

W.C. WONG / “G12”... in Light of Luther’s Theology of the Cross

The “G12” Cell Groups Church Model in Light of Luther’s Theology of the Cross
(Abstract)

Wing-chi WONG*

Martin Luther describes the essence of true theology as “Theology of the Cross”. In the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther calls any theology not based on the Cross a “Theology of Glory” that misinterprets the truth. Men get knowledge of God because God reveals Himself through the Theology of the Cross. True knowledge of God comes by God’s self-revelation in the human nature of Christ and also His suffering on the Cross. That is what Luther means by, “He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering.” However, by contrast, the theology of glory wants to know and please God by men’s works, believing men have the ability to reflect God’s glory. Luther argues that only the Theology of the Cross, not the Theology of Glory, can lead people to God.

The Group of Twelve, which is always referred to as “G12”, is a cell group church model founded by Pastor Cesar Castellanos and Pastor Claudia Castellanos in 1983. The G12 in fact is a strategy in ministry with a vision to seek growth in terms of church leaders and their leadership abilities. In this way, growth in cell groups and then growth in church members are expected. The G12 has become more and more popular recently, and various churches have adopted the G12 program on their own, with a view to expect the same kind of multiplication of members as happened in the Castellanos’ church.

The G12 sets forth certain cell church growth principles for discipling and equipping church members, with its main goal of turning every church member into a leader that is able to lead his team of twelve people, in some ways like what Jesus Christ did to His twelve disciples. A group leader will lead and train twelve people through a program of intensive interpersonal sharing and accountability who are then

* Wing-chi Wong is alumnus of Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong Kong (Bachelor of Theology, 2007).

W.C. WONG / "G12"... in Light of Luther's Theology of the Cross

trained to disciple twelve others.

Despite that the G12 always describes itself as following the way of evangelism and discipleship demonstrated by Jesus Christ, it is found to be not supported with a solid theological foundation. In reading most books of G12, one may find only successful results of adopting the G12 model. Only certain simple and general concepts are discussed, with the absence of biblical hermeneutics to justify its "cell group concepts". In fact, the G12 puts significant emphasis on men's abilities, men's works and even men's success in contributing growth to churches, which is definitely contrary to the teachings of the Theology of the Cross. This article attempts to address the theological contradictions between the G12 and a Theology of the Cross with a Lutheran standpoint, although the G12 may not be strictly regarded as derived from the Theology of Glory.