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Ray J. Johnson
Fuller Theological Seminary, rayjj8596@gmail.com

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Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

CHURCH PLANTING IN AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN CONTEXT
A GUIDE FOR INDEPENDENT REFORMATIONS:
A CASE STUDY OF CALVARY REVIVAL

Written by

RAYMOND J. JOHNSON

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary
upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

Clifton Clarke

Kurt Fredrickson

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CHURCH PLANTING IN AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN CONTEXT
A GUIDE FOR INDEPENDENT REFORMATIONS:
A CASE STUDY OF CALVARY REVIVAL

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SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
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THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

RAYMOND J. JOHNSON
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ABSTRACT

Raymond J. Johnson
Doctor of Ministry
School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary
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The purpose of this doctoral project is to provide a set of contextual church-planting strategies for African-American episcopal and pastoral leaders who will launch, develop and grow spiritually healthy leaders and churches.

The church-planting movement of Calvary Revival Churches (hereafter CRC) is located in southeastern Virginia. The area’s independent cities mirror the boroughs of New York City. The CRC brand launched four churches with five campuses spread throughout the Hampton Roads region. To date only two CRC church campuses remain. The expansiveness of suburban sprawl and residential centers coupled with centralized commercial services have always left disconnected and disenfranchised people in urban neighborhoods where many Black churches resided. The African-American Church has always been the epicenter of the “black community;” its affluence and influence has a rich heritage and historical impact in the pursuit of equality.

The first section of this project examines the context of ministry with a closer look at Calvary Revival Church. The second section traces the history of the Black Church’s development and wrestles with the tensions surrounding church planting in an African-American context. The impact of mega churches coupled with new ecclesiastical developments and reformations versus the decline of the traditional denominational Black Church has created a tension within the “black church community” and its ability to serve its community. The third section examines the trends of church-planting models within an African-American Church context. The lack of intentional strategies coupled with an inability to address contemporary changing worldviews with biblical foundational truth has given rise to the decline in CRC launched campuses. The final section will develop best practices and strategies leaders can follow for launching, developing and growing spiritually healthy leaders and churches that serve their communities.

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To the members of the walk of dominion who have graciously given of their time, understanding and compassion as this work was being completed: All of you who have remained through the transition from Calvary Revival Church Peninsula to Dominion Outreach Worship Center have been extremely patient, understanding, loyal and committed to the birth of the original vision as given to me while sitting in my bedroom in the winter of 2005. As I began this journey my intention was to be a part of something larger than me, thus the connection with Calvary Revival. As the unfolding events of crisis, compromise and culture in an urban context have impacted my own life, I have developed a greater sense of compassion for those who find themselves in the crucibles of life without clear guidelines and resolution to apply biblical resolve. If African-American led reformations are to plant spiritually healthy, influential and impactful African-American led churches, this work and my own experience seem to suggest there must be a return to contextual biblical orthodoxy and doctrine among sending reformations and planting leaders. The Church is only as healthy as its leadership’s commitment to biblical truth while applying contemporary strategies. I want to thank each of you for sharing with me through the process as I fought tirelessly to align my domestic life with biblical order during the launching, planting, building and ministry mobilization process. As all of you know it was to no avail ending in the dissolution of my martial relationship. Although the pain of this divide over the previous two years has impacted our momentum as a ministry. I am more committed today to the preaching, teaching and modeling of biblical truth in both marriage and ministry as it is critically important to the next generation of young clerics tasked with the responsibility of reaching, touching, teaching and transforming urban communities with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom. We all have much work to do in improving the spiritual health of African-American churches and their leaders.

A special word of encouragement to my four daughters: Please forgive me if I seemed undaunted, unapologetic or unphased by the reorientation of our family dynamic. The four of you are all of what’s best in me. As you have seen me give my life to nurturing each of you please know our Lord’s ways are just and will bless us if we give ourselves wholeheartedly to them. Our times are full of compromise for the comforting of emotions but in fact leave us empty and without the blessed life. I know that time heals all things. Daddy loves you and each of you are daddy’s girls. Our last name is Johnson;
we do lead from the front and sometimes we are afraid but have courage in the face of your fears.

To my brothers in the episcopacy: We have a tainted task that lies before us. Our adversary has crept in among us in an attempt to subvert biblical truth and has hidden himself in the most unlikely of professions. The profession of mental health is needed in African-American communities. Ministry often depends heavily upon the cultivation of relationships. When it comes to their preservation and maintenance in an African-American ministry context psychological profile analysis coupled with counseling services and personality testing is a must for both clergy and laity alike. Yet, when unbiblical solutions are suggested to change family order and structure in both church and family the fallout is catastrophic in community. The ability to apply the methodology of Jesus to liberate women while adhering to a biblical ethic of divine order in both church and family will certainly bring with it persecution. As we establish new churches and reformations it is paramount to the spiritual, emotional, physical and financial wholeness of the urban family and church that we maintain adherence to biblical truth in context. As we lead we must become the chief defenders of the faith in word, action and deed.

To the new plant pastors and my sons and daughters in the faith: I trust this work will equip you with understanding in strengthening your resolve to be on the cutting edge of ministry and Kingdom movements of our times. As Paul said to Timothy in his final address to the church at Ephesus in 2 Timothy 4, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers.” Finally, I would encourage each of you to fight the good fight of faith for there will be a crown of righteousness laid up for each of us at his appearing.
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PART ONE
MISSIONAL CHALLENGE AND CONTEXT
INTRODUCTION

Calvary Revival Church had become a model for patriarchal ministry in Hampton Roads in the twenty-first century. As pioneers throughout salvation history had to leave familiar surroundings in order to establish movements to fulfill the plan of God, so B. Courtney McBath left the sprawling country hills of Tennessee and founded CRC in the urban landscape of Norfolk, Virginia in 1990. African-American churches and denominational movements were all started by pioneering leaders, who like Moses were sent to respond to the cry of a specific people in specific geographic regions at specific times.¹ Many believe the African-American experience in the West, through the vehicle of Christianity, is likened to the Hebrew exodus from Egypt.² Release from the bondages and vestiges of slavery required the enablement of the Divine to perform miracles in the hearts of men.

The evolutionary experience of the Black Church in America is nothing short of a miracle. When one considers the impact of cultural and linguistic remediation, scientific racialism in America’s socio-political economy and its impact upon the Western Christian Church’s theological inference of freedom—the soul liberated, but the flesh in bondage—one can clearly see the work of the Divine. Evangelicals agree that the goal of American territorial expansion in the West was to escape the tyranny of England through the establishment of religious freedom. In Bible schools and southern seminaries stories

are told of pilgrims who made the exodus from England, pioneers who were devout Christians fleeing Europe in order to escape religious persecution, literally beginning their stay on the soil of the Americas with the words, “In the name of God, Amen.”

These pilgrims were followed to New England by the Puritans, who created Bible-based commonwealths. Those commonwealths practiced the same sort of representative government as their church covenants. There were more than one hundred of those governmental covenants and compacts, which were the foundation for the Constitution. It is believed that New Haven (Connecticut) and Massachusetts were founded by Puritans who wanted to reform the Church of England, later becoming known as Congregationalists. A historical Puritan figure, Roger Williams, founded the colony of Rhode Island based on the principle of freedom of conscience, a distant removal from the Catholic notion of penances or taxation in controlling one’s conscious belief toward God. Pennsylvania was established by William Penn as a Quaker colony that practiced strict doctrines in adherence to the Holy Scriptures.

On the other hand secularist and ethnic minorities, in particular African-Americans, argue that the point of the London Company’s expedition to the soil of the West was a search for wealth resulting in independence from England and the pursuit of

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Barton, *Spiritual Heritage*. 
non-taxable income through the means of cheap labor. According to Reginald Horsman, in *Race and Manifest Destiny*, the American political ideology internally was to bolster power and protect the status of migrating English populations from Europe. This was done to justify American territorial and economic expansion. Internally it was made quite clear that American was a White, Anglo-Saxon republic; other White races would be absorbed within the existing racial mass, while non-white races would be rigorously excluded from equal participation as citizens.

Externally, American pressure on adjacent territories was justified by the argument that only American Anglo-Saxons could bring political and economic changes that would make possible unlimited world progress. The concept of manifest destiny in the West became a point at which politics, racism and religion formed a unified front to create a world super power, the same world super power that would send missionary Gospel preachers all over the world. I believe America’s founding and early formation of the Western Church is not an either-or but a both-and perspective. The power of the Gospel still saves, transforms and heals. The mobility of the Gospel has always been surrounded with controversy, from the refusal of the Jewish Sanhedrin to accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah to the persecution of Christians in the early Greco-Roman empire. The point is the Gospel of Jesus Christ still transforms lives, changes cities and transcends frameworks of

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10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.
controversial worldviews. This is evident in the formulation, migration and sojourning experience of the diaspora of Africans in America, particularly the “The Black Church.”\(^{13}\)

Historically, the Black Church in America has been an institution to which African-Americans have entrusted their fate. As an epicenter of the Black experience, colleges and universities were started by African-American churches and denominational movements.\(^{14}\) African-American-owned banks and small businesses all found their undergirding in the local church.\(^{15}\) The African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child” was alive and well in Black communities throughout migrating movements of Christianity in the West. The earliest mandates of the Gospel that resonate with African-American congregations find their roots in the beginnings of the public ministry of Jesus. After the experience of the wilderness in Luke 4, a reinvigorated Jesus quotes from the book of Isaiah in Luke 4:18 saying, “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed.”\(^{16}\)

The New Testament recording of the Gospels has Jesus circuit preaching in villages and towns, healing the lame, blind, deaf, mute and all manner of sickness and disease. In his travels he pulled together twelve men, inspiring, teaching and sending them to do the


\(^{16}\) All Scripture is cited from, *The Spirit Filled Life Application Bible.*
same. The Bible records that he gave them power over demonic spirits and charged them with extending the Kingdom of God. The zenith of his ministry concludes with his death, resurrection and reappearance to his disciples; and upon his ascension he left them with these words found in Mark 16:15, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.’” The book of Matthew gives a more detailed account of his empowering and commissioning words in Matthew 28:18-20: “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

As a result of the Great Commission, the Gospel is to be preached in cities among people for salvation of human souls. People experience the healing of sickness and disease inflicted by spiritual oppression. In another sense the Gospel is centered in making disciples of the newly converted in order to extend the authority and rule of God in the city, thereby enabling people under the influence of the Gospel to remain free from oppression, sickness and disease.

As an African-American preacher, pastor and church planter, I understand the history from which I come. The movement of progression and attainment of liberties that African-Americans enjoy can be traced to the prophetic, redemptive voice of the Church. As the saying goes, “As goes the church, so goes the world.” I believe this to be true when one considers the disproportionate realities of cultural and social demography in the African-American community today. It seems that the influence of spiritual oppression has
brought about disproportionate social ills, discomfort, weariness and dis-ease. The urban league suggests that the number one crisis facing urban America is a crisis of leadership.\textsuperscript{17} Traditionally the Church, and in particular, the Black Church, has always filled the void of a leadership vacuum through service, meeting the needs of those impacted by changing times, morphing values and sliding socio-economic scales.\textsuperscript{18} However, today there appears to be no variation between the lives of those who stand in the pulpit and those who sit in the pews, as both leadership and laity are in need of the same God who is proclaimed in houses of worship. The experience shortens the chasm and distance of piety leveling the religious playing field to truly release the Kingdom of God. The greatest tragedy of human existence is to live an experience of torment on earth and upon death end up in a literal hell, void of God’s presence for eternity.

As Courtney McBath founded CRC in 1990, explosive and expansive growth took place in a world where people were hungry for God. CRC has grown to more than 8,000 weekly attendees, as it has become one of Hampton Roads’ largest and most influential mega churches. As one enters Hampton Roads through Norfolk International Airport, it is easy to see billboards advertising CRC as one of the must-see attractions in the region. Among a host of ministries established by CRC to serve the needs of people, the most notable include but are not limited to an accredited K-12 Christian Academy, a federal credit union, a home for women in crisis pregnancies and a prison re-entry assistance program for men. McBath’s ministry has become a powerful portrait of the balance


\textsuperscript{18} Leander Bridges, \textit{Building The Black Church} (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), 45.
between faith and practice. His forward-moving leadership resulted in the establishment of the Calvary Alliance of Churches and Ministries, a fellowship for like-minded leaders in an apostolic network that trains, develops and prepares the next generation of ministry leaders. Currently, McBath holds the positions of Senior Pastor of Calvary Revival Church-Norfolk, Presiding Bishop of Calvary Alliance of Churches and Ministries, and formerly held the office of President for Hampton Roads Ecumenical Council of Bishops, a leadership gathering providing spiritual guidance to equip, train and serve local church leaders with “iron sharpening iron” fellowship among those within the episcopacy.

As a result of the need in Hampton Roads, CRC expanded its reach into the region, planting four more CRC churches in specific localities. Between 2005 and 2008 Calvary Revival Church-Chesapeake, Calvary Revival Church-Suffolk, Calvary Revival Church-Richmond and Calvary Revival Church-Peninsula were all birthed. However, to date only two Calvary Revival Churches remain: the original planted work by McBath and Calvary Revival Church-Chesapeake, a name-change church plant from Closer Walk Christian Fellowship, founded by Bishop Carlton McLeod.

A little over eleven years ago, I was sent from CRC-Norfolk to lead a transitional name-change church plant as well. CRC-Peninsula at the time was known as Zoe Community Church. The church today is known as Dominion Outreach Worship Center. It carries the original name given to me by the Holy Spirit during a dream state years before its inception in 2002. The transition of Zoe to Calvary brought with it the CRC brand name and ministry logo. However, before being sent, I served alongside McBath as a staff pastor assigned to the academy. My experience working with faculty, students and board...
personnel uniquely helped to equip me in my new role of transitional plant pastor. I transitioned a burned-out congregation that was steadily dwindling in a historic facility in the downtown area of Newport News.

My story is quite uncommon amongst church planters as growth and expansion of property and people at the time was exponential to some degree, unlike the current cultural climate in an African-American context. As a result, I have become uniquely involved and keenly concerned about this and the next generations of church planters. It is why I have chosen this topic. CRC watched the CRC-Richmond church plant fold and merge with another congregation due to a lack of seeding and staffing. Its unsustainability forced its closure and folding into another church-planting movement. To date it remains incubating awaiting another sending. CRC-Suffolk changed its name and left the Calvary Alliance movement altogether. The lack of intentional strategy in vision coordination concerning purpose led the Suffolk church to form its own identity and reformation.

The Peninsula church today is known as Dominion Outreach Worship Center. Although it had resources in the form of property, skilled administration and pulpit prowess the cultural crisis and conflict found in many urban centers crept in among peninsula leaders. The inability to communicate clear biblical standards on the order of family, church government and role of wife to her husband forced a change in branding and ministry affiliation as Dominion is completely independent today establishing its own reformation and movement of churches and ministries.

Today out of the five ministries established only two CRC branded logo churches remain. As it relates to church planting, there is much to be learned from successes and
failures to improve the process of sending and establishing new ministries in regions and localities. As a result of some of our success on the peninsula, I was elevated to the office of overseer to assist McBath with the development and establishment of new churches and leaders. McBath’s Calvary Alliance also has taken upon itself the mantle of assisting and developing leaders who desire to establish new ministries that may or may not carry the branded name and ministry logo. CRC-Chesapeake has established two new non-branded churches and as leader of CRC-Peninsula I trained, developed, prepared and sent a church to the Richmond area known today as Destined Word CRC, which has its own brand and logo but is supported by McBath at CRC-Norfolk. Destined Word is established and led by Pastor Breon Hamlett and Lady Nyah Hamlett. The Hamletts came out of the closure of the original CRC-Richmond and served with me as youth pastors.

As stated earlier, as the Church goes, so goes the community; in the African-American community our faith traditions are in transition. As institutional mainline denominational churches continue to experience a decline in membership, new independent churches have grown and flourished over the last thirty or so years. Many have begun reformation and, like McBath, are beginning to duplicate their brands, ministry names and logos through church planting around the country and throughout the world.

There are several theological tensions that bring about a cause for concern as new reformations establish new ministries. The authenticity of the Christian conversion experience is primary among the litany of concerns within these new movements. There are many who believe the mega-church phenomenon is a concert stage for false doctrine and commercialized Christianity. John McArthur most recently questioned the legitimacy of
these charismatic, Pentecostal independent reformations, calling them “strange fire.”\(^\text{19}\)

McArthur has a point when one considers theological discussion surrounding the nuances of gender roles, particularly women as primary pulpit leaders. The continuing movement to ordain homosexual clergy, support for same-sex marriage and the increasing descent of church leaders into promiscuous sexual sin have created a quandary concerning spiritual authority, biblical literacy and moral integrity in the life of the Church today. These issues will be addressed in communicating how the lack of effective strategies robs the Church of its power of transformation with specific implications in the African-American community. It is often said, “When the Evangelical White church catches a cold, Black denominational and non-denominational movements get the flu.”

As a church planter in an African-American context, I see the need for a systematic, strategic, synergistic plan for church planting. The nuances of living in an almost post-Christian world have forced and are forcing many planters to reckon with the changing dynamics of establishing new churches and ministries. When McBath began CRC many years ago, there was a hunger among the people in Norfolk and the surrounding region of Hampton Roads to experience the presence of God. Today people are hungry but really do not know what they are hungry for. Today, the planter-turned-preacher/pastor has a tremendous task of communicating present realities in light of a meta-narrative.

The landscape of post-modern relativistic thought has permeated the psyche and ethos of humanity today. Western Christians are not immune to these influences as denominations are continuing to experience decline. It seems America is entering the age

\(^{19}\) Michael Brown, “John MacArthur, Strange Fire and Blasphemy of the Spirit,” Charisma Magazine (June 2013).
of a post-Christian society, which heretofore is strange, as it is believed the US was founded on Judeo-Christian principles and values. The advancement of technology, the breakdown of family, and the questioning of bedrock and societal mores and norms have created a new fault line for the ministry practitioner today.

The Gospel is still the answer to the spiritual, social and economic ills that plague the human soul. The local church, the Body of Christ, is still God’s means for establishing, equipping and maturing individual believers to become disciples; and the local church is the mechanism for extending the Kingdom of God. Theologians, scholars and ministry practitioners still agree that the best way to extend the Gospel of the Kingdom is through the medium of the local church. As it relates to church planting in an African-American context of critical concern is the actual process of establishing a local church. The course of action in preparing, evaluating and sending a planter is of critical importance to the sustainability of the church organization as well as the community at large.

As a witness of the process at CRC, I have become all the more vested in the spiritual, financial and emotional health of a church planter coupled with intentional, strategic, resourced development of senders and planters and a local church’s planting. The ability to serve the needs of people hinges on the ability of the local church to become self-sustaining. The days of haphazardly starting a ministry have come to an end. The volatile nature and landscape of ministry today pushes past the many reasons persons have

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20 Barton, Spiritual Heritage, 25-40.


wanted to start churches. Some view church planting as a self-esteem booster, a way to prove oneself in the aftermath of schisms and splits. The passive-aggressive narcissism that refuses to send forth sons and daughters reduces them to wasted fruit on the vine. This mindset destroys the novice and the seasoned alike. As a result, I have undertaken this project in concert with my responsibilities as a newly-appointed episcopal leader in the Hampton Roads Ecumenical Council of Bishops and member of the African-American College of Pentecostal Bishops to ensure that the process of church planting improves within an African-American context.

The purpose of this doctoral project is to provide a model for church planting in an African-American context. It is written to African-American clergymen and women who are interested in establishing ministries that will predominately serve African-American communities. It is also written to pastors, ministry leaders and reformations who are preparing leaders and teams to establish works designed to meet the needs of African-Americans in urban centers and beyond.

Part One will address the planting and reduplication of Calvary Revival Church in Hampton Roads as a model of ministry. The historic nature and location of the region will be addressed. In addition, this section will examine demographics and target audiences served in developing a thriving ministry in an African-American context. The nature of Calvary’s success thrust the organization into a region-wide leadership capacity in Hampton Roads because of the founder’s role and influence in the regions. As a result, Calvary’s model had the potential to create patterns for others to follow. Special attention will be given to the changing socio-economic landscape of African-American
communities in Hampton Roads as reflective of African-American communities throughout the landscape of the West. Despite progressive climb through class and cultural strata, the vast majority of African-American communities are still experiencing large disparities across economies of scale.23 One area in which this can be readily seen is the state of marriage and family. African-Americans are no different from any other racial groups in the West; however, the impact of post-modern and post-Christian values has severely and disproportionately affected the state of marriage among African-Americans. I contend that the Black Church has been instrumental and is still a key to solving many issues in communities. The lack of intentionality, focus, organization and resourcing of church planting fuels the present-day crisis, exacerbating the spiritual and social ills among African-Americans and the communities in which they reside.

Part Two describes the phases of evolution and development of the Black Church, as it has been the epicenter of Black community and a source of social cohesiveness in Black America. This section will review the mission of the local church as an extension of the Kingdom of God, while exploring the purpose, plan and process of evangelism and discipleship as a means of spiritual, social and cultural transformation. There is historical significance to the exposure of a Judeo-Christian worldview among Africans that gave rise to the foundation and evolution of the Black Church. A discussion of these views of local church mission will provide a theological framework for the historical traditions of the Black Church.

This will lead to a discussion in Chapter 3 of a review of church planting from an African-American church perspective, an analysis of past, present and future leadership matrices. The complexity of leadership dynamics in African-American church planting ranges from the changes in the traditional landscape of ministry to the metamorphosis of new independent reformations reduplicating their brands, ministry name and logo, in an effort to serve communities. An examination of the biblical mandate of the Great Commission will establish biblical models for the purpose, practice and leadership development of those launching and establishing new ministries. A careful examination and application of the life of Jesus and Old Testament leaders and expansion of the New Testament Church should result in the transformation of local communities that experience the balance between the city of God and the city of man.

Part Three provides the foundation for ministry practice of those establishing new ministries and sending ministries to serve local communities. As a result of the African-American Church’s historic role of change in the American socio-economic fabric, this section will detail the goals and plans of transformation through the launching and establishment of healthy churches. A review of the strategic goals for church-planting movements involve a thorough understanding of intentional, focused, strategic, resourced preparation of healthy leaders to launch, plant and grow healthy churches. A review of the current landscape of church planting will reveal that many churches are started due to disgruntled leaders or disagreements/splits among denominations, and even in new reformations and movements this pattern continues. Consequently, communities of people suffer greatly due to a lack of evangelism and discipleship because of the issues of
process and proper sending. Today, there is a reduplication of the same issues under the guise of starting a new ministry.

Finally, Part Four provides a foundation framework of resource and strategy provision of pre- and post-assessments that any sending church or reformation can use when establishing new local churches and ministries. A careful and healthy assessment of a plant pastor in the areas of education and ministry practice preparation, marriage, family and financial health helps to guide decision makers as to when and how a person should be sent or how a ministry should be established. A look at CRC’s process to establish new brand, ministry name and logo, and non-branded churches will serve as a resource for planters and reformation who are able to encounter this document.

Chapter 1 examines the missional challenges of planting a ministry led by an African-American man in the American Founding. McBath’s ability to overcome the deep-seated issues of race and religion certainly gave rise to the explosive thrust of his present-day ecumenical leadership prowess. As it relates to church planting in an African-American context, this certainly becomes a means through which he is viewed as a metropolitan leader creating patterns for others to follow. However, with the pressures and impacts of day-to-day pastoral ministry and organizational leadership, CRC and Calvary Alliance have also been impacted by the duality of process and planning.
CHAPTER 1

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY: A HISTORIC VIEW OF CALVARY REVIVAL CHURCH IN HAMPTON ROADS, VIRGINIA

The church-planting movement of Calvary Revival Churches, was primarily located in southeastern Virginia, home to over 3.5 million people in seven cities within a fifty-mile radius.\(^1\) The South side is comprised of Suffolk, Chesapeake, Portsmouth, Norfolk and Virginia Beach. The Peninsula includes Hampton and Newport News. The area’s independent cities mirror the boroughs of New York City as diverse populations of lower-to-middle-income people groups live together in high density land masses, and more affluent people groups with upper-middle-to-high income live in comfortable suburban greenery with sprawling housing developments, spacious communities and centralized commercial services. CRC has planted four churches with five campuses spread throughout the region of Hampton Roads and Richmond, with a focus of meeting the needs of the hurting and broken. The expansiveness of suburban sprawl and residential centers coupled with centralized commercial services has always left

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disconnected and disenfranchised people in neighborhoods. The majority of the disenfranchised in Hampton Roads are African-American. It is within this landscape that Courtney McBath started CRC; he began with a vision of building an overcoming church out of broken lives through the power of Jesus Christ. This was a vast change from the hills of Johnson City, Tennessee, where he served as the assistant pastor to Richard Hilton, now Bishop Hilton.

After marrying Janeen McBath in Boston and graduating from MIT, McBath returned to serve with Hilton. Their relationship was perfect for McBath’s journey into Hampton Roads. Hilton, a former Church of God preacher, began a non-denominational, Pentecostal Christian Church. His focus has always been the Word of God to the people of God, which crosses all barriers. After a time of prayer, McBath asked Hilton to consider sending him to Hampton Roads, as McBath felt the call of God to the region. Hilton, in desperate need of his help, asked McBath to wait one year to ensure the nudge and call was of the Lord. As it relates to church planting, timing is everything. The process to prepare is critical for the planter and pending church. However, something greater was at stake in McBath’s delay from Johnson City: the purity of heart every planter needs to give birth to the Lord’s church.

The process of development of this purity is seen in the racial mix of the two men. Hilton is White and McBath is Black. The undercurrent of race relations in the American Founding were as difficult during the time of McBath’s sending as it was during the years

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3 Schaller, *44 Questions for Church Planters*, 85.
of Jim Crow and Civil rights era. Today, McBath still remains accountable to the pastoral ministry of Hilton, as Hilton serves McBath as the assistant presiding Bishop of Calvary Alliance of Churches and ministries, an apostolic network of churches and ministries with McBath as the presiding bishop. The birth of CRC has been able to address two historic issues that have plagued the local church in the Bible-belt South: race and religion. Hampton Roads has been impacted and suffered from the vestiges of both.

**Historic Beginnings and the American Founding**

The Western experiment called America has undergone several nuances of transformation over the last 400-plus years. The historical debate and banter of America’s founding gives rise to the meaning of her existence and the purpose for which this nation began. On the one hand there are many conservative, Anglo Evangelical Christians that believe the founding of America was for the purposes of religious liberty and the exercise of personal freedom from the tyranny of a state controlled church.\(^4\) Christopher Newport, who led the expedition of the London charter (also called the Charter of the Virginia Company of London) sailed into Cape Henry and later landed in Jamestown in 1607, claiming what is now Virginia Beach as a beacon of light for the Gospel.\(^5\) This pursuit of religious liberty would also give rise to the greatest form of representative government mankind has ever known because of its commitments to individual liberty and personal freedom that are nowhere else existent and flourishing as in the American political economy. As a result, the US is best guarded by the undergirding principles of the

\(^4\) Barton, *Spiritual Heritage*, 81.

country’s constitutional document, those of freedom and responsibility. It is these two ideas, which guard and protect its citizenry from the contrary popular notions of a democratic mob rule society. America is a republic. America is government by the consent of the governed.

There are many who believe that America is also a nation of people who are to be self-governed, and it was believed by many that self-government of the individual lies within the expression of the common good driven by one’s conscience, which determines how one lives within the marketplace and society. The Virginia Bill of Rights of 1776 exclaims in articles 15 and 16:

That no free government, or the blessing of liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue, and by frequent recurrence to fundamental principles. That religion, or the duty which we owe to our CREATOR, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity, towards each other.

This language would seem to suggest that America’s founding fathers and framers of the Constitution and founding documents were Bible-believing Christians. There are others who would beg to differ, believing that America’s framers were deists, agnostics and

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7 Ibid., 30.


9 Barton, *Spiritual Heritage*, 56.
atheists of the Enlightenment. They especially point out that Hampton, America’s first English-speaking settlement founded in 1607, the city in which I was born and in which I am now a pastor, is home to the first importation of slaves and slave auctions.

History records the Enlightenment of Europe as the Age of Reason, where humanity’s internal self-governance and decisions for day-to-day living are made with one’s intellect through the collection of scientific data. There is seemingly no one source of influence upon the framers of America’s founding documents but rather a combination of French, Latin and English thinkers from the ages of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Men such as John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Nicolo Machiavelli, Baron de Montesquieu and Jean-Jacques Rousseau influenced the Preamble and the Declaration of Independence. Baron de Montesquieu wrote at length about the importance of the rule of law. He was also one of the first people to advocate the separation of powers in government, which became written into the American Constitution as the legislative, executive and judiciary. Machiavelli’s thought was antithetical to that of the Founding Fathers; they had seen enough self-serving brutal princes. Rousseau declared famously, “Everywhere man is born free yet lives in chains.” This inspired many thinkers to believe in equality, at least before the law. It is believed that Hobbes frightened people

14 Ibid., 100.
with his talk of an all-powerful state. Locke was part of the Enlightenment, whose thinkers believed that reason was a better tool for solving the problems of society. He thought people were like blank slates—*tabulae rasae*—on which experience wrote.\(^\text{16}\) They became shaped by their circumstances.\(^\text{17}\) This is another way of saying people are responsible for their own destinies and therefore they must be free to become who they are if their lives are to have meaning. 

The context of these philosophers is critically important to understanding much of the dilemmas still seen today in historic regions such as Hampton Roads. The writings of these philosophers were directly in opposition to a state-church and its abusive control of the citizenry. The “high church,” predominately Catholic, exercised control of the spiritual and economic affairs of people within its provinces. There were faulty religious practices of doubling excessive taxation and penances upon its citizenry as a means to access heaven’s domain.\(^\text{18}\) It was believed that the Papacy was all-powerful and a partly divine presence among men.\(^\text{19}\) The words of the Holy Fathers would become law in the governance of princes and kings; this led to the abuse of a political, economic and spiritual alliance. The structure of alignment made its way from Italy throughout Northern Europe and the practice of the “high church’s” treason spread throughout England and Germany. The hypocrisy sickened many as Enlightenment philosophy became the order of the day. There was a divorce between faith and reason articulated as

\(^{16}\) Federici, *The Political Philosophy of Alexander Hamilton*, 130.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 145.

\(^{18}\) Tierney, *The Crisis of Church State*, 105.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.
the separation of church and state.\textsuperscript{20} Herein lies the strategy of justification of slavery within the founding of America.

The Enlightenment brought about the spread of deism, which produced a scientific racialism taught by intellectuals and believed by theologians. One such enlightenment deist was Thomas Dew. An American educator and writer, Dew was well respected in the South; his widely-distributed writings helped to confirm pro-slavery public opinion. He was born in King and Queen County, Virginia, and graduated in 1820 from the College of William and Mary, which is still a prominent university in Williamsburg, Virginia, a historic suburban city just outside the Peninsula of Hampton Roads. Dew was professor of history, metaphysics and political economy at William and Mary from 1827 to 1836 and served as president from 1836 until his death.\textsuperscript{21}

In his published work of 1832, \textit{An Essay in Defense of Slavery}, Dew used the expulsion and assumed future disappearance of the Indians as an argument before the Virginia Legislature to defend Black slavery: “More Indians would have been saved,” he argued, “if they had been enslaved.” Dew, a student of Thomas Paine, could argue this point because he was a deist.\textsuperscript{22} Deists believed in a Supreme Being, or the God of the Bible as the creator of the universe. However, they did not believe that He interfered in the daily affairs of men. As a result, the morality and destiny of men was left to the conscious intellectual who has evolved as a result of Darwin’s “survival of the fittest” mentality. It is

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 160.


\textsuperscript{22} Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, \textit{The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders’ Worldview} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 409-411.
understandable for secular humanists to follow this line of thinking, but the issue is of concern to those who have been enlightened by tasting of the heavenly gift of salvation. The notions of inherent human equality (biological and cosmological, but not cultural) and the biblical unity of humanity that had reigned over the Age of Enlightenment gradually gave way to theories of polygenesis and inherent human inequality.23

The process of scientific classification of nature by Anglo-Saxon Americans had by the nineteenth century culminated in the classification of humanity itself into separate races with innate qualities of inferiority and superiority. This process is typified by the “science” of phrenology, which revolutionized the nineteenth century view of human relations. Phrenology was not simply the “scientific” examination of the relationship between skull size and intelligence; it was also the study of brain/skull size in relation to morality, which, supposedly resided in the frontal and coronal parts of the brain. It was taught that Anglo-Saxon Americans, having the largest frontal lobes were not only more intelligent than non-whites, but they were more moral.24 It is here that Enlightenment thinking made its way into the propagation of the Gospel among African slaves.

Protestant theologians from Baptist, Methodist and Anglican denominations of the era embraced this line of thinking as it pertained to the enslaved Africans.25 It is within the historical environment of this racial and religious dogma that McBath sought to begin a church, which would become a movement for all races, genders and cultures of people in


Hampton Roads. As this is the country’s first region in the founding of America, it would become a religious mecca for many prominent denominational and non-denominational movements, as the eastern seaboard and continental US all come to visit Hampton Roads.

**Vacation Centers and Military Outposts**

Calvary Revival Church, birthed and planted by its founding pastor and now Bishop, McBath, began with twenty-one members in Norfolk, an area known as the urban metropolis of Hampton Roads. Today, the ministry has over 8,000 weekly attendees, a nationally-televised broadcast, an accredited K-12 school, a credit union and transitional homes for men and pregnant teenage girls. McBath is also overseer and presiding Bishop of Calvary Alliance of Churches and Ministries with diocese districts in Africa, India, China and the Caribbean.

Hampton Roads is home to seven independent cities in southeastern Virginia, known as the birthplace of America. These cities include Williamsburg, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Suffolk, Chesapeake, Portsmouth and the major tourist attraction Virginia Beach. Hampton Roads has a population of over 3.5 million people. Its cities and neighborhoods are a mix and blend of urban, suburban and rural aesthetics considered the Mid-Atlantic region of the US.26

As it relates to church planting, Hampton Roads gives way to plenty of ministry opportunities; the region is home to several military outposts, from Fort Eustis to historic Fort Monroe, a landmark of the Civil War. The area is also home to two naval shipyards, Langley Air Force Base, two naval command centers, and the Joint Chiefs Task Force

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Command Center.\textsuperscript{27} The region is filled with major tourist attractions, including theme parks, national parks, historic museums and beaches. Hampton Roads also houses several of the nation’s top colleges and universities and has been rated by \textit{Money Magazine} as one of the “Top 25 Livable Regions in America.”\textsuperscript{28} However, the rich history and heritage of Hampton Roads is impacted by its religious, racial and socio-economic history, which is uniquely reflective of the American experience.

**Suburban Sprawl and Urban Metropolis**

America has been known as the land of freedom and opportunity. The rights and privileges of citizenship have always carried with them mobility, educational modality and property ownership.\textsuperscript{29} As this experiment called America has made tremendous progress toward liberty and prosperity, this has not always been the reality for many of America’s African children. The progress and expansiveness of suburban sprawl and residential centers coupled with centralized commercial services has always left disconnected and disenfranchised people in neighborhoods. The majority of those impacted by the disproportionate numbers are largely African-American.

For example, the central cities of Hampton Roads, Hampton, Newport News, Portsmouth and Norfolk are urban cities of high-population density, segmented with dilapidated housing stock, federal and state aid assisted communities, increasing crime

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crises and social statistics coupled with struggling educational attainment.\textsuperscript{30} The reverse is true of Hampton Road’s outlying cities and counties, which include Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Suffolk and Williamsburg. The thriving tax base, pristine schools, centralized commercial services, sprawling greenery and single-family dwellings have made for comfortable living, which gives the appearance of a paradise.

On the other hand, the urban centers of America, largely made up of Hispanic and African-American minorities, are suffering social ills reminiscent of years gone by. The years of slavery, the Great Depression, Jim Crow and the Civil Rights era have not witnessed the woes of today, as Black children are born out of wedlock at a rate of 70 percent. The benefits of a two-parent family reduce the likelihood of a myriad of negative social statistics in children. Children in single-parent homes are more likely to experience low educational performance, illiteracy, criminal tendencies, drug abuse and a life of poverty; and this cycle tends to repeat over and again.\textsuperscript{31} Black women between the ages of 20 and 50 have a 45 percent lesser chance of experiencing matrimony with their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{32} In 1970 the marriage rate among African-Americans ages 20 to 54 was 64 percent; by 1980 the rate was 54.2 percent.\textsuperscript{33} In 1990, the marriage rate among African-Americans slid downward to 40.4 percent and by 2000 the rate was up slightly to 41.6

\textsuperscript{30} Hampton Roads Regional Planning District, “Consolidated Plan,” 145.


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
percent, but by 2008, just before the election of the nation’s first African-American president, the numbers were down to 39.6 percent.  

African-Americans represent nearly 14 percent of the US population; however, African-American males make up 55 to 60 percent of the prison population. These numbers are clearly disproportionate, reducing the number of marriageable men within the African-American community. Marian Wright Edelman, in her work examining the mass incarceration of Black men says, “A black boy born in 2001 has a one in three chance of going to prison in his lifetime, and a Latino boy a one in six chance of the same fate. The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world: 7.1 million are adult residents in prison; one in 33 are under some form of correctional supervision including prison, jail, probation, or parole.” The coined phrase “cradle-to-the-prison pipeline” has created an epidemic of mass incarceration. It is one of the most dangerous crises facing the Black community since slavery, and it affects everyone in the nation. Black males have an imprisonment rate nearly seven times higher than White males, and Hispanic males have an imprisonment rate over twice that of White males. Mass incarceration is tearing fathers and mothers from their children and economically disempowering

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34 Ibid.


37 Michelle Alexander has become a leading expert in this area. For more information see Michelle Anderson, The New Jim Crow (New York: The New Press, 2010).

38 Edelman, “America’s Cradle to Prison Pipeline.”
millions. One-in-nine Black, one-in-twenty-eight Hispanic and one-in-fifty-seven White children have an incarcerated parent.

With these urban social statistics reflective of the nation, McBath began in 1990 in Hampton Roads with a movement as descriptive as his television broadcast, The Voice of Revival. As stated earlier, as the Church goes, so goes the community. A revival among the disenfranchised was needed in Hampton Roads, and a planting pastor, through the preaching of the Gospel and establishment of a local church, created patterns for others to follow.

**Planting Patterns and Explosions - Calvary’s Revival in Hampton Roads**

CRC began at a time when people where hungry for something more, not only in the faith community, but in the community at large. People were looking for change. A failed democratic nomination by Jesse Jackson for president and the era of Ronald Reagan and George Bush’s, trickle-down economics policies resulted in surging unemployment rates, increasing gang violence and the Gulf War. The affairs of the time did not seem to bode well for many African-Americans. And many began to turn their attention away from the socio-economic crisis and turn their attention back to God. As a result of rich heritage and history, Hampton Roads is home to several major Christian denominational movements. The Anabaptists and Congregationalists settled in Hampton Roads. CRC-Peninsula’s building is the original Anabaptist structure in Newport News. The 90,000 square foot structure cornerstone dates back to 1883. Bishop John Francis Asbury, a church father of the Methodist Church in America, still has a headquarters church in Newport News. Bishop Asbury is most noted as a great revivalist who attended
the constitutional convention during Reconstruction. Impacted by phrenology, it was Asbury who left the freedom of the flesh of America’s imported African labor to the affairs of the state and freedom of the soul of the African to the hands of God.39

Charismatic and Pentecostal movements call Hampton Roads home. The Assemblies of God have two jurisdictional presences. There are streams of Pentecostal Assemblies of the World as well as the Church of God. Among African-American major denominational movements in Hampton Roads are the first four jurisdictions of the Church of God in Christ, two jurisdictions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, as well as National Baptist, which is the primary influencer of the region. As McBath began CRC in 1990, his non-denominational focus, corporate style of organization and teaching style of ministry proved to draw thousands of parishioners. In his third year of ministry CRC was well above 700 members; by year five he had already reached 1500 members and was well on his way to 2000 attendees, which according to Outreach Magazine is the starting point for classifying a ministry as a mega church.

McBath’s birthing of CRC into Hampton Roads was not without controversy. The growth of CRC was filled with new converts and members from traditional mainline denominational churches. He was often labeled as a member stealer, cult leader and money hoarder.40 However, CRC’s influence continued to grow with the indigent and affluent of all races and cultures. The significance of his influence was seen in his

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connection with Whites within the region. Hampton Roads is one of those regions where the most segregated hour during the week is on Sunday mornings in worship services. Despite societal and economic gains among African-Americans it was still absolutely unheard of for Whites to join an African-American led ministry. However, ethnic minorities throughout the region readily joined White congregations. Charismatic and Pentecostal movements of the region were often multi-ethnic, yet the senior pastor of the ministry was often a White male, which is still predominately true to this day. McBath and CRC were among the first to break through in the region.

The real breakthrough occurred in 1995 as McBath had completely outgrown the space of his first location on Little Creek Road in Norfolk. CRC’s growth called for three services on Sunday in a facility that could only seat 700 people.\(^41\) The board of elders convened to build a sanctuary edifice that could easily seat 2,000 plus with space for children’s ministry. The ministry purchased a tract of land but ran into zoning issues when the neighborhood did not want a church (considered a commercial facility); zoning laws would need to be changed to accommodate the thriving ministry of CRC. The neighborhood commissioner and local ward representative to the city council were both White males who blocked the measures toward obtaining the ministry’s zoning and building permits to begin construction.\(^42\) McBath’s momentum could easily have been halted or stunted by his need for space and his moments with the mayor were reflective of his time with Hilton, who had helped him walk through troubled waters during his time in

\(^{41}\) Ibid.

\(^{42}\) Ibid.
Tennessee. McBath was beloved by the former mayor, Paul Fraim. His facilities on Poplar Hall Drive are among the must-see attractions within the city of Norfolk; but at that time he was a young preacher with influence who could have flexed the wrong muscles for the church, the African-American Church in particular, thus hindering the movement to help the hurting and broken. During that time, city council moved for a vote by referendum to change the zoning ordinance of the city to allow the ministry of CRC to build. McBath had the number of votes needed city-wide to force the change, but instead opted to stand down in changing the ordinance. He has often said, “If we had moved forward with the vote, we would have created a precedent in the city and region which, if at any time a local government wanted to vote a church up or down for space through legal loopholes they could do so.” His wisdom has proven to speak volumes within the racial/religious context and history of Hampton Roads.

Instead McBath opted to build a state-of-the-art school that served the city and area with K-12 Christian education. I even have benefited from his wisdom; it was at the school that I joined the staff of CRC as a pastor to meet the needs of parents, children and board members. The school was one of the first of its kind to graduate students, sending them on to colleges and universities. His sacrifice built relationships throughout the city, among leaders and laity. Calvary Revival was on the move as bridges were built and old guard pathways forged new patterns for others to follow. Finally, for the first time, these city leaders realized that an African-American clergyman could be trusted and followed, and the Kingdom of God advanced so much so that McBath’s own seminary experience

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43 Bishop McBath has said this in many different settings over the years including in conversations I have been a part of.
led him into relationship with a well-known televangelist. Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network and Regent University welcomed Courtney McBeth, not only as a graduate of CBN/Regent University School of Divinity, but now as an influential board member contributing to the University’s success.

**Pastoring Hampton Roads, Expanding the Brand of CRC**

Calvary Revival Church is not only a local church, but had become a movement of churches throughout the Hampton Roads region. The movement was characterized by its catch phrase: “Discover Life at Calvary: Embrace Life, Live Life, Give Life.” As the ministry progressed through the 1990s a well-known prophetic voice decreed, “CRC would be likened to a franchising entity as McDonald’s, the taste for its brand of ministry would be every-where as new churches would come alive.” In the marketplace the concept of brand franchise management is nothing new. Starbucks, Walmart, Food Lion, Apple, Verizon all expand their concepts of business strategy, customer service and product management with consistency regardless of the region of the US, with slight adjustments for context throughout the world.

The expansion of the local church is no different or at least it should not be when one considers the churches of the New Testament. The churches of the first century were identified by their locale and region. It is how the world of the New Testament was viewed. The epistles of the New Testament were all to churches in or of the city. Today ministry expands by denomination, culture, ethnicity/race and class. The expansion of a single vision, mission and mandate today could be seen as the expansion of brand name, logo and ministry mobilization patterns.
Expanding the Brand of CRC - Name, Logo and Ministry Local Plant Patterns

Calvary Revival Church attempted a brand expansion and franchising concept of its local church flavor of the “Discover Life Movement” to several other cities within Hampton Roads. As in the marketplace, the churches would share the same name, ministry logo and thematic expression respective to cities and flavor and focus of ministry that met the need of each context. As it relates to church planting the strategic, organized resourced planting of local churches helps to create and spur the expansion of the Kingdom in every locality. The Great Commission is seen and expressed, but there is something else key to church planting that qualifies CRC as a local church movement. It is the movement dynamics as seen in a local congregation that are consistent with New Testament churches.

The missionary enterprise of the nineteenth century offers important insights into the dynamics of effective movements. During that century, many of the new churches established by Western missionaries in the non-Western world were locked into unhealthy patterns of dependency. Roland Allen saw that Western missionaries maintained all authority, power and control over new churches and only delegated it very gradually over to national leaders over an arbitrarily defined period of time. Unable to support or propagate themselves, these churches needed funding and leadership from the Western Church indefinitely.\footnote{David Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 451.} An alternate approach to missions, pioneered by John
Nevius, Hudson Taylor, Roland Allen and others, sought to plant churches that were self-sustaining from inception. The goal is not to merely plant churches but to instill organic, self-propagating movement dynamics in churches from the start so they naturally grow and reproduce.

Allen’s book title *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* speaks to this. The word “spontaneous” evokes the idea of “spontaneous combustion.” That is combustion without an external ignition source. A church that has movement dynamics grows spontaneously from within, because its faith and vision catalyzes commitment, unifies people into communities and is attractive and infectious to a significant part of the population around it.45 Thus, a church with movement dynamics produces its own new ideas, leaders, and resources to realize the vision. However, as it relates to church planting in an African-American context it is vital in resourcing, staffing and crisis management, of social cultural infusion from a sending church to a plant pastor or planting church. It is not only key to the growth and health of the local church but stabilization of its membership constituency and community at large.

However, in the language of missiologists, the church is self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating, and “self-theologizing.”46 Such a church will inevitably reproduce itself into other churches that reproduce themselves for the same reasons. The more ideas, leaders and resources that are pooled and deployed, the more the movement

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46 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 451
dynamic strengthens and snowballs. As long as all the reproducing churches can keep a unified vision, the movement can build steam and grow exponentially. The question becomes what are these movement dynamics? How can they be fostered? The answer lies in what movement dynamic looks like within an individual church or ministry and is translatable to what it looks like in a city that is being reached with the Gospel.

There are three factors that constitute a movement dynamic in a congregation or network of churches. The first is that there must be grace renewal. Nothing is more important than that. All movements start with what Steve Addison has called “White Hot Faith,” founders come to a deeply felt, intensely expressed conviction about big ideas that are compellingly shared with others. However, a Holy Spirit movement consists of much more than simply infectious concepts. The Spirit of God honors work through the preaching of the Gospel (1 Thes 1:5; 1 Pt 1:12.) The Gospel cannot simply be subscribed to as a set of propositions but declared and applied as a living power. That is a foundational element for being classified as a “movement.” The explosive growth of Calvary Revival through the 1990s fits the description as McBath proclaimed God was building an overcoming church out of broken lives through the power of Jesus Christ.

The second factor is a church must contextualize the Gospel to its culture without compromising it. It must neither over-adapt it to the surrounding culture (by avoiding or changing the Christian doctrines offensive to that society) nor under-adapt it (by holding onto non-biblical accretions and practices from other societies). It might be possible, for example, that an ethnic church in a major city could experience spiritual revival but it

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47 Ibid.
48 Steve Addison, Movements that Change the World (Downers Grove, IL: Missional Press, 2009).
might not become a movement, because it does not know how to communicate comprehensibly to members of the other cultures around it. However, this was not the case concerning CRC’s explosive growth through the 1990s and early-2000s as the ministry maintained ethnocentric centrality and biblical orthodoxy through its assimilation process of new converts and members of all races, cultures and class in its thematic expression “Discover Life.”

The third major factor is a church must strike the dynamic, energy-producing balance between being an organization and an organism—it must be an “organized organism,” so that the structure always serves the cause and truth, not the other way around. For years sociologists have noted the way movements begin with a vision and a set of sacrificing, charismatic leaders and great fluidity in how they got things done. However, over time the organic movement becomes institutionalized. That is, movements begin as something almost completely informal and organic, and eventually become formal, planned and organizational.

A church, or group of churches, with a “movement” dynamic will have the following characteristics. It experiences the dynamics of grace renewal. It practices wise and balanced contextualization. It is an “organized organism” with movement characteristics. It maintains a unified vision and beliefs, cooperation and catholicity of spirit, sacrificial commitment, spontaneity and creativity.

The Discover Life church-planting movement of CRC has had many challenges and has learned greatly from its novice beginnings. Church planting in and of itself is a newly, nuanced transforming organic process for expanding the Kingdom of God among
Evangelicals in the West. The movement of CRC is only twenty-eight years old. When one considers the context of African-American church planting with newly forming reformations not backed by a denominational structure, one can appreciate the experience of African-Americans in this country through the evolvement of the Gospel. It brings about pause to review the theology of the local church and its mission as well as the miraculous evolutionary metamorphosis known today as the Black Church. Attention how shifts to an examination of the local church’s mission and how it applies in an African-American local church context.
PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE FOR LOCAL CHURCH MISSION AND EVOLVEMENT OF THE BLACK CHURCH IN AMERICA

The literature review is an effort to rediscover the purpose of the Gospel as expressed through the mission of the local church. The literature reveals the mission of the local church as an extension of the Kingdom of God. It will also explore the purpose, plan and process of evangelism and discipleship as a means of spiritual, social and culture transformation among African-Americans. This chapter will review the phases of evolvement and development of the Black Church, as the Black Church has been the epicenter of cohesiveness in Black America. There is a historical significance to the exposure of a Judeo-Christian worldview among Africans that gives rise to the evolutionary foundations of the Black Church’s beginnings. A discussion of these views of local church mission will provide a theological framework for the historical traditions of the Black Church in an effort to return to sound reasoning and rationale for why new local church movements and reformations should engage in church planting as an extension of the Great Commission to expanding the Kingdom of God.
Local Church Mission

The birth of the local church finds its roots in three very significant places in Scripture. The first is the encounter between Jesus and Peter concerning his identity. A disciple of Jesus, Peter, is questioned concerning the Lord’s identity and his response to Jesus as the Christ leads to the foundational beginning of what many consider to be the birthing of the Church. Jesus, so moved by Peter’s spiritual acumen in Matthew 16:18, says, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Another birth place for the idea of the local church is “The Day of Pentecost” as seen in the book of Acts where 3,000 new converts were added in one day as a result of the promise of the father given to those who gathered together in one accord and waited for the presence of the Spirit, who came as a sound of a rushing wind. The Bible records in Acts 2:6-11:

And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.

The local church was born because everyone heard the same message in the same place at the same time. A missional focus for every planter turned pastor is communicating the message weekly, so that everyone is able hear the same “wonderful works of God.”

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1 Alan Hirsh, The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 78.
A third place many believe to be the birth of the local church were in the last words uttered by Christ as he hung upon the cross in John 19:38: “It is finished.” At first glance of these words in Scripture it is easy for one to ask the question: What is finished? What was Jesus referring to when he uttered those words? For much of Church history, since the early church in Acts, preachers and proclaimers of the biblical message have centered much of the local church’s focus on the preaching and proclamation of the Gospel. This focus is based on what theologians, scholars and preachers have deemed as the Great Commission, derived from the words of Jesus in Mark 16:15: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature and make disciples of all nations.”

When asked the question, what is the Gospel, many people refer to the Gospel as the virgin birth, sinless life, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yet, the Greek word for Gospel is “evangelion” from which are derived the words evangelism and evangelist. Evangelion simply means good news or good report. Evangelism, then, is the process of communicating the Good News, and an evangelist is an instrument for communicating that Good News. By this definition any good news is Gospel. And good news can be subjective based upon the needs of hearer.

For example, if an impoverished community is told that they have just received 10 million dollars to stimulate their economy, this to them would be good news. However, what we as Christians mean by the good news of the Great Commission is that the virgin birth, sinless life, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ produces

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2 Myles Munroe, *Rediscovering the Kingdom* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publisher, Inc, 2004), 145.

3 Ibid.
salvation for the soul of humanity, and those who receive Him are being saved from eternal damnation and separation from God. Yet, even with this truth, the glass is half empty as it relates to dominion over sin, because when it comes to the sociological, political and economic development of nations, states, regions, communities and neighborhoods where the local church resides the question is quite perplexing. The relativist of the post-Christian age may ask: What does the salvation of the human soul have to do with my daily life? And how does one reconcile this existence on earth with all of its problematic inequities in preparation for an after-life, if there even is one? And what does this have to do with the immediacy of my human need at a time when all economies are on a slippery slope? And when Jesus uttered the words, “It is finished” did this bring an end to these inequities? Many theologians have spent their time preaching the life and love of Jesus and his atoning sacrifice when this is not what Jesus himself preached. He did not preach about himself. In order for the local church to fulfill its mission on earth, it must return to the message that Jesus preached and proclaimed - the Gospel of the Kingdom as well as preaching the life and love of Jesus toward humanity as a means of reconciliation between God and man.

When it comes to church planting it is important for the local church-planting pastor to understand not everything the Bible teaches can be considered the Gospel. The Gospel is not a set of general doctrinal truths, but primarily news about the historical events of Jesus’ life. As already mentioned, the very word Gospel has as its background a news report about some life-altering event that has already happened. The Gospel then is good news, not good advice. It is not some thing, or a way of life or something to be
done, but rather something that has been done for us, that we must respond to and as a result our lives are able to live in harmony with God and man.\textsuperscript{4} The Gospel is, then, what one must believe in order to have relationship with God put right and to be saved.\textsuperscript{5}

It is therefore important to realize that the Gospel is primarily about how alienation from God is addressed and removed by the work of Christ. All other alienations in life—sociological, economic, political—flow from this and the inequities created as a result of human alienation from God are reconciled through a relationship with God through Christ.\textsuperscript{6} This is what is meant by the words of Jesus, “It is finished!”

The reconciliation between God and humanity is complete and as a result the foundational framework for reconciliation between one another has a basis in which to now begin. As a church planter and now pastor communicating this truth is a part of the task of the local church. The task is revealing the finished work of the cross and God’s reconciliation as available for every human being, while also helping people make sense of the daily efforts of reconciliation between themselves and others. The local church planter turned pastor has the awesome opportunity to not only preach Jesus Christ to hearers, but to also preach what Jesus himself preached.\textsuperscript{7} This leads to an exploration of what Jesus preached, which is addressed below.

\textsuperscript{4} Mark 1:1; Luke 2:10; 1 Corinthians 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-10.


\textsuperscript{7} This means that the saying, “Preach the Gospel; use words if necessary” is misleading. If the Gospel was primarily about what one must do to be saved, that could be communicated as well by actions (to be imitated) as by words. But if the Gospel is primarily about what God has done to save us, and how we can receive it through faith, that can only be expressed through words. Faith cannot come without hearing. This is revealed in Galatians 2:5, that heresy endangers the Gospel, and why we learn in
What Jesus Preached

As it relates to church planting, in many instances, the plant pastor can miss the focus, intention and mission of Christ on earth, which is to be lived out through the local church. In preaching, prophesying and proclaiming, many have missed the understanding that everyone wants to discover his destiny and the power to make dreams come true. It is in this critical point that sociological, political and economic inequities occur among human beings and among human governments that preserve individual and national identities as well as individual and national prosperities, especially as it applies to Christendom in the West. The Gospel provides harmony with God and provisions for humanity, yet the vast majority of the world’s people have not discovered them, much less embraced them, and the question is why? There are many reasons.

For one, their minds have been blinded to prevent them from seeing the truth. Secondly, they have not been exposed to the message. Finally, many have heard the wrong message. Many people have not heard the Gospel because the vast majority of the modern church does not preach the Gospel. The “gospel” is not the message itself but the description of the message. The Church is commissioned by Jesus to proclaim and spread the Gospel message of the Kingdom of God. The message of the Kingdom of God is described as Good News for everyone who hears its message.

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Philippians 1:16 that a person’s mind must be persuaded of the truth of the gospel. Ephesians 1:13 also asserts that the Gospel is the word of truth. Philippians 1:12, Ephesians 6:19 and Colossians 1:23 all teach that the Gospel is advanced through verbal communication, particularly preaching.

8 Munro, Rediscovering the Kingdom, 146.
There are many kinds of good news messages to talk about, but only Jesus is identified as the focus of preaching. He told his followers to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. When Jesus began his public ministry, his first recorded message was, “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven/God is near” (Mt 4:17). Jesus proclaimed the Good News that the Kingdom of God had come to earth. That was His Gospel. It was not news about religion or denomination or some get rich quick overblown message of prosperity. Believers are not called to make people feel good with a message that creates a warm fuzzy feeling. Jesus’ message was the Good News that God’s Kingdom had come on earth and any and all who would come would be reunited in spirit and fellowship with Him and be restored to their full position and rights as children of God.

Among these rights are harmony with God and man. The Good News of the Kingdom is that humanity regains what Adam lost, and what the nations of the world lost as well: the dominion of God’s empire on earth through man. Arthur Glasser in his book, *Announcing the Kingdom*, says it is the local Church’s responsibility to demonstrate that the Kingdom of God has come to earth through its preaching and ministry programming. The local church’s ability to serve its community and congregants as a vehicle to establish the presence of God and expansion of the Kingdom is directly related to its established beginnings. It is exactly what Jesus had in mind in John 14:12 when he said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.” Focus is often on

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10 Ibid.
preaching the forgiveness of sin, however the revelation of reconciliation with God should produce a transformation of serving one another. The Apostle Paul in Romans 5:12 says, “Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” As an example, the impact of sin can be seen in an Egyptian king who knew not Yahweh, who worshiped foreign deities and believed in them for economic substance and sustenance, but when faced with an approaching famine, enslaved all of Israel, an abuse of his fellow man.

The message of the Kingdom of God restores the place of dominion’s authority that God intended at the beginning of time. In order to maintain a world order free from the tyranny of chaotic idolatry and socio-economic slavery, the Gospel message of the Kingdom must be established on the earth and carried in the hearts of men and women who operate within the spheres of the systems of the world, where God is able to establish his dominion through their works of service.¹¹ Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. That is the only Gospel He preached; therefore, as it applies to his under-shepherds, disciples, local church planters and pastors the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is the only true gospel. In Luke 4:43, Jesus told his disciples, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.”

The intent and focus of Jesus’ message of the Kingdom is for empire-building throughout the world, where all nations of men in their appointed times, places and seasons would function under the governance of God on earth. In this all of the world would be subject to the theocratic rule of God, where there is peace, prosperity and

¹¹ Munroe, *Applying the Kingdom*, 75.
tranquility for all human beings. In this theocratic rule, economic stability is available for all who would follow the ways of the Kingdom, instead of inequities created by the darkened hearts of men and women who have not heard, received or are applying the message of the Kingdom. This warrants a discussion of the relationship between the community, state and the Church; in particular the African-American Church.

**The Community, State and the Church**

The African-American diaspora has typically entrusted their fate in the pursuit for freedom and equality to two institutions: government and the local church. To date African-American’s have not always agreed to the means of our pursuit, but historically have endured or been impacted by a socio-economic experience that has instilled within us a desire and focus towards the pursuit of freedom. The church-planting pastor must understand the delicate balance and dual role she has in the life of African-Americans through the ministry of preaching and hands on day-to-day shepherding of the flock.

The African-American Church has always held a pastoral and prophetic role in the life of African-American citizens. The Church has been the place of conscious avocation during abuse by the powers of the state and compassionate solver of crisis when impacted by life in community. Karl Barth, in *Community State and Church*, gives a glimpse of understanding the duality of the local church as it advocates for liberty and freedom among the least of these while extending the Kingdom of God. He writes, “The church in gratitude toward God, must not seek to undermine the state’s legitimate task in

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principle, but must draw attention or remind the state that God’s Kingdom stands above the church and state; through its witness to the gospel, the church reminds the state of its proper task to be a responsible agent of peace and justice in the world.”

The history of America, and its misinterpreted understanding of her founding, of which Hampton Roads is home, through secularism, has sought to divide the affairs of humanity into actions of the state and the service of the Church to the community. American society is still limited and impacted by the projected adversarial relationship the two can have with each other.

Barth in his work attempts to neutralize the odds by communicating a strategy to develop sound political theology among practicing theologians. The African-American church planting pastor in transitioning to senior pastor must develop a political theology that reverses the secular humanistic view that permeates many African-American churches with a sound Christocentric view. Unlike many approaches of political theology that speak about theology within a political framework, Barth encourages the practicing pastor and theologian by reversing this view speaking about politics within a Bible-centered framework (theology interpreted politically). He raises the idea of considering politics and its relationship to the Church as (politics interpreted theologically).

The typical approach is political theology, usually beginning with social-scientific analysis of the state and civil society (including the Church), then correlating theological belief or practice. Theology becomes an appendage to the language of political science,

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14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.
sociology or political philosophy. Barth suggests pastors, and in this context, planting pastors should develop a political perspective entirely upon God’s action in and through salvation history and the revealed will of God in the context of the word of God. Barth believes in this Christ is center with advancement of the Kingdom of God as the message. Jesus will neither be left or right but center. As far as the West is concerned it becomes reflective of the US mantra *E pluribus unum*, which is Latin for “Out of many, one.” The idea is for left and right, policy advocates, analyst, thinkers, theologians and ministry practitioners to gravitate toward the center, where Jesus and his Kingdom are, rather than trying to make Jesus either-or when in actuality his message is both-and. The impact of policy issue initiatives that dilute the strength of the Black Church in its service to community will be addressed in a later chapter. However, this leads to a discussion of the nature of the voice of the Church in producing prophetic redemptive change in African-American and urban communities.

**Prophetic Voice**

The prophetic voice of the Church finds its roots and history in Scripture. The Old Testament prophets lifted their voices with a clarion call of the people to repentance that they may live in harmony with the living God. The prophet was representative of God to the people forth telling and revealing the future, providing words of encouragement and warnings for continued disobedience. The Old Testament prophet spoke the truth of God to those in power. Nathan, in his prophetic role to David, uses metaphorical allegory of a stolen lamb to say, “Thou art the man who has taken another man’s wife and committed adultery with her.” John the Baptist is beheaded for speaking to Herod as he commits
adultery with his brother’s wife reminding him this is unlawful and unbecoming of the occupant leader of the temple as priest. The Old Testament is filled with the voices of the prophets as they cry aloud for righteousness, justice and mercy.

The Black Church tradition has always played a significant role in the shaping of the moral fiber of this nation and has been able to serve as a strategic resource in the formation of ethical leadership.\textsuperscript{16} At its best, the Black Church demonstrates the meaning and destiny of American democratic dogma.\textsuperscript{17} It finds creative affinity with what James M. Washington called “the American dissenting tradition.”\textsuperscript{18} This tradition has most notably has been represented by preachers like Martin Luther King, Jr. It calls for social reform against the hypocrisy of American ideals. It is embodied by the opposition’s determination to put righteousness, conscience and morality before social and political expediency and helps shape the nation’s most fundamental values and institutions.\textsuperscript{19}

The Black Church has always spoken truth to power. The preachers of the 1600s, 1700s and 1800s all called into question the hypocrisy of America’s social, economic and governmental system. On the one hand a nation built upon the promise and provision of justice and liberty for all should not hold in bondage without citizenship and the rights pertaining thereto those brought into bondage. These preachers appealed with the infallibility of the biblical text. An example is John 8:36 which says, “Therefore if the

\textsuperscript{16} Earl Walter Fluker, \textit{The Stones that the Builder Rejected: The Development of Ethical Leadership from the Black Church Tradition} (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 42.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” They called into question how the liberty of the soul and being could not translate to the liberty of the body.

The preachers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries called into question the separate, but unequal doctrine citing the inerrancy of Scripture and biblical doctrine regarding the image of God. The era’s constitutional legal battles of state and national citizenship coupled with the historical perspective of limited government in the life of citizens with belief in state governmental authority governing the affairs of the American citizen did not fare well for Blacks. The reason being Blacks were viewed as private property. Though the 14th Amendment awarded Blacks citizenship rights, the 1866 Supreme Court Case interpretation of the privileges and immunities clause supported actions of the states. The actions of private persons in southern states that owned private property with regard to public conveyances, inns and places of public amusement were protected by state constitutions as Blacks were excluded from public life as citizens.

Eventually the legal argument of private property citizenship gave way to the understanding between alienable and inalienable rights. Civil rights legislation finds its roots in the understanding of alienable and inalienable rights. The preachers’ influence upon the legal minds of the day gave cause for understanding that inalienable rights are those given to an individual because of their created personhood, what it meant to be a human being created in the image of God. Alienable rights were those given by the state.

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22 Ibid.
as a result of an individual’s inalienable rights or personhood rights. Blacks were stripped of personhood and viewed as property and the preachers of the time stood vehemently against this ideology calling for righteousness and justice and as a result freedom of citizenship and liberty were given because of the Church’s influence among lawmakers. The prophetic voice of agitation was felt and heard. The question became how did this adherence to justice and righteousness arise among African-Americans? There is and was a rich history and tradition among Africans that preceded their European capture which enabled an easy transition in the articulation of speech to worship the one-triune God.

**Historic Christian Worldview among Africans**

In tracing the roots of religion and spirituality among Blacks in America, some historians have tended to begin with the experience of slavery in America. However, there is a rich spiritual and cultural tradition among Africans preceding the impact of European settlement on Western shores. In studying the religious and cultural life of Africans on American soil fragmentation must be accounted for because of the manner in which they were captured, practically stripped away their heritage.23 The area in West Africa from which the majority of the Africans were drawn exhibited a high degree of cultural homogeneity. The capture of many Africans in intertribal wars and their selection for the slave markets tended to reduce to a minimum the possibility of the retention and the transmission of African culture.24 However, a careful study of the African concept of

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time and their view of life after death seems to indicate spirituality more closely aligned with rabbinic Judaism found in the New Testament writings of Paul.

In a world of complex values the ontological perception of time is one of the most significant. A culture’s sense of time reveals its nature and for an individual a particular and developed sense of time is an essential parameter of personality.\textsuperscript{25} When speaking of time it refers to an individual’s worldview, of their state of being in relationship to the world around them.\textsuperscript{26} An individual’s perception of time guides his daily activity and helps to shape his values in relation to people and environment.\textsuperscript{27} Simply expressed, an individual or culture’s understanding of time governs her behavioral patterns and encompasses her religious practices of worship, which helps to shape her morality.

Traditional West African cultures shared a basic attitude toward time that was much like the traditional Hebraic attitude of the time. They emphasized slow movements, patience and waiting.\textsuperscript{28} Their connection to the earth, community of people and the world around them guided their conscious living for daily decision-making.\textsuperscript{29} Africans believed the work of patience affected the souls of people and determined their reason for being.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 21-85.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Joseph E. Harris, \textit{Africans and their History} (New York: New American Library, 1972), 79-110.
Africans had a sense of a supreme being, a greater spirit power that controlled the destinies and fate of humanity and as a result affected how they lived daily.\textsuperscript{31}

The African concept of time affected their work ethic toward tasks. Historically, in African cultures the daily tasks of labor were ordered by cultural status of societal members. In most ethnic groups those born within a set period ranging from approximately two-to-ten years formed a group and shared activities and responsibilities. For example, the Igbo tribes were in sets of people formed every two-to-three years, and had three levels of people. The elders were old men and women who wielded authority; a middle grade was responsible for communal work, and finally boys and girls who sang, danced, wrestled and played together.\textsuperscript{32} This is very similar to the organization of the Hebraic tradition of the tribes of Israel. The patterns of Hebraic life and culture as written in the Old and New Testaments concerning work and labor, religious conviction and morality were already embedded in African culture and thought.

West African understandings of time, space, causality and purpose were an ideal worldview articulated differently by the English, but widely shared by West Africans. The Anglicans and Protestants who settled in the West, with their linear calendars of time observed saint’s days and the cyclical remembrance and renewal of the most important events in the life and death of Jesus. As a result the teachings and biblical doctrines of love, grace, faith, patience, giving, redemption and sanctification were fixed values and beliefs that were a part of the American colonies.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31} Sobel, \textit{The World they Made Together}, 21-85.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
Ironically, the West Africans who were brought to America, generally regarded as having been a heterogeneous group, may have brought with them a set of perceptions that included the supreme-being articulated differently based on ritual practices and language. West African views of family structures, economic pursuits, folkways and mores differed among themselves widely. But they all shared a more basic worldview with their European captors that made possible the melding of one culture under the impact of North American slavery.\textsuperscript{34} They shared an understanding of a spirit power, its nature and its influence on human beings and of time and its relation to space and environment.\textsuperscript{35}

As a result Africans embracing Christianity and its values on American soil is not beyond the scope of belief. The teachings of liberation and redemption would have naturally agreed well with the ontological perspectives of Africans. There was also the biblical narrative and motif of Hebraic engagement with Africans, known has Cush or Kemit or Kemir.\textsuperscript{36} Abraham marries Keturah after Sarah dies (Gn 25:1). The Scripture bears the record of Moses’ marriage with an Ethiopian woman. David’s first child is lost as a result of an adulterous affair and results in a marriage to Bathsheba, as she gives birth to the wisest King that has ever lived.

It is often said that sons, secretly or unconsciously look for the traits of their mothers, thus Solomon’s marriage to the Shulamite woman. Many theologians and scholars have asserted this is the queen of Queen of Sheba, because of Solomon’s known

\textsuperscript{34} Genovese, \textit{The Mind of the Master Class}, 409-411.

\textsuperscript{35} Sobel, \textit{The World they Made Together}, 21-85.

\textsuperscript{36} Harris, \textit{Africans and their History}, 79-110.
efforts to develop regional political alliances through marriages. In all of this there is historic intermingling of Africans and Hebrews. In this sense the evolutionary evolvement of Judeo-Christian heritage by Africans in America can easily or readily be seen. And as a result it is easy to see how the experience of Africans in America gives way to the focus of faith as a means to liberation, freedom and sanctification.

As an African-American church planter and pastor having participated in CRC’s movement within the American founding, and as an overseer, leader and participant within the movement I have developed a greater appreciation for the call of God. The call to community transformation through local church evangelism and discipleship as a means of extending the Kingdom of God is quite a daunting task. For the church planter it provides perspective and a centered understanding from which come a focus for where the Church is going and what leadership in the “Church” must do. However, before examining the future there must be a review of the historical significance of this evolutionary creation of the Body of Christ known as the “The Black Church.”

**Evolution, Development and Growth of the Black Church**

The Birth of the Black Church

A constant theme among all African-Americans has been the quest for freedom in American society. The enslavement of Africans not only destroyed the traditional African system of kinship and other forms of organized social life, but made the most elementary form of social life insecure and precarious on American soil. It destroyed the Black
family. Christianity provided a new basis of social cohesion in American society for Africans. In order to understand the cultural and social history of African-Americans one must study the influence of Christianity in creating solidarity among a people who lacked social cohesion and a structured social life in slavery and early post-slavery days. The Church became a means through which family life was preserved among African-Americans.

From the beginning of the importation of slaves into the colonies, Negroes received Christian baptism. The initial opposition to christening Africans gradually disappeared when the laws made it clear that slaves did not become free through the acceptance of the Christian faith and baptism. Although slaves were regularly baptized and taken into the Anglican Church during the seventeenth century, it was not until the opening of the eighteenth century that a systematic attempt was made on the part of the Church of England to Christianize Africans in America. The missionary effort was carried out by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which was chartered in England in 1701.

Proselytizing activities on the part of Methodists and Baptists, as well as the less extensive missionary work of Presbyterians, were a phase of the Great Awakening, which began in New England and spread west and south. When the Methodists and Baptists

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began revivals in the South, large numbers of Blacks were immediately attracted to this type of religious worship due to the similarities between Christianity and traditional African worship. During the closing years of the eighteenth century the religious revivals in Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee tended to reinforce the forms of conversion which characterized the cultural environment of Blacks in the south. As a result Black attitudes toward their way to live in America were highly Christianized and conservative.

The spiritual development of Christianity among Africans was ushered in as Richard Allen and Absalom Jones started the first formal Black churches under the banner of the Methodists. By 1816, Allen, Daniel Coker and Stephen Hall started the African Methodist Episcopal Church. It is important to note that Allen had the blessing of Bishop John Asbury, the White Bishop of the Methodist Church to establish the work.

The secessionist movement among Mainline denominations was in full bloom by the late-1700s and 1800s. This movement caught on in other denominations as well. These churches were started by free Blacks known as the “Free African Society,” made of mulatto, freed slaves and children born free. Allen, father of the African Methodist Episcopalian Church, echoed the sentiment by saying, “God will not fight our battles less we live by the Ten Commandments.” These were the developments of a strong moral climate in early African-American communities as a result of the messianic movements

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42 Ibid.
43 Billingsly, Black Families in White America, 147-149.
45 Ibid.
spread of the Gospel. As it relates to church planting, the movement must continue and be centered in focus among church planters in an African-American context. Communities hinge upon the plant pastor’s ability to remain true to the methodology seen throughout Scripture, as well as the Black Church’s historic roots and origins. This will be expounded upon further, but attention now focuses on the phases of Black Church development.

Larry Brayboy, author of *The Black Church in America*, makes the point that the Black Church evolved and developed in phases in the American context. Brayboy suggests the Black preacher under the leadership of God and the permission of his slave master is the initial catalyst for the birth of the Black Church in America. It is clear the idea of a Black Church as separate from the White Church is a phenomenon of racial separation. However, Brayboy says it was the visible manifestation of a divine response to the African Diaspora in America.

He refers to the first phase as the “Invisible or Informal Church” from the 1610s to the 1780s. The secret meetings held among the slaves in what Leronne Bennet calls “portable hush-houses” create the nexus of the movement. Bennett goes on to say: “Through Christianity the slave adapted the Christian religion to his spiritual psychological and social needs. Christianity and theological development within the Black experience was expressed through music and rhythm. The early Negro Spirituals is

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47 Brayboy, *The Black Church in America*, 185-205.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.
the foundational instrument for this adaptation process.” The invisible or informal church was the meeting and gathering place to discuss the needs and heal the wounds of the Black experience in America during the time. It appears as if much if not some of this is still needed today given the plight and turmoil of Black communities.

The second phase is referred to as the “Independent/Institutional Church,” from 1787 to the 1880s. It is the organized movement of Africans into denominations as a result of the reconstruction era. As previously mentioned Allen and Jones worked to organize Africans under the Methodist banner; these kinds of institutions provided social cohesiveness as a result of the disorganization of newly freed slaves after Emancipation. Before slavery ended, slave marriages were not recognized and their families were split up and sold on different plantations. These conditions created moral confusion.

The independent, institutional church provided moral standards for living, education and economic viability into the next generation. It was born and grew out of turmoil within White denominations over slavery, but also a growing opposition to joint worship services with Blacks. The rise of denominationalism in America responded to socio-economic change and upward mobility and the rising number of converted slaves through missionary efforts who needed church families. The growing difficulty was reaching illiterate masses of slaves with a Gospel message that could touch their

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51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
dehumanized natural and spiritual condition. Brayboy says, “The greatest distinguishing marker between phase one and phase two is the rise of education amongst blacks.” The rise of education brought with it the establishment of educational institutions as well as property and space to house a growing spiritual, social and economic class.

The third phase is referred to the “Modern Black Church,” which was roughly from the 1890s through the 1960s. The Modern Black Church is the church, which addressed international and domestic influences among Blacks. This is the most well-educated, wealthy and informed churches of its day. When Black parishioners had to go off to war black preachers like Martin Luther King and Fred Shuttlesworth, pastor of the 16th Ave Baptist Church in Birmingham Alabama, spoke against war and many of them were thrust into the international arena because of their stance on public issues. A major influencing factor of the Modern Black Church was the mobility of African-Americans for the first time as Blacks were migrating in massive numbers. The Black preacher was forced to deal with population shifts and this problem still impacts phases four and five today. E. Franklin Frazier informs the current research trend with a summary of the migratory threat of the Black Church in America. He writes, “The migration of Negroes to cities, especially northern cities created problems for Negro life similar to that created by the civil war and emancipation.”

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54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
The inability of the preacher to ground and develop the worldview of Black Christians to make sense and meaning of their experiences during the time crippled their spirituality. These moments are the beginnings of the downward spiral of spirituality impacting urban communities today. The time forced many to move into industrial complexes for the sake of economic stability. The world of education proved to be an essential tool for survival as it informed and improved the economic condition of Blacks during the modern church era. However, the religious education of and provided by the preacher enabled the growth of spirituality and success for daily living as well as growth in major denominational movements with the establishment of publishing houses, colleges and seminaries and committed leaders and workers. The Modern Black Church is characterized by facing a diversified multiplicity of issues. The development of new social groups and employment migration provided competing religious worldviews among African-Americans. The growth of the Black Church was impacted by sects such as Daddy Grace, Father Divine and The Nation of Islam. The rise of these groups challenged the modern church and enabled the fourth phase.

The Post-modern Black Church is from roughly the 1960s through the 1980s. The rise of this church opposed the Church’s orthodox Eurocentric theology. The Post-modern Black Church would become very closely identified with the emerging “Black Conscious Movement.” The new challenge came in the prominence of Black theologians like James Cone. The rise of Black liberation theology challenged the traditional Eurocentric method of interpretation of Scripture within the Black Church. The Post-
modern Black Church had to seriously evaluate its own message in light of other more potent messages emerging within the Black community.

Black theology was defining itself as a religion for people. This theology arose at a time when Blacks were attempting to make sense of the lynching’s, beatings and segregation in the south.\textsuperscript{57} Black theology was interpreted in the right here and the right now. An often, asked question of Black theology is whose interest does it serve man or Christ? This work asks the question why does serving and meeting the needs and interest of man in an African-American context have to be void of the interest of Christ? As previously mentioned, when the Kingdom is preached there is harmony with God and man because of its establishment on earth through the hearts of men and women. Jesus in Matthew 20:28 said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” The messianic movement of Christ was to give his life in service for people of the city. This is and was uniquely the Gospel message of the Kingdom. This is the call of the local church and will be needed in the rescuing of the Black community from the spiritual, social and economic ills that plaque them today.

Theologians must not allow forces and winds of doctrine to move African-American clergy away from the evaluation of spirituality that suggests there is no practical impact of how one lives. The saying, “Do not be so heavenly mind that you are of no earthly good,” though colloquial and catchy is unbiblical. The Bible says, “Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Col 3:2). Scripture seems to suggest heavenly mindedness always inspires doing more earthly good. As Christians the

\textsuperscript{57} Brayboy, \textit{The Black Church in America}, 185-205.
goal is to set one’s minds on things above and faithfully serve the Lord in the practical
day-to-day affairs of one’s lives as an individual and corporately as part of the Church.

The fifth and final phase according to Brayboy is the “Techno-modern Church,”
which started to emerge somewhere around the late-1980s and continues to this day,
steadily evolving in the new millennium. This church has arisen out of the success and
failures of the Civil Rights Movement. This stage is defined as Black religious life in
America since the passing of Civil Rights legislation. Brayboy clarifies that the events
and people of this stage have changed the Black Church in America in ways that have not
yet been fully understood. 58 The point of advancement and usage of technology has
equipped this church to wrestle with the issues of mobility and transient movement that
confounded the modern and post-modern church. As a result the Techno-modern Church
has the ability to connect with people all over one’s region; gone are the days of
neighborhood churches of the past. Today, people will drive thirty minutes from where
they live for Sunday services or stream online and watch services and participate in
online giving. The development of social media and cell phone technology enables text
blasting and social posting creating interactive mobile discipleship within this nuanced
age of the local church.

I disagree with Brayboy in the sense that the Techno-modern Church is the final
phase of development within the Church or Black Church today. There is a new phase of
development occurring that I call the Emergent-technocratic Church. This church
combines the usage of technology and has the bells, whistles and technological

58 Ibid.
advancements of the time coupled with the look, feel and presence of God in the Black Church experience. However, it is masked and marked with a lack of regenerate transformation in the life of the individual, both laity and leadership. It is important to understand this is not only a Black Church issue, but an issue of Modern American Christianity. It can be best characterized by the words of the Apostle Paul to his son in the faith, Timothy, who carried on Paul’s missionary work. In 1 Timothy 3:1-5 Paul says, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.”

Amidst the forward movement of technological advancements, the Church in America in general, and the Black Church specifically, in many ways are going backwards spiritually. It seems as if the Church and Black Church are losing the power of their influence and voice. It seems as if the American Church, and the Black Church in particular, are suffocating with the art of compromise for political and economic expedieny as well as social currency in having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof and as a result are losing their prophetic voice.

As it relates to church planting, movements, reformations, regions, communities and neighborhoods will suffer without a real prophetic redemptive voice to bring change to the spiritual, social and economic landscape of African-American communities. As traditional denominational membership continues to decline and independent
reformations and movements expand a synchronized strategic, yet organic plan is needed not only for plant pastors and African-American churches, but more importantly the congregants and communities they will serve. A look at the state of marriage in the American context reveals the slippery slope of cultural compromise in social-demography and pending collapse of the American social-economic order. It has often been said, “When America sneezes with economic and societal woes, Black America contracts the flu.” And nowhere is that more true than the bedrock institution of marriage in an African-American context.

The African-American Family and State of Marriage

The end of the first African-American president’s first term left the country divided with the re-election of the nation’s first African-American President. President Barack Obama won by a landslide with over 340 electoral votes needed to secure his bid for re-election, yet the popular votes within Ohio, Virginia and Florida held the race in contention with his Republican challenger Mitt Romney refusing to concede until late in the hours on the second Tuesday of November 2012. The election issues varied from looming unemployment, growing fiscal debt and economic growth to relief for the middle class with the changing cultural landscape of reproductive rights known as abortion on demand and same sex marriage as marital equality.

As the election ended and Obama began to govern, his perspective on several key policy issues as it relates to family gave pause to many Conservative Christian advocates.

President Obama garnered support from all over the political spectrum in all social and economic classes. However, there was no voting block more faithful to the election and re-election campaign than African-Americans and in particular “The Black Church.” In 2008, Obama made a campaign stop in June to speak to the largest ecumenical gathering of African-American preachers, on the campus of Hampton University at the Hampton’s Ministers conference. As the consciousness of the African-American community, its clergy, listened to Obama. The word spread quickly among all denominations a vote for Obama would give hope for the critical crises facing African-American communities.60

In spite of all of its economic, educational and societal gains the African-American community finds its self in somewhat of a crisis in regards to what was once a symbol of strength and a beacon of light within its community - the disintegration of the Black family.61 Scholars, philosophers, theologians, educators and legislatures alike are witnessing a present-day experience that the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery, Jim Crow could not do - see the destruction of the two-parent family in the African-American community.

According to the Center for Disease Control and the Department of Health and Human Services 70 percent of Black children today are born out of wedlock. As previously mentioned children born into a two-parent family are less likely to experience the societal ills that impact American’s social economy. The Department of Justice bears a record that confirms the so-called “Cradle to the Prison Pipeline.” Close to 60 percent

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experiencing incarceration or under the supervision of state or federal penal systems on parole are Black.\textsuperscript{62} The unborn in the African-American community is five times more likely to be aborted than other races within the US.\textsuperscript{63}

The election and reelection of Obama, if nothing else in the minds of many within the African-American community, symbolically represents hope and change in regards to the breakdown of family. His public demonstration of love, admiration and appreciation for his wife and connectedness with his children causes many to aspire to the two-parent Black family structure.\textsuperscript{64} In a world of character compromises and leadership crisis in marriage, it would appear our country and the Black community found a leader in which an educated, intellectual mind and tender heart could dwell within the same body.

In light of the critical social strata among African-Americans, it would seem the imagery of marriage as embodied by the Obamas would maintain the institutional, historical as well as cultural standard of marriage between a man and a woman. Yet, in May 2012 a sitting African-American president gave his personal affirmation for the idea of same-sex marriage. The media frenzy was almost instant as Evangelicals of other persuasions responded viscerally. However, the Black Church institutionally remained silent as many recognized the presidency was on the line and finally there arose a

\textsuperscript{62} Edelman-Wright, \textit{America’s Cradle to Prison Pipeline}.


\textsuperscript{64} National Center on African-American Marriage Parenting and Family, “The Marriage Index.”
carefully crafted, codified statement from Black intellectual, theological elites: “He is running for the President of the United States not the Pastor of the United States.”

As if the African-American community was not already fighting to maintain the existence of family, it seemed the taboo subject of homosexuality, which was always prevalent within the pews, choirs and musicianship laity, made its way to the public square and the Black Church was thrust into the center of a geopolitical moral debate. The outcome and impact of such would determine the presidency and cultural trends within the US. The after math of the re-election of Obama has brought with it the election of the first openly gay senator, a referendum vote for the passage of the public usage of marijuana by two states and the first state to pass same-sex marriage as close to the Mason Dixon line as Christian Conservatives in southern states can handle.

The issues of same-sex marriage and marital equality have even come closer to home here in Hampton Roads the American Founding. At the time of this writing a federal court judge has overruled the people of the Commonwealth of Virginia’s constitutional amendment and vote to clearly define marriage between and man and a woman. The economic and social mobility of African-Americans has always rested within the hands of the motif of the local church. The words of the black national anthem written by James Weldon Johnson echo this sentiment: “God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, Thou who has brought us thus far on the way; Thou who has by thy

66 Richard Wolf; “Ruling by U.S. District Judge Arenda Wright Allen Sets the Stage for a Possible Supreme Court showdown,” USA Today (February 13, 2014).
might, led us into the light, keep us forever in the path we pray. Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee, lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee.”67 As it relates to church planting and the planting pastor in an African-American context, in order for the Black Church to move forward in salvaging its family structures in the Black community in the areas of marriage, family and sexuality, the question is has the community become so drunk with the wine of the world that they have forgotten Him?

**The Meaning Of Marriage and the Gospel**

**Historical Perspectives and Universal Foundations**

The union between man and woman dates to the beginning of humanity’s existence on earth. Humans have always been on a search for a soul mate, companion, confidant and friend.68 For most of human history, marriage was not a romantic institution. It was more akin to a business deal between men, and the bride in question had very few rights or other options. Biblical history would have fathers searching for brides for their sons among their kindred. Abraham sent his servant on a search for Rebecca. Biblical history tailors the work ethic or paid price of a man in servitude to the father of the bride for his daughter’s hand in marriage. The story of Jacob working for Rachael’s hand in marriage instead received Leah and worked an additional seven years

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for Rachel. In human history love has never been out of the question for; most just did
not always believe that such a thing could be found within marital bonds.69

Marriage was a good way to ensure a family’s safety. By marrying a daughter off
to a fellow from a nearby tribe, a father expanded the circle of people who could be relied
upon in times of famine or violence.70 Marriage came to be respected as an institution, so
much so that people who did not marry were penalized outcasts.71 It was not until the
twelfth century that a priest would participate in a marriage ceremony, and it would take
another hundred years before the ceremony was validated within the courts.72

During the Protestant Reformation, men tried to loosen the Church’s grip
on marriage and put the institution in the hands of the government.73 However the Church
dug in its heels and claimed that true marriages required a priest and two witnesses. No
matter the religion, however, women were still treated as a piece of property possessed by
their husbands; any money in their purse or land their family held was considered to
belong to the man.74 Slowly, the idea of being in love with the person one married began
to take hold. It was not until 1870 and 1882 that England passed the Married Women’s
Property Act, which allowed women to keep money they earned and inherit property.75

68 Billingsley, Black Families in White America.
69 Molly Edmonds, “Betrothed through the Centuries: A Timeline of Marriage,” Journal for the
Study of Marriage (June 20, 2010).
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
However, through the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century it seemed that women were in roles of dependence. During the 1950s, married women became particularly obsessed with having the perfect home, a phenomenon referred to as “the cult of domesticity.”

Television programs of the era showed wives and mothers baking pies, vacuuming the home and putting dinner on the table promptly at 6 pm, all while wearing pearls and high heels. The rise of a second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s brought an end to the cult of domesticity; more women began to work outside of the home and the idea that married women were expected to be subservient to their husbands was considered preposterous. For the first time, women did not feel that they had to get married, and since then, people have been marrying later, if at all.

In the US, the government began to loosen some restrictions about who could get married; the 1967 Supreme Court Case of Loving v. Virginia, for example, eliminated laws prohibiting interracial marriage. It would seem as a result marriages of all kinds would increase, however, marriages have been decreasing among all populations. The decline of marriages among African-Americans will be discussed, shortly but consideration is given to the majority population. Marriages among Whites in 1970 were at 78.6 percent and have slid to 57.2 percent by 2008. A historical review of every major world super power on the earth throughout time attributes its’ breakdown and demise to the redefinition or moral compromise concerning sexuality and family. Egypt, Babylon-Persia, Greek and Roman societies began to crumble with the decimation of marriage. It appears as if the fabric of the US is in trouble, but a commitment and return to biblical

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74 Edmonds, “Betrothed through the Centuries.”
values can turn the nation back in God’s direction concerning covenant commitments between a man and a woman.

Theological and Biblical Foundations

Historically Evangelicals and Catholics have both agreed marriage is God’s idea. However, Pope Francis’ inclusionary views regarding homosexuality, gay marriage and relativistic interpretation of Scripture calls into question where the world is headed. From an evangelical perspective, it seems the *eschaton*, “End of Days,” is nearing. It has not only been the Catholic Church, but in-fighting among Episcopalians and Protestant movements, ensuing with splits among denominations concerning the acceptance of gay marriage. As denominations, movements and churches wrestle over the issue of gay marriage and sexuality the biblical narrative of humanity begins in the Garden of Eden as Scripture records the evolutionary process of the woman in creation with the first marriage ceremony performed by God. Genesis 2:22-24 records, “Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.’” The Apostle Paul echoes the sentiments of how two become one. Paul states in Ephesians 5:30-32, “For we are members of His body of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but concerns Christ and the Church. Based on these Scriptures, I believe marriage is God’s idea because of its biblical underpinnings of
the relationship between Christ and the Church. Paul refers to this as a mystery yet Scripture bears a record in the Genesis creation account of humankind as being created in the image of God, both male and female, exercising dominion over the created order.

I believe it is their unity that formulates the image of God. Humanity is created in his image and in his likeness. Marriage is about the reflection of this image and likeness of God. First John 5:7 says, “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” As the trinity maintains oneness of unity so it is with man and his wife - a unity that reflects the image of God. Cultural trends seek to redefine, re-codify and adjust the expression of relationships in human sexuality, essence and function. Culture has either lost or been unaware of the impact on gender role identity. The end result being family structure within the US in general and in African-American communities specifically has severely been impacted for the worse. However, in the African-American community as previously mentioned this was not always the case.

As Christianity enabled African-Americans to live through times of oppression it created solidarity among the most important relationships: marriage and family. Years of slavery, the Great Depression, Jim Crow and the Civil Rights era have not witnessed this decline in marriage and family. Black women between the ages of 20 and 50 have a 45 percent lesser chance of experiencing matrimony with their male counterparts. African-Americans represent nearly 14 percent of the US population; however, African-American

77 National Center on African-American, Marriage Parenting and Family, “The Marriage Index.”
78 Ibid.
males make up near 60 percent of those incarcerated.\textsuperscript{79} This is clearly disproportionate, reducing the number of marriageable men within the African-American community.

African-Americans experienced a two-parent family post-slavery and Jim Crow at a rate of nearly 80 percent. In 1970 the two-parent family marriage rate among African-Americans was 64 percent.\textsuperscript{80} In 1980, the rate was 54.2 percent.\textsuperscript{81} In 1990, the marriage rate among African Americans slid to 40.4 percent. In 2000 the rates were up slightly to 41.6 percent, but by 2008 just before the election of the nation’s first African-American president the numbers were down to 39.6 percent.\textsuperscript{82} One must ask what is happening to marriage in America and in particular the African-American community. The answer looms in the continual drift away from biblical orthodoxy.

As it relates to church planting in an African-American context the planting pastor cannot afford to launch without understanding the importance of sound biblical foundations in the area of marriage and family. The spiritual, socio-economic and even theological survival of the Black Church hinges on the planting pastor’s commitment to strengthening marriages in African-American communities. There are several focuses the African-American church planter must have as one seeks to establish ministry in an African-American context. Among the many is a call to establishing biblical orthodoxy and commitment to marriage. This is foundational if community the planted church

\textsuperscript{79} NAACP, “Criminal Justice Fact Sheet.”

\textsuperscript{80} National Center on African American, Marriage Parenting and Family, “The Marriage Index.”

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
serves is to become holistic. It requires strategic foresight and a planned strategy to address the needs of African-American communities.

Gone are the days of establishing a ministry because of a desire, call or a word, known as the “itch to preach.” Reformations and movements must be calculative, insightful and resourced to combat the spiritual, social and economic ills that plague communities. However, all too often the evolving the Black Church has experienced all too familiar problems of those who do not prepare for ministry expansion and transition. The sacrificing of the next generation to preserve the status quo of the present has seemed to be the order of the day. It becomes incumbent upon all who pioneer independent ministries or are instrumental in growing churches and ministries to note they will not always be the lead pastor. Instead, they must seek to aspire to what Acts 13:36 says about King David: “Now when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed.” Each leader must seek to serve the purposes of God in his generation. As it relates to church planting it means preparing a platform for the next generation to live out the purposes of God.

As a church planter in an African-American context I am well aware of the present state of marriage and family in the Black community. Black preachers have not necessarily been the model of fidelity, fathering and family. Religious reformations have been riddled with scandal and seizures of moral decay. On the Black college campus Black women out number Black men almost twelve-to-one; Black Church populations are no different.\textsuperscript{83} In Black Church congregations Black women make up nearly 70

\textsuperscript{83} Culpepper, \textit{The Black Girl Curse}. 

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percent of the population. They fund nearly 60 percent of the budget and are nearly 80 percent of the helps, auxiliary, administrative and outreach ministry staffing. In short, the Black Church experience in America would not exist without the Black woman. Yet, women are less than 0.5 percent of all senior pastors and 2 percent of associate pastors and ministers across denominational lines.

However, an interesting phenomenon has become commonplace among African-American clergy as pastors and church planters. As ministries are canvassed by would be church goers in an African-American context an unspoken as well as spoken inquiry among potential members is the role of the pastor’s wife before joining a local flock. Typically, the pastor’s wife is referred to and revered as first lady. This is not only an affectionate term of endearment reflective of governmental leadership in the US, but in Black Church circles it is a title that carries with it influence and authority. As of late the expectation in many Charismatic/Pentecostal or Full Gospel circles is the wife carrying the title of co-pastor or executive pastor as there is an unspoken expectation that she should carry just as much spiritual authority as her husband, who is in the biblical, spiritual and functional office of pastor. This dynamic is not necessarily as common in White Evangelical or Southern Baptist circles but is extremely prevalent among independent Black Pentecostal and Charismatic circles.

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86 Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 135.
As not only a third-generation minister, but a second-generation senior pastor, I have witnessed along the eastern seaboard well-to-do ministries serving the African-American and urban sectors of the Church with husband-wife partnership pastor and co-pastor led ministries. At the writing of this document my parents will celebrate fifty years of marriage and as their successor I watched them labor together for twenty years in the senior pastor’s chair. It appears many of the women of my mother’s generation and those within fifteen-to-twenty years of her age seem to adhere to the biblical text of submission, divine order and are given to hospitality first in their homes before moving into prominent positions of leadership in the local church.\textsuperscript{87} A well-known first lady, who functions as a co-pastor and national preacher, is a perfect example of this. Her husband serves as a board member with the Joint College of African-American Bishops. In a training session for wives as helpmates she responded to how she balanced marriage, family and ministry and when and how her husband allowed her space to lead. She responded, “I served fifteen years in our local church before I ever held a position, a title or said anything publicly from our ministry’s pulpit.”\textsuperscript{88}

Yet, an interesting thing has occurred amongst the next generations. There has been a demand among women to carry spiritual titles, licensure or outright beginning outreach ministries or full-blown churches if such demands are not met. Many of these women are wives and charge many of their husbands who delay, deny or encourage them as the women of old to operate in their homes first as being controlling and narcissistic.

\textsuperscript{87} Culpepper, \textit{The Black Girl Curse}.

\textsuperscript{88} Taken from a training session. Her name is intentionally withheld.
These women are well aware of the influence they yield, and many shift the balance of power of ministries just by their mere presence or lack thereof.

In my own experience, my humble, gentle, yet firm, stance on the supremacy and infallibility of the headship principle of Scripture and set “poimen” man principle was met with swift, obstinate and political maneuverability that ended with the dissolution of our twenty-year marriage. The former first lady was a licensed minister, ordained executive pastor and had shared the podium and post with me for the tenure and existence of Calvary Revival on the peninsula. However, when it came time to circle the wagons for an outreach ministry she began without my knowledge, and the response was: “This is something God has called me to do and is not under your purview.”

Clerics and spiritual leaders certainly do not have the right or authority to tell an individual what they are or are not hearing from God. However, they do have biblical authority and it is imperative to communicate effectively how God communicates his ways, his order and how he calls an individual given the state of marriage and cultural climate of ministry. As I experienced this, a mentee ten years my junior in age, length of marriage and ministry was having the same experience. His wife charged him with being a narcissist at the delay of her ordination and left his church and has not returned. A remedy applied by the governing council found me removed from the pulpit at Calvary on the Peninsula for a season to work on the dynamics of our marriage in an attempt to make adjustments and realignment of ministry function. Our time away from ministry service was met with counsel to redefine the role of husbandry as an egalitarian approach as well as a countdown system to resolve conflict, disagreements and quell anger. As
much as I agree with the need for counseling and therapy, today’s culture seeks to dilute the inerrancy of Scripture where marriage and family are concerned, and for the first time in a century of Christianity it appears as if clerics are afraid to uphold biblical truth because of the fallout. Leaders are afraid of declining budgets, turnover among ministry volunteers and the public perception of being archaic and uncompromising in a reality TV, politically-motivated environment that shames those who adhere to Bible truth as potentially being on the wrong side of history.

As it relates to church planting in an African-American context the ability to become relatable, relevant and yet upholding the standards of righteousness without compromise is what leads to becoming John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul and Jesus standard bearers of today. This leads to an exploration in Chapter 3 of how independent churches and reformations have been established in recent years. It must be asked who prepared these men and women, how they were resourced and who or what is responsible for the current climate of religion in an African-American context. The answer to these questions and more will help one discover there are several nuances to church planting in an African-American context that must be considered before a launch begins. The ability to navigate through them will determine not only the success and failure of the planted church but its ability to extend the Kingdom in community.
CHAPTER 3
NEW MINISTRY INTIATIVE: CHURCH PLANTING - A CRC EXPERIENCE

Planting Perspectives: A New Phenomenon

As previously mentioned, the movement of Calvary Revival Church began as a vision of McBath in 1990 with twenty-one members. As a movement, Calvary-Norfolk planted four churches within three years: CRC-Chesapeake in 2005, CRC-Suffolk in 2006, and CRC-Peninsula and Richmond in 2008. The process began as an idea to relieve the pressure of McBath’s preaching 3 times each Sunday morning and the pastoral team’s frantic schedule of cell-group management throughout the week. This yielded an important realization: planting begins with vision and a burden, and is not a means to streamline operations. Unlike the market place, church planting is an organic process. The local church is alive and wholly depends upon the main variable - people.

The formula of people, image and budget are all congruent tangibles and intangibles to the ongoing growth of the organic movement of a local church.¹ As any business venture would have a solid business plan and strategic forecasting done to predict profits and losses for solvency, in the same manner a church plant must be clear

¹ Davis, *The Black Church Relevant or Irrelevant in the 21st Century*, 45-58.
about its potential for growth and be intentional about its process for how it will grow.\textsuperscript{2} The church-planting movement of Calvary Revival has done some things, well but also has room for much improvement.

**Pregnant with Possibility**

Church-planting movements begin where all movements start, with what Steve Addison has called “White Hot Faith.”\textsuperscript{3} Founders come to a deeply felt, intensely expressed conviction about big ideas that are compellingly shared with others. As the genesis of Calvary-Peninsula, the vision and mission closely reflected the vision and mission of Calvary-Norfolk. Calvary-Norfolk’s vision as given by McBath is: “Building and overcoming church out of broken lives through the power of Jesus Christ.” Calvary-Peninsula’s vision was, “Empowering broken people to walk in dominion through the power of Jesus Christ.” The consistency of ministry to mending the hurting and broken through the power of Jesus Christ became a hallmark of Calvary Revival Churches and synonymous and reflective of its brand of ministry. However, distinctiveness of expression as it related to gathering and garnering people was left in the hands of all plant pastors to build momentum through mobilization and effective ministry.

The planter being “pregnant with a word of dominion” stemmed from the biblical text found in Acts 3 of Peter and John’s interchange with the lame man asking for alms outside temple at the city gates. This man’s miracle healing came as a result of Peter and


\textsuperscript{3} Addison, *Movements that Change the World*. 

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John’s encounter with him that was reflective of their encounter with Jesus. The white-hot faith developed from an encounter with Jesus becomes a planter’s sustainment, moving her from one destination to the next. Peter and John had walked with Jesus for a three-and-a-half-year period and observed his ministry, experienced his teaching, participated in his miracles and had been transformed by his truth.

Planners turned pastors must walk through this process of sustaining combustion.\(^4\) As a planter turned pastor, my spiritual formation has been met with processing difficulty and disappointment, as well as an opening of my eyes from the disillusionment of launching ministry. However, as these first-century apostles experienced, I have experienced the same combustion that Peter not only experienced at Pentecost, but kept him through the persecution of imprisonment and flogging, as well as Paul through shipwreck, snake bites, mocking and scourging. The terrain of twenty-first-century ministry today is becoming more reflective of first-century ministry.\(^5\) Pluralistic worldviews and eroding morality just as in times past seem to be the order of the day. As the Jerusalem Council met to discuss the conflicts of missional ministry among Jews and Gentiles, the planters of Calvary convened in 2005 to discuss missional ministry launches among the respective cities of Hampton Roads and beyond.

\textbf{This Land is My Land}

\(^4\) Alan Hirsh, \textit{The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church} (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 94.

Church planting in an African-American context is still an interesting and new idea. The Black Church’s roots and beginnings were birthed through the flame of affliction to make sense of a discriminatory reality. Africans found solace in the worship and call of the Triune God to liberation and freedom, as did many of the Christian movements among Blacks in America who began in search of a new expressive reality and Christian expression in worship of this Triune God. It is well-noted after the experience of the Azusa Street Pentecostal explosion of 1906, a movement sparked by Charles Parham, influential leader and founder of Assemblies of God, William Seymour and Charles Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ spilt over, by the preaching of the Gospel in areas that had not yet been exposed to Pentecost.

Among the most notable reformation movements of today, Bishop Paul Sylvester Morton, pastor and founder of Changing a Generation Church with campuses in Atlanta and New Orleans, began a movement among Progressive Baptists who embraced the infilling of the Spirit and the phenomena of tongues. The movement began in 1990, as hundreds of churches of Baptist clergymen and women left the national Black Baptist church movement along with their churches to join this modern-day movement of Pentecost. Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship spans across the globe and the continental US. However, in 2012 Morton announced his retirement and began succession planning for the next generation of Full Gospel Baptist Church fellowship.

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6 Brayboy, *The Black Church in America*, 185-205.


8 Dash, *The Shape of Zion*, 85-125.

9 Brayboy, *The Black Church in America*, 185-205.
leadership. To Morton’s credit he began succession planning while he was still able to lead and carry out the vision of ministering, leading and serving the reformation. The two-year process finally ended with three candidates and Morton allowed the board of bishops and delegates to choose. The hotly contested selection process caused much strife among the movement of Full Gospel with many delegates threatening to leave the fellowship. Finally, on the night of an announcement of the new leader two of the three presiding bishops resigned their post of leadership and Bishop Joseph Walker of Zion Baptist Church in Nashville was announced as the new leader. The next year, Neil Ellis, 2nd Presiding Bishop of Full Gospel began and founded as the presiding bishop of Global United Fellowship, a movement of clergymen and delegates that left Full Gospel and developed another stream of Pentecostalism to house Black Church reformations.

As new movements and reformations of Black Pentecostalism begin most are found to be members of the Joint College of African-American Pentecostal Bishops. A conclave of clerics convened to provide training, polity and order in the episcopacy among Black, independent Charismatic and Pentecostal churches. As these movements begin a clear, consistent and constant familiar theme is being found, coined in the phraseology of, “This land is our land you have to find your own.”

American territorial expansion begins with an exodus from Great Britain. The Protestant Reformation begins with 95 Theses of Martin Luther nailed to the door of Wittenburg Castle Church of “the Just shall live by faith.” Just as the Civil War of the North and South cost many lives for economic liberty, freedom of resistant succession, and southern states declaring their right to own African slaves as private property, so
many movements of churches, ministries and reformations begin with the right to their bent to carry the message of the Gospel as they see it, rather than the need for a ministry service in a local context. As it relates to church planting in an African-American context intentionality is one of the missing ingredients. There are many who begin ministries because of a split, disagreement, disgruntlement or because the planter and launcher believe their season and time is up in the headquarters church.\textsuperscript{10} The movement of Calvary Revival Churches was no different. Although the beginnings of these churches in principle began with the idea of unity in branding, vision casting expression and ministry mobilization, the resourcing, staffing, organizing and funding of these ministries is likened to a parent sending children into the world ill-equipped and prepared to navigate the terrain of changing times of ministry praxis.

\textbf{Transformation of the Village and Chief}

Calvary Revival began in 1990, after McBath remained a year after expressing his dream to Hilton. Hilton asked McBath to remain with him that year and then go and launch the ministry in Hampton Roads, which landed in Norfolk. The dynamics of ministry in many African-American contexts are reflective of the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise the children.” The deterioration and redefinition of family in an African-American context has brought about the necessity for aid from outside resources for social, economic, educational and financial stability. Church planting is and has been no different. Calvary began with an idea of planting four additional churches stretching from Richmond to Hampton Roads. As mentioned to date only two logo branded

\textsuperscript{10} Reggie McNeal, \textit{Missional Renaissance} (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 200-224.
churches remain. Much of this can be attributed to the lack of intentional, planned, prepared resourced strategy and internal motivations for planting these established works. Although the idea of church planting was good, intentional planning, commitment to the cost and targeted staffing infusion were requirements the Calvary movement seemed uninterested in or uncommitted to making.

An example of the commitment to intentionally as it relates to church planting in the US is the example of Robert Morris, senior pastor and founder of Gateway Church in Dallas. Morris, began what many would consider another satellite church in a completely different state. He sent an assistant pastor, Preston Morrison to Tucson, Arizona to scout the land just as Moses sent Joshua into the land of Canaan. Morrison moved to the city and was resourced by Morris for an entire two years in terms of his salary. The second year Morrison had a team of six-to-ten people who were also covered by the hub church in Dallas in terms of their salaries. They also covered administrative support and helped with the ministries of marketing, assimilation, discipleship and preaching.

Morris’ commitment to Morrison yielded three hundred people going into launch Sunday the third year. It has been ten years now and the Arizona church is already planning to reduplicate itself in another state. The commitment of human, financial and spiritual resources has yielded great returns. Gateway has also made the same investment locally within the same region, which would be similar to Calvary’s attempts locally in Hampton Roads amongst its seven cities. Tim Ross, Gateway campus pastor came to Gateway Church after serving as the young adult pastor with Potter’s House led by Bishop T.D. Jakes. Ross took time to decompress the DNA of the Potter’s House while
assimilating into the culture of Gateway Church. The process took five years with Ross becoming the Gateway south campus pastor. The exact same process with Morrison ensued with Ross. Yet, this time, Morris was establishing a completely different branded church. The Embassy Church did not carry the Gateway name but carried the Gateway culture and DNA. As mentioned, church planting is about self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating, and “self-theologizing.”¹¹ Such a church will inevitably reproduce itself into other churches that reproduce themselves for the same reasons.

Ross’s vision is to spread into the Midwest from Irving, Texas a neighboring city. Morris financially supported Ross for two years. He was given three elders, an administrative, teaching and pastoral care leader. Ross, at the writing of this document is in year six, having purchased a facility with two services of 500 people each. The key is resourcing and intentionality in spiritual, financial and human resourcing.¹²

The Theological Perspectives of a Biblical Mandate

Launching and Sending: Transformation of the Village Chief

As a church planter, senior pastor and former episcopal leader within Calvary’s movement, I have come to understand the tremendous burdens and labor of ministry. There are always needs to be met within the contextual climate of ministry. Today, particularly in the ever-growing hostile climate of the West, it is a disservice not to talk about commitment of resources, both internally, and to those a church would serve. In

¹¹ Bosch, Transforming Mission, 451.

¹² McGavran, Church Growth, 100.
African royal dynasties, village chiefs inherit the right to rule by way of their bloodlines. However, the right to rule must be earned through rituals that measure performance and competencies.\(^\text{13}\) This can be seen in the ascension of King David to the throne in Israel. David was anointed king, but his right to rule and the throne could only come through demonstration of competencies in conquering the lion, bear and Goliath. David spent much of his life running from Saul, waiting for Saul to die before he ascended the throne. As it relates to church planting, many churches and reformational movements begin in the same manner. Young men often lose their youth, potential and ability to establish legacies because of barbaric tendencies by sages who are unwilling to create opportunities and the resources that opportunities create. This in no way suggests or implies that the mastery of competencies of leadership should not be tried and tested, however there is a balance when it comes to intentional resourcing to ensure sustainability and successive generational transfer.

There are three kinds of resourcing, which are in concert with each other: spiritual, human and financial. All three are needed for the growth and development of the organism within the organization. The context of church planting in an African-American context has a history of over spiritualizing the influence of the sovereign.\(^\text{14}\) Whenever a young man would come to the old preacher and say, “I believe God is calling me,” the response was often, “Well if you believe God is calling you go find out just

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\(^{13}\) Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, 36-145. 

\(^{14}\) Dash, *The Shape of Zion*, 85-125.
don’t do it within 20 miles of here.”¹⁵ This saying will be unpacked later in this chapter. The four CRCs were all within a 30-mile radius of each other. This is one of the rationales given for why the Suffolk Church is now known as Covenant Community Church to maintain its distinctiveness to reaching the lost in its local context. However, the point is resources are needed to grow any organization.

As a mother gives birth to a newborn, she is there to help sustain for the first few days, months and even years until the child is able to clothe, feed, and even clean itself. Yet, this new parent available and able to meet the nuances of needs as they arise. As it relates to church planting, the role of the sending church is quite different. It acts as a hosting mother, while the “Spirit of the Living God” must be in the role of father. In some sense there is duality for the sending church, fathering and mothering is needed to help guide the newly-planted church through its first few weeks, months and years to ensure growth. However, in so doing, resourcing financial and human needs in an organized, systematic, strategically-planned way that hinders the spiritual, human and financial impact of the new ministry in its locality. The inability to meet the temporal and felt needs of people directly in a local context impacts the perception of the ministry and its visibility and viability in its community.¹⁶

As a planter and now pastor there is a social dynamic in all churches regardless of ethnicity. The ability of the church to succeed past its tipping point to self-sufficiency and possible reduplication and sending itself is directly related to resourcing both human and financial resourcing. Chapter 4 will discuss the tipping-point concept as it relates to

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church planting. There are several church planting organizations and movements who agree. Most notable is the Association of Related Churches (ARC). ARC holds an annual conference every year with some of the best and brightest minds as well as experienced practitioners in church planting. Their influence is well seen throughout denominations, reformations and independent churches. They have created a scale based upon size, income and influence. Their tier scale ranges from 250-member churches to 5,000-member churches. Their counsel is larger churches should not even begin the process to send unless they are able to seed over a two-year span at of least 250,000.¹⁷

ARC makes the case that churches under 200 members are not in a position to plan to plant even if the ministry of 200 is financially stable and contains benevolent members.¹⁸ The argument is that human resources are needed not only as a financial resource but for staffing, serving and supporting the auxiliary needs of ministry. Although CRC-Norfolk classifies as a mega church by ARC’s standards, the process of planting as a priority will have to convene with lessons learned. Unintentional migrating strategies create crisis in community by unintended consequences in this process called church planting.

The village chief who rules well is the one who masters competencies and has proven success in the heat of battle, earning the right to sit on the throne. The village chief who establishes legacy prepares, trains, equips and resources the village for sustainability well after he is gone. This happens in many African societies when there is

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¹⁷ Association of Related Churches, Planting A 21st Century Church (Birmingham, AL: ARC, 2000), 85.

¹⁸ Ibid.
intentionality. The chief selects a successor or successors and begins the process of preparing, pruning and prodding the next leader toward leadership. As it relates to church planting in an African-American context, many who would be considered chiefs have been plagued with the sickness of their own invincibility. They have likened themselves to demigods who believe they may rule well into era of immortality. This happens because of a quest of mastery without aid and or assistance. It likens itself to the Israelites making bricks without straw, yet miraculously through sweat, labor and enactments of the divine, bricks are made, walls are fortified, ministries are built and cities are served. In these moments chiefs often sicken themselves in an attempt to create a matrix of competency development by creating opportunities without giving tools or equipment to develop. The case of Calvary Revival as it relates to church planting was no different.

The idea of support from the hub church was a public announcement of a church launch date along with the plant pastor and wife and migrating human resources to churches within a locale by virtue of choice, not by mandate. There were no intentional administrative staff support, sending of proven capable leaders or committed budget formulation. The Richmond church-plant pastor received six-months salary support and minimal personnel. The Suffolk church plant pastor received a year’s full salary, public announcement, in which a few of the church’s well-to-do membership personnel left with him. Today, the ministry is well sustained under a different name. The Peninsula church did well through sustainability because of its already in place resources of building, plant-pastor leadership and the assumption of leadership transition. The Peninsula church, like the Chesapeake was a transitional church-plant name change.
Pre-existing churches with facilities simply change their names and become inundated with Calvary ministry culture led by the pastors themselves. The plant pastor of the Peninsula church was asked to wait a year and to keep the Peninsula church silent during a renovation phase of new construction of the edifice hub church. This was necessary because of the cost of doing business in a ministry context. Much is dependent on the volunteer support for donors. As McBath was asked to wait a year by Hilton, much the same could be attributed to request McBath’s request of me.

In an Elder’s meeting a governing council member asked me, “If we are not able to support this church financially will you still plant it?” I responded, “Yes. Absolutely we believe in the call to empower people to walk in dominion through the power of Jesus Christ.” The Peninsula church saw over 700 people attend on launch day and only thirty remain after the official name change from Zoe Community Church to Calvary Revival Church-Peninsula. Its growth was due to “white hot faith” and spontaneous combustion. However, the Peninsula church transition to Walk of Dominion, is yet another example of when reconciled resources are not met with intentional strategies, coupled with missional focus and the biblical mandate of returning to biblical orthodoxy. Chaos, confusion and “this land is my land, you have to find your own ministry” ensued.

Church planting in an African-American context is rugged terrain as the culture of the West has become riddled with evading morality, convoluted preaching and hostile political culture to the tenants of faith in the declaration of absolute truth. It would be one thing if this was the world, but this has become the atmosphere of the Church and many
of its planters and sending leaders. When biblical truth is nuanced by village chiefs, transformation and return to biblical mandates become the order of the day.

Launching and Sending: The Jesus Method

The mission of the Gospel is centered in the Great Commission of Christ to his disciples. The focused ministry of Jesus was rooted in launching and sending his disciples to declare, deliver and destroy the works of the devil. A critical component of the ministry of Jesus was the preparation of his disciples for deployment. As it relates to church planting in an African-American context, reformations, movements and local churches are often haphazardly established through trial and error without intentional purposeful strategies. The methodology of Christ was intentional. The Bible is clear in the selection process of Jesus of those who would carry his message and ministry.

Mark 2:14 says, “As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him.”19 The word “saw” is the Greek work eido, meaning perceive, discern and to discover. Jesus was intentional in his selection through discernment and discovery of Levi. Mark 3:13 says, “And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him.” Jesus was intentional about those who would and could be his disciples. He was intentional about selecting them for training and development. Luke 9:1 says, “Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases.”

19 For the remainder of this work, unless otherwise noted, biblical citation will be from Spiros Zodhiates, Hebrew-Greek Word Study Bible KJV (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2008).
The Jesus methodology of church planting is clear. Jesus discerned, developed and deployed those he wanted to carry the Gospel mission, message and ministry. The training process of his disciples lasted over a three-and-a-half year period of development and training with intentionality before dispatching them into the world for evangelism and discipleship. Matthew 28:19-20 says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” The methodology of Jesus included discernment, development, deployment and a method to double check on his disciples’ success. Matthew 28:19-20, ends, “And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” In many instances in church planting in an African-American context, sons and daughters who establish ministries are not only not resourced with intentional strategies of human, financial, organizational and spiritual aids but they are often neglected in terms of evaluative methodologies that could curb detours that cause calamities and destructive trajectories.\(^{20}\)

**Explosion: Pentecost to Antioch**

The intentional methodology of Jesus to discern, develop and deploy his disciples transitioned them from being carriers of the message to establishmentarians of a movement. The local church is spearhead by “white hot faith” and movement dynamics. Local ministries should have the potential to reproduce themselves in the establishment of other ministries when churches are healthy and have been resourced. Jesus, in his final

words to his disciples who would be come Apostles, reminded them to gather together to wait for the promise of the father. Acts 1:4 says, “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘You have heard from Me.” This waiting coupled with discernment, development and deployment produced a sustainable explosion that continues to this day. The power of the explosive “dunamis” in Jerusalem spread into Antioch as a fulfillment of Jesus’ final command in Acts 1:8, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The Church in Jerusalem with “white hot faith” and a self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating and “self-theologizing” movement of followers of the way began to spread its establishment into other cities and regions, consistent with the vision, mission and values given by Jesus its visionary. Acts 11:22 declares: “Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.” The power of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ began spreading through the world among gentiles, and as the Church in Jerusalem was established they set out to establish the church in Antioch. Jesus, in Luke 4:43 said, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.”

Acts 2:25-26 says, “Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” The strategic, intentional, resourced, discerned, developed
and deploying church of Jerusalem sent emissaries to establish churches in spreading the Gospel. However, the establishment of churches in the New Testament did not begin with the Apostles who were once disciples of Jesus. It began with an age-old leadership paradigm of the Old Testament: transference of the spirit of the leader from father to son who would eventually become a sending father himself. As it relates to church planting in an African-American context there must be a return to biblical models of leadership in the establishment of the spirit of the father-to-son-to-father principles.

Leadership Paradigms: Moses to Joshua

The Black Church experience of church planting as beforementioned has been wrapped in the colloquial phrase of “This land is my land you have to find your own.” One of the vestiges left over from slavery still impacting African-Americans today is a “crabs in a barrel” mentality, an abusive theology of barren naked castration of sons and daughters of ministry who become incapable of reproducing, because they have never been fathered and mentored.21 There are many lost in moments and times of transition because of the lack of intentional strategies, resource development and deployment.

However, the biblical model of church planting in terms of leadership paradigms is clearly a transference of spirit and leadership development, as well as a demonstration to lead in the mastery of competency, while the present leader still has the ability to transition the ministry and live long enough to properly continue the mentorship and development of one’s prodigy. The greatest example in modern times to date in terms of the reformational transition would be Bishop Morton. Morton, while still in the place of

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21 Dash, The Shape of Zion, 85-125.
competence, began the process of choosing the next leader and transitioned Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship into the hands of a man who was forty-seven years old as he approached 70. Morton has been able to ensure successive, reformational generational leadership for at least the next twenty-five years, as Bishop Joseph Walker will have the opportunity to select from among his own sons who the next leader will be for Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship. Morton is available to Walker for mentorship, guidance and leadership as he leads in front of him and in front of the people.

This leadership paradigm of successive generational planning and preparation is intentional and strategic. The biblical pattern can be found in Scripture, with the transference of leadership between Moses and Joshua while Israel was still in the wilderness and Moses was still the presiding leader. Numbers 27:18-23 says,

And the Lord said to Moses: “Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the LORD for him by the judgment of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him—all the congregation.” So Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. And he laid his hands on him and inaugurated him, just as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

This text is a clear example of transformational transference of leadership. The Lord gives command to Moses to lay hands upon Joshua, set him aside for organizational leadership and to give Joshua a measure of his authority the ability to lead before the congregation of followers. This enables the transfer of leadership of Joshua to be stable, intentional, resourced and strategic. There is no jealousy between Moses and Joshua.
There are no crucible moments of abusive spirituality measurements by Moses to Joshua to see if Joshua is mature, called to lead or loves God’s people or his own personal family. The litmus test is in the text. The Lord signifies that His Spirit is in Joshua. And the Lord himself instructs Moses to set him before the priest before the judgment of Urim. This process is objective, not subjective. Urim and Thummin judgment were jewels upon the breastplate of Aaron as priest. The Jewls would light whenever Aaron moved closer to the fire of God upon the altar. The radiant light of the jewels reminded the priest that the sacrifice was pleasing before the Lord. If the transference of Joshua’s call before the Lord would not light before Aaron then one would know Joshua had not been called, chosen, prepared and set aside by the Lord.

Furthermore, Joshua had already proven tests of the heart, loyalty and endurance. He remained on the mountain and was not seen participating in the development of the golden calf constructed by Aaron. He remained with Moses through Korah’s rebellion and did not participate in the murmurings, griping and complaints against Moses’ leadership. As it relates to church planting and the establishment of new leaders, often times “spiritual fathers” require spiritually-abusive processes of spiritual legalism as measuring rods that they themselves have not walked through, creating angst among their sons who then in return become spiritually-abusive fathers.22 The Apostle Paul writes that there may be ten thousand instructors in Christ, but not many fathers. A true mark of fatherhood is a leadership paradigm is what I call preparing and passing.

22 Leander, Building the Black Church.
Leadership Paradigm: Elijah to Elisha

John Maxwell, noted leadership development coach, has coined a phrase key to successive generational leadership. He has often been quoted saying, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.”23 As it relates to church planting in an African-American context the establishment of ministry extensions, satellite campuses and son-and-daughter ministries all depend upon the leadership paradigm of the sending leader. Business organizations that have progressed well through leadership transition seasons are well noted for their ability to maintain or gain market share despite differences in leadership style from one leader to the next.24 A key to this strategy has been innovation, technology and prepared next generational leadership. The decline of denominational movements is creating a quandary for Christendom in the African-American context.

Preparing the next generation requires a willingness to pass the mantel. In many African-American contexts, those who adorn pulpits and leadership posts have forgotten about their mortality.25 Everyone who holds a post of leadership in an organizational context have a season in which they are called to lead. Seasons and times will eventually expire. The question becomes will she have been able to live out the purposes of God to her generation as did King David. The passing of one’s mantel requires mentoring commitment of preparation over time. Scripture gives a clear example one can apply to

23 This quote is attributed to John Maxwell, seemingly coming from his widely streamed lectures of the late-1990s.
25 Leander, Building the Black Church.
the context of church planting of how one is prepared for the process to receive a mantel of leadership that its to be passed from one generation to the next.

The prophet mentoring relationship between Elijah and his mentee Elisha is a great example of leadership transition and the passing of the leadership mantel. The nation of Israel had always been a people whose leader was chosen by Yahweh through the current leader. The transition from Moses to Joshua was a hand-picked selection by the Lord himself. Israel’s first two kings were also hand-picked between the mentee and the mentor. Leadership transition is not always easy. The nature of the relationship between Saul and David was toxic as Saul maintained the position of leadership but lost the power of leadership influence. The nature of leadership transition between Elijah and Elisha is one of Scripture’s first examples where the current leader literally passes the mantel of leadership to the next generation. Second Kings 2 says,

> Then the Lord said to him: “Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him. So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him.

The instructions of the Lord were clear to Elijah - he was to anoint the next generation of leaders. However, in the case of Elisha he was to anoint him to lead in his place. Elijah was the major prophet of the day and while still leading was instructed to anoint his replacement. All too often in an African-American context in empowering next generation leaders to lead and carry the mantels of leadership, the current generation of
leaders withhold the passing of the mantle. As it relates to church planting the mantel can be seen as intentional, strategic, resourced human and financial assets.

The mantel in Israelite culture during this day was not only symbolic of being chosen and set aside to lead but the empowerment of authority to lead. All too often what becomes of concern from one generation to the next is the release of authority from one generation to the next generation. Authority is the demonstration of power to produce results as one leads. As it relates to church planting it is the ability to draw, mobilize, organize and create momentum of continued growth both numerically and spiritually. However, in the case of Elijah to Elisha an excellent example is seen in preparation, passing and possession of the mantle of leadership authority to the next generation.

The Bible records the transition of Elijah to Elisha as Elisha stayed and remained in the presence of his mentor through tough seasons of transition. Elisha followed his leader through Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho. Each of these places represented memorials of transition in Israel’s history. Gilgal represented the place of circumcision, a cutting away of the flesh; Bethel represented the place of the house of bread, the place of Israel’s spiritual sustenance; and Jericho represented the place of Israel’s crossing from the old regime of leadership to the new regime of leadership. Next-generational leaders, if they are to receive mantels of leadership, must remember spiritual leadership requires spirituality; there is no place for the flesh. Next-generational leaders must be reminded that the house of bread is the place of spiritual sustenance and that leadership is built upon places of spiritual crossings. The old landmarks are guidesposts to help leaders
maintain the course. Each of these moments represent places of testing for Elisha if he has the capacity to carry the mantel of leadership.

Finally, the determination is made for Elisha’s qualification as he is asked by his leader what may he do for him and the point of positional transfer. Elisha asks for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. He asked for double the ability of Elijah to perform. A chariot of fire separated the two of them at Elijah’s departure and Elisha received Elijah’s mantel, seal of authority, to lead. However, at the departure the wording describes the relationship between Elisha and Elijah. Second Kings 2:11-12 says, “Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, ‘My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!’ So, he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces.”

As Elijah is taken from Elisha he referred to him as his father and not his mentor. In today’s climate and culture of Christendom there are many who lay claim to be spiritual fathers. Yet, Paul was very clear as he stated in 1 Corinthians 4:15, “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” As it relates to church planting, fathers prepare next-generational leaders to lead as well as provide for the next generation to lead passing the mantel of leadership for next generational leaders to lead.26

26 Fluker, The Stones that the Builder Rejected, 42.
In the case of Calvary’s reformational movement in church planting, formalized training and leadership development became a work in progress. Plant pastors were not necessarily prepared for the rigors of administrative, marketing, assimilation, acquisition and maintenance, fundraising, auxiliary ministry development and pastoral care. As it relates to leadership development in regards to church planting, Elisha assumed the role of leadership as a church planter would assume the role of leadership in the continuation of establishing a new ministry. In the same way Elisha was with Elijah, Calvary’s pastors were with McBath. Public anointings and ordinations could be viewed as announcements. The roles of staffing are seen as the moments of Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho. However, the provision of empowered enablement of Elijah’s ability would be seen in the splitting of the waters, when Elisha asked “where is the God of Elijah?”

Money helps to create momentum in the world of church planting. In Calvary’s reformation members were able to migrate from the international headquarters church, established by McBath, to the surrounding area local churches established by plant pastors. The governing council board believed as members from the headquarters church attended, joined and or gave this would be counted as seeding the works. Launch day offerings were raised and salary support was given for one pastor who had worked seventeen years for the ministry for one year and six months for another pastor who was fulltime fifteen years. A total of eighteen months’ support was given by the general council to support local churches that carried brand names from CRC-Norfolk.

The Calvary Revival-Peninsula church plant to Richmond was seeded by Norfolk, but training, development and preparation of the plant pastor was done by the Peninsula
pastor. As mentioned, fathers prepare, provide and pass on the mantels of leadership. As the Peninsula church was preparing for launch, a governing council meeting was held with the plant pastor. It was perceived the Peninsula and Richmond churches were asked to delay potential launch due to the impact of migrating members on the Norfolk church (headquarters) during the renovation and construction process of its new facilities.

As in most non-profit organizations donors share and carry the bulk of the income stream. As the governing council convened, I was questioned concerning the financial support given to its launching. A member of the council asked, “If we are not able to financially support this launch effort will you still plant the church?” I answered, “We believe the Lord has called us to empower people to walk in dominion through the power of Jesus Christ.” As a result of the response another council member responded saying, “It is evident the brethren believe the Lord has called and is sending them, however, let this be the last time we send children out without any clothes on.” The Peninsula church’s ability to transition is in large part due to the sovereign will of God in the form of its assets both human and financial. The few Norfolk members who migrated were on the fringe and not critically involved in the development and vibrancy of the Norfolk church. They were not in leadership development tracks or those who had been engaged in carrying the load of ministry. The bulk of the few within the fifteen or so were novice at best. And further their migration was not an intentional sending and many have dispersed into other congregations on the Peninsula due to the aforementioned marital turbulence without biblical aid from the Norfolk church. The words of the Apostle Paul indeed ring true, “We have ten thousand instructors in Christ but not many fathers!”
Leadership Paradigms: Paul to Timothy

The New Testament Church finds is discipleship-making process in the model of Jesus with his own disciples who became the first apostles of the early church. The methodology of Jesus discerned, developed and deployed those who would carry the Gospel. The life of Saul who became, the apostle Paul, one of the greatest disciples, who wrote a third of the New Testament is an example of preparing with a future prospective. He began with the end in mind. Paul began with the idea of ensuring there was an apostolic voice who would be prepared for the times in which he would live.

As it relates to church planting in an African-American context many sons and daughters who are finally launched and released into ministry are done so ill-equipped and can be found reduplicating themselves into the image of their “fathers” without realizing their fathers were called to their own times. The other end of the spectrum is equally true as well. There are sons and daughters who are released into their times and are able to utilize the methodology of the times but dilute and compromise the message of the times weakening the movement of authentic Christianity. Of this, Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2-9:

To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with
a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

Paul affirms Timothy’s call in the faith encourages him to stand through suffering. Paul continues in his exhortation to Timothy. He encourages him to not compromise in his preaching and teaching. In verse 13 he says, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words, which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” He finally concludes with words that are essential to the successive leadership dynamic in Church planting. The ability to reproduce the authentic message in the next generation of leaders to lead, mobilize and organize the establishment of more churches that can and will produce more churches is essential. He says, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

The establishment of the Black Church experience in America is still somewhat of a phenomenon. Christianity in the West provided a cohesive guise and glue in developing solidarity of a social and economic stability to a people you were fractured, battered and broken through the vestiges of chattel slavery, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, integration, the Cold War, the war on drugs, gang violence and diversification of morality and religion into the twenty-first century. The Black Church’s evolvement to meet the needs of its passing generation of Africans in America did not begin with Western Christianity, but was rather informed Christianity in the West. Christian history’s greatest theologians borrowed many of their hermeneutical and exegetical approaches of interpreting the text
to the times from African scholars. This truth becomes critical to understanding the context of Black preaching of social consciousness, liberation and prophetic redemption to release the Kingdom of God in the lives of the hearers. It gives cause as to why the ecclesiology of Black Church is the voice of the helpless and hopeless.

**Ecclesiology of Church Planting in an African-American Context**

**Anointed for the Poor**

According to scholarly research done by Thomas Oden, African exegetes had a tremendous impact on the formulation of Western theological thought in developing a framework to interpret the Scripture in culture. Their definitions and concepts were defined decades earlier in Africa by Tertullian, Cyprian, Athanasius, Augustine and Cyril. The theological impact of wisdom from Leo the Great, Cassiodorus and Gregory the Great emerged later on northern Mediterranean shores many generations after African Christian teachers had already hammered out their basic terms.

Oden argues that Western Christian dogma was formed with precision in Africa before it became ecumenically received worldwide. As Africans emerged on Western shores as slaves and indentured servants, the association of a spirit power or supreme being was not a foreign concept to them. It is from here that Africans were able to entrust their fate to the God of the Hebrews who provided the exodus from Egyptian soil. The Old Testament stories of captivity in Babylon and return to a homeland and establishment

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
of a sovereign nation-state resonated well with Africans in captivity in the West. As Africans became learned in the text of Scripture they believed in a God who identified with the marginalized and disenfranchised. The words of the messianic Christ bode well with African clerics on American soil. Jesus himself proclaimed in Luke 4:18, “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me, To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed.”

Church planting in an African-American context despite the political, educational and economic gains among many African-Americans, as a whole still finds itself in need of the messages of liberation and prophetic redemption. As of late the disproportionate numbers of African-American men and women under the penal system are reflective of what Michelle Alexander calls the new Jim Crow. The new emergence of police brutality and untimely deaths of African-American boys and men are becoming reflective of plantation politics as many African-Americans cry for justice.

As Moses cried out with a prophetic decree to Pharaoh to “let my people go,” so the Black preacher of today’s African-American context calls for liberation of violence, brutality, underfunded school districts, red lining among banking and lending institutions in urban regentrification. The African-American cleric today is concerned with how salvation of the soul and the development of Christian spirituality transfers to improving the quality of domestic life of African-American citizens in a country that once espoused a belief in the Judeo-Christian God with its monetary motto of “In God We Trust.”

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30 Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.
African-American clergy find themselves in a crisis of belief with the virtue of the American soul and vitriol behavior of its trusted institutions. It is almost as if America itself has fallen victim to the same dangers of a human ethos that destroyed empires of humanity in yesteryear. Pharoah, Xeres, Nebuchannezzer, Herod and Nero all seem to have had a common thread in their positions of power: the belief that they in and of themselves were sovereign, without accountability and answering to the God of Heaven.

Images, Idols and Altars

America’s historical foundations of its beginnings find its earliest settlers before landing in Jamestown, Virginia, touching ground in Virginia Beach at Cape Henry and proclaiming the new land for Christ. It was believed that from the shores of America the world would be evangelized with the message of hope, forgiveness, love and redemption. The Gospel of Jesus Christ would be preached from American pulpits throughout nations. The country’s founding documents gave rise to the notion of how America’s republic would function. The Bill of Rights, inherit rights of personhood and humanity, for each of the country’s citizens originally began as the Virginia Declaration of Rights. These rights form the foundation and basis for how citizens of the nation would be governed. Article 16 says, “That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other.”

31 Horsman, Race and Manifest Destiny, 291-330.
Grade school children in America before starting class for the day would recite the Pledge of Allegiance. This was seen as an act of patriotism and commitment to American ideals and principles. The recitation says, “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands one nation under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all.” A key to the liberty and justice of America is in its commitment to remaining a nation committed to its Christian ideals of influence as seen as dependent upon the wisdom of God. Its political/governmental, economic and educational institutions maintain a Judeo-Christian God consciousness in public life.

As stated by this declaration of rights, American society functions well when there is an adherence to Christian virtue and values in daily life among citizens. Yet, an interesting moment has occurred in America. Pluralism has become the order of the day. There is consistent and constant pushback against referencing the God of the Bible who mentions Jesus as the Christ, removal of public teacher-led prayer in public schools, removal of the Ten Commandments from courthouses, a move towards more ecumenical prayer, the inherit right of women to the common practice of abortion as a means of birth control, and the redefining of family through governmental-sanctioned, federally-licensed same-sex marriage. It appears as if America is daily moving closer to becoming a post-Christian nation in public life.

History bears a record of the downfall of previous super world power nations. Egypt, Babylon and Rome all had monarchs who believed in and of themselves to be gods. They believed themselves to be sovereigns. Whenever human beings ascribe unto themselves to be independent sovereigns it becomes idolatry. The Hebrews of the Old
Testament were reminded by Moses of the interdependence required with Yahweh for economic provision and military protection. The first of the Ten Commandments says:

I am the L ORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the L ORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me.

The implication is an adherence to maintaining a humility and respect for the eternal. Whenever humanity remembers God in their daily doings God remembers humanity with blessings. The Scriptures record what happens to a nation of people who honor God. Psalms 33:12 says, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.” Proverbs 29:2 says, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan.”

The times in America are lending themselves to groaning people who are searching for the blessing of the Lord. Although there have been strides, gains and accomplishments among many African-Americans, the state of family, economy, literacy and even the Black Church still find itself hemorrhaging. As postmodern and post-hristian themes have in large part been spread through the American landscape, the Protestant American Evangelical Church has been able to hold the plumb line of Christian biblical orthodoxy.

However, streams and strands of Christian movements have begun to embrace conflicting ideologies and many in the Black Church have followed suit. There are strands embracing the redefinition of family, as there are entire church movements of
same gender-loving pastors within an African-American context. The Black Church is watching entire reformation of clergy embrace this new phenomenon. For the first time in American history the divorce rate among African-American clergy leaders is equal to that of its laity. The out of wedlock birth rate of African-American children of those who profess Christ as Lord is equal to those who profess no faith or religious views. Doctrinal views of Scripture pertaining to the most basic elements of salvation are now commonplace among in an African-American context.

Bishop Carlton Pearson’s doctrine of inclusion is permeating quadrants and sectors of orthodox Christian tradition. African-American spending power is equal to that of the twelfth largest nation in the world, but its earning power lags behind and is likened to those in third-world countries. The question becomes what has been on the altar of sacrifice within the Black Church? Has its leaders become sovereigns unto themselves, have they bought into a system of greed and corruption? James Weldon Johnson author of the Black National Anthem asks these question as he has penned these words in the last stanza:

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, thou who has brought us thus far on the way; Thou who has by Thy might Led us into the light, Keep us forever in the path, we pray. Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee, Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee; Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand. True to our God, True to our native land.32

Church planting in an African-American context must not only must give attention to its methodology, how it plants churches. It must also give credence to its message - how it serves a community in a local context. The strategic, resourced,

32 Johnson, “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing.”
intentional plan of a reformation can save and restore or return a local context to brokenness.
PART THREE

MINISTRY PRACTICE
CHAPTER 4
GOALS, PLANS AND STRATEGIES: CHURCH PLANTING IN AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN CONTEXT

Church Planting Dynamics

Church planting in an African-American context is in dire need of organizations that have viewed church planting as a priority and not an after thought. All too often organizations are thrust into the complexities of redefinition, renewal and rebranding vision due to circumstances. There are many who view church planting as a diversification of industry strategy as a means of staying relevant to the times. However, church planting is as a result of a divine directive to meet the spiritual and human needs of those within a local context. It is the expansion and establishment of the Gospel in the hearts of men and women so that the Kingdom of God may advance.¹

Church planting in an African-American context finds itself perplexed with a myriad of issues relative to the times. As post-Christian values quickly become the norm, African-Americans find themselves entering a season where they must give a defense of

¹ Davis, The Black Church Relevant or Irrelevant in the 21st Century, 45-58.
their faith through Christian witness.\(^2\) As the 1960s brought the social consciousness movement of Black power and the Nation of Islam, communities in urban cores from Boston through the Carolinas, from Chicago to Dallas and from Los Angeles to Denver are wrestling with a resurgence. The Hebrew-Israelite nation is a movement of young African-American men and women that focus on self-reliance, a return to what is believed among them to be true religious orthodoxy. A mixture of Judaism and African culture has many in the movement believing again that the Black man is as a God.

Church planters in an African-American context will have to organize around how they present the tenants of the faith in a relevant, yet real and authentic way. There are many in African-American contexts who wrestle to understand the necessity for Christ, water baptism, communion and a need for the Spirit. They struggle with what these things are and how they apply to one’s daily life.

Church planting in an African-American context will have to consider the transformative message of the African-American Church’s prophetic voice. The voice of the preacher in the Black Church has often called into question the actions and political will of politicians and their intent towards African-American communities. The socio-economic disparities and resurgence of the loss of Black life at the hands of law enforcement finds itself reminiscent of times gone by in Black communities. Alexander alerting many who face these atrocities to be aware that “Jim Crow has become James Esquire.” The idea behind the statement is the America’s vitriol response to race has not

\(^2\) Dash, *The Shape of Zion*, 85-125.
changed but morphed into systemic and categorial discrimination with the aid of the law.\textsuperscript{3}
The Black Church and church planting in an African-American context will find itself having to wrestle with the call for justice from several different quadrants and sectors of the Black community.

During the years of the Civil Rights Movement there was solidarity towards the cause of social, economic and political freedoms and liberty with the infrastructure of the Black Church to guide momentum. Today, the Black Lives Matter campaign and maintain political coalitions with LGBTQ community. A political advocacy group for those in engaged in the homosexual lifestyle has successfully been able to adjoin themselves to Black causes using the strength and guise of the Black Church. As a result, church planting in an African-American context will have to wrestle with the redefinition of family as gender roles change and 70 percent of African-American children are born out of wedlock with single-family heads of household.\textsuperscript{4} Church planters will have to be clear in what is the biblical guise of family, role of women in ministry and its social impact in community or lack thereof. The potency of the Gospel message in an African-American context hinges on the Church planter’s ability to create momentum in guiding a Kingdom transformative movement that is clear on the roles of church, family, government and self-government in an African-American context.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{3} Alexander, \textit{The New Jim Crow}.


\textsuperscript{5} Bridges, \textit{Building the Black Church}.
The Great Commission

The ministry of Jesus on earth met the needs of people and freed people from several levels of bondage. The ministry of Jesus touched the lives of people, transformed social systems and ensured political justice happened amongst the least of these. The miracles and healing power of the ministry of Jesus was spiritually liberating, but also socio-economically sustaining.

The woman with issue of blood in Mark 5 found herself in an unjust political, social and economic system of her day. Her disease labeled her unclean which kept her from being able to interact mainstream society. This hindered her ability to be able to work and remain gainfully employed because should could not interact with people. Mark 5:25-26 says, “Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse.” The passage seems to suggest the woman did not have access to adequate health care as cost pushed her further and further into debt.

The plight of women in Israelite society was that of second-class citizens, their access to equality under the law was somewhat skewed. The penalty for adultery in Israelite society was death by stoning. The writing of the laws’ intent is impartial, but the application of the law in the New Testament is skewed. Leviticus 20:10 says, “The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” When members of the Jewish Sandhedrin catch the woman in adultery the text mentions
nothing of stoning the man, but only of stoning her until Jesus enters the scene and executes righteousness and justice. John 8:4-11 says,

They said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

The woman of the text would have been killed by the death penalty in an unjust social system. Church planters in an African-American context will have to find themselves engaging a culture of people who have become entangled in immoralities, while lifting up a standard of righteousness and setting people free to live within the consciousness of grace. Jesus in this one act is able to accomplish all three. He baffles the unjust judicial system, calling its administrators into accountability, exonerates the woman’s guilt and levels the social playing field of the woman’s future to be free.

Church planters in an African-American context will find themselves in the midst of these kinds of messy moments in the lives of people. The gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Jesus Christ change the landscape of an American context in general and the African-American context specifically. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is liberating to the soul, exonerating the individual from the condition of sin in one’s human nature. The Gospel of the Kingdom keeps one from the practice of sin and improves one’s quality of
life while overhauling unjust social and economic systems that oppress people. There is a
call and need for both in an Africa-American context. This gives rise as to why there
must be strategic, intentional, planning of planted churches with spiritually healthy,
prepared, equipped planters to tackle the terrain of the day.

**Healthy Whole Leaders**

The local church is the extension of the Kingdom of God on earth. It is the vehicle
and mechanism through which genuine discipleship occurs in the life of a person. The
book of Acts gives a portrait of Christianity in its early formation. These are essential
elements needed in every local church context to be considered a location extension of
the Kingdom. Acts 2:42-47 says:

> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the
> breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many
> wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were
together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods,
and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one
accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food
with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the
people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

As it relates to church planting consistency in communion, prayer, fellowship,
outreach and study of the Word of God are essential elements from the early church.⁶
Church planting in an African-American context would do well to continue in these
essentials as the African-American Church experiences the nominally religious, novice
and unsaved attendee. The spiritual condition of the local church is directly related to its

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spiritual leadership. Peter Scazzero, in his book *Emotionally Healthy Leader* writes of the importance of spiritually-sound thinking. He argues that humanity is often impacted by the life experience of what has happened around them, in them and to them, without having gone through the process of healing to make sense of ones’ reality. The potential of projecting one’s ethos onto another is great. Church leaders must be conscious of this in preaching, programming and participating in religious life.

As the Black Church tradition lends itself toward prophetic declaration against social-economic and political injustices, Black Church leaders must keep in focus the importance of the development of healthy spirituality. This is not to project one against the other, but rather focus the attention toward a both-and approach. The perspective of liberation and social justice leads one to view God only through the lens of God as a rectifier or liberator. The God of Scripture is a rectifier, reconciler, redeemer and liberator. He is a redeemer and calls for a return to him from the backslider. When spiritual leaders have not made spiritual sense of their own realities, the spiritual equilibrium and balance in the life of a congregation can become skewed.

As it relates to church planting in an African-America context spiritual leaders should experience spiritual evaluation in determining and developing spiritual health in leaders. Spiritual health is measured in the practice of spiritual disciplines. There are several questions one can ask in evaluating the health of a spiritual leader.: Does the leader continue in regular prayer, devotion and worship life independent from one’s

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duties and responsibilities in the local church? What is the state of marriage and family of the leader? Has the leader prioritized the importance of time with family in developing memories, moments and momentum in both parent-child and spousal relationships? And finally, how does one even go about measuring this?

The movement within Calvary Revival stressed weekly-to-monthly date days with one’s spouse, annual vacations as well as developing a schedule of priority to ensure the importance and moments of children’s emotional and physical needs were met. Another critical area of important concern for church planters is the leader’s financial health. It must be asked: What is the leader’s income independent from the church plant? Will the leader be bi-vocational or a salaried full-time employee of the church? What is the leader’s credit score? How is the leader able to meet the needs of his or her household without support from the local church? A leader’s financial health greatly impacts his ability to organize and mobilize spiritual, human organizational and financial resources.

Spiritual leaders ought to be led by the spirit of the living God not driven my temporal circumstances. The key to planting, developing and growing healthy, strong churches is developing, growing and planting healthy strong leaders. A part of this process is assessing where a reformation is in terms of its commitment to sending pastors to establish churches with resources both human and financial, as well as determining the health of the planting pastor his family, finances and faith. The movement of Calvary Revival began the process, but had much need for improvement. The lack of purposeful intentionality in terms of its resource support, application of biblical orthodoxy and
clearly-defined church planting model may not have cost the movement its longevity, but
definitely has cost the Peninsula plant pastor some of his posterity.
CONCLUSION

Church planting in an African-American context is still a new phenomenon. The Black Church experience in America is still a phenomenon. The Black Church has provided a sense of cohesiveness to a people who had lost their sense of identity, language and culture. However, the call toward prophetic redemption in being the consciousness of the Church in America and throughout the world remains a clarion call for the Black Church.¹ This call among Black clergy did not just begin with the Black Church in America. Its roots find their genesis in the heart of sacred Scripture.

Hamitic peoples of Scripture have always fulfilled the role of messenger envoys within the heart of Scripture. Cush or Kush, which means ebony skinned or burnt faced, are primarily African myelinated peoples.² As David was in search of a clear clarion word about the death of his son Absalom, two messengers ran to carry the message to him. A young Jewish boy named Ahimaaz and a Cushite who is nameless in the text. Ahimazz was only able to give general information concerning the death of David’s son. However, the Cushite was very clear in what he saw. Second Samuel 18:31 says, “And the King said to the Cushite, ‘Is the young man Absalom Safe?’ So the Cushite answered, ‘May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do harm, be like that young man!’” The Bible says David mourned the death of his son Absalom because the message delivered by the Cushite was extremely clear and concise concerning what he saw, whereas the message of Ahimazz was general and nebulous at best.

¹ Davis, The Black Church Relevant or Irrelevant in the 21st Century, 45-58.
² Harris, Africans and their History, 79-110.
The late Myles Munroe, in his prophetic preaching, declared the dark-skinned man as the third-world man in America, yet would be the prophetic eyes of the American Church. Martin Luther King, Jr, an African-American preacher from Georgia is considered to be one of the greatest reforming voices of American history. His writings, voice and work to end segregation culminated in a speech in given in Memphis. King’s “I Have Been to the Mountain Top,” was a patented speech he would give many times through the south in drawing attention to the atrocities of segregation. This speech was given at Mason Temple COGIC in his call to action and support of sanitation workers who were striking for better wages, housing and safety. He spoke with prophetic insight concerning the liberty, freedom and mobility of African-Americans and that those of African descendent in America enjoy today. In his final words he said,

Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn’t matter with me now, because I’ve been to the mountaintop. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life; longevity has its place. But I am not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the Promise Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the Promise Land. So I’m happy tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. ³

King, a Black preacher, referenced his eyes seeing the future of a day of liberty and freedom for African-Americans. He was a product of the Black Church. King’s message of equality and freedom was filled with prophetic insight. His eyes were reminiscent of another Black man in scripture - Moses’ father-in-law Jethro or Hobab, who Moses referenced as being eyes of direction to help Israel navigate through the

³ Brayboy, The Black Church in America, 185-205.
wilderness. Israel had just been liberated from 400 years of bondage and slavery.

Scholars and theologians have debated amongst themselves concerning the length of time needed for Israel’s journey from the desert, wilderness of Siani to the Promised Land of Canaan. A week’s journey took the Israelites forty years because the prophetic eyes would not make the journey. Numbers 10:29-31 says:

Now Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses’ father-in-law, “We are setting out for the place about which the LORD said, ‘I will give it to you.’ Come with us and we will treat you well, for the LORD has promised good things to Israel.” He answered, “No, I will not go; I am going back to my own land and my own people.” But Moses said, “Please do not leave us. You know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you can be our eyes.

A dark-skinned man would not make the journey and cost Israel insight in navigation through the wilderness. This can be perceived given the present times of American culture, redefining of family, to include the federal legalization of gay marriage, legalization of marijuana in several states through the union, the senseless loss of African-Americans lives in many urban sectors at the hands of law enforcement, attempts to remove the federal voting rights act through the south, environmental quality disparity in drinking water in many urban communities, pulling away from biblical orthodoxy to embrace culturally sensitive changing norms in religious life, and the moral crisis facing Protestant and Catholic clergy throughout the globe. How much more so should Clack Churches be planted with prophetic insight through intentionality in preparation, planning, provision and potency of both sending organizations and planting pastors. The future and vibrancy of American communities in general and African-American communities in particular could be at stake.
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