pelo autor.

Conforme figura 1, a Ponte Social tem sua arquitetura de acordo com o seguinte modelo: O CFB realiza parceria com uma igreja histórica e de

grande porte, firmando acordo com foco no apadrinhamento de crianças e intervenção social num período de 16 anos.

5. Desenvolvimento local promovido pela igreja e o CFB

Através desta pesquisa foi possível verificar a forma como a Ponte Social promove bem-estar nas crianças e em suas famílias. O processo de apadrinhamento apresentou-se, de acordo com este estudo, como uma importante ferramenta de integração familiar; de incentivo à leitura e à escrita; de proteção da criança; de parceria com as famílias no processo de educação e sustento dos filhos; de fortalecimento da amizade que supera a distância e o status social; de superação das barreiras religiosas; de espaço de compartilhamento da fé e espiritualidade; de ação ativa da missão transformadora da igreja, e também de alegria e bem-estar emocional.

No cenário de profundas carências que tem a cidade de Santa Luz, a coalizão se mostra como um imprescindível sinal de esperança para esta cidade. Foi possível perceber os sinais de desenvolvimento e transformação na localidade: por meio do empoderamento das pessoas; através da participação e democracia dos processos decisórios da ASSCAD; na formação de liderança local com compromisso social e atitudes solidárias; na forma de apropriação dos moradores da cidade para com a ASSCAD (há uma integração bela entre as famílias e esta Ong); por meio do trabalho voluntariado desenvolvidos pelas mães e jovens nesta instituição; na parceria inédita entre uma igreja e uma Ong local; na melhoria do comércio local; na formação empreendedora das pessoas; na proteção infantil; na promoção de espaço de lazer e bem estar emocional; por meio da mobilização política; na melhoria da renda familiar; nos vários mecanismos de educação emancipatória e no reconhecimento do trabalho de outros atores sociais da localidade e de outras cidades. O quadro 1 aponta

resumidamente o tipo de desenvolvimento que a coalisão tem promovido nesta cidade.

Quadro 1: Indicadores de Desenvolvimento Local Sustentável na cidade de Santa Luz.

Tipo de desenvolvimento	Indicadores	ODS Relacionada
Desenvolvimento Ambiental	• Espaço seguro para as crianças; • Educação ambiental; • Educação para melhor uso dos recursos hídricos.	ODS 2, ODS 6, ODS 12, ODS 15.
Desenvolvimento Econômico	• Novas relações de trabalho; • Mudança e desenvolvimento do comércio local; • Novas demandas e ofertas de produtos; • Aumento no consumo e no lucro; • Capitação de novos impostos; • Controle dos impostos; • Surgimento de novos negócios a partir da avicultura; • Melhoria do empreendedorismo local; • Melhoria da renda familiar; • Troca de produtos; • Empreendedorismo feminino; • Adequação legal das empresas; • Educação financeira; • Prática do empréstimo e poupança por meio do GOLD; • Prática da poupança dos recursos financeiros.	ODS 1, ODS 2, ODS 8.
Desenvolvimento Social	• Cultura empreendedora; • Melhoria da renda familiar; • Acesso a melhor alimentação; • Acesso a novos produtos; • Mudança cultural no ordenamento familiar a partir da avicultura; • Empoderamento de crianças, adolescentes e jovens; • Proteção infantil; • Lazer e promoção da qualidade de vida; • Empoderamento de mulheres; • Educação empreendedora; • Participação comunitária; • Fortalecimento dos vínculos sociais; • Unidade entre as famílias; • Melhoria na educação das crianças; • Prática de esportes; • Novas rotinas e possibilidades para as mulheres; • Empoderamento familiar; • Novos métodos educacionais para as crianças; • Parcerias entre organizações locais para o desenvolvimento comunitário; • Realizações da escuta comunitário; • Reuniões comunitárias; • Melhoria da relação do poder público com os moradores.	ODS2, ODS 3, ODS 4, ODS 5, ODS 8, ODS 16.
Outros tipos de desenvolvimento na localidade	• Melhoria alimentar; • Mudança cultural: novo ordenamento familiar; • Mudança cultural: integração e participação comunitária; • Mudança cultural: novas relações sociais • Promoção da autovalorização de mulheres e crianças; • Melhoria no comportamento das crianças que são atendidas pela ASSCAD; • Melhoria da saúde das mulheres e crianças;	ODS 2, ODS 3, ODS 5, ODS 11, ODS 16.

Fonte: Elaborado pelo autor.

Em relação a como a igreja pode promover desenvolvimento na localidade, de acordo com este estudo, isso pode ser feito por meio da participação da igreja na rede comunitária, por meio da mobilização social; da abertura da igreja para reuniões públicas; da inclusão de pessoas de outras igrejas e não cristãs em seus cultos e programas; no acolhimento e cuidado das famílias da comunidade; na realização de cultos no espaço público; no fortalecimento e apoio a ongs, escolas e administração pública; na realização de devocionais juntos aos parceiros, a partir da ação pastoral ativa junto a liderança local; na abertura do espaço da igreja para realizações de atividades com crianças, adolescentes e jovens; por meio da participação ativa dos seus membros na vida pública, quando ela une seu discurso e prática; quando promove unidade e paz no ambiente local; quando vive uma fé encarnada e solidária. No quadro 2 indico a forma com a Igreja Presbiteriana de Santa Luz tem promovido desenvolvimento nesta cidade.

6. Conclusão

Por meio dos resultados obtidos nesta investigação, foi possível compreender a forma como o CFB promove DLS em parceria com a igreja e outras organizações, chegando à conclusão de que esta parceria tem sido fundamental e estratégica para o desenvolvimento local da cidade de Santa Luz. Este é um desenvolvimento inicial, mas em curso, comprovado de acordo com este estudo na melhoria do mercado local; no empreendedorismo de mulheres; na melhoria da renda familiar; no surgimento de movimentos de cooperação; na prática da poupança; na melhoria da proteção das crianças; no uso de espaços de lazer; nos processos de educação emancipatória; na melhoria da qualidade de vida das famílias; no bem-estar emocional; no acesso a cursos e projetos que permitem o desenvolvimento pessoal e familiar; na articulação comunitária, por meio da formação de liderança

Quadro 2: Desenvolvimento promovido pela Igreja Presbiteriana em Santa Luz.

A Igreja Presbiteriana por meio da IPN e Igreja Local promove desenvolvimento local sustentável	▪ Formando novas lideranças para a cidade na igreja e junto a ONG; ▪ Cuidando e educando as crianças; ▪ Promovendo lazer para elas; ▪ Pastores ativos na cidade – espiritualidade oração, reflexão bíblica, apoio pastoral, participação, engajamento nos projetos da ASSCAD e Prefeitura. ▪ Apoio dos pastores a prefeitura, reuniões da cidade, ASSCAD, proximidade com as famílias e dos gestores públicos e técnicos da ONG. ▪ Na Realização de culto para as famílias da cidade de 3 em 3 meses e os cultos semanais; ▪ Por concretizar os atos de amor, justiça e do evangelho na vida comum da cidade; ▪ Pelo testemunho local – criou-se uma imagem de Igreja presbiteriana diferente da imagem do contexto nacional: “Os presbiterianos são diferentes”, afirmou um dos entrevistados do GP Focal 2; ▪ A partir da assistência social da IPN – médicos, psicólogos, dentistas, cursos. Atendimentos de difícil acesso para as pessoas da cidade de Santa Luz; ▪ Igreja participativa e parceira – Famílias, ASSCAD e Prefeitura. ▪ Promovendo educação, por meio da arte, cultura e música; ▪ Promovendo articulação entre os diversos atores da cidade; ▪ Em sua incidência social, marca da relevância da igreja na cidade; ▪ Acessibilidade dos pastores; ▪ Abertura da igreja para os moradores da cidade; ▪ Espiritualidade engajada da igreja – fé e obras. ▪ Rompimento de paradigmas religiosos danosos; ▪ Igreja e ASSCAD como espaço proteção e lazer para as crianças e famílias; ▪ Atuação da igreja em situações que a Prefeitura e ASSCAD não conseguem agir: apoio a família, espiritualidade, resolução de conflitos, fé, apoio psicológico; ▪ Na sustentabilidade econômica da ASSCAD e por meio de sua ação na cidade; ▪ Igreja e ASSCAD identificada como espaço de apoio às famílias; ▪ Por meio da atuação da ASSCAD na proteção infantil. Referência para o poder público e cidade; ▪ O nome ASSCAD causa respeito na cidade e nos políticos; ▪ Católicos frequentam a Igreja presbiteriana e a admiram; ▪ Perguntados sobre como seria uma igreja ideal para a transformação social – citaram muitos elementos que já estão presente na ação da Igreja presbiteriana na cidade; ▪ A Igreja Presbiteriana Faria falta na cidade Santa Luz – prova de uma igreja relevante.
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Fonte: Elaborado pelo autor.

local; na inserção da espiritualidade e da fé no processo de mobilização social; no acolhimento e atenção aos mais vulneráveis da cidade; na formação de parceria institucional; no fortalecimento do sistema de garantia de direitos; nas práticas democráticas; na mudança cultural; na aproximação entre poder público e população, dentre outros.

É notável destacar a forma estratégica e bem fundamentada que está desenhando o modelo de intervenção social TSS. Também é extremamente estimulante visualizar, no ambiente local, a sutileza do processo de desenvolvimento e os indicadores que provam sua eficiência e a possibilidade deste modelo ser inserido em outros contextos no Brasil.

A participação da igreja em um espaço como este se justifica pelos imperativos bíblicos, por ser algo que se coaduna com seu papel, com sua identidade e pelo fato de em contexto de pobreza e vulnerabilidade social, os membros das igrejas também sofrerem os condicionamentos e violências causados pela miséria. O desemprego, a fome, a falta de saneamento e espaço de lazer, o desmatamento, a má utilização do solo e da água, a péssima condição de moradia, a violência contra mulheres e crianças, são questões que afetam os seguidores de Jesus no local em que estão.

No entanto, a participação da igreja em uma rede solidária exige que o modelo de igreja nessa dimensão tenha características muito peculiares. Neste sentido, sustento a necessidade do desenvolvimento de modelos de igreja que sejam transformadores e orientados para o desenvolvimento. Tal modelo implica estrutura organizacional mais aberta e participativa e ministérios desenhados para a missão transformadora (discipulado, adoração e educação cristã orientados para a plenitude de vida).

Por fim, a partir desta investigação, indico dez grandes temas que dizem respeito a ação transformadora da igreja, são eles: a necessidade da pastoral transformadora; a urgência da elaboração de cursos bíblicos e

teológicos sobre a sustentabilidade; o diagnóstico social como ferramenta para a implantação de igrejas; a inserção das igrejas como atores de promoção de desenvolvimento sustentável; a participação política da igreja; a participação da igreja em uma rede de transformação social; a necessidade de igrejas inclusivas e abertas ao povo; a Ponte Social como modelo estratégico para uma ação missional transformadora; a formação de incubadoras missionais e a inclusão do campo da fé, religião e espiritualidade como elementos estratégicos para a elaboração de programas e projetos de intervenção social.

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Novos Desafios, Novos Paradigmas: Ministério com Jovens e Ação Missional no Contexto Urbano. Uma Análise a partir da Igreja Evangélica Holiness de Londrina-Brasil

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Resumo

A tese apresenta a importância da contextualização da mensagem do evangelho nas cidades, para uma ação missional tendo como ênfase o ministério com jovens. Analisam-se o contexto e a cultura, conforme conceitos teóricos apresentados pelos autores latino-americanos Charles Van Engen, Jorge Barro, Tito Paredes, René Padilla, além de outros. Delimita-se como estudo de caso a Igreja Holiness de Londrina, a qual, inicialmente, em termos de evangelização, dirigiu-se aos imigrantes japoneses em contextos rurais. Esse histórico revela a identidade eclesial e doutrinária da comunidade, importante para a análise da transição geracional. Pesquisas de campo e bibliográficas revelam os desafios aos jovens no

contexto urbano como a questão do consumismo, individualismo, novas configurações familiares, cobranças, pressões e o aumento de transtornos psíquicos. Constatou-se que os novos desafios para o ministério de jovens implica em ruptura de paradigmas, mudança de costumes e tradições eclesiológicas.

1. Introdução

A Igreja Evangélica Holiness do Brasil foi fundada inicialmente após a Primeira Guerra Mundial, juntamente com o movimento da imigração japonesa ao Brasil para atender os japoneses num contexto rural. Tanto a abordagem evangelística, as abordagens e ações missionárias procuravam atender o público num contexto rural.

O presente trabalho visa a compreensão da realidade dos jovens da igreja Holiness, como também a realidade dos jovens em geral que estão inseridos no contexto urbano. Além disso, visa entender sua cosmovisão, os novos paradigmas e os desafios que os jovens enfrentam.

A tese analisa como uma igreja local, que possui um paradigma vinculado a um grupo étnico e suas tradições, caracterizada historicamente por uma proposta missional restrita ao público pertencente a esta mesma etnia, com fortes traços do mundo rural - pode fazer a transição para um novo paradigma, ou seja, tornar-se uma comunidade relevante para responder às novas demandas que envolvem a nova geração que a compõe. A presença desta juventude como membresia carrega dilemas do mundo urbano hodierno, requerendo assim uma estratégia pastoral capaz de viabilizar sua formação espiritual e preparo para a missão em seu contexto. Parte-se do princípio de que o discipulado com jovens é um importante caminho para viabilizar a transição para esse novo paradigma. Essa é a questão central que norteia a pesquisa aqui desenvolvida.

2. Marcos teóricos

O embasamento desta pesquisa são conceitos da missiologia apresentados por teóricos como David Bosch, autores latino-americanos como Charles Van Engen, Jorge Barro, Tito Paredes, René Padilla e outros.

2.1 Paradigma Missional

Missio Dei: Primeiramente, a compreensão de que a missão é derivada da própria natureza de Deus. Ela originou-se no contexto da Trindade, não da eclesiologia ou da soteriologia. A doutrina da *Missio Dei* significa Deus Pai enviando o Filho, e Deus, o Pai e o Filho enviando o Espírito Santo, e ainda outro movimento, o Pai, Filho e o Espírito Santo enviando a igreja para dentro do mundo. A obra é do Deus Triúno, Criador, Redentor e Santificador por amor ao mundo, um ministério do qual a igreja tem o privilégio de participar.

Deus é um Deus missionário. Não é a igreja que deve cumprir uma missão de salvação no mundo; é a missão do Filho e do Espírito Santo mediante o Pai que inclui a igreja. A igreja é vista como um instrumento para essa missão. Existe igreja porque existe missão, não o contrário. Participar da missão é participar do movimento de amor de Deus para com as pessoas, visto que Deus é a fonte de amor que envia. (Bosch 2002, 462).

A missão do próprio Deus é maior que a missão da igreja. A *missio Dei* é a atividade de Deus, na qual abarca tanto a igreja quanto o mundo e na qual a igreja tem o privilégio de participar.

2.2 *Missão que analisa o contexto e a cultura*

No Congresso de Lausanne sobre a Evangelização Mundial, em 1974, a questão da cultura foi um assunto de grande preocupação. A Evangelização não se faz isoladamente da cultura humana da qual procede, nem na qual se evangeliza. Nessa oportunidade, foi discutido e se concluiu que, embora todos sejam criados à imagem e semelhança de Deus, em detrimento da queda do ser humano, essa semelhança na divindade tem sido distorcida. Deus requer que sejamos bons mordomos da graça universal que Ele tem concedido. Deve-se dar a devida importância à dignidade humana e aos valores culturais da humanidade.

Cabe à Igreja discernir exegeticamente o que se afirma na Escritura sobre uma cultura. E, em toda geração e cultura, deve haver nova formulação e explicação para assegurar sua fidelidade à Escritura, sem deturpar o sentido original, mas que alcance a realidade local.

O documento de Willowbank (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization 1978, 6 al 13 de enero), oriundo da Consulta sobre o Evangelho e a Cultura realizada nas Bermudas, em 1978, ajudou na compreensão da Cultura na evangelização. Valorizar os elementos culturais para que o missionário não negue a cultura do povo a ser evangelizado.

A questão importante sobre o paradigma missional é o compromisso com a cultura em que a igreja está inserida, ou seja, que a igreja seja encarnacional, comprometida com o evangelho e sensível ao contexto cultural.

Ricardo Agreste (Silva 2007) propõe uma eclesiologia não baseada na tradição nem no mercado de consumo, mas na natureza missionária da igreja. Também Samuel Logan afirma:

[...] Na sua melhor definição, “missional”, descreve não uma *atividade* específica da igreja, mas a própria *essência e identidade*

da igreja à medida que ela assume seu papel na história de Deus no contexto de sua cultura e participa na missão de Deus para o mundo. [...] descrever uma igreja missional significa definir a comunidade cristã inteira como um corpo enviado ao mundo e que existe não para si mesmo, mas para levar as boas-novas ao mundo (Goheen 2014).

2.3 O compromisso em fazer verdadeiros discípulos

A Grande Comissão de Jesus pode ser lida também em Marcos 16:15-18; Lucas 24:46-49; Atos 1:8 e João 20:20,21. A comissão de levar as Boas novas, o Evangelho à todas as nações.

Muitas vezes a igreja tem entendido erroneamente a evangelização, como sendo apenas uma decisão, uma oração para aceitar Jesus. Porém, muitas dessas decisões não têm uma continuidade, e não geram vidas transformadas. Então, fazer discípulo consiste em uma decisão inicial de ouvir e aceitar o Evangelho, porém existe a necessidade da caminhada ou acompanhamento de um discípulo mais experiente para o fortalecimento e ensino para que o novo convertido cresça e dê frutos. O chamado ao discipulado é, portanto, comprometimento exclusivo com a pessoa de Jesus Cristo. Bonhoeffer (2008, 9-10) em seu livro sobre o Discipulado exorta sobre o perigo da graça barata. “A graça barata é a pregação do perdão sem arrependimento, é o batismo sem a disciplina comunitária, é a Ceia do Senhor sem confissão dos pecados, é a absolvição dos pecados sem a confissão pessoal. A graça barata é a graça sem discipulado, sem a cruz, sem Jesus Cristo vivo, encarnado.” Tomar a sua cruz é o sofrimento que o discípulo carrega por causa da união com Cristo. Não é um sofrimento casual, mas necessário. É a rejeição por amor de Cristo. O chamado de Cristo é a luta diária contra o pecado e o diabo. A cada dia o cristão enfrenta

tentações da carne e do mundo, trazendo consigo sofrimentos, sinais vivos de comunhão com a cruz de Cristo.

2.4 O discipulado que conduz ao crescimento integral

Na década de 1980, houve um notável interesse pelo crescimento da igreja. Orlando Costas insistiu na importância de critérios teológicos para a avaliação do crescimento, e não apenas numéricos.

Pode se dizer que a igreja cresce integralmente quando recebe novos membros, se expande internamente, aprofunda seus conhecimentos da fé e serve ao mundo. Porém, ela cresce qualitativamente quando, em cada dimensão, reflete espiritualidade, encarnação e fidelidade.(Costas e Tadeu 2011, 109).

Costas sugere uma avaliação em quatro dimensões, conforme exposto resumidamente a seguir: 1.Crescimento numérico: a igreja é chamada a se expandir a todas as nações e culturas. 2.Crescimento orgânico: desenvolvimento na sua forma de governo, estrutura financeira, liderança, tipo de atividades, celebração, desafio da contextualização da igreja numa situação histórica definida para constituir uma comunidade com raízes autóctones. 3.Crescimento conceitual: desenvolvimento da inteligência da fé, grau de consciência com respeito à sua existência e razão de ser, conhecimento das Escrituras, compreensão do mundo que a rodeia, discernimento do lugar da igreja na sociedade. 4.Crescimento diaconal: aumento do serviço que a igreja presta ao mundo como prova concreta do amor redentor de Deus.

Em cada dimensão deve haver um crescimento qualitativo, cujas qualidades se baseiam em uma teologia trinitária: a espiritualidade, a encarnação e a fidelidade.

3. Contexto institucional e da sociedade atual

3.1 A igreja Holiness em Londrina

O início do movimento Holiness no Japão é intrinsicamente ligado à pessoa de Juji Nakada. Em 1896, Juji Nakada era um jovem com 27 anos, um pastor metodista que estava frustrado com seu fraco desempenho no ministério de evangelização, que pensava em largar o ministério. O Japão já estava sendo evangelizado por cerca de trinta anos, e menos de 20% do país havia sido alcançado pela mensagem do evangelho.

Vou largar o ministério. É melhor ser um leigo ativo que um pastor frustrado, diz o pastor Juji Nakada à sua esposa. Ela responde dizendo: Eu me casei com você por que tinha chamado para ser pastor. Tome este dinheiro e vá para a América buscar o Espírito Santo.¹

Naqueles dias, Dwight L. Moody era conhecido como um grande evangelista. Nakada ouviu dizer que ele havia recebido o batismo com o Espírito Santo, e que mesmo sendo um simples sapateiro, se levantou como um grande evangelista. Então, Juji Nakada atravessou o Pacífico em 1896 para ingressar no Instituto Bíblico Moody.

Nos Estados Unidos conheceu o casal Charles, um telégrafo e sua esposa Lettie Cowman, que daria início a uma grande amizade. Em 1898 retornou para o Japão, onde começou a trabalhar como pregador itinerante da Igreja Metodista.

Com o passar dos anos, Nakada tornou-se um evangelista experiente, e teve o desejo de estabelecer um centro de missões, onde poderia pregar

¹ Site oficial da Igreja Holiness: Disponível em: <http://www.holiness.org.br/index.php/quem-somos/nossa-historia>. Acesso em: outubro de 2016.

todas as noites e treinar evangelistas. No mesmo período, o casal Cowman, nos Estados Unidos, teve o mesmo chamado de ir para o Japão para abrir um centro de treinamento, o que ocorreu em 1901. Assim, a partir destes movimentos muitas igrejas Holiness foram abertas no Japão, enviando missionários para várias regiões da Ásia e posteriormente na América.

Assim, no dia 31 de outubro de 1917, a igreja Holiness se estabeleceu como uma denominação independente e Juji Nakada se tornou o primeiro superintendente ou também chamado de bispo.

O nome OMS Igreja *Holiness* foi dado porque a palavra Holiness traduzida para japonês seria *seiketsu*, uma palavra que não traria o mesmo sentido para a cultura japonesa. Nakada queria manter a expressão do “clube santo” de John Wesley. Já a palavra OMS aparece por causa do suporte financeiro da organização desde o início.

De acordo com Nampo e Goya (2005), no dia 15 de julho de 1925, Takeo Monobe, o primeiro missionário Holiness do Japão desembarcou no porto de Santos.

A Igreja Holiness oficializa o trabalho de Londrina em 1942 no concílio e o Pr. Yoshikatsu Nampo assume o pastorado no meio do período de guerra.

O início da igreja Holiness de Londrina se deu no contexto da II Guerra: em 1938, em Assaí, e 1942, em Londrina. Esse começo foi marcado pela discriminação tanto da parte dos brasileiros, porque as relações diplomáticas entre os dois países foram rompidas; e da própria colônia japonesa, pois os próprios japoneses não aceitavam a derrota do Japão, e a igreja se posicionou aceitando-a.

A evangelização ficou restrita ao povo japonês, tornando-se uma igreja étnica. O treinamento de obreiros, que era algo forte para a evangelização, pelo menos inicialmente ficou dependendo do seminário

Holiness no Japão, mesmo para pessoas que não dominavam o idioma japonês.

A sociedade se encontra constantemente em processo de mutação e renovação. Hoje, apesar de muitos membros da IEHL serem agricultores da primeira geração de japoneses que emigraram para o Brasil, a maioria de seus membros atuais é formada por cidadãos brasileiros que falam português como língua materna, tiveram a educação em escolas brasileiras e assistem as mídias como um cidadão brasileiro típico. Por isso é importante refletir se a Igreja Holiness mantém muito da tradição da cultura japonesa e como isso tem afetado o cumprimento da sua missão.

3.2 Contexto atual da sociedade

Para mostrar a realidade dos jovens no contexto atual, a pesquisa fez uso de investigação bibliográfica de autores como Zygmunt Bauman, Byung-chun Han e outros, que têm escrito sobre a atual geração, no uso que fazem de conceitos como modernidade líquida, sociedade do cansaço entre outros. Também foi realizada a pesquisa de campo com os jovens da igreja Holiness de Londrina por meio de questionários e grupos focais para compreender como os jovens pensam e o que entendem como prioridade em suas vidas.

*Teenagização*² da cultura: Após a Segunda Guerra Mundial, nos Estados Unidos e em todo o planeta emerge a cultura adolescente. O adolescente se transformou em parte privilegiada do mercado consumidor, o que favoreceu o florescimento de uma cultura adolescente altamente hedonista. Como a sociedade tem erguido o adolescente como um ideal para todas as idades, ocorre a teenagização da cultura ocidental e os adultos

2 *Teenagização* - termo utilizado por Maria Rita Kehl (2004) sobre a adolescência se tornar a faixa privilegiada da população pela indústria cultural na economia capitalista.

começam a viver com a disponibilidade, esperança e anseios de adolescentes. Tem havido uma grande omissão dos pais em oferecer parâmetros para orientar os filhos, que não colocam referências nem proteção.

Cultura do consumo: A faceta da cultura que tem afetado e sabotado a questão da espiritualidade nos dias de hoje, em termos de comunidade, é a “cultura do consumo”. Fruto da sociedade capitalista, as pessoas são incentivadas a um constante consumo, inclusive em relação à igreja. Conforme Ricardo Agreste, estas são algumas características da cultura de consumo (Silva 2007):

Busca pelo *ter* em detrimento do *ser*. O que determina o valor da pessoa não é o caráter ou o seu interior, mas a roupa que se usa, o lugar onde mora e onde frequenta.

O outro é visto como uma matéria prima da realização pessoal. Aproximação de pessoas e relacionamentos, não por quem são, mas como fontes de benefícios, pelo que a pessoa pode oferecer.

Insaciabilidade gerando relacionamentos descartáveis. Os bens adquiridos, as realizações e o prazer têm curta duração, com prazo de validade muito curto. Há uma grande busca por novidades, onde logo se desfaz do antigo, buscando coisas novas.

Grande influência da mídia. Aparente individualidade, que sob a homogeneização da cultura através da mídia, sofre a influência para o consumo e compra.

Relacionamentos frágeis e efêmeros: outro reflexo que se percebe nesta geração é a questão da modernidade líquida descrita por Zygmunt Baumann. Os relacionamentos são efêmeros, abandonando o primado anterior “até que a morte nos separe” por uma liberdade presente nos diversos aspectos do trabalho, família e amizades. As pessoas passam a ver a satisfação com o parceiro como um objetivo a ser alcançado, não se vinculando profundamente a projetos de longo prazo.

O código familiar anterior, rígido, patriarcal, matrimonial e estático, não permitia a relação conjugal que não contemplasse o casamento. Hoje é reconhecida a união estável equiparada ao matrimônio pelo próprio texto constitucional. A dissolução da relação conjugal não mais carece de tempo mínimo anterior, discussão de culpa e outras formas de cerceamento de liberdade e pode ser efetuada em cartório. A afetividade passa a ser um elemento presente em diversas relações familiares contemporâneas, sendo cada vez mais percebidas pelo Direito.

O número de divórcios no país cresceu mais de 160% na última década. A atual geração de jovens é considerada como órfãos de pais vivos, com fraca presença dos pais na educação. O resultado é o distanciamento dos pais, físico ou emocional.

Aumento de doenças psíquicas: Conforme Byung-Chun Han (2017) em seu livro *Sociedade do cansaço*, o século XX foi marcado por doenças virais e bacteriológicas. Já o século XXI é caracterizado pela presença de enfermidades neuronais, tais como depressão, transtorno de déficit de atenção com síndrome de hiperatividade (TDAH), transtorno de personalidade limítrofe, síndrome de *Burnout*, que é devido a um colapso psíquico, resultando em um esgotamento.

Para Han, o século XXI tornou-se uma “sociedade do desempenho”. Na sociedade do desempenho, os indivíduos não se submetem mais a instituições disciplinares, porém atualmente os indivíduos surgem como “empresários de si mesmos”, como “sujeitos de desempenho” que são mais rápidos e produtivos que os sujeitos obedientes.

No Brasil, a questão das doenças mentais tem aumentado no meio dos jovens, principalmente entre universitários. Uma pesquisa realizada em

2017, pelo site catracalivre,³ mostra que 99% dos mais de 2000 alunos que são ou já foram universitários e vestibulandos disseram que já passaram por quadros de estresse e ansiedade por conta da universidade. Além disso, 73,5% afirmaram que foram diagnosticados com depressão durante o vestibular e nos últimos semestres do curso.

Algumas outras causas também podem ser levantadas, segundo os relatos dos alunos: a estrutura atual da vida acadêmica, repleta de pressões, bem como a escolha do curso a fim de se ter um diploma. A ameaça do desemprego e fracasso profissional têm desencadeado a depressão, a ansiedade e o uso excessivo de medicamentos, de modo que a saúde fragilizada dos universitários se conecta com as causas de suicídios no meio acadêmico em todo o Brasil.

3.3 Pesquisa de campo com os jovens da Igreja Holiness em Londrina

A pesquisa na Igreja Holiness confirmou várias questões abordadas na investigação bibliográfica.

Consumismo: A questão do consumismo, que se dá não só por causa de necessidades biológicas, mas por questões econômicas com implicações sociais. Pois as pessoas são medidas de acordo com os lugares que frequentam, para onde viajam, ou o que comem e o que demonstram nas redes sociais.

Dificuldades de relacionamentos familiares: Os jovens revelaram também que as famílias não estão bem. A pesquisa mostrou que eles veem os pais mais como provedores do que como amigos. Mencionaram que grande parte dos jovens tem problemas em casa, e não conseguem conversar com os

3 Por que a universidade está deixando os estudantes doentes? Disponível em: <https://catracalivre.com.br/educacao/por-que-universidade-esta-deixando-os-estudantes-doentes/>

pais. Dentro da Igreja Holiness de Londrina, em relação aos pais dos jovens, o número de divórcios é pequeno, mas os jovens mencionaram que muitos dos seus amigos têm pais separados. Os jovens também confirmaram que eles próprios não têm muito diálogo em casa com os pais. A maioria dos entrevistados quase não faz refeições junto com a família. Percebem que os pais encarregam a educação dos filhos a outros. Os pais esperam que, além do conteúdo curricular, a escola eduque, dê carinho e ensine sobre relacionamentos e afeto.

Faltam referências e apoio emocional: Os filhos não sabem com quem podem contar. Os relacionamentos acabam sendo superficiais, com muita desconfiança, medo de reprovação, achando difícil ter amigos de verdade. Revelaram também que têm dificuldade em lidar com frustrações, não querem assumir culpa ou erro, e têm dificuldade em lidar com as emoções.

Muita pressão pelo sucesso profissional e financeiro: Dentro do contexto nipo-brasileiro, como é o caso da Igreja Holiness de Londrina, existem muitos descendentes de japoneses, como foi descrito na pesquisa. As famílias se importam bastante com o sucesso financeiro, afetando inclusive a escolha por profissões mais rentáveis.

Na mesma proporção, como também hoje é chamada esta geração-sociedade do cansaço, assim vemos o aumento de doenças psíquicas, como a ansiedade, medo, angústia e depressão. Há muita cobrança da sociedade, de si mesmo e também dos pais, porém com poucos vínculos e apoio emocional.

Algo que se destacou nas entrevistas foi que alguns jovens que não eram de famílias cristãs disseram que o grupo de jovens mostrou um diferencial, onde encontraram amigos e o apoio emocional. Eles disseram que dentro da igreja encontraram pessoas que realmente se importam, e que não agem por interesse.

4. Proposta

4.1 Em relação à comunidade local

Quanto às mudanças de paradigma dentro da instituição, isto é, na comunidade local, a Igreja Holiness de Londrina, destacam-se alguns pontos importantes para a reflexão e prática:

Não mais se sentir ou se preservar como uma igreja étnica, voltada apenas ao povo japonês. Buscar a contextualização e compreender a natureza da igreja na perspectiva missional em relação à inserção na cultura brasileira, para manter-se fiel e relevante à sua vocação diante de Deus. Apesar de ter muitos membros agricultores da primeira geração de japoneses que no século passado emigraram para o Brasil, a maioria dos membros atualmente é formada por cidadãos brasileiros, que falam português como língua materna, tiveram a educação em escolas brasileiras e assistem as mídias, como um cidadão brasileiro típico.

Servir a cidade e não ser isolada do seu contexto. A teologia da santidade mal elaborada trouxe uma mentalidade de alienação da sociedade, tanto da cultura como dos problemas político-sociais. Superar a mentalidade de “manutenção” da igreja, e ampliar a visão quanto à missão.

Treinamento dos membros: igreja missional treina e encoraja seus membros a se envolver em missão como indivíduos e como corpo. Vivemos numa era chamada de pós-cristandade. Durante muitos séculos a igreja cristã ocupou um lugar privilegiado no centro da cultura, influenciada pelos ensinamentos éticos do Evangelho, pela crença num Deus pessoal, na vida eterna e na lealdade dos Dez mandamentos. Porém, hoje a cultura e a vida pública não são dirigidas pelos princípios cristãos. Existem grandes desafios que os membros enfrentam no meio público e profissional para poderem viver

os princípios do Reino de Deus, a qual a igreja deve ensinar e treinar seus membros.

Novas estratégias para o crescimento integral dos jovens holiness para a missão no contexto urbano. Pensar em programas que façam mais sentido para os não-cristãos, para alcançá-los. Os jovens mencionaram a dificuldade em trazer os amigos para igreja, como sendo um ambiente ameaçador. Sugestão de reuniões menores nas casas como opção evangelística para maior contato com os amigos, maior aproximação, maior abertura. O uso das ferramentas através da internet permite o acesso tanto a cristãos como a interessados, devendo ser mais exploradas e aproveitadas para alcançar vidas.

Apoio e envolvimento dos pais e da família, tanto através de palestras, como também por meio de momentos de compartilhamento e oração. Procurar envolver os pais para a compreensão da realidade dos jovens, buscando também novas formas como o relacionamento familiar pode ser melhorado. O problema não envolve apenas os jovens, mas reflete algo mais abrangente, como o casamento e outras questões de família na atual sociedade.

4.2 Em relação aos jovens

Discipulado de crescimento integral: Quanto aos jovens, conforme a pesquisa, a maior necessidade tem a ver com relacionamentos de confiança, e que sejam duradouros. Por isso compreendemos que o discipulado de jovens que contemple o crescimento em várias áreas da vida seria uma proposta mais adequada:

- a) crescimento espiritual no relacionamento com Deus e a experiência de práticas espirituais.

- b) crescimento numérico que leva à evangelização, a compartilhar a fé com os amigos.
- c) crescimento nos relacionamentos fortes e duradouros. Promove amadurecimento nos conflitos relacionais.
- d) crescimento no discernimento e confronto aos ídolos da cultura. Opor-se ao que é contrário aos valores do Reino de Deus (como o consumismo, pressão para o status e sucesso financeiro, relacionamentos frágeis e passageiros.).
- e) crescimento conceitual capaz de lidar com os questionamentos e as dúvidas dos jovens.
- f) crescimento diaconal que leva compaixão, verdade e justiça num mundo que sofre com incertezas, injustiças, dores e pobreza.
- g) crescimento sacerdotal capaz de treinar jovens para servirem tanto no contexto eclesial como também fora da igreja, expandindo o Reino de Deus através de suas profissões.
- h) crescimento que leva ao desenvolvimento físico. O cuidado com o corpo, que é o templo do Espírito Santo, através da prática de exercícios, a alimentação balanceada e a mente saudável.

5. Conclusão

Dentro da igreja Holiness existem muitos japoneses e descendentes, mas também muitos membros não descendentes orientais. Os jovens, na sua maioria são da terceira geração, quarta ou posteriores. Por isso ainda preserva-se muito da cultura japonesa dentro da igreja.

Na cultura japonesa existe o respeito aos idosos e às tradições da cultura. Isso é algo bonito e admirado, porém, pode também resultar em mudanças lentas. Não se rompe facilmente as tradições, pois há o respeito ao desejo dos mais idosos. Existe a cultura da honra e respeito tanto dos jovens

para com os mais velhos como vice-versa. Eventos como o dia da mocidade onde casais homenageiam os jovens, e jantar do dia dos namorados, onde os jovens servem os casais.

Como a igreja iniciou com o propósito da evangelização de japoneses, e por muito tempo ficou restrita a isso, ela se tornou uma igreja étnica. A igreja já se abriu muito, em vista do que era antes, quando praticamente 90% eram japoneses ou descendentes. Ainda existem muitos descendentes, porém a igreja está mais aberta. Mas, pode-se conscientizar acerca da responsabilidade da igreja em alcançar todos os povos ou diferentes grupos étnicos.

Quanto aos grupos de jovens, também sempre houve conselheiros adultos que orientavam e apoiavam o crescimento do grupo. Os discipulados são feitos pelos mais velhos com os adolescentes, ou adultos que procuram apoiar e ensinar os mais novos, sejam através de cursos sobre finanças ou sobre a Bíblia. Percebe-se que quando existe este apoio dos adultos e profissionais, há maior segurança e cuidado. Como uma família, onde um pai ou uma mãe cuidam, e os irmãos mais velhos também ajudam no processo, assim também é na família de fé, pois Deus aprova isso.

Paulo exorta a Timóteo que aprendesse a lidar com várias gerações. No contexto, eclesial, Timóteo, como um pastor, mesmo sendo jovem, foi instruído a tratar a todas as pessoas como se fossem sua família, como um pai, mãe, irmã o irmão. A Bíblia diz em II Timóteo 1:7 que devemos ter espírito de poder, amor e moderação.

Para haver a revitalização da igreja, deve-se ter o respeito e a valorização da história, porém equilibrados com o investimento, treinamento e discipulado dos jovens.

Desta forma, acredita-se que pessoas de gerações anteriores possam acrescentar muito ao discipulado de jovens através da transmissão de

conhecimentos. Também colocando-se como referenciais de fé e liderança, como homens e mulheres maduros que possam acompanhar e compartilhar sabedoria e transmitir o bastão da liderança.

Assim, dentro da igreja, saber conviver e trabalhar com diferentes gerações possibilita o crescimento e a inovação, não permanecendo apenas as tradições, permitindo que a Palavra de Deus seja pregada de maneira contextualizada para as novas gerações.

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Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.