



God's Way Isn't Often the Easy Way: *The Mischief that "HUP" Explains*¹

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Major Issues Facing the Church in the Early Twenty-first Century:

1. Evangelization: Relating the *Way* and the *Truth* to the *Life*. (John 14)
2. Recognizing the Mission of the Church: *to make disciples* of Christ. (Matthew 28)
3. Resisting the Cultural Boundaries among Christians. (Acts 6)

World Characteristics as the 21st Century Emerges:

1. New Cultural Mixes and More Intense Intercultural Interaction.
2. Ethnic Conflict and Exaggeration of Historic Enmities.
3. Experiential Morality Replacing Orthodox (dogma-based) Morality. Thus relativism is replacing conviction, even among "principled people."

Explaining Mischief—Donald McGavran's Homogenous Unit Principal (HUP):

People tend to prefer to be among people similar to themselves.

Problem: Misusing this *descriptive* principal as a *prescriptive* principle.

The Resulting Mischief: Christians justify to themselves habits of cultural isolationism.

The Mischievous Assumptions (beliefs) and the Debatable Conclusion:

The purpose of the church is to bring people to Christ.

People come to Christ most easily in situations that are culturally comfortable.

Therefore, evangelism and church planting should take place among culturally similar groups.

The Harmful Consequences of this Deduction:

Each local church (and denomination) will reflect a given cultural-ethnic commonality.

There will be little if any motivation in such churches to reach across socio-cultural lines.

The church, as a whole, will reflect little of the social reconciling work of the Gospel.

What are the flaws in the assumptions and the reasoning that lead to these consequences?

While it is true that a person tends to be most comfortable among similar people, it does not follow that this fact should be foundational to nature of the church.

One other assumption is important:

Although a church may most easily be formed among people of similar interests and socio-cultural background, as the church matures it would be likely to increase in grace, thus becoming more culturally open and accepting as well as motivated to reach out to evangelize and nurture without regard to socio-cultural barriers.

Evaluate this pragmatic choice against the situation described in Acts 6.

¹ Ted Ward. God's Way Isn't Often the Easy Way: The Mischief that "HUP" Explains. Presented at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, August 1998