There is no such thing as ‘theology’; there is only contextual theology... Doing theology contextually is not an option, nor is it something that should only interest people from the Third World, missionaries who work there, or ethnic communities within dominant cultures. The contextualization of theology – the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context – is really a theological imperative (Bevans 2002, 3).

Theology happens in a context. It is worked out among the rhythms of people’s lives as they try to understand God and what it means to follow God in the way of Jesus. The language, stories, analogies, parables, and metaphors all come from the context. This paper will reflect on the contextualization of theology within the historical culture and context of North American Youth Ministry. Contextualization of theology, as defined by Stephen Bevans, occurs in the conversation between the theological influences of the past and the present contextual influences (Bevans 2002). Utilizing this approach, snapshots from four different periods of North American Youth Ministry as identified by Mark Senter and their distinct contextualized theologies will be analyzed: Period of Associations (1824-75); Period of Youth Societies (1881-1925); Period of Relational Outreach (1933-89); and Combining Old and New (1990 and beyond) (Senter 2010).

For the purpose of this paper four elements will be used to distinguish the contextualization of each period. First, there will be an identification of some specific contextual issues that are distinct for that place and time. Second, for each period a new truth from Scripture will be identified that was discovered. Third, each section will look at the social change that occurred because of this new truth. Finally, some evaluation will be given to the contextualization for each period identifying: the theological sources from which this new theology draws; the ways the new contextualization meets the Criteria for Christian Identity (as identified by Robert Schreiter¹); and the model of contextualization used (based on the models of Stephen Bevans²). Through this analysis a few threads will emerge that seem to weave this greater movement of youth ministry together.

² Stephen B. Bevans Models of Contextual Theology have been widely utilized throughout Christianity since the early 1990's including the areas of theology and missiology. He offers six different models of contextualization: Translation; Anthropological; Praxis; Synthetic; Transcendental and Countercultural. For a brief overview of the models see his “Synthetic Tables of the Six Models” pp. 141-143.
The Context of North American Youth

In the period of time that will be covered in this paper there were some significant transitions in the understanding of the terms, “youth”, “adolescence” and “teenager”. While this impacts the usage of the words in the writings and reflections of the times, it does not change the focus of the ministry to this general age group. It is those ministries to youth that will be focused on here. For the purpose of this paper the terms mentioned above will all refer to the transitional time period in a person’s life between childhood and adulthood. While this still leaves some ambiguity, especially on the later end with the onset of adulthood not being a physiological reality, it will place the focus of the context and the culture on a general age group.

It has also been argued that there is not one uniform youth culture in North America, nor has there ever been. The author agrees with this statement, but as will be articulated in this paper, there are groups of adolescents that can be characterized into some specific cultures and it is in these contexts that the working out of theology will be addressed. In short, this paper does not summarize the whole experience of all North American Youth Ministry. It admittedly only highlights some movements within the larger groups of youth cultures. While simple in this respect, it is believed that the periods and movements identified here are representative of the changes in contextualization within the youth ministry context for those times.

The point of the paper then is to highlight the reality and necessity of contextualization if and when youth ministry is to be done well. This recognizes the plurality of youth cultures and the ongoing need for contextualization in each age and place. In the absence of contextualization, youth ministry merely replicates what has been done before hoping for the exact same movement of God. In the presence of contextualization, youth ministry helps further and broaden the picture of the kingdom of God.

The Period of Associations (1824-75)

Contextual Matters

During this period of time there was not a specific segmentation of a group known as adolescents. There were children and there were adults in the eyes of most of culture. However, with the industrial revolution and the growth of labor jobs in the cities, there was a new interest in employing those young men who were able physically to work in factories. Many young people then moved to the cities to work while their families remained on the farmstead (Reed and Prevost 1993, 261). In addition to these rural implants, there was a whole other group of young immigrants from Europe who were also a part of this mix (Senter 2010, 105). Due to the issues of unruly behavior and lack of control and the absence of almost any formalized schooling outside of New England to this growing population of young people within the cities, there is a large need for adults to invest in these youth (Reed and Prevost 1993, 256). This is a group living without family or traditions.

3 For more information on the usage of these terms and the age groupings see Jon Savage, Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture, New York: Viking, 2007 and Robert Epstein, Teen 2.0: Saving our children and Families from the Torment of Adolescence, Fresno: Quill Driver Books, 2010.

New Truth and Scripture

Out of this unruly youth context, the church discovered that young people have their own identity and need to be evangelized for Christ. While there is not a specific set of Scriptures that this era of youth ministry singled out as their core, one that seems to encompass the heartbeat and was prevalent in the development of this theological insight was Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it (NRSV)."

Social Change

The church recognized that there was a problem with the youth within the city. While a good part of the rest of culture (and most in the church) sought to stay away from these unruly youth, some in the church stepped forward with a way to both educate the youth as well as evangelize them: Sunday Schools (these were not run by local churches, but were run by Christian laymen and women outside of the church) (Senter 2010, 256). While there had been Sunday Schools before this time in the United States, they were mostly focused on the children of those who were already attending church. At this time in history a model adapted from Robert Raikes of Britain was adopted and proved to be very successful in converting youth and helping them to keep to Christian morals (Reed and Prevost 1993, 260-1). Because of the Sunday School movement and the associations that arose out of their success (such as the temperance associations, the YMCA and the youth missionary societies), the social climate of young people within the context of the cities changed for the better. The context of the churches’ ministry changed as well as they began to see the value in ministering to these young people.

Evaluation

Theological Sources

This new truth and contextualized theology about the need to evangelize specifically the youth came from an interaction with the theologies of John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards and the Pietists like Cotton Mather (Lovelace 1979a, 215-6) (Lovelace 1979b, 38). Within these voices was a call for a distinct purity of life centered on Christ. Wesley added the evangelistic push to this pietism and revivalism mentality (Senter 2010, 54).

Criteria for Christian Identity

Of the five criteria offered by Schreiter, this new truth meets all five. A particular strength would be the way this truth continues the “Cohesiveness of Christian Performance” (Schreiter 1985, 118). This is manifested in the pietism among the young people and the adapted methods of keeping Christian morality a priority in their context through the temperance associations and the forming of the YMCA. One other strength is the way this truth “Challenged Other Churches and Christian Performance” (Schreiter 1985, 121). In many ways this was the beginning of forcing the local churches to directly deal with young people and their own specific issues.

Model of Contextual Theology

This model of contextualization seems to follow Bevans’ category of the “Countercultural Model”. Within this Christian youth association movement culture is seen as
standing in opposition to the gospel and needs to be challenged. Bevans’ writes, “What this model realizes more than any other model is how some contexts are simply antithetical to the gospel and need to be challenged by the gospel’s liberating and healing power (Bevans 2002, 118).” The Christians who started this movement did so as a way to challenge the dominant culture’s choice of ignoring these young people and to challenge the out of control rhythm of life these young people were living. This model also seems to fit at the level of embracing the incarnational approach of living alongside those in the culture, but also clearly living prophetically (Bevans 2002, 122). The purpose of the Sunday School was to help these young people at their level in their space at their time, but also to challenge them into a wholly different way of life (Senter 2010, 106).

This countercultural model is not a perfect fit however. Part of the prophetic living is a connection to the local church at every level. This strong ecclesiology is not mirrored in the early days of the Sunday School movement or the associations who largely operated outside the structure of the visible church (although run by laypersons from the local churches). Bevans’ notes that, “The countercultural model emphasizes the importance of Christian ‘practices’ – reading the Bible (especially together), hospitality (especially to the stranger), participation in communal prayer, celebrating baptism and reconciliation, celebrating Eucharist, developing skill in Spirit guided discernment, keeping the Sabbath… (Bevans 2002, 122-3)” This close connection with the activities of the local church is clearly missing in this movement. This was in part due to the times available to minister to this age group. The schedule of youth did not fit with the churches agenda and therefore Sunday School had to be done missionally.

The Period of Youth Societies (1881-1925)

Contextual Matters

Two major shifts in American society were the seedbeds for another contextualization of the gospel. The first shift was the beginning of the public high school in the United States. In 1875 the United States Supreme Court allowed for tax money to be spent on high school education and within 40 years of this ruling every state in the union had compulsory attendance laws (Krung 1972, 1). This acknowledgement of a separate age group became very significant. The second shift was within the Sunday School. The main focus of Sunday School had shifted to include children of all ages and there was more focus on the younger populations (Senter 2010, 154). There was now a group of older youth (that we would now call teenagers) who were educated in the faith, but were not challenged to live it out. A concern developed within the church for these young people, particularly in the mind of Francis Clark a pastor in Portland, Maine (Senter 2010, 154). He had tried many things to move the youth from a place of apathy to involvement, but was not successful. This concern for the discipleship and service of young people within the church became a concern throughout the nation.

New Truth and Scripture

Clark decided to gather these older youth and challenge them to pledge to accountability and to service in the church in 1881 (Senter 2010, 152). In short, Clark was calling the youth to leadership and to be active in their discipleship. Basing his model on the temperance associations of the day, Clark called for young people to pledge themselves to the endeavor to grow in their Christian faith and called it the Christian Endeavor Society (Clark 1906, 33). The Scripture that most encapsulates this contextualization would be 1 Timothy 4:12, “Let no one despise your
youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity (NRSV).” This text became a challenge to this newly discovered group of young people within the church.

Social Change
Many social changes occurred because of this new contextualization. From the outset one of the main goals of the Christian Endeavor Society was to incorporate young people into the life of the local church (Senter 2010, 163). Secondly it built upon the above mentioned contextualization (Sunday School), taking youth identity seriously enough to not only seek their conversion to Christ, but also to seek their service in the kingdom (Senter 2010, 161-4). Third, this Christian Endeavor Society exploded throughout the nation. Within a few months of first starting his society, Clark wrote about his efforts in two periodicals. Letters poured into Clark and he eventually wrote a book explaining his rationale. By 1892 there were 22,000 societies with over a million members all taking youth seriously as members of their churches capable of being held accountable and applied in service (Senter 2010, 159).

Evaluation
Theological Sources
In addition to his reflections on the current state of the youth in his context, Clark was influenced heavily by the theology of John Wesley and in particular Wesley’s vision of “Class Meetings” (Senter 2010, 156). This deep seated theological idea that followers of Christ need a community to hold them accountable was incredibly important to Clark’s contextualization. Clark had tried many other things to reach young people, but it wasn’t until this theological piece of accountability was added that the true contextualization came to fruition and was articulated by the youth themselves (Senter 2010, 157).

Criteria for Christian Identity
While meeting all of Schreiter’s criteria, this contextualization seems to connect best with the criteria of “The Praxis of the Community and Christian Performance”. As Schreiter says, “Where that performance moves beyond an intellectual formulation into engagement with its environment we discover its credibility or lack thereof (Schreiter 1985, 119).” Here the Christian Endeavor Society shines through, calling for the young people to not only know the words but to take seriously their ownership of their faith and developing therein. The Christian Endeavor Society also connects well to “The Challenge to Other Churches and Christian Performance” in that it clearly called for other local churches to take young people seriously in their faith as well. Before this time most of the young people were not considered able to be full members of any congregation because they were still “children” (Senter 2010, 154).

Model of Contextualization
The model of contextualization that fits this period best is the “Praxis Model”. In the praxis model there is an emphasis on not just the words but also the actions (Bevans 2002, 71). The Christian Endeavor Society sought not only commitment (via a pledge), but also specific service in action (Senter 2010, 163). In addition the praxis model calls for everyone to theologize. “This is why an important presupposition of the praxis model,” …, “is that all women and men are called to theologize. In fact, by their lives of reflective action, they already do (Bevans 2002, 75).” This model depends on a continual dialogue between the working out of
the expressions of the faith and the commitment to Christian action (Bevans 2002, 72). Christian Endeavor took young people seriously and challenged them to match their growing head knowledge of the faith with action. In fact Christian Endeavor’s regular rhythm of reviewing both the expression and the action (and holding people accountable), connects particularly well with the praxis model’s continual loop of practice, action, practice (Bevans 2002, 76).

The Period of Relational Outreach (1933-89)

Contextual Matters
This period of time represents a large amount of change within the landscape of North American youth. As was mentioned before the American public high school began to take center stage and attendance become mandatory. This worked to separate the youth from the working class even further. In addition to the attendance at high schools, there were for the first time extra-curricular activities to be a part of after school which lead to less adult involvement in the lives of teenagers (Senter 2010, 198). With a decreasing amount of time spent with adults, teenagers became more and more autonomous and grew in prominence and privilege within American society (Savage 2007, 255-466) (Senter 2010, 196). As youth became almost exclusively connected to “teenager”, there also came an increasing secularization starting within education. First, public high schools began teaching less and less from the Bible and eventually were mandated to stop Christian teaching all together (Senter 2010, 212-3). In addition, through the famous Scopes trials Christianity began to be seen as anti-intellectual which lead to a further distance between education and the church in the eyes of teenagers (Senter 2010, 197-8).

Because of this increasing divide between youth and church and the increase in entertainment options for teenagers the formal youth societies became less and less popular. The curricular youth programs that did develop within churches were largely based on theories and philosophies of education so that theology and passion for following Christ were almost completely removed (Dean 2004, 38-42). The church was again outside of the world of youth.

New Truth and Scripture
Because of the increased autonomy of youth and the church’s desire to reach them, there came another contextualization: relational programming that engages youth culture was needed. The church of this time would often turn to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (NRSV).” As the church interacted with this mandate and recognized the absence of youth, there was a desire to go to where students were (public high schools in particular) and to reach them for Christ.

Social Change
If the church’s theology called them to go everywhere, that meant even to this new land of the American high school. As very formal youth societies faded within churches or adapted to be more education centers, Christian men and women developed some strategies to “go alongside” (or para) the church and bridge the gap. As they met teens on their own turf, they began to create youth programming that engaged youth culture and taught youth a method of evangelism with their peers that would later be called “relational evangelism” (Senter 2010, 217).
One great snapshot of this contextualization is the start and development of Young Life. Jim Rayburn, who had been a leader in the Miracle Book Club movement, adapted some of the techniques learned in his work with the Miracle Book Club to reach teenagers who did not come to church at all (Meredith 1978, 20)(Senter 2010, 218-20). The focus of Young Life was to connect with teenagers in their world through building relationships. They developed the phrase, “winning the right to be heard,” which meant that they desired to gain friendship with students before presenting the gospel (Cailliet 1963, 62). In this way a more youth context specific method was developed to share the gospel with teenagers who were outside of the church. The Young Life strategy was to go to the high school campuses and build friendship with teenagers, especially those who were not Christian.

Building on the strength of Young Life and other parachurch programs (Youth for Christ, InterVarsity, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, etc.) local churches began to form less formal youth fellowships as well. This trend eventually lead to a more formal professionalization of youth ministry including efforts in theological education (Senter 2010, 292).

Evaluation

Theological Sources

This era of youth ministry and in particular the Young Life model of youth ministry has heavily interacted with incarnational theology. While there is not space here to go into depths around this issue, it becomes apparent that the interaction with incarnational theology started and stopped in seeing the incarnation as a methodological model and did not quite yet truly engage in the full conversation with incarnational theology (that will come later). The view here rests in being like Christ and going to where teenagers are living – their high schools, extra-curricular activities and hangouts.

Criteria for Christian Identity

The strongest connection in the area of criteria for Christian Identity lies in the “Worshipping Context and Christian Performance” (Schreiter 1985, 118). “If the Lord is truly present in the community of word and sacrament, then what is expressed there is a touchstone for Christian identity (Schreiter 1985, 119).” In this relationship focused method of contextualization the church (and parachurch) sought to bring young people into a community that was worshipping God in song and word.

However, there are some strong questions about this change based on some of the other criteria that Schreiter mentions. In the area of “Praxis of the Community and Christian Performance”, this contextualization provides both strengths and weaknesses. This model did help to teach teenagers a relational method of evangelism that was easily propagated. But many believe that in separating the youth into their own organizations away from other adults, the body of Christ ceased to be whole. Others argue that there was a watering down of the message and the moral expectations with such a concerted effort to engage youth culture (Senter 2010, 217). So there were mixed returns on the evaluation from others churches as well as the continuity of Christian Performance (Schreiter 1985, 118-9).

Model of Contextualization

The “Translation Model” seems to connect best with this era of youth ministry. In the translation model, “The values and thought forms of culture and the structure of social change are understood not so much as good in themselves, but as convenient vehicles for this essential,
unchanging deposit of truth (Bevans 2002, 37).” So too the relational program model of youth ministry did not necessarily see youth culture as good, but rather as a potential way to aid the sharing of the gospel story. This was evidenced by the call of many of the youth fellowships for teenagers to move away from their culture that competed with the church and gospel and provide a similar place with Christian morals (Senter 2010, 198). The translation model assumes a “gospel core” (Bevans 2002, 40) that exists within culture, but is supracultural itself. This contextualization of youth ministry was not about changing the message as much as it was about changing the methods to connect to the culture. This is summed up well in Youth for Christ’s 1940’s slogan, “Geared for the times, but anchored to the Rock” (Senter 2010, 276).

**Combining Old and New (1990 – Present)**

**Contextual Matters**

While youth culture “grew up” during the 20th century, there were the seeds of a deep cultural shift within its growth. Culture has begun to shift from a modern philosophical base with the soil of monotheism, reason and locality and the atmosphere of Judeo-Christian worldview to a postmodern base with the soil of pluralism, relativism and globalization (Kimball 2003). Youth culture in the “in-between” time of this shift is complicated and shifting. The urbanization of most of the population adds to the complexity as does the enmeshing of cultures within the fabric of North America. Where there was some uniformity across youth culture in North America there is now a patchwork quilt of cultures and values.

**New Truth and Scripture**

In the midst of this rapidly changing and diverse cultural milieu, there are some realizations and a new truth developing in youth ministry. One realization is that youth ministry can no longer just return to what it has done it in the past and expect the same results. Another realization is that youth culture is multi-culture, calling for a more missional and missiological approach. But the new truth being discovered in this time is simply: True relationships work. The Scriptural interaction for this starts in Philippians 2:5-8, “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross (NRSV).” It also extends into Acts 2:44-46, “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts (NRSV).” There is this concerted sense for the importance of relationship, community and mission.

**Social Change**

One of the main changes that this new truth and interaction with Scripture has brought is a movement away from using relationships as influence on teenagers’ lives and a movement towards sharing life with one another. This shift is highlighted well in Andrew Root’s *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation*. In this book Root calls for a deeper interaction with the incarnation and the person of Jesus Christ. This approach is a drastic move away from programs and activities based youth ministry and towards a more relationship based approach of place sharing with teenagers (Root 2007, 13-20).
Evaluation

Theological Sources

This model largely enters into conversation with Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In this interaction Bonhoeffer is heard to communicate the need for sharing place with one another in life without any agenda that would form the other into a person of our choosing. This place sharing calls for us to enter into relationships as did Christ at the points of incarnation, crucifixion, death and resurrection (Root 2007, 85-102).

Criteria for Christian Identity

This theology of incarnation meets all of Schreiter’s criteria. In particular it seems to shine under the light of “Praxis of the Community and Christian Performance,” where the actions of Christians in youth ministry are central to who they are in Christ. In articulating this theology Root stands open to the “Judgment of Other Churches and Christian Performance” which in this case includes academic theologians as well as practicing youth workers. This also exists as a “Challenge” to others, calling them re-evaluate their theology of youth ministry as well as their practice. Root’s theology of incarnation does not seem to fit categorically in the issue of worship. However it should be noted that the incarnation in calling one to rest with people in the midst of their suffering naturally leads to a call to worship as the living God is encountered in their midst (Schreiter 1985, 117-121)(Root 2007, 102-3).

Model of Contextual Theology

In light of Bevans’ models of contextual theology, this contextualization stands as a representation of the “Anthropological Model”. As Bevans’ articulates, “While the person who uses the translation model basically sees himself or herself as bringing a saving message into the context and making sure that it is presented in a relevant and attractive way, the practitioner of the anthropological model looks for God’s revelation and self-manifestation as it is hidden within the values, relational patterns and concerns of a context (Bevans 2002, 56).” This model places emphasis on seeing context as basically good. In summarizing this contextualization, Root notes, “Therefore, in this project I seek to revisit relational youth ministry, calling us beyond seeing relationships as tools for influence and into seeing the beautiful inner reality of relationships as the invitation to share each other’s place, to be with each other in both joy and suffering, and in so doing to witness to Christ among us” (Root 2007, 10). While this model of youth ministry may not wholesale baptize all of culture as some critiques of this model have been mindful to warn us against, he sees that there is something important within the human relationship and calls for youth ministry to see this as the starting and ending point of ministry. Bevans’ echoes this, “The starting point, therefore, of the anthropological model is, broadly speaking, present human experience, with a particular focus on human culture, secular or religious (Bevans 2002, 57).”

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Further Thoughts: Threads of Unity

As the history of contextualization in youth ministry unfolds in this brief paper a few themes seem to emerge that weave their way through the fabric of this movement. Highlighting these here may help us interact with them as we continue to engage the conversation of the past and present.

Out of Holy Discontent

All of the youth ministry contextualization highlighted here is a result of the church, and more specifically Godly men and women from within the church, engaging their cultural context, finding a disparity from what they perceived the mission of God to be and working through that holy discontent to find a solution. This strikes one as incredibly biblical as the authors of the New Testament in particular seemed to encounter and interact with areas of culture where things were not meeting the mission of God (Flemming 2005, 15-20). This also points to the reality that while youth may not have been priority number one during some of eras of church life, these Godly men and women listened to God’s heart for this group of people. It was out of this holy discontent that many of these people chose to minister differently.

Unsung Heroes

While this paper does highlight the names of some of the leaders among youth ministry contextualization in different eras, the other truth is that there were thousands of un-named Godly men and women who cared for these young people, lived life with them, started and ran programs for them and helped them live into their faith. This trend continues in youth ministry today. It is the eyes and ears of these heroes of the faith that often begin the contextualization process of connecting the past theologies to the present cultural realities. Anytime the leadership structure gets too small or too focused in one area, it seems that God is more than willing to allow contextualization in a new way emerge from an unknown and unheralded leader and ministry. For this the church must be thankful and anticipate God’s faithfulness through his people’s obedience.

Christocentric

One of the joys of the historical journey of this paper is to read again and again the heartbeat of the church to point young people to the transforming, dynamic person of Jesus Christ. While the methods, interpretation and focus of youth ministry changes, the unity that is found in the focus on Christ is overwhelming and most important in weaving these movements together.

Conversation with the Past

One of the interesting threads that popped up throughout this look at youth ministry history is that the theology of John Wesley continued to arise in the conversation. Whether at the beginning of formal youth ministry looking for a practical model of accountability, or interest in developing leadership, or the current renewed interest in a holistic and community oriented faith, Wesley continues to be a part of the conversation. This should be an affirmation and a call for more involvement and interaction on the part of those Wesleyan theologians.
Continued Conversation

The conversation between the academy, the professionals and the volunteers in youth ministry is needed more than ever. As the story is told about contextualization within youth ministry it cannot be missed that different places and phases of these contextualizations come from different levels of youth ministry advocates. All three levels are necessary in the implementation of youth ministry and all three levels must continue to work to come together to listen and speak to one another. Without this continuing conversation there will undoubtedly come isolation and fragmentation. In truly listening to one another the reality of the present can become clear as can the voice of the past theologies so that we can best contextualize the gospel for our place and time with young people.

Conclusion

In this journey through the history of youth ministry the contextualization of each different era has been explored. A snapshot of contextualization has been examined from each period: Sunday School; Christian Endeavor; Young Life; and Incarnational Ministry. In each period the contextual matters have been revealed, the new truth in response to Scripture has been discovered and social changes resulting have been explored. The conversation of the present culture with past theologies has been investigated and some common threads have emerged. Through the paper the goal of reaching all people, including young people, with the gospel has emerged as a priority of the church.
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