

CREATE A CONTEMPORARY SERVICE IN ORDER TO FORM A POSTMODERN
HERMENEUTIC FOR WORSHIP IN THE
MIDDLE DISTRICT BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

A professional project submitted to the Theological School of
Drew University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Ministry

Advisors:
Rev. Robert J. Duncan, Jr., D.Min.

Andre G. Carr, Jr.

Drew University

Madison, NJ

May 2017

ABSTRACT

CREATE A CONTEMPORARY SERVICE IN ORDER TO FORM A POSTMODERN HERMENUTIC FOR WORSHIP IN THE MIDDLE DISTRICT BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Andre G. Carr, Jr.

Mt. Rena Missionary Baptist Church of the

Middle District Baptist Association

Rocky Point, North Carolina 28457

Some call it the emerging church. Some call it a new kind of worship. Still, others call it, the seekers church. It all amounts to the need to be worshipping God. Those who recognize there is a different kind of thinker or seeker suggest that in the world of religious philosophy and spiritual enlightenment, changing worship practices are at odds thereby resulting in diminishing traditional church roles. Many academics ensure us that “this too shall pass” and leave the questions presented by these new kind of thinkers about religion to ever changing tides of the time. Yet questions presented by postmodern seekers need to be addressed. Young people hold the key to such questions but are not freely given the opportunity to express their thoughts.

In the process of developing this project, I was able to identify roadblocks and marginalizing characteristics within the traditional worship experience. I discovered various behaviors of young people and traditional worshipers relative to religious practices.

This project is an evaluation of a Worship service produced, directed, and implemented by young people of the Middle District Baptist Association in Burgaw,

North Carolina. This Association consists of a group of sixty Baptist Churches in Eastern North Carolina. This area is but one example that has experienced the decline in new member enrollment and have decided to address the issue. I examined the various stages young people of this Association and my home-church experienced in the process of attempting such a venture. Integrated also in this paper are suggestions for identifying roadblocks and entertaining ministries to increase community participation in the church and combine traditional and contemporary worship.

This paper and its components will be shared with the Middle District Baptist Association in Burgaw North Carolina and may be instrumental in providing a bridge between the traditional and the postmodern worshiper.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....1

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORY: MODERN AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH – HOW
ARE WE TO THINK10

CHAPTER THREE: CONTEMPORY CHURCH VS FUTURE PERCEPTIONS34

CHAPTER FOUR: FEAR AND MISTRUST45

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION52

APPENDIX

1. LETTER TO MIDDLE DISTRICT BAPTIST ASSOCIATION-MODERATOR 65

2. LETTER TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR66

3. LETTER TO THE PASTORS68

4. LETTER TO PARENT OR GUARDIAN70

5. LETTER TO LAY COMMITTEE MEMBERS71

6. CHART72

BIBLIOGRAPHY74

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

When we fail to listen to someone who is different, whether that person is dressed in the garb of a different age, gender, race, sexuality, class, or creed, we diminish a cosmological sense of the holy. Since the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the entire world is God's sanctuary; everything that has breath is to praise God; thus we ought not to dismiss those capable of praise.¹

This statement communicates volumes concerning the state of affairs within the church; empty pews as it applies to the hidden, and the unspoken hopes of the contemporary seeker. Although fear and/or mistrust may cast shadows over our spirits, we need to remember that "...not to us but to your name be the Glory..." (NIV Psalm 115:1).

The purpose of this project is to incorporate the worship practices of the traditionalist and the contemporary seeker resulting in a shared community based endeavor. Furthermore, the combination of these practices will instigate the spirit of trust necessary to discontinue shared marginalization and fears of both traditional worshipers and contemporary seekers. This project has not been without its difficulties and roadblocks as we will see in the chapter "Bridges".

Historically, within the Black Church, children were not heard or consulted relative to church matters as they relate to worship practices. Difficult questions concerning theology, the Bible, and/or spirituality, was dealt with sparingly causing fear and discontent among younger worshipers. In short, participation of young people was

¹Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, *Wake-Up!: Hip-Hop Christianity and The Black Church*, Nashville: TN Abington Press, 2011, pg. xi.

limited to the behest of the elders of the church and any change in the worship service was discouraged. Today, however, because of varied reasoning, young people have been given a partial voice in these matters.

Today's young people are different in many ways from those of us who were brought up in the so-called modern age. Young people truly have something to say about the manner and content of their worship practices to the Lord, and their involvement in Church politics and growth. I would imagine the traditional worship service and Church, in general, being difficult and confusing for the contemporary postmodern seeker.

In the beginning of my spiritual walk, religion was difficult, demanding, and confusing. My father was the adult Sunday school teacher in Tasker Street Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. My mother sang in the church choir and with a Gospel group that performed in churches throughout Philadelphia and the surrounding area. At that time in African American Church history, gospel singing was accepted but had its opponents; similar to the contemporary gospel music of today. My grandfather was a Deacon in the same church and nothing got past him relative to his family's religious commitment or involvement. I remember, during some Sunday school sessions, asking questions about God, religion, or the Bible. Sometimes these questions, caused "eyebrows" to raise and the proverbial "that's a mystery, you're not supposed to ask questions like that" answer. After church, when I returned to my grandfather's house where we lived, my grandfather would confront me. I found myself challenged with the well-meaning patriarchal stare and question of, "Do you really want to know the answer to that question, boy?" I hedged with my answer indicating as always, "No, Sir". Sometimes, I would make an attempt to find the answers for myself. Unfortunately, most

of the time, out of frustration with no answers, I closed the Bible or other religious books we had in the house. In terms of God, I was content that He loved me and looked out for everyone. However, in terms of the other questions I had about religion, the Bible, or church in general I knew I was formulating something different from the adults I so admired.

The ability to notice subtle differences in behaviors of young people and my surroundings afforded me the opportunity to plead the cases of young people in the communities in which I lived and worked professionally for many years. I've worked with gangs, youths at risk, and I was a Public Relations coordinator with the phone company for many years in some rather dangerous housing projects in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Therefore, working with young people of different mind-sets and being a buffer between them, church, and society, in general, was very familiar to me. However, "dominant discourses"² or ingrained perceptions, which will be explained later, have hindered my involvements with young people.

Therefore, when contemplating a subject for this project, I was encouraged by fellow classmates in my doctoral program to look in the direction of postmodern thinking and future challenges of the Church involving relationships with young people. What I found, in my spirit was a need to engage young people in the worship experience and attempt to foster new understandings of trust among the saints.

During and after the civil-rights movement, particularly around the Viet-nam era, there was a decrease in church attendance. Additionally, the "crack epidemic", beginning in mid-1900's decimated families and our young people. Once firm family values were

² Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry*, Louisville, KY: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008, pg. 79.

effected by this disease, the community disintegrated further into chaos and violence, exacerbating the decline of church attendance.³ This resulted in empty pews, and the few remaining saints in the church were perplexed regarding the problem. Left to the prejudices of their dominant discourse, the Black Church vilified many forms of contemporary worship and community involvement, thereby further unraveling the community.

There are a plethora of reasonable explanations concerning this religious trend of empty pews, and most accounts are credible if left to the subjectivity of the motivated doctrine and the influence of modernity on the church body as a whole. However, these accounts have failed to consider the impact of contemporary postmodernism.

Postmodernism used here describes the succeeding phase of human developmental thinking as it concerns the worship experience. Hence, the purpose of this project: a reason to inject the experiences of our young people into the traditional government of faith. Later I will take a glance into the realms of postmodernism in contrast to the subject of contemporary worship practices.

I would consider the most valid speculation, concerning the subject of postmodernism and the church, lean toward the deconstruction ideologies of Jacques Derrida. This scholar, in part, writes, “there are new ways of reading and writing”.⁴

Derrida provides language I can use to understand the breakdown of traditional of

³ Kate Gotsch, “Breakthrough in U.S. Drug Sentencing Reform: The Fair Sentencing Act and the Unfinished Reform Agenda,” The Sentencing Project, November 18, 2011, accessed July 2016, http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/dp_drugarrestreport.pdf.

⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1995. pg. 140.

worship and give credence to the “subjective truth” tenet of postmodernism and open the door to at least an investigation.⁵ That is, investigation into a combined form of the worship experience. Moreover, this type of thinking supports another principle of postmodernism which is the abandonment of the “universal truth” in reason.⁶ In other words, truth becomes subjective rather than an exercise by the community, in particular the community of faith. The thinking of society at large, is ever changing; in this era subjective attitudes hold sway. In order for the church to survive subjective attitudes, in the worship experience changes in that experience should follow.

This venture began in 2009 as I was preparing for my Doctor of Ministry Degree in Congregational Growth and Development at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. During Practical Theology discussions related to postmodernism and diminishing membership in the Church, the idea of bridging *modern* and contemporary *postmodern* worship services began to manifest in my spirit. At that particular, time, my father, retired his Pastoral duties after twenty-four years in Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church in Winnabow, North Carolina. Rather than continuing to attend Bethlehem, he wanted to resume his past membership at Mt. Rena Missionary Baptist Church in Rocky Point, North Carolina; the church of his youth. My father no longer drove, hence, by my driving him I also attended. The first time we entered the building I noticed the sanctuary was noticeably void of young people. This was something I had not expected because I remember a congregation filled with young people. I asked myself, what happened here? Instantly, my spirit moved towards a solution to this dilemma and my discussions in class concerning postmodernism and church worship. The insights

⁵ Ibid. pg. 7.

⁶ Ibid. pg. 163.

discussed in class by my professors became the platform by which I would begin to find a possible solution to these empty pews. Furthermore, working with young people professionally and in the community afforded me insights to conversations and behaviors not generally accepted by ministers of the Gospel. Therefore, when the idea of putting together a contemporary postmodern service in a traditional church came to mind, my spirit moved in a direction I believe the Lord pre-ordained.

I have worked with young people for many years and consider the contact the Lord has allowed me with them as part of my calling. All my life, even before answering my calling, God has put young people in the mix as I attempted to pursue other directions. Hence, the suggestions, which I will present here, do not come to me as a surprise. My spirit confirms this is but another step ordered by God. I consider this project part of my calling and in line with a Proverb by Solomon 16:9 “A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.”⁷

My intention is to orchestrate a contemporary worship service produced, directed, and performed by young people of the Middle District Baptist Association (MDBA) in Burgaw, North Carolina. This worship service will be studied by a committee from five different churches; all will be members of the MDBA. However, the main focus is, as far as the youth involved will be, the manner of worship. The goal of the youth is to discuss attitudes, genres, music, prayer, preaching, liturgy, and future ministerial possibilities. Then, as a committee, the goal is to produce a report to be distributed to the entire MDBA. This will be accomplished through a series of meetings, as a committee, we will look for teaching opportunities for various churches, and prepare a special presentation to

⁷ Proverbs 16:9, KJV.

the executive Board of the MDBA. Theologian and church planter Diallo Smith says, “New religious thought and spiritual expressions are beginning to emerge from unconventional sources,” and “...in order to evaluate critically these new religious modes with equity and justice, to embrace postmodern theories that serve to democratize culture ...this brings value and hope to the young to be nurtured by older leaders.”⁸ This is supported by Proverbs 20: 29 which states: “The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is their gray head.”⁹ Note: Gray hair meaning their wisdom.

I also used “The Precept,¹⁰” which is a research organization that provides detailed demographics for Churches. I concentrated on the geographical areas served by the MDBA which outlines some very interesting facts in terms of faith, spirituality, religious concerns, and education. These demographics indicate the rather high resistance for change in terms of genre acceptance, that is, what is generally accepted by a particular church in its religious practices. Here is one example I witnessed. I attended the Annual NAACP gathering at the MDBA building in 2012.

The audience consisted largely of young people, who were the recipients of a sermon from a preacher who used, in his delivery, raps and rhymes. This sermon was appreciated by the young people. Personally, I appreciated his courage and applaud the effort. I interviewed a few traditionalists in the audience after the service. The traditionalist denigrated the preacher and his preaching genre for a variety of reasons. Some indicated the sermon was out of place. Another stated, “I just didn’t like it, another

⁸ Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, *Wake-Up!: Hip-Hop Christianity and The Black Church*. Nashville: TN, Abington Press, 2011, pg. 146.

⁹ Proverbs 20:29, KJV.

¹⁰ Appendix 1: Percept Ministry Area Profile

indicted: “it was OK but I just didn’t like it”. There were frowns and the shaking of heads which I interpreted as fear. Additionally, there were hints of being disgusted with the preacher’s approach leaving me with the question of, “Why?” Note: the aforementioned who indicated “just didn’t like it” would not give a reason as to why.

The community of Pender County, North Carolina, the focal point for this project, is a rural setting with its time-honored traditions and perceptions. One such example of tradition is that cars, approaching a funeral processions, out of respect for the dead, pull to the side of the road. It is a relatively small community of working-class families whose young people make it a point to move away as soon as possible. I believe this is because of sparse economic opportunities and lack of diverse entertainment. The town I live in, Rocky Point, North Carolina is an example. There was a time, in the Rocky Point area, when there was only one blinking yellow traffic light, which was 50 years ago. Presently, there are three traffic lights and one of those is not at an intersection.

The Middle District Baptist Association, located in the middle of Pender County, founded in 1871; this is the venue for my project. It consists of sixty Churches centering in Burgaw, North Carolina, stretching as far west as Fayetteville, east to the ocean, and north to Rocky Mount and south to South Carolina. The demographics of this Association present a unique and challenging opportunity for this project in that traditional worship is the governing force of the Association. Furthermore, my committee is representative of five Churches across the MDBA demographic generating an account for urban as well as rural youth. I choose to use this method to obtain a cross-section of information from the largest area possible.

My prayer is to continue the pleas of our youth for a variety of reasons; some of which we will explore in the chapter on “Fear vs. Mistrust”. I also pray this service will be a voice in the wilderness for the traditional worshiper as we “think out-of-the-box” of our dominant discourses and openly explore other avenues of worship, ministry, and spiritual development for ourselves and our young people.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY:

Modern African American Church - How Are We to Think

The history of the African American Church is grounded in tradition. There have been many changes over the years in terms of church participation, particularly in the personal lives of its congregants. In this chapter we will encounter some of their stories as the church is transforming through the next paradigm shift.

To qualify **Paradigm Shifts**, as it relates to this paper, we will begin in 18th century with the definition: a significant change in the paradigm of any discipline or group.¹ The purpose for this opening is to not get bogged down in the ever changing interpretations of old-world history's debates and subtopic discussions.

The **Industrial Age** is classified as a period of invention beginning around the mid-19th century. We note this period because it was a time of change and discovery. Change, in that the minds of people became broader in terms of dimensions which included religions. Dimensions in religion became broader as people moved to the cities and worked on jobs with people from other places in the country with different religious beliefs.

Modernity, after the industrial age, we'll describe as the period after some people left the farm which was called the agrarian period. During that period people were totally

¹ "Paradigm Shift," Dictionary.com, accessed February 22, 2017.
<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/paradigm-shift?s=t>.

dependent upon the land as a means for survival and to a degree isolated. This was an agricultural society with its fellowships dependent upon local co-operation and self-sufficiency. Complete change, from this period did not take place through-out the world therefore no definitive year can be expressed to give an accurate date for the time period.

The industrial revolution describe as a period of time when machinery began to replace manual labor. Some give the time period of this era as beginning in the mid-18th century to the mid and late 19th century. This period ushered in the development of machinery and increased production of goods and services. During both of these periods *truth* was still consigned by reason therefore objectivity was the paradigm in the thinking process both in and outside of the church and society at large.

Questioning of ideas

One understanding of Postmodernity, according to Riddell, relative to this paper and in the context to *thinking*, is undergirded in the belief that the status quo is questionable; in its entirety; everything, as it relates to the present mode of thought.² For example, because experience is valued more highly than reason, truth becomes relative. This opens up all kinds of problems, as in lessening the standard that the Bible contains absolute truth, and even disqualifies biblical history also as being fact, in, many cases. If the Bible is not our source for absolute truth, and personal experience is allowed to define and interpret what truth actually is, a saving faith in Jesus Christ is rendered meaningless. Thereby, giving way to spirituality rather than a denominational practice justified biblically.

² Mike Riddell, *Threshold of the Future: Reforming the Church in the Post-Christian West*, London: SPCK, 1998, pg. 222.

Postmodernity

“Postmodernism entails a radical rejection of the Enlightenment project and the modern technological ideal along with the philosophical assumptions lying behind them”.³ To me the above suggest that although this posting was not until the 20th century the beginning of radical thought and description began long before this accepted view of critical thinking. We can hold Postmodernity to the 20th century however, every period of time or to be more precise, change of thinking has an arguable beginning. In this paper I am classifying Postmodernity as a noticeable change of thought within the context of the church. This classification does not insinuate a period of time. For the purposes of this paper we will classify the following terms in this manner:

Postmodern – in its purest sense a *time period* is classified after the era of Modernity. Set to inscribe a period or condition of time, thinking, and culture. Example: after the Industrial Revolution came the Modern age, followed by a period of called Postmodern age.

Postmodernism – *active and accepted stance* of time and culture depicting utilizations of the period after Modernity. Ex. Today in America, in these postmodern times, we have become consumers rather the producer. In this paper we will use this word when describing a particular and active behavior within a particular context.

Postmodern Thinking by definition began long before the 20th century. This argument has its underpinnings in the time of Luther as power and influence, concerning orthodoxy, transitioned from the King and the church to a Biblical interpretation. Note:

³ Grenz, Stanley J. *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids, MI: W. B Eerdmans Pub., 1995. 14-15, 83.

this does not translate that Postmodernity began with Martin but rather is a prelude of postmodern thought (see chart Modernity vs Postmodernity also see The Enlightenment – previously discussed). We'll discuss more about this later in the chapter, however in this case we'll confine our discussion to the time period of the 1960's. There is also an inference of this type of thinking in both the agrarian and the industrial eras.

Furthermore, the deconstruction of basic customs, language, and traditions of people were changing as well. Postmodern Thinking, as we use it here will also describe *particular mannerism* in a culture, to include language, religious practice, clothing, art and music etc.

The Paradigm shift here was after the Civil War, generally called the post-antebellum period. During this time, Black folks began to establish their own independent churches, particularly in the southern states. Thus began significant developments of change some today would consider, controversial church issues, for the *Black Church*. Some of these schisms will disappear over the next 150 years, while others will resurface and become denominational determinants. Denomination determinants defined here are very specific mannerism in worship practice initiated for and within a particular denomination.

Throughout history there have been radicals who have set-aside society's borders concerning thought and description to deliberate in a manner different from the status quo. Some examples are: Luther of the 16th century, Descartes of the 17th century, Hume of the 18th century, Hendrix of the 20th century, Savage of the 21st century, and nondenominational churches in general.

Luther of the 16th century spoke of an “awakening” of lay piety. The Roman church failed to exercise moral and spiritual leadership in the face of questioning evidence brought on by humanist scholars of the time.⁴ Descartes, during the “era of reason” challenged authority of the church positing: “...the beginning of all knowledge is doubt and real progress cannot be made until a basis or point of departure, can be found which cannot be doubted.”⁵ Hume went a step further saying: “Experience gives us all our knowledge, but we receive it as isolated impressions of ideas.

In the music of the 20th century, Hendrix opened a new era of dimension with his single “Purple Haze” positing “...is it tomorrow or the end of time”.⁶ Relatively soon after, in the terms of the church, we have Savage along with Presnell unlocking research in the capacity of defining Postmodernity in the Faith community. These and many more dissatisfied spiritual beings are all examples of paradigm shifts in the thinking patterns of church, cultures and society.

Paradigms of the Past

Many major schisms occurred during the formation or more to the point deconstruction of church power as Denominations began to form and discount orthodoxy. One could also argue that the mere formation of Denominations in the church is a form of Postmodern thinking. Here is one such schism. When Emperor Charles V began to see his power diminish in the 16th century, he called for the Council of Trent.⁷ This Council

⁴ Williston Walker, “*A history of the Christian Church.*” New York, NY: Scribner, 1985. pg. 420.

⁵ Ibid, pg. 569.

⁶ Ibid, pg. 582.

⁷ “Trent, Council of,” Europe, 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World, Encyclopedia.com, 2004, accessed October 13, 2015, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/philosophy-and-religion/christianity/roman-catholic-and-orthodox-churches-councils-and-treaties-21>.

met on and off for a period of 18 years through three different Popes (Paul III, Julius III, and Pius IV) in hopes of diminishing Protestant influences. This period was called the Protestant Reformation furthermore; Martin Luther was another primary proponent.

There have been other major schisms earlier in church history which were also monumental in depth and doctrine. Take for example the First Council of Nicaea.⁸ This council set the ground work for the Trinity, positing the Father and the Son were the same or *homoousion* (Greek). This Council also produced the Nicene Creed which is largely used today. If we come closer to today's ideas and schisms we see the First Vatican Council.⁹ Here we see the Catholic Church addressing a point of change in the society and its independence as it reaffirms the Popes' infallibility amongst other very distinguishable revelations concerning personal independence. This Council posits to denounce modern rationalism and liberalism as a tool to reign in the masses from a society which is apparently rejecting truth in reason. That is, from a Modernistic point of view, if the point of contention is reasonable then it is the truth: the Council did not want people thinking in this manner. Again, one of the tenants of Postmodernity defines truth as being subjective within a particular group. This Council injected such controversy within the church there would not be another Council for close to 100 years later.

⁸ "Nicaea, First Council of," The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed., Encyclopedia.com, accessed October 13, 2015, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/philosophy-and-religion/christianity/roman-catholic-and-orthodox-churches-councils-and-treaties-17>.

⁹ "Vatican Council, First." The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed., Encyclopedia.com, accessed October 13, 2015, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/philosophy-and-religion/christianity/roman-catholic-and-orthodox-churches-councils-and-treaties-22>.

The next Council emerged less critical and more sensitive or conservative in its decrees and avoided controversy in its wording and declarations.¹⁰

The following true stories are relevant to this paper because they depict practices which were developed after slavery. These stories cover a period from the agrarian era, mid-18th century, to include the mid-1900, the Modern age; the accepted underpinnings of the African American church worship service today.

This story depicts early marginalization accepted by the Black Church. It was an exceptionally hot for a September day. Grandma, with her young granddaughter in tow, headed for church. During the service, the granddaughter and her newborn baby were called before the congregation. On her way to the front of the church the young girl began to perspire as she noticed the looks from the pews. A stranger could perceive the gravity of the situation. The situation was this; the unwed mother had participated in a perceived ungodly act and in so doing also committed a grievous act against the church. Once in front of the Pulpit, either before or after her statement of repentance, the young mother was chastised severely by the Pastor. The unwed mother was to then sit in the sinners' pew and be prayed for by the congregation.

Stories of autonomy and independence, like the one described above, were not practiced during slavery, for obvious reasons. The slave owner controlled who and what was preached to the slaves. However, there were other denominational determinants sustained into the modern era of today's Black Church. Today, in some postmodern church practices, there are some notable transmutations in the areas of theology and sanctity. Church attitudes toward perceived sin, such as the single mother described

¹⁰ Kristen Colberg, *"Vatican I and Vatican II As Coherent Christian Discourse: A Relationship of Complementarity and Difference."* Diss. Notre Dame, Indiana, 2008. pg. 1-2.

above, have been accepted to a degree. Marginalization practices such as the sinner's bench, Baptism for children of single mothers, and musical instruments are not as widespread. However, there are some residual practices that have survived. These residual practices cosponsor absolute authority embedding biblical interpretation the progenitor. Additionally, these residual practices give the inference of personal infallibility if used out of context.

Here is a true story depicting such personable infallibility. The new Minister of the church took on the task of having a video system installed. After clearing it with the Pastor during the Church Conference, he set about the task of getting the best deal for the church. After informing the Pastor of price and equipment the Minister and a few Deacons found a video installer to get the job done. While the work was being done, the installer of the video equipment informed the Minister he could get more equipment at a better price. The Minister went to the Deacons with the deal and was given the go-ahead. After the equipment was installed, the Pastor was informed the equipment was working. The Pastor suspended the Minister from the Pulpit for six months. The Minister told the Pastor the go-ahead was given to him by the Deacons but the Pastor's decision would stand. A meeting was held about the situation. Unfortunately, the Deacons were informed, by the Pastor, if they had anything to say about the situation they would also be suspended. Fortunately, in other Baptist churches, the Pastor's main responsibility, in terms of influence, is to bring the Word and see to the spiritual development of the congregation. In this story biblical interpretation was not a consideration. This was a Baptist church in the south where more often the not, the Pastor is the ultimate authority in *all* matters concerning the church. I have been exposed to this type of authority and

found it disturbing. Baptist churches are supposed to be autonomous.¹¹ That is, the responsibility of the church, in general, is the responsibility of the Trustees and Deacons.

Here is another story with a clouded view where Modernity clashed with Postmodernity. The Pastor, after the morning service, in an almost apologetic voice called the congregation to participate in an infant Baptism. The family had been members of the congregation for some time and had received permission for the event. Most of the congregation and a notable few nonmembers stayed for this occasion because this particular family was large and the parents were young. The Pastor made an announcement to the entire church. This announcement concerned the proper manner to proceed. He stated: “We in the Black community believe ‘the village raises the child’ because the parents of this child are not married. Therefore he, the father, will not be allowed the stand with the immediate family at the front of the church. The Holy Baptism practice is sacred and Blessed by the Lord, therefore all things connected to this must be ‘in order’”. The father of a child, born out of wed-lock, sometimes is not allowed to stand with the family during the Baptismal proceedings. He is not called to the front of the church to be an official part of the “village” to “raise the child”. Marginalization of the infant’s father can be justified by the Pastor as being non-biblical and offensive to elder members of today’s modern era churches. However, Postmodernity dictates by definition the contrasting view of subjective thinking which would allow the father’s participation in this practice notwithstanding Biblical interpretation. Note: See Chart 1 for Modernity vs. Postmodernity.

¹¹ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Baptist Congregation*, Regent College Pub., 2002, pg. 54.

This next true story, in the modern era of the church, is an example of, in the end, the deciding factor was skewed by biblical interpretation. The good Reverend sincerely believed God had “Called” him to preach the Word to this particular church and applied for the position of Pastor. He felt confident he would be chosen by the congregation because his familiarity with most of its members; the match of the two appeared to be a good one. He was a familiar man-of-God to the area and had a favorable community participation track-record, as well. He was ambitious, and ready to lead this church into the next modern era of spiritual fulfillment. During the quarterly Church Conference the atmosphere was positive and generally in favor of this man of God. In the back of the church sat an old Trustee who grunted and cleared his throat continually. During the voting process for this new Pastor the old Trustee grunted again calling for a “point of order” from the floor. He completed this disruption of the proceedings with the phrase, “The man ain’t Godly; he been married befo’.” The entire membership agreed without question, comment, or hesitation. The good Reverend was disallowed the position and the conference moved-on to the next issue for church consideration. Again by definition, Postmodernism would dictate the installation of the good Reverend basically because he was a good fit, deconstructing the Trustee’s biblical point of view. The Trustees’ objection would represent a particular type of authority which Postmodernism rejects as objective thinking.

Prior to the 1960’s Cultural Revolution of the modern age, the youth Sunday school teacher had to be knowledgeable, biblically. The person who held this position also had to be of a particular character. Additionally, the youth Sunday school teacher had to be someone who was genteel and contrastingly stern. This teacher had to be

someone “hand-picked” demonstrably to handle these particular children of this particular congregation in strict accordance to the churches denominational concerns. Today, such considerations are not at the forefront of church teachings. The next story shows the church attempting to go forward into postmodern thinking.

The local high school dance teacher becomes a new member of the church. She brought up an idea during the Church Conference to include Praise-dancing during the up-coming Sunday service. This action was overwhelmingly approved by church members. The only qualifications were that the teacher would be willing to work with the young people of the Church and teach Sunday school. Her biblical knowledge was not brought into question; the concern of the church was to keep young people interested in church.

The above-mentioned stories could be today; contrasting views between the Modern and Postmodern age in the church as change is being ushered through the sacred halls of most religious communities. Time honored traditions of worship and sanctity, beginning after the Civil War, has changed for the Black Church. Some of these traditions are the “sinner’s bench”, drumming in the church, music, clothing, sermon content and divorced Pastors.

Some of those “old time religion” church practices have never changed, even today. The remaining practices are being replaced by self-interest motivations and emotive concepts embossed by the media coverage and popular opinion. Officiated by modern theological assumptions combined with dissimilar manners of practice, today’s postmodern church would be considered heresy 200 years ago. For instance, the words spoken by the Pope Francis in the early 2000’s would have surely led to a schism similar

to the controversy surrounding the break-up of the Catholic Church into East and West, the Muslim movement from the East notwithstanding. Although there are conversations concerning Constantine's motives for the move to Turkey, the impact of Pope Francis's words if spoken *then* would surely be as controversial. None the less, orthodoxy is unraveling from the inside-out. Extensive media coverage of sex scandals in the Catholic Church and television ministries brings such exertions to light. Such disclosures are strikingly similar to the Lutheran revelations of over five-hundred years ago when Martin Luther posited "...the Pope promotes lies"¹². This statement, if uttered by most individuals of that time, would have surely caused their death.

The Reformation Period was a very precarious time period for Protestants. However, Martin Luther was allowed the privilege of challenging the King as well as the church because of his extensive discernment of scripture. This Smalcald Article is just one example of "Awakening Periods" experienced by the religious community in general, and through-out world. This Article was submitted before a group of theologians as a "Confession of Faith". These Articles were to be presented to the public just in case Luther was condemned by Pope Paul III before he had a chance to defend himself. In this particular example, in addition to another I will mention, the Christian Church was about experience interpretations of the Bible which were unsanctioned by the King and cosponsored by the Pope. Luther also posited some very interesting comments about Councils and Churches. Here is an example. Luther contends the Pope admits that a bigamous marriage is a true marriage and does not constitute sin against God, the world, or the church, adding that such a marriage is a sacrament. Furthermore, such a man must

¹² Concord. "Smalcald Articles," *Martin Luther's Theological Writings*, Ausbury Fortress, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, pg 514.

be barred from holding an ecclesiastical office. For such conversation Luther called canonists, “lawyers for asses.”¹³ Moreover, he says that a marriage between a man and a woman cannot be a sacrament because neither is a virgin and the only correct marriage is Christ and the Church. I contend, these actions alone set off some of the very first accepted contrasting subjective public views of Biblical and theological thinking in the Christian community.

Culture is putting pressure on the face of church theology and sanctity in an effort to change the worship experience. Today, in some cases, incoming preachers are not questioned about their marital status. Furthermore, gender is no longer an issue, in some denominations. Praise dancing and its associated music are also generally accepted, in some churches; technology is also coming to light.

Here is another postmodern example of the church changing and a possible reason for the decrease in church attendance. I taught High School for a time. One of my students produced a musical program which included everything a Sunday service would have except an Offering. She asked if I would be the Advisor for this Senior Project. I filmed the event and offered what I could in terms of historical content and accuracy.

The Preacher wore a baseball-cap, and his pants were baggy as he stood behind the Pulpit. He also sported a striped polo shirt to match his multi-colored sneakers. He held the Bible in one hand and waved frantically with the other as he marched to-and-fro on the Pulpit. His speech patterns would be foreign to the traditional worshiper but readily accepted by those in attendance. The sermon lasted well over two hours covering many books of the Bible and countless Scripture references. There was not a neck-tie

¹³ Ibid, pg. 554-555.

visible in the pews and most of the congregation was young and unceremoniously interested, with very few “Amen’s.” Interesting however, the musicians were talented, young, energetic, and dressed quite similar to the Preacher.

Today, some of our young people are using technology as their vehicle in the worship experience. I would venture to say young people are also using their phone in church to text about their feelings and perceptions concerning the goings-on during the worship experience. I applaud their actions. Not only does this type of communication open-up dialog, it also incorporate a sense of belonging and participation. In-turn, this breeds the tenet of fellowship in the worship experience. Thereby negating the sometime marginalization experienced by young people in today’s traditional church.

iPads, tablets, phones, and computers with Bible apps are replacing actual Bibles in some churches. However, these new innovations are not being readily accepted by the “old school” congregants.

Two stories concerning this behavior were related to me. A Preacher, during a sermon one Sunday held-up his iPad instead of his Bible during a sermon. Apparently, some in the congregation did not appreciate this gesture and related their concerns. During the sermon on the next Sunday, the Preacher, wanting to teach by example and please those concerned about his past discretions, held up both, the Bible and his iPad. In another story, apparently, one of the “old sisters” in the church noticed a person in the pew using his iPad instead of the Bible. Keeping in tradition the “sister” tapped the young person on the shoulder and informed the person to “put that toy away”.

Some would consider the aforementioned stories a complete break-down in the reverence for the Church and God, considering its time honored customs and ostensibly

unvaried Biblical standards. Contrastingly, others would argue there is nothing wrong or sinful in this type of worship service, denominational practice, or its participant's behaviors.

Personally, I have found these new experiences fascinating, the young people brave in spirit, and the music incredible.

Considerations for the Future -Local Context Narrative of Concern

Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, located in Winnabow, North Carolina was where I started this project; I was youth Minister serving under my Father who was the Pastor. It is a traditional church with a current membership of seventy-five. The young people of this church number around thirty, ranging from one to twenty-four years of age. I returned to this church to construct my project because of my familiarity with the young people and congregation. The young people of this church have expressed to me, on many occasions (I was youth Minister when my father was Pastor), their enthusiasm to serve God and the church. Additionally, most of the young people of Bethlehem became members of the church because of their parents' association with it and, out of respect, have continued to attend and serve in various capacities. However, most speak of not only recognizing and respecting their limitations (as instituted by the traditionalist of the church), they also speak of doing something inclusive in the church, with the hopes of being respected for their opinions.

I visited the church to ask the young people of Bethlehem if they were interested in participating in the worship-service portion of my project; the response was overwhelming. After the service that day, the young people and I proceeded to a back

room of the church and within forty-five minutes, the basics were set for the entire program (which included a tentative date for the event).

The most important factor of this project, even more important than gauging its success or failure, is that these young people must interpret, conduct, and implement their entire worship service. A clear representation of the thoughts and ideas of young people is the paradigm for this endeavor. Stanley Grenz points to this type of thinking in his book, *A Primer on Postmodernism*. “We dare not fall into the trap of wistfully longing for a return to the early modernity that gave evangelicalism its birth, for we are called to minister not to the past but to the contemporary context, and our contemporary context is influenced by postmodern ideas.”¹⁴ Additionally, when we limit our understanding of the changes in the perceptions of postmodern youth to nonsense, such misunderstandings will ultimately lead to unnecessary confusion and fear. Therefore, the ideas for the worship context of this investigation must essentially come from postmodern youth and their leaders as authentic.

Our postmodern youth live in a world of “subjective truth.” *Subjective truth*, loosely defined here, stems from the logic that truth is true only on the condition that it (the context, issue or thinking) is true to me or my group. This is in striking contrast to the modernistic view that truth is objective and based solely upon reason. In other words, truth is a personal preference rather than an objective reality. Grenz summarizes this condition this way: “Postmodernist live in self-contained social groups, each of which has its own language, beliefs, and values. As a result, postmodern relativistic pluralism seeks to give place to the ‘local’ nature of truth. Beliefs are held to be true within the

¹⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1995. pg. 10.

context of the communities that espouse them.”¹⁵ This type of thinking is not based in logic or some systemic visualization. Grenz also makes the claim that a Postmodern Christian can embrace both classical doctrines of the church and non-classical doctrines not of the church, such as reincarnation.

After considering the aforesaid stories and their possible impact on the church; what should be are our considerations for Sunday worship and the future *in* the church? As a paradigm for future religious thought and practice, what should be our *foremost* deliberations? In the final scrutiny; are we left with a new understanding of church and theology, known by some as the postmodern church? Should we continue within the framework of orthodox tradition, afraid we may offend God or some celebrated “old school” church institution? Or should we embrace the enviable face of change without fear and present the courage to know that God is in charge remembering the scripture: “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”¹⁶ We could also hypothesize these Postmodern developments are blue-prints for the emerging Church, that is, what *will* happen next in the church. At the end of these conversations we still must examine two very significant undergirding’s; (1) yes, the past is related to the future but can we shift our paradigms into multiple experiences and expressions theologically, with the Church, as we attempt to re-fill the pews? (2) The past is labeled as rational and systematic; the present, chaotic and subjective with its own set of paradigms; can we bond the seemingly unstable subjective present with its past history of reason and objectivity?

¹⁵ Ibid. 15.

¹⁶ John 10:16, NIV.

Lastly, as we consider how to deal with our present situation of refilling the pews in the face of change we have to ask; how have we, as a society dealt with change.

Apparently, thinking out-of-the-box is exactly the perplexing process taken during every *major* religious, political, and social developmental change on this planet. Succinctly, an example of that process appears as such: Someone or a group of individuals begin thinking out-of-the-box in an effort to manipulate or influence the multitudes and/or change the attitudes of government, the Church, or society.

Around the world we have examples like Gandhi who on March 12th 1930 took a walk where tens of thousands of people followed. Although portrayed in media coverage to the world as an act of passive-non-violence, Britain, the controlling government, thought otherwise. That government saw, in this simple act, a massive violent act of civil disobedience.

By the end of 1994, 1.2 million people died in Africa because the Belgium Government, over a period of time, portrayed one tribe inferior to the other by labeling the size of their noses, height, and forehead structure. In the end, one tribe titled the other “cock roaches” over the air waves. This was not genocide, this was massive propaganda orchestrated at its best.

Here, in America, there are examples of such manipulation and the ramifications of that conduct. The Civil War, where a group of people, after deciding there should be only one nation, thought society would be better served if there were two nations. Ignoring this action was a clear violation of the Constitution and a declaration of war.

More recently, the Civil Rights Era, where self-determination became the issue of those who were previously considered, by some, to be beyond the Grace of God because

of their skin color. Unfortunately this movement also became a target of self-interest motivated manipulators; short-sighted in the long-term damage of their endeavors.

Another example to include in this list of out-of-the-box spiritually motivated historical and political upheavals is the Hip-Hop movement. This movement has confounded Church leadership and society in general. It has drawn lines in the sand for academics and in some cases polarized communities. It has been demonized by its opponents because of language issues and praised by its supporters as prophetic. In the end, this movement has taken a place in society and spread throughout the world challenging Presidents, governments, and cultures to look squarely into the eye of their respectively sworn discourse of Declarations.

Hip-Hop tells gripping human stories. Additionally, Hip-Hop sets people free to express what others cannot or will not say. It portrays itself as a vehicle, bringing about political conscience and freedom derived from the spirit. The definitions for this movement are as varied as its contents and intentions. For considerations of this paper, we will classify it as an out-of-the-box movement within the human spirit. That being said, we can insert its meaning and conditions under the similar hubristic form as the Civil Rights Movement; also a born from an unsatisfied spiritual condition implemented by a people believing in *hope*.

By definition, these two movements were born and developed by a people who were undecided by an entire society. The Civil Rights Movement and Hip Hop were born in the ghettos of the down-trodden and bewildered of America, as expressed earlier in this paper. Additionally, these two movements also opened financial and political venues previously denied to them by a society that was unaware of its power and influence. This

fact can be established by the present day forte these two movements have established. That is, these movements express themselves in similarities such as pride, self-confidence and self-determination. Consider the Hip-Hop movement a sibling of the Civil Rights era where freedom is the undergirding factor of the hope, experience, and the goal for an informed society. Additionally, this movement holds this position because of its significance in worldwide influences of all people just as the Civil Rights movement. We see the tenants of the Civil Rights Movement in the struggles of other countries the world over as they march and act in unison for a common goal or personal right.

If we juxtapose the Civil Right struggle and the Hip-Hop movement, we can clearly see these similarities and the undergirding's of these two ideologies. I mention these two movements because of the manner in which they became applicable to the feelings and thoughts of the young. The Civil Rights movement, in terms of national coverage arguably began with the civil liberty of "riding a bus" being denied. Note: Rosa Parks was not the first try of this tactic, by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), to gain National attention towards the struggles of Black people. This approach was directed toward a particular city only. The Civil Rights movement took hold in the national arena when young people began sit-ins through-out the south. The inception of Hip-Hop began out of the backs of automobile trunks, in the form of tapes, sold locally by young people who had no connection to the national music genre of the country. In their infancy, these two movements shared similarities of language, undergirding's of struggle, and religious opponents contending their Godlessness. Another example of their comparisons is as follows: At the beginning of the Civil Rights movement, particularly the Black Power segment, in conjunction with organizations like the Black

Panther Party and the Black Guerilla Movement there were not many Churches involved, both Black and White. Hip-Hop, in its infancy, was on the fringes of society as well; ostracized, at least in part, by the traditional music lovers, society in general and unquestionably the church. Again, these spiritually motivated movements became another of those aforesaid cultural processes that, in the end, became accepted and has been incorporated through-out the world. All that being said can be succinctly expressed in the words of an African who died because of an “idea”. His name was Steven Biko. I understand him as a man who spoke volumes in a few words. In terms of fear expressed by some concerning the Civil Rights movement and the Hip-Hop movement I believe he would say, “...the power of a movement lies in the fact that can indeed change the habits of people. This change is not the result of force but of dedication, and of moral persuasion”.¹⁷ This begs the question; why is Black unity fearful? Some would call it an expression of the experience. Biko also sum up these expressions in a training course he developed concerning Black Consciousness. “Being Black is not a matter of pigmentation – being Black is a reflection of a mental attitude.”¹⁸

The early part of the 21st century has brought about events and attitudes with similarities to the Civil Rights Movement of the 60’s. However, there are some changes in the attitudes of those seeking self-determination and those sworn to protect and serve.

First of all, the church has *not* fully committed to the struggle facing youth today. The church has not committed because it does not understand those most effected. That is, ordinary people facing gangs, drugs, unemployment and an increasing unchurched population. The police on the other hand, out of fear or an inference that accountability is

¹⁷ Donald Woods, *Biko*, New York, Henry Holt and Company 1984 pg. 119.

¹⁸ Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*, Johannesburg: Heinemann, 1972, pg. 48.

not an issue are reacting in a manner that is not only unprofessional also damaging to future positive interactions with the community. The only way the church can help to eradicate any further deterioration of public trust is to produce a *place* of conversation for understanding. That is, recognize their role in the disconnection with the youth of today and direct efforts to eradicate mistrust infused in those sworn to protect the community. Intrinsically, what we as a society are faced with is this: The secular community is professing justice while at the same time allowing our young to kill themselves and not say *anything* (Snitches get stiches). Contrastingly, law enforcement is saying we need community trust and support to eradicate those same influences killing young people but also disallowing *their* accountability. That is, not policing their own to the degree where an inference, relative to cover-up, is not enough to investigate and plausible deniability is the reason for unaccountability. Again the words of Biko: "...the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed".¹⁹ In short, the church will not discount its claims of understanding people by way of the Bible and authority will not question its methods of control as ineffective. However, getting in the way of these efforts by the church, community, and law enforcement is our enemy, pride. We will explore more of the subject of pride and its devastating effects in chapter four.

Out of The Box

In terms of the Civil Rights era and its music, the radical lyrics of artist's such as "Gil Scott-Heron"²⁰ in the 1970's spoke of a "revolution not being televised." In

¹⁹ Ibid, pg. 68.

²⁰ Gil Scott-Heron, "The Revolution will not be Televised," *Pieces of a Man*. Comp. Gil Scott-Heron. 26011. 1971.

comparison to today's Hip-Hop, the words of Tupac Shakur speaking of *Brenda's Got A Baby*²¹ and *Starin' Through My Rear View*²² express volumes concerning content and subject matter of conscientiousness viewed by the young people of today. These analogous views of postmodernism speak to the Derrida deconstructive stance positing, "there is nothing outside of the text"²³ leaving everything to a hermeneutic expression as it concerns clothing, entertainment, family, and the meaning of self-determinism correlated through subjective truth. These expressions of wanting to be included are similar to the conflicts facing traditional Churches today as postmodern worshipers seek to be accepted. Young people wear sneakers, baggy pants, and questionable length skirts to Church, church gossip notwithstanding. Further examining the Civil Rights movement and Hip-Hop, the struggles of not only Black people also the poor and disenfranchised of all races and cultures are being expressed. These two movements, ostracized and marginalized by society in general, in their quest for inclusion brought out to the world stagnated existences posting to the world that Jesus said: "Come to me, *all* you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"²⁴. Could the Gospel be the answer for young people today? Could a different hermeneutic of scripture provide bridges to incorporate the masses into a single entity of conviction. This is "*the*" significant question this paper attempts to answer as we attempt to re-fill the pews in this postmodern society.

²¹ Tupac Shakur, *Brenda's got a Baby*, Tupac Shakur, Anton Gregory. 1991, CD.

²² *Tupac: Resurrection*, dir. Lauren Lazin, perf. Tupac Shakur (S.l.: Paramount Home Entertainment, 2003), DVD.

²³ James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1970, pg. 34.

²⁴ Mathew 11:28, NIV.

Who wants to think out-of-the-box? In this case, and throughout history, thinking out-of-the-box is the answer for anyone who believes change is the order of the day; to be heard and respected. This paper posits to those, seemingly outcast by traditionalism, that change is indeed the order of the day. In order for change, to become a reality, spiritual growth and progress might be conducted by an out-of-the-box philosophy; that is, a spiritual person who is willing to grow from their mistakes, and take a reality check of their behavior; a religious person brave enough to take an authenticity check of their own religious practices and influences. Young people have been assigned that calling in their music, mannerisms, and their drive to obtain a spiritual connection with God. Their right to Praise Him must be respected.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEMPORARY CHURCH VS FUTURE PERCEPTIONS

As we attempt to re-fill the pews of the church in this postmodern society, we need to consider many factors both past and present, to move forward. Thinking patterns, investigations, perceptions, and the most important of these factors is the type of information. The following are a few of the possible questions considered by the church as it attempted to keep-up with the plethora of changes in society.

- If the leaders of the Orthodox Church, during the time of Martin Luther, contemplated the ideas of deconstruction, where would the church be today?
- When the church divided into East and West, did Constantine consider the abandonment of the “normal or reasonable”?
- As Islam spread west during the 7th century, did the church seriously ponder another tolerable orthodoxy? If so, where would the church be today?

Considering these possibilities, in terms of the kind of thinking involved, would this be considered postmodern thinking? There would definitely be fear among the modernists/traditionalist of the time prevaricating possible awakenings of the religious community and a loss of power and influence. Moreover, investigations were not common place during that period of time. Information sharing was limited to clergy and

religious scholars. Additionally, the number of people who could read during this period of time was relatively nonexistent thereby further decreasing competent investigation.

Questioning whether the present excursions into Postmodernity are also perfunctory investigations or concrete futuristic perceptions of theology and worship are questions that the church and its congregants are faced with today. In an effort to re-fill the pews should the church continue in its traditional manner or another “manner of thinking” be embraced considering the shift in the religious thinking of today? I believe that this question is strikingly similar to the contrasting views of public perceptions during the Scopes trials of 1925.¹ Succinctly speaking, should we as a society continue to think in a manner congruent to the church or should we embrace another “type” of thinking? This trial set in motion the public debate of biblical creation vs the evolutionary stance of “the beginning”. On one hand we have an accepted version of objective truth, that is, biblical creation or Modernity. On the other hand we have subjective individualistic views of Postmodernity in the evolutionary stance, with its own individual set of rules and standards. In the examination of Modernity and Postmodernity we clearly see the clash between theology and science, faith and reason, and/or majority and individual liberty. In the end the question solicits, how should the church proceed?

Public perception during the Scopes trial was a sort of revolution that considered truth vs. freedom and fundamentalism vs. urban sophistication. Setting aside contrasting religious views and legal inconsistencies, the Scopes trial illuminated two very distinct human behaviors that emerged affecting both sides of this controversy. Those two

¹ Douglas Linder, "Scopes Trial Home Page - UMKC School of Law," Scopes Trial Home Page - UMKC School of Law, 2008, accessed Oct 13, 2015, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/scopes.htm>.

behaviors are fear and mistrust. These issues of mistrust and fear will be discussed in detail in the chapter “Fear and Mistrust”.

Fear and mistrust took the forefront and overshadowed the primary issues for the church while science manipulated both sides of the argument. There is a similar conflict concerning Modernity vs. Postmodernity. I’m not talking about the fear of losing a trial and having your religion or your profession perceived as illegitimate. The kind of fear and mistrust mentioned here is manifested in the misinterpretation of perceived behavior of others.

Another factor influencing the questioning of religious tradition is, is the context of information in the forms of objective and subjective truth? One may also presuppose that too much information can compound the problems associated with making an informed decision particularly concerning Modern vs. Postmodern thinking. For instance, relative to deconstructive thinking, that is, the thoughts of what or who is the authority supporting the information in question? The list is extensive, confusing, and incomplete at this juncture in history. I mention incomplete at this junction in history because the public as well as main-stream academia has yet to investigate pertinent information stored in places like the Vatican, ancient writings from Egypt, South America, and the far-east. Contrastingly, over the past 50 years we’ve seen questionable institutions in the west impact people’s lives and religious practices with information that, some say, borders on lunacy.

Scientology founded by Ron Hubbard is one such institution. A worldwide institution, Scientology believes in the notion that “a meter can be used to rid its

followers of negative influences”.² This concept also has exclusive variations relative to its membership based on monetary contributions. Apparently, such contributions are interrelated to levels of purity and ranking within the organization. How do the accepted, present day, church and society deal with religious practices of such influence, and where can the line be drawn in terms of authenticity?

At another extreme, we see other forms of information sharing and religious practice, sometimes leading people to take their own lives for the sake their beliefs. Furthermore, these extreme forms of information sharing and religious practice, in some cases, have resulted in the public’s misinterpretation of events, leading to false criminal charges and other devastating results.

Another questionable institution is the Branch Dividians’ with David Koresh. From news reports, the public heard he could not surrender his congregation to authorities before he translated or interpreted the Seven Seals from the book of Revelations in the Bible. In the end, 82 men, women, and children died in this fear induced action of pride fueled by murderous mistrust.

John Africa and the individuals in the ‘Move’ organization from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is also a questionable institution which believes in a spiritually driven natural way of living. ‘Move’ gained a reputation by just being different from the status quo, and unfazed, by police authority. That authority turned out to be a Philadelphia Police Commissioner determined to destroy the organization, some sources believe for personal reasons, others say spiritual. The Police Commissioner was Catholic; Move members were spiritual and literally flaunted their disdain for police authority and the

² James R. Lewis, *Scientology*. Oxford Press: New York, 2009, pg. 339.

Commissioner. To give an example of how erroneous information can persuade people and our court system to make exceptionally bad decisions in this day and age, consider this: During a Move confrontation in 1978, a police officer was shot and killed at a house occupied by 'Move' members. When the police finally removed the Move members from the house, no weapon was found in the house. Oddly enough, every Move member, in that house was charged with murder. Over the years that followed, Move members continually protested this injustice and other erroneous infractions of the law that were similar. Move finally settled in a house occupied by nine people, including five children. The police continually watched the house, and finally decided to serve warrants for certain occupants of the house. The police bombed the structure, ignoring the children inside, resulting in a fire. Philadelphia Police allowed the fire to burn three square blocks of the city to dislodge Move members believed to be hiding in the house. Nine people died in that fire including five children, all Move members. One surviving female was charged with a crime but was offered a deal by the District Attorney's Office. She was to be let out of jail *if* she disassociated herself from fellow Move members for the rest of her life. She refused the deal. The incident happened in 1985; she was awarded, by the city \$500,000.00 in 1996 after serving her entire sentence. The police and Move proclaimed conflicting beliefs based on a different view of the personal rights and guarantees by the Constitution. Two questionable inconsistencies resulted from this conflict.

- First, we have a court system denying the right of an individual to associate with others of her Faith resulting in her incarceration.
- Second, we have an individual who is willing to spend years in jail to uphold her religious belief and receive a cash settlement of vindication.

In terms of the future, how can a society determine a just balance between the rights of individual beliefs and the legal system? (Church and State) There is a growing concern for determining individual rights vs. constitutional guarantees. This concern can be seen in the cases of self-proclaimed Prophets like Warren Jeff, President of the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints (FLDS). He selected genes to influence the world. He had many wives and children, and held sway over hundreds of marriages and commanding absolute loyalty. This is to say nothing of his predecessors who led their followings across the United States and well established themselves politically and in the community. The information these people received would change the lives of people for generations to come. Furthermore, even after Jeff's conviction for child molestation, it is reported he still has a loyal following. This story begs the questions of: "What is fundamental truth about God these people believe?" Additionally, "the particular authority of the information has to be questioned but by what means?"

Another example of these growing concerns for the church are conventions of the likes of Jim Jones of the Peoples Temple of Christ. The uniqueness of this group stems from the fact that they left the country of their origin to practice their belief. The aftermath of that situation is definitive, but their motives and individuals responsible for the information they shared are unclear.

Our Constitution makes a very clear distinction concerning Church and State. Do we, as an associated culture have the responsibility to *inform* those willing to give-up or change their citizenship status? I believe history has shown that some people can be influenced by various methods and mannerisms which may not be in their best interest. Their behaviors, because of these influences, can become erratic and in some cases

dangerous to themselves and society, at large. As society becomes more complex and confusing, fear and anxiety about life, in general, sometimes give people a wanting to believe all sorts of “greater than thou” stories about God or the perceived truth. Some people believe these seemingly outrageous stories about God and creation as authentic in an attempt to find something new and meaningful. Others have been dissolution by the promises of happiness and fulfilment only to find their pursuits wanting.

In the transition from the Modern age into Postmodernity a transparent authority should be the sign-post. That is, a paradigm for the *past and present* developments of the information concerning religious practice and spiritual development should be confirmed. Society has the responsibility to assure the public it has acquired the correct or at minimum reputable account of past societal mistakes and realizations in a particular context. That information should contain specifics of all available practices and spiritual developmental observations. Then, and only then, will the unchurched Postmodern seeker and the Modern church member begin to trust each other and together enter a fearless future of growth and understanding.

Before I go any further I need to define the terms “churched” and “unchurched”. Today, particularly in American society, there are “unchurched” people who have had a very limited exposure to the church and the Biblical experience. Arguably, beginning in the 1960’s when the so-called Love generation made its appearance people hedged their parent’s belief systems. The 1970’s and 1980’s generations followed suit “...abstaining from religious practice.” Very little was being passed down in the family and many became disillusioned. Those who became disillusioned did not attend, at least not on a regular basis, and passed very little on to their children. Therefore, we can safely assume

there are a large number of people who do not have any or very little church background. Catholic school attendance diminished as a convention and people's attitudes changed concerning societal norms and standards. Some of the children raised during the aforementioned period's period are today 'seeking' some type spiritual orientation; opting out of denominational practices³. I call them the *unchurched*; they can also be classified as postmodern seekers.

Then there are the "churched" or traditionalists. These people have been taught, to a significant degree, about church, the bible, and are practicing within a denomination. Some have become zealots to the point of Fundamentalism to the extreme; while still others are practicing their church denomination by way of tradition, some settling aside personal spiritual development. The reasoning for their choices are varied and complex to the point of unexplainable. I call them the *churched*; they can be classified as Modern believers.

Ultimately, God can be trusted as the ultimate authority and if we lean towards the natural progression of a deep spiritual connection; spirituality becomes the transducer for such a correlation. The challenge is obtaining concrete information and explaining the "spiritual" to the churched and sorting out the information for the unchurched. The unchurched may not conceive spirituality to be a problem, as they have little or no presuppositions concerning "spirituality" as meaningful. The churched, on the other hand, could have a problem with an explanation of the spiritual. It is more than likely the

³ Michael De Groote, "The rise of the nons: Why nondenominational churches are winning over mainline churches," Deseretnews.com, February 25, 2011, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700113490/The-rise-of-the-nons-Why-nondenominational-churches-are-winning-over-mainline-churches.html?pg=all>.

churched are locked into the Trinitarian (Christian) view or some other benign practice surrounded in tradition. The churched view the “spiritual” as something connected to an emotive or related to metaphysics. By contrast, the unchurched have only seen or heard of the emotional or metaphysic elevations in the traditional worship service and have come away wanting. Attempting to *explain* the personal exclusivity of “spirituality” by the unchurched to the churched may, in some cases, be an exercise in futility. This may be because the churched, in some cases, cannot or will not separate religion from the spiritual. That is, the churched has “trusted” this particular view. The unchurched on the other hand, if they continue to attend church, will want to learn about God, and the practice of religion, while continuing to see the “spiritual” as a separate issue. Some unchurched will welcome Bible study and then gradually accept the worship services an essential part of their spiritual development. At the end of the day, God can be counted on to handle the spirituality in the churched and the practice of religion in unchurched.

Another societal transition presented itself during the writing of this paper. Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans-gender and Questioning (LGBTQ) community have struggled to achieve legal status in the church. “...thus we ought not dismiss those capable of Praise”. The future holds these individuals in the embrace of society disavowing old marginalization’s held by the church. I share Dr. Kirk-Duggans’ intention of inclusion because God made these individuals therefore to dismiss this community’s objectives would not be sacrosanct. I believe the church, one day, will fully embrace this community as *normal* and displace its “abomination” citation. During my studies at Drew University I read about a lesbian Pastor who received her Calling while

holding her lover outside of a gay club. The reading went on to say this still gay Pastor has a congregation of over 4000 people.

When I read this story I was reminded of an encounter I had with some Middle School students. I taught High and Middle School for a time. One of my Middle School students said something so profound during class it deserves repeating. We were discussing weekly events from one of the local newspapers in class one day. Apparently, Elton John married a man and one of my students took exception to this union. I was a bit nervous about the topic and waited for a response from the class. From the back of the room, one of my more engaging students stood up and said, “Mr. Carr, if a vegetable grows underground or on top of the ground, it’s still a vegetable, isn’t it?” The entire class gave her a standing ovation. I was really proud of my class that day.

The questions raised in the “History” chapter remains, “Are we headed for the preaching of a baseball cap, baggy pant, street looking individual? Are we destined, in the religious community, for the extremes of the Prosperity Gospel and Fundamentalism as the formats for theology? Where will the future take the postmodern church seeker with their ambiguous truths and mistrusting spirit?”

Dr. Gardner Taylor, former Senior Pastor of Concord Baptist Church in New York made note of this era and the problematic nature of Postmodernism. During a Ministers conference in North Carolina in the early 2000’s, Dr. Taylor was put to the question. He stated, in no uncertain terms, “this too shall pass”. However, as we contemplate future theologies, church attitudes, and church populations, the underlying conventions remain; are we destined to repeat past mistakes of similar cultural, historical, and political perspectives and remain ignorant of God’s true intentions? Are we to

continue in traditional paths, which will inevitably lead to further fearful ideals and spiritual mis-formation not understood or respected by our young people? Can we to feel safe, in our present modes of practice, paying little or no attention to other spiritual possibilities and ideologies of postmodern theology and spirituality? Hopefully, this prayerful and honest look at forming bridges between Modern and Postmodern worship may provide some insights to alleviate stumbling blocks of fear and mistrust inside the church.

CHAPTER FOUR

FEAR AND MISTRUST

An elaboration on the subjects of fear and mistrust and their influences on our discussion of worship in the postmodern era are in order, at this point. Although these subjects are common place, in and by themselves they have been used, abused, and misunderstood in a religious context. Common religious history gives us examples in the form of perversions created by those displaced from power, in government and the church as well. To be succinct we can clearly see what happened in this country; undergirded by fear and mistrust colonialism took power. However, for the sake of this discussion a basic idea will be sufficient.

Our first look at fear and mistrust takes us to a behaviorist theory and the Oxford dictionary. Fear is an unpleasant emotional response identified by some behavioral therapists in classical conditioning as a conditioned response. A conditioned response is the behavior or pattern of an animal *after* a neutral stimulus. This behavior pattern was first introduced by B.F. Skinner in the 1930s.¹ The indications and definition of fear are, but not limited to, exposure to danger, expectations of pain, etc.² Mistrust is defined as to

¹ Rodney J. Hunter and Nancy J. Ramsay, *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2005, pg. 79.

² *Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pg. 531.

be suspicious of and/or feeling of no confidence.³ These definitions are sufficient for our purposes in the context of worship and the Church or more specifically traditional Christians and the contemporary seeker.

The influences of fear and mistrust must be respected for their power in our lives. Sometimes in our quest for spiritual growth and development we overlook certain particularities associated with being human, especially our susceptibility to *failings*. However problematic and destructive the outcome of a situation brought on by these negative emotions we must always remember our spiritual development is a process not an end result.

Note: fear inherits hesitation; hesitation is the forerunner of mistrust formulating marginalization within the traditionalist and the postmodern contemporary seeker. If we follow this logic to its obvious conclusion a plethora of problematic conditions occur without outside influences.

Within the traditional church there are longstanding attitudes, order, and decorum. Some of these are hats worn by the ladies of the church, suits by the men, and proper attitudes of respect, reverence and an air of dignity. In the Black Church, from the time we were brought to this country, we had a “Sunday go to meet’ in” pair of shoes, shirt, pants, or dress, which was required. As time went on, women began to wear hats and the men suits. People sat in a particular place in the pews and responded at a specific time to a precise event in the worship service. Children were to conduct themselves in certain mannerisms and were chastised severely, by anyone, for any number of encroachments. If someone conversed louder than a whisper he or she could also be reproved by anyone.

³ Ibid, pg. 958.

Music, in the Black Church began as a foot stomp and progressed to include a piano; for a time, drums and other instruments were forbidden. Today, most instruments can be included along with Praise dancing. To stray from these traditions and cultural norms of the church, in some cases would be considered sacrilege; which in turn would produce chaos, confusion, marginalization and fear. Chaos in that people would surmise the Pastor or the Deacons could not control the congregation. Confusion would ensue because the children would not understand the proceedings. Marginalization's follow some offences because no one would want to associate themselves with the person or persons committing the wrongdoing. Therefore, since you do not "act like us", you're not welcome here. Subsequently, fear of God's and other member's wrath would establish itself because the offence would seem a form of irreverence in God's house. All of this is in line with Modernity in that orthodoxy is in line with the status quo; truth, therefore is defined by reason, and objectivity is the underpinning of thinking. This is in striking opposition to the subjective thinking of the postmodern ear and its proponents.

In the Postmodern Contemporary worship experience there have been many changes from the traditional stance. Contemporary Gospel music has found a home along with Gospel raps, poems, videos and electronic music (music played by computer). The contemporary worship experience apparently is breaking boundaries in clothing, speech, and attitude. There are Pastors who wear hats in the Pulpit and anyone can wear sneakers instead of shoes. Some churches have separated the young people by age group, on Sunday, and given a different sermon from the main congregation. Postmodern contemporary seekers are more focused on the "spiritual" rather the "religious or denominational practice". Decorum and mannerisms have taken a back-seat to

participation. Inclusiveness has been inherited by these seekers negating the traditional stance of “you’re not welcome here” because you do not “act like us”. This type of thinking corresponds by definition to postmodern thinking, that is, subjectivity is the undergirding of the worship experience and values can be determined individually.

The manifestations of fear and the negativity of responses within the modern context appear most strikingly in the breaking of Church traditions. This particularly pertains to the language, clothing, music, and alike of the contemporary seeker. At the same time these fears lay the framework for marginalization and exclusion. On the other hand, the postmodern contemporary worshiper responds to traditional Church authority with mistrust. This may be due to behaviors unfamiliar and frightening as witnessed by the contemporary seeker. When this hesitation or mistrust occurs, two very significant and damaging consequences follow within the traditionalist and the contemporary seekers behaviors. The traditionalist and the postmodern seeker first misinterpret unfamiliar actions; secondly, both fall short in respecting possible sincere actions. Some of these misinterpreted behaviors include and are not limited to resentment, jealousy, and disrespect, along with a plethora of other underlying destructive conditioned responses. Resentment sometimes occurs, for example, in the fact that the modern and the postmodern seeker are diametrically opposed in their thinking patterns in terms of reason. Subsequent, jealousy appears in the form of loss of control when explanations are needed. Disrespect rears its tentacles in the form of methodologies not being taken into consideration. Ironically these destructive behaviors are led by pride. Pride will not allow either the traditionalist or the contemporary seeker a shared worship experience. This happens because pride bates us into making unjustifiable demands on others. When

these demands are not met our pride causes us to justify our own abhorrent behaviors; thereby causing unreliable thoughts and feelings destroying possible bridges of mutual and beneficial ministerial endeavors.

Mistrust, on behalf of the traditionalist and the postmodern worshiper, is also destructive and confusing. Mistrust finds its tenants in the memories of the past such as misogyny, age disparagement, and problematic theological perceptions arriving from biblical interpretation. As stated above, mistrust is; to be suspicious of; feel of no confidence in.⁴ Postmodern worshipers have seen and experienced the fruits of the traditional Christian practice and have found it wanting notwithstanding history books and media accounts.⁵ The track-record of the modern Christian experience is ambiguous, at best, and continually under the scrutiny of the Postmodern society. These ambiguities speak volumes in terms of a no-confidence vote. Included in this vote are the Church's lack of involvement in the struggles of the young poor, disenfranchised, and the obvious *nemo tenetur seipsum accusare* (no one is bound to accuse himself). One thing is strikingly clear regarding a large majority of Christians of today. Some Christians today demonize postmodern generational forms of worship and preclude their spiritual concerns as not factual. These allegations are fashioned within the secular community as well, breeding inimical suspicion and contempt.

What does this to do with building bridges within the worship experience? First allow this brief explanation of two other very important terms; dominant discourse and preferred story. A "dominant discourse" is explained by Carl Savage as: "...a set of

⁴ Ibid, pg. 954.

⁵ *Sourcebook: a reference to percept information sources and systems*, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Percept Group, Inc., 2003, pg. 49-53.

guiding thoughts that are not likely to change until credible and promising alternatives are produced”.⁶ Additionally, a “preferred story” is latent, more functional and hopeful story.⁷ Earlier in this chapter we mentioned the contrasting views of Modernity vs. Postmodernity. We can clearly see that fear and mistrust are the stop-gaps generated in the worship experience between the modern and the postmodern seeker. Therefore, if we can begin to understand the manifestations of our fears and mistrust what can spawn are insights to a new beginning. We can initiate reconciliation within our context of the long-standing pride generated by “dominant discourses” which have prevented honest explorations into the “preferred story.” Understanding possible misinterpreted theological and biblical fears generated by these “dominate discourses,” also preclude fallacious excursions into spiritual connections of the postmodern-seeker. This disallows any fair and unbiased dialog to understand a different worship hermeneutic. This idea is supported by Savage as he posits “traditionalists need to own their negative behaviors”⁸ of misogyny, misinterpretation, and marginalization produced by fear and media produced perceptions. If the aforementioned ideas can be taken into consideration progress in the formation of bridges between the traditionalist and the postmodern seeker may become a reality. Furthermore, future ministries are also an actuality if the postmodern seeker can (1) begin to understand the origins of practice as it pertains to the traditionalist (2) set in motion rudimentary inquiries of varied theologies associated with traditional worship and convention (3) and respect traditional formats and ideological

⁶ Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry*, Louisville, KY: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008, pg. 79.

⁷ Ibid, pg. 79.

⁸ Ibid.

Church practices. This can only happen if prevailing attitudes of hegemony relinquishes its throne of pride. Under these auspicious and fundamental principles the walls of mistrust will fall and the fear of misinterpretation by accepted orthodoxy and the postmodern worshiper will take its proper place, thus producing a “preferred story.

In light of this discourse the church is faced with the dubious and daunting task of asking old and new members of the congregating to examine themselves. Looking at *self* can be confusing and extremely frightening. Appraising the situation squarely to see where the problem lies and finding fault in our own behaviors will require prayerful analysis and a determined spirit. Then, it will become necessary to implement ministries necessary to form true relationships with others of a different spiritual and religious paradigm. This challenge can become a reality. “...when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw *all* people to myself” (John 12:32) and “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow *me*”. (John 10:27).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

I will begin this summary and conclusion with a simple statement: Religion, in this country and I would venture to say other countries, has an inimitable and paradoxically inane effect on people in terms of change. Change in the religious world is slow and difficult. What is inexplicably apparent before or after *any* major societal change has been preceded by war, community isolationism, or political upheaval. The same is apparent in the religious sector of society. Therefore, as we examine these conclusions it would be wise to keep in mind; those in power, in any religious context, will not submit wholeheartedly to *any* major change without conflict. A people, a culture, a community, a state, or a country can become locked in religious passion, sometimes to the point of ignoring its own public and political welfare. History has proven this point beyond exception. This report is but a “call in the wilderness”.

In this diametrically opposed society of secular verses religious, poor verses the wealthy, the process of bridging modern and postmodern thought patterns becomes

increasing difficult with such changes. However, our focus here is the youth in our churches and the refilling of church pews.

I will combine my summary and conclusions with personal observations of these dynamics. My general observations of young people during the process of this project are as follows:

Young people are reluctant to stray from the norm of the modern structured religious practice in addition a contrasting energy to embrace religious practice on personal levels.

I announced my intentions about this project in my home-church during one Sunday morning service and pronounced there would be a meeting after service. Initially, all the young people in the church were excited about doing something different for Sunday worship service. They were further enthused about doing it themselves in a manner different from the norm and produced by themselves. At the onset I did not notice any apprehension or fear developing. However, as the meeting progressed thoughts and feelings by the young people changed rapidly. As the young people began to discuss a religious service produced entirely of their own accord there appeared to emerge a sense of reluctance to do something different; I acknowledged this hesitancy as fear. Apparently, after participating in conventional services for all of their lives, *any* change not already approved or demonstrated by their home church was looked upon with skepticism.

However, when informed that their choices would be Biblically sound and denominationally correct there was a noted sense of relief to a degree. Conversely, there also were some faces in the crowd I recognized as showing a genuine flash, or more specifically, an indication of mistrust. I was concerned about these individuals more than

the others. I wanted to know where and how the feelings of mistrust developed. Not that I wanted to change their mind; I wanted them to understand and discuss their apprehensions. My main concern was to give them an understanding that their ideas, thoughts, and actions were just as important as anyone else in the community of Faith. In other words I got the indication from them that the church would not allow their changes.

Referring to earlier comments about fear and mistrust in the church; fear manifests itself in a number of aberrant behaviors. These behaviors or more importantly the outcome of these behaviors was my main concern. As noted: to stray from traditional and cultural norms of the church, in some cases, would be sacrilege producing chaos, confusion, and marginalization.

As the meeting continued, comments in the room and personal conversations were varied, selective and thoughtful. In short, we had a good time discussing the Pastor, other church members and behaviors not readily understood. Their comments ranged from, “the Pastor has to allow this, my parents will be glad to hear that”, to “I don’t know about this Minister Carr”, etc. Additionally, I noticed prideful and optimistic nuances in conversations such as, “We’re going to do this”, and “oohs and aahs” when there was a bold or unanticipated comment. Religion to these young people is important and participation in such a significant part of the community of Faith bolstered feelings of belonging and a genuine connection of having status within the community.

My next point of observation: Young people have a candid fear of marginalization by parents and the congregation, in general.

One of the many consistencies and marginalization’s exposed to young people in the church is the particular type of selectivity concerning people who did not fit within

the norm of the church. I questioned some of the young people after our initial meeting and I was really surprised by the amount of fear being expressed concerning what other people might think about them if they participated in something *not already* established in the church. My first question to these individuals was, “Why didn’t you say you were afraid in the meeting? Why didn’t you ask that question? Why didn’t you talk more about a particular idea *you* had?” Their common answer was, “I was scared to say anything because I did not want people to talk about me.” The people these individuals were concerned with are the people in the meeting and the congregation, in general. We all know how “the word” gets around in the church. These feelings were genuine by the young people. “Church folk” can be cruel and unforgiving particularly when change is involved. These feelings are reflections and indications associated with fear and mistrust although not fully expressed by young people or congregants. As noted, mistrust undergirds both the traditionalist and the postmodern thinker. This statement is addressed in the chapter “Fear and Mistrust”. Also noted, the manifestations of fear and negativity within the modern context of the Black Church appear most strikingly in the breaking of tradition. This is also true when a person expresses themselves in a personal manner when articulating fear within a particular group setting. Notwithstanding the presuppositions of fear, the young people were enthusiastic about this project and were willing to face oppositions whole heartedly. As we left the meeting I heard conversations about Rap, singing, preaching, and group interactions such as Praise dancing.

- Young people display ignorance surrounding the origins of their faith, denominational issues and personal spiritual concerns. Willingness, with some apprehension, to express their concerns, discuss their challenges, and an

indication to compromise when confronted with conflicting views of cultural concerns.

There were questions from the young people throughout this entire process concerning the legitimacy of these endeavors in terms of concrete knowledge about the church, faith, denomination, and spiritual issues. Most young people I encountered were very limited in their knowledge about these issues and demonstrated genuine interest. The developmental process of these and other theological concepts were apparently a bit foreign. I noticed this inconsistency when young people asked question after question. Sometimes there were questions such as, “Can we do that in church? Is that in the Bible? Can this get me closer to God if we do it this way, and conversely, will we go to Hell for this?” Without going into too much detail, I answered some of these questions as humbly as possible. I was amazed at the ignorance of the young people concerning the Biblical legitimacy of this project and assured them we also have a theological consultant involved who would be diligent in keeping this service in order. There were very few questions concerning denomination and spiritual development, however, most did understand to some degree about their personal spirit. I did have a chance to teach through-out this project. I taught Biblical notions about the Trinity and its origins, Church history relative to the Baptist tradition and the how denominations came into actuality. There was a particular interest in the spiritual development process. This came about when I juxtaposed the manner they listened to their secular music and church music. Additionally, I was able to lessen fears about change in worship practices not being a bad or ungodly. However, I was particularly impressed with their enthusiasms about making changes in the worship experience. Most found the normal Sunday

morning worship boring, and sometimes confusing. Additionally, there were many questions and observations about the emotive dynamic expressed by some of the older church members. Some wanted to know if that dynamic was in the Bible, did people throughout history act in that manner? The most surprising question to me, that the young people wanted to know was, “where did these older people get that particular behavior?” This gave a clear indication that some of the young people were not clear about their own historical heritage. Of course my question for them was, “How did you obtain your church behaviors?” Some said they did not understand what all the shouting was about. They did say, “Sister so-and-so always got ‘Happy’ and asked why does she have to do that *every* Sunday?” I was afforded the opportunity to explain to the young people about tradition versus denomination and the particulars of the worship service as they relate to culture. They were fascinated. I asked if they chose this particular denomination. Most had not and did not give it much thought. This led to a discussion about the “spirit” which was quite lengthy and called for further interaction and teaching. There was agreement, among the group, that some of the traditional music not only sounded good, some looked forward to particular selections. This led to sharing information about the history of music in the church and its progression. Historical and denominational instructions were also shared by my committee. I was also amazed at their misinformation and misconceptions about the origins of faith, origins of the Bible and the historical schisms which effected biblical publication. However, there was interest in wanting to know more.

- Young people feel a need for acceptance within their respective religious communities.

All the young people involved wanted to feel accepted; particularly in church. There have been studies showing that all young people want to please. Young people desire to please someone older, someone they respect, someone in authority. This project has shown that young people desire to be included within the broader context of regular Sunday service and please older church members; not just on youth Sunday. They want to be respected and acknowledged as being an integral part in the community of faith. In past generations, of the church, young people were told to be “seen and not heard”, to be there and just accept limited participation.

To be inclusive in every Sunday worship experience will become a catalyst for refilling present day pews. Such a venture will become a legacy of trust and acceptance for future generations. Additionally, such inclusiveness will bring in a new manner of worship and community participation to everyone within the general community, at large, in particular the community of Faith. Thereby, strengthening our society, as a whole and insuring a permanent place for those who *think* differently.

- Young people who participated in this project demonstrated a genuine need to please God and develop an accepted theology.

The young people I spoke with had a genuine belief in God and a willingness to please God but were confused as to the correct manner to accomplish this seemingly elusive goal. Some told stories about asking questions about the correct way and were told the correct way was in the Bible; just read your Bible; just have Faith; just keep going to church. In short, most young people I spoke with were not satisfied with these answers. Previous generations were frustrated, as well, but accepted such answers. I

tackled questions like; is the right to please God a secret? How come I can't get a straight answer from my parents or Pastor? How come they have so many churches today? Did they have this many churches in old'n times? Young people have candid and important questions which deserve concrete answers. The church must act responsibly to these inquiries of young people; comprehensive answers are wanted and needed. This can only happen if traditionalist let go of solidified practices and embrace another method of thought in the worship experience.

Observation from Lay Committee

My committee was eager to participate in this project; however they did bring some of their own traditional religious baggage, which was expected. My committee was instructed to keep in mind that their family, life experience, education, value preferences, and professional journey will influence the telling and interpretation of the narratives and should be owned and discussed through the project. Most of the committee grew-up in the church, and are familiar with traditional church policy and its marginalization's concerning young people.

My first roadblock in this project was transportation. This project was conducted in a rural setting; therefore public transportation was out of the question. Meetings at my home church were no problem, but the inclusion of other people in my committee and other young people who wanted to be involved presented a serious situation.

The committee's first meeting was held at a local Community College. This meeting consisted of me, the chairperson, and another individual; no one else attended. We discussed as much as we could about the project and its anticipated problems,

teaching opportunities, as well as its possible benefits to the MDBA. Admittedly, I was disappointed about the turnout. After the meeting, I spoke with the chairperson who had experience with working with people in this rural setting. Expecting he would also be disappointed he assured me this type of response was common. Apparently, the dynamic associated with this rural setting was apathy. His words were, “some church folk, in this area will get excited about something initially but apathy, job, and family responsibilities take priority, which is understandable. Naturally, my next question was, “Why did they take the commitment?” His answer was, “They mean well and they really want to appear involved with church activities by other church members.”

This speaks to an earlier statement made in this paper concerning church people. Church folk want to *appear* involved out of fear of being classified as “not really” a Christian. Judgmental accusations made by “well-meaning” Christians are normal in a church related setting which can be damaging and at times cruel. However, postmodern religious thought, by definition, leaves little room for such conversation. After a discussion about postmodern thought patterns, in this first meeting, the Lay Committee was in total agreement with this statement.

Additionally, at this meeting we discussed how to proceed in the next phase of the project which was a mass meeting. We mapped a strategy to contact the sixty churches in the MDBA and how to inform the MDBA of our intentions. Since this is my project, I contacted and talked with the Moderator and the Christian Education Director of the Middle District Baptist Association MDBA (see appendix). They pledged their support and I looked forward to their wisdom. Dr. H. Robinson, Moderator for the MDBA encouraged me to “not give-up” which proved to be invaluable.

I contacted the members of my committee through letters in order to have “on record” our interactions and intentions (see appendix). Letters were also sent to participating Pastors of all the churches in the MDBA. Additionally individual parents of some young people who wanted to have input for this project were sent letters as well (see appendix). As the project continued we found it necessary to re-send letters to all the Pastors of the MDBA. In all, three contact letters were sent out at considerable cost. Note. We never received a reply from any churches. I attribute this nonresponse to fear.

One of the many things I learned from this project was the limits and fears Pastors of rural churches face. First of all, the young people in their respective churches are the future of *their* church. Jeopardizing that dynamic in the demographic of an area of an outgoing population can be intimidating. Outgoing meaning young people, in this area rarely stay in the area. Secondly, some Pastors can be influenced by their traditional congregation to the point of being unwilling to upset the natural setting of their respective church. That is, they do not want to bring something new into the church setting that has not developed in *that* church, i.e. by the dominant family in their church, Deacon Board, or Trustees. We attempted to make it clear to these Pastors that this project was a one-time affair and we were not attempting to redirect their youth membership. Additionally, we wanted to insure them this project is an effort to increase youth participation in their respective churches.

Our next meeting was held at the MDBA building which was attended by fifty young people and adults. We made some inroads concerning the content of the service. We informed the people in this meeting that regardless of what the young people decided to do that the service will be biblically sound and denominationally correct. We believed

this eased some concerned because there were some parents attending who were concerned about the extent of their children's contributions. I intentionally made this my first statement because of the reactions I observed earlier that year.

If you remember a story I conveyed, in this paper, about a preacher who preached a sermon to the young people in the MDBA building; here's that story.

The audience consisted largely of young people, who were the recipients of a sermon from a preacher who used, in his delivery, raps and rhymes. This sermon was appreciated by the young people. Personally, I appreciated his courage and applaud the effort. I interviewed a few traditionalists, in the audience, after the service. The traditionalist denigrated the preacher and his preaching genre for a variety of reasons.

Some indicated the sermon was out of place. Another stated, "I just didn't like it, another indicted, "it was OK but I just didn't like it". There were frowns and shaking of heads which I interpreted as fear... Additionally, there were hints of being disgusted with the Preacher's approach leaving me with the question of; Why? Note: the aforementioned person who indicated "just didn't like it" would not give a reason as to why. Others would not comment as to their reasoning concerning their negative comments.

The audience, during this first large meeting, was enthusiastic about the project and pledged their support, unanimously. The remaining seats of the Lay Committee were formed that night with the next meeting forthcoming pending confirmations. However, our optimism about the project was short lived. Lay Committee members, with the exception of the chairperson were difficult and in some cases impossible to contact.

The Chairperson for the Lay Committee became frustrated with the committee members failing to fulfil their commitments and missing meetings.

The young people, in my home church presented a service at the MDBA building and did their best. We had a young Preacher to preach the sermon and the young people sang a few traditional songs. However, I did not notice anything different in the service. It was traditional in content and delivery.

I would conclude this was a successful project but a failed worship service endeavor. This project was a success in that my lay Committee observed and understood the fears and mistrust issues of both traditionalist and postmodern seekers. Prayerfully, these individuals will pass along what they have learned and apply that knowledge accordingly. This was a failed service endeavor in that the young people who participated in the service *did not* inject anything new into their service.

The young people of the church knew they could do whatever they wanted to do, within reason, for the service. However, they chose to keep things traditional without injecting anything contemporary. The service was in order and came off without a hitch. As expressed in the opening statements of this paper, sometimes people can become caught in a pattern of behavior and do not or cannot change. Clearly, the young people possess postmodern thinking patterns and want to express themselves in a contemporary fashion but failed to express that religious right.

In the end, because traditional thinkers and postmodern thinkers have two diametrically opposed thought patterns, finding small and common ground is the start. Then, and only then, the process of getting both sides to listen, *really* listen can begin.

After this is accomplished, a mutual worship practice can become a reality and begin to refill the pews.

APPENDIX 1

LETTER TO MIDDLE DISTRICT BAPTIST ASSOCIATION-MODERATOR

From the Desk Of:
Minister Andre G. Carr Jr.
#75 Reverend Andre Carr Road.
Rocky Point, North Carolina 28457
Phone: 910-6753302
E-Mail: acrrjr@ec.rr.com

Dear Rev. Dr. Harvey Robinson,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His Grace and Mercy are sufficient.

As you well know, I would like to involve our youth in a contemporary worship service. I am a Minister at Mt Rena MBC in Rocky Point, NC Pastor C. Graham. I am writing my Dissertation for my Doctor of Ministry Degree at Drew University; said service is part of that effort. I would appreciate meeting with you to solicit your help in this project, at your convenience, of course. I understand your time is limited therefore; I would only require 15 or 20 minutes of your time. I have permission from Reverend Graham, my Pastor, to proceed in this project, subject to his approval and I pray your endorsement as well. I appreciate your time and consideration in this matter. I pray to hear from you in the near future. God Bless.

APPENDIX 2

LETTER TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR

From the Desk of:
Minister Andre G. Carr Jr., M. Div.
107 Pine Hollow Drive
Rocky Point, NC 28457
(910) 232-6951/acarrjr@ec.rr.com

To: Dr. Reed
Director of Christian Education
Middle District Baptist Association
Burgaw, NC 28459
Re: Contemporary Worship Service

Rev. Dr., J. Reed,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We spoke earlier concerning this matter.

My plan is simple. Have our youth do an entire service. I'm not speaking of having a youth-day. I'm of speaking of an entire service; the way THEY (our youth) would like it. (date, time, the place will be the determined. This program will be Biblically correct and denominationally responsible. The various major partitions of the service such as Preaching, music, program, usher, etc, will be monitored by a lay committee (already in place). The entire service will have a theological consultant (already in place) to monitor the activities before becoming part of the permanent program. After, all phases of the program have been completed the program has to be approved by a Pastor (already in place). Final approval will be in the hands of you and Reverend Robinson.

Here's the Kingdom building piece. There will be a lay committee (already in place) observing the planning sessions and service. It will be the job of this committee to interpret, both theologically and spiritually, the service. They will share the information with our entire organization. Thank you and God Bless.

APPENDIX 3

LETTER TO THE PASTORS

From the Desk of:
Minister Andre G. Carr Jr., M.Div.
#75 Reverend Andre Carr Road
Rocky Point, NC 28457
(910) 675-3302
acarrjr@ec.rr.com

Middle District Baptist Association
1825 NC Hwy 53 West
Burgaw, NC 28457

Re: Contemporary (Youth) Service
Dear Pastors,

We offer you greetings, in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We are contacting all the Churches in the Middle District Baptist Association for the following: We would like the youth of your church and all the Churches in MDBA to participate in the creation and execution of a worship service. Note: “This is a one-time event.” Please choose two or three young people, from your church, ages 18 to 30 to participate in a planning session. This will to be held on June 7th @ 8 PM in Association building. (Noted above) This will not be a long meeting; maybe lasting 15 or 20 minutes.

The information gathered will be designed to build bridges and re-connecting today’s youth with traditional Baptist Churches. All information gathered from this venture will be distributed though-out the entire Association.

This will be a Biblically sound and denominationally correct service and is fully supported by the Middle District Baptist Association. We are looking forward to a very informative and fun filled undertaking for our youth. We pray for your support.

Please feel free to call me for any additional information

The Bible says: Isa. 11:6 “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” KJV.

Yours in Christ

Minister Andre Carr Jr., M.Div

APPENDIX 4

LETTER TO PARENT OR GUARDIAN

From the Desk of:
Minister Andre G. Carr Jr., M.Div.
#75 Reverend Andre Carr Road.
Rocky Point, NC 28457
(910) 232-6951
acarrjr@ec.rr.com

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Your daughter/son has shown interest in participating in a youth Service. This service will be constructed completely by the youth of Middle District Baptist Association Churches. Additionally, this service will be conducted in a Biblically sound and denominationally correct manner entirely endorsed by the Association. The reason for this service is to continue to have our youth participate in ministry and bring others into the community of Faith.

If you have any questions, please contact me through the above information; I will be happy to answer all your questions.

The Bible says: Isa. 11:6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." KJV.

Thank you for your time and consideration. God Bless.

Yours in Christ

Minister Andre Carr Jr., M.Div.

APPENDIX 5

LETTER TO LAY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

From the Desk of:
Minister Andre G. Carr Jr., M.Div.
107 Pine Hollow Dr.
Rocky Point, NC 28457
(910) 675-3302
acarrjr@ec.rr.com

To: Lay Committee Members

Re: Contemporary Service

Thank you and welcome. I appreciate your participation in this project. With your help, guidance, and our shared experience we can look forward to advancing the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior. Participating in this type process fills the Great Commission, as stated in the Bible. There may be some challenges ahead however, I am sure through prayer and keeping in mind, we are doing God's work, at the end of the day we will share in a satisfying resolve. After the work is completed, and we look back; my experience in this type of Kingdom building has confirmed what Jesus says in Mathew 11: 30 "For my Yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

APPENDIX 6

CHART

The following chart contrasts modernist philosophy with postmodernist, but any such chart is bound to be an oversimplified generalization. Nevertheless, generalizations and distinctions are necessary and useful.

Modern	Postmodern
rational	irrational
scientific	anti-scientific or unscientific
utopian, elitist, belief in universal values	populist claim, local values only
democratic	feminist and minority hegemony
hierarchical	anarchical
organized	non-totalized, chaotic, fragmented
centered	dispersed
European, Western	"multicultural"
generalizing	non-generalizing
determinate	indeterminate
objective	subjective
objectivist values, masterpieces	values determined socially and individually
formal disciplines	informal, undisciplined
purposeful, meaningful	meaningless or purely subjective meaning
construction	destruction (pomos prefer the euphemism "deconstruction")
belief in progress	no progress possible
theoretical	concrete, non-theorizing
analytical & synthetic	non-analytical, rhetorical, based on belief
simplicity, elegance, spartan, streamlined	decoration, elaboration, convoluted, evasive
logical, scientific	illogical, superstitious, opinion based
cause-effect	chance
linear	haphazard, "nonlinear"
harmonious, integrated	non-integrated
permanence	transience

abstract	concrete
communicative, prefer to be understood	prefer to be arcane
unified, coherent	eclectic, incoherent
objective truth	truth is socially constructed
apolitical to occasionally political	politicizes everything
disciplines primarily indifferent to power struggles	political power is of primary concern
reality is not anthropocentric	reality is socially constructed and anthropocentric

46

⁴⁶ Larry J. Solomon, "What is Postmodernism?," 2003, accessed December 15, 2016. <http://solomonsmusic.net/postmod.htm>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Biko, Steve. *"I Write What I Like"* Heinemann, Johannesburg, South Africa. 1972.
- Colberg, Kristin. *"Vatican I and Vatican II As Coherent Christian Discourse: A Relationship of Complementarity and Difference."* Diss. Notre Dame, Indiana, 2008.
- Concord. "Smalcald Articles," In *Martin Luther's Theological Writings*, by Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- De Groote, Michael. "The rise of the nons: Why nondenominational churches are winning over mainline churches." Deseretnews.com. February 25, 2011. Accessed October 23, 2016. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700113490/The-rise-of-the-nons-Why-nondenominational-churches-are-winning-over-mainline-churches.html?pg=all>.
- Gotsch, Kate. "Breakthrough in U.S. Drug Sentencing Reform: The Fair Sentencing Act and the Unfinished Reform Agenda." The Sentencing Project. November 18, 2011. Accessed July 2016. http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/dp_drugarrestreport.pdf.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub., 1995.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *The Baptist Congregation*. Regent College Pub., 2002.
- Hunter, Rodney J., ed. *Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Nashville: Abington Press, 2005.
- Kirk-Duggan, Cheryl. *Wake-Up!: Hip-Hop Christianity and The Black Church*. Nashville: Abington Press, 2011.
- Lewis, James R. *Scientology*. Oxford Press: New York, NY, 2009.
- Linder, Douglas. "Scopes Trial Home Page - UMKC School of Law," Scopes Trial Home Page - UMKC School of Law, 2008, accessed Oct 13, 2015, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/scopes.htm>.
- "Nicaea, First Council of." The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed. of the Early Modern World. 2004. *Encyclopedia.com*. 13 Oct. 2015 <http://www.encyclopedia.com> 2015. *Encyclopedia.com*. 13 Oct. 2015 <<http://www.encyclopedia.com>

- Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- “Paradigm Shift.” Dictionary.com. Accessed February 22, 2017.
<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/paradigm-shift>.
- Randolph, Peter. “Plantation Churches: Visible and Invisible.” *African American Religious History*, Milton C. Sernett, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001.
- Riddell, Mike. *Threshold of the Future: Reforming the Church in the Post-Christian West*. London: SPCK, 1998.
- Savage, Carl Savage and William Presnell. *Narrative Research in Ministry*. Louisville, KY: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008.
- Scott-Heron, Gil. “The Revolution will not be Televised,” *Pieces of a Man*. Comp. Gil Scott-Heron. 26011. 1971.
- Shakur, Tupac. *Brenda’s got a baby*. Tupac Shakur. Anton Gregory. 1991. CD.
- Smith, James K. A., *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1970.
- Solomon, Larry J. “What is Postmodernism?” 2003. Accessed December 15, 2016.
<http://solomonsmusic.net/postmod.htm>.
- Sourcebook: a reference to percept information sources and systems*. Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Percept Group, Inc., 2003.
- "Trent, Council of." Europe, 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World. 2004. Accessed October 13, 2015. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/philosophy-and-religion/christianity/roman-catholic-and-orthodox-churches-councils-and-treaties-21>.
- Tupac: Resurrection*. Directed by Lauren Lazin. Performed by Tupak Shakur. S.I.: Paramount Home Entertainment, 2003. DVD.
- Walker, Williston. *A history of the Christian Church*. New York, NY: Scribner, 1985.
- Woods, Donald. *Biko*. Henry Holt and Company, New York: 1984.
- "Vatican Council, First." The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed. Encyclopedia.com. Accessed October 13, 2015. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/philosophy-and-religion/christianity/roman-catholic-and-orthodox-churches-councils-and-treaties-22>.