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An Exploration of the Relationship between Strategy and Structure to the Work of Starting and Supporting Church Planting Movements

Introduction

The idea that there is a relationship between strategy and structure was introduced to me by David Watson (who played a key role in shaping the structures behind the book, *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims Are Falling in Love with Jesus*. In a lecture he presented at the VERGE Missional Community Conference held in 2010 he made two assertions. First, there is a relationship between structure and strategy. According to Watson, how a group is organized or structured shapes how they think and act when engaging others. He challenged the audience to consider that strategy and structure should be shaped by the people we are trying to reach rather than how we are structured (2010). His thesis made sense but it raised the question of whether this was simply the observations of a maverick church planter or if his assertions could be validated by additional research.

Structures

At a very elementary level the idea of structures conveys the concept of how things or individuals are organized or relate to one another. These complex systems of relationships between entities are fundamental to the

universe. Biology and chemistry teach us that how elements are structured in a system have a significant impact on their nature and function. Both water and hydrogen peroxide are made up of hydrogen and oxygen. However, how the elements are structured, H₂O or H₂O₂, determines whether the system or substance provides a refreshing drink or disinfectant.

The structures that define elements are highly complex. This is especially true of the structures that define human interaction. This complexity is largely responsible for the difficulty of finding simple definitions for human structures.

Two Structures in Church History

Paul Pierson, in his book *The Dynamics of Christian Mission*, points out that historically two structures have defined the church, (1) congregational structures, which “are local and inclusive of fervent as well as nominal believers, youth and the elderly, new Christians, and mature disciples,” and mission structures which “are small, mobile, focused groups of men and/or women who know that God has called them to a specific missionary task in a different place or culture” (2009:6).

He goes on to say that “both congregational structures and mission structures are essential to the completion of the mission of the Church to the end of history, and that both are equally the Church, the People of God” (6).

Pierson’s thesis affirms that different structures exist within the Christian community and are essential to its mission. He also asserts that mission structures often exist at the periphery of congregational structures, are a source of renewal movements within the church (6), and provide a vital force for creativity and innovation to the church (33). The emergence then of creative new mission structures is one of the signs of the vitality of the church. Pierson challenges those who question this view. He states, “We also must recognize that a theology which asserts that only the organized Church should be involved in mission has a very serious quarrel with history” (33).

For this reason Pierson urges that careful attention be paid to the matter of structures. If renewal as well as mission effectiveness are the fruit of structural innovation and creativity then this subject should be of special interest to anyone who is committed to the task of taking this gospel to the whole world in this generation (White 1942:262). For Pierson the understanding of structures is central to the understanding of the dynamics of Christian mission. In the introduction to his work he states:

In our study of history, we will look at the “means,” or the structures, God has created and used to take the Gospel across significant cultural, racial, and geographical barriers. Become a life-long student of the various “means” God has used in cross-cultural mission. Look for the different structures He has used to take the Gospel to new places, and be open to new methods the Holy Spirit is constantly creating for this purpose. (2009:30)

What follows in Pierson’s work is a compelling account that appears to affirm Watson’s observation regarding the importance of understanding structures. While this is encouraging the question of the relationship between mission effectiveness, structure, and strategy still needs further study.

Two Structures in Adventism

Bruce Bauer, in his dissertation, “Congregational and Mission Structures and How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Has Related to Them” explores the two structures in the context of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His thesis is that there is a natural tension between congregational and missions structures (1983:4). These two structures consist of the inward facing nurture and service activities usually carried out by the local church body and the outward facing mission functions usually carried out by groups of dedicated Christians committed to some specific outreach goal (11).

The primary concern of Bauer’s work is that mission or the expansion of God’s kingdom is severely inhibited when congregational structures dissolve or assimilate missional structures (2, 3). He asserts that missional and congregational structures have very different concerns. The following chart summarizes Bauer’s reflections on the differences that exist between the two structures: (13-26).

I changed the order to help contrast the two structures. The numbers reflect the order in which the structural characteristics appear in the original document. Bauer concludes that in order for congregational and mission structures to coexist a third “organizational” structure is necessary. He states that cooperation between mission and congregational structures is necessary for sustained growth and that three basic characteristics exemplify the needed symbiotic relationship between the two structures: “(1) both structures should maintain a semi-autonomous relationship in decision making, (2) both structures should share a common purpose and objective thereby allowing for coordination of activity and maximized efficiency, . . . [and] (3) both structures should share a common reference point that will act as a basis for decision making and coordination” (1983:221, 222).

Congregational Structures	Missional Structures
1. Multi-faceted concern—diverse programs for building up of the members.	1. Narrow concern—focused specific mission
7. People-orientated—most of the resources, human and financial are focused on already existing Christians	2. Task-orientated—dedicated to reaching specific missional goals
3. Nurture—focused on activities that will help people with different levels of spiritual commitment and experience, helps grow and mature believers.	3. Outreach—local congregations tend to reach people like themselves. Mission structures focus on unreached people/areas.
	4. High commitment expected—engages and employs only the most committed.
2. Consolidates gains—connecting and grounding believers.	
6. Longevity and continuity—provides stability over a long time.	5. Innovative and open to change
8. Check and balance, authenticates—provides protection against radical and excessive trends.	
10. Concerned with organizational development—leans towards developing structures, often inspired by business.	
4. Unity—helps maintain unity of the church.	6. Helps renew congregational structure
5. Runs on consensus—governed by structures that encourage consensus.	7. Leadership style—bold disruptive leadership in contrast to conservative leadership style of congregations
11. Tends to be authoritarian, dominating, and tends to swallow mission structures	
9. Resource base—provides the resources for mission structures.	

Figure 1. Congregational and Mission Structures. *Source:* Bauer 1983:13-26).

Bauer's primary objective for making this recommendation is that the natural inward focus of congregational structures results in the needs of the unreached or the unrepresented being neglected. He concludes his paper with the suggestion that a semi-autonomous mission board be reestablished at the General Conference with the power to promote the needs of missions, raise funds, survey the world fields and appoint its members (1983:224-230).

While Bauer's work has made a significant contribution to reinvigorating the Adventist missionary enterprise and rightfully points out that innovation in structures is key to the renewal of this focus, it does not address the critical relationship between mission, strategy, and structure.

Strategy

Patrick Lencioni is a consultant that has made a significant contribution to the business world because of his ability to make complex concepts easy to understand. In his book *The Advantage*, he argues that "the single greatest advantage any company can achieve is organizational health. Yet it is ignored by most leaders even though it is simple, free, and available to anyone who wants it" (2012:28). He goes on to identify four disciplines that help to foster organizational health: (1) building a cohesive leadership team, (2) creating clarity, (3) over communicating clarity, and (4) reinforcing clarity through human systems (46 ff).

In essence organizations characterized by cohesion and clarity become healthy. This is true because "at its core, organizational health is about integrity, but not in the ethical or moral way that integrity is defined so often today. An organization has integrity—is healthy—when it is whole, consistent, and complete, that is, when its management, operations, strategy, and culture fit together and make sense" (32).

To create clarity, Lencioni says, an organization must answer the following six questions: (1) Why do we exist? (mission), (2) How do we behave? (behavioral values), (3) What do we do? (industry), (4) How will we succeed? (strategy), (5) What is most important, right now? (priority), and (6) Who must do what?" (engagement) (2012:130).

What Lencioni is arguing is that among other things, healthy organizations have high levels of alignment between mission (question 1) and strategy (question 4). I believe that it is helpful to understand the question of the relationship between structure and strategy against the larger backdrop of organizational health. Lencioni notes that "unfortunately, more than any word in the business lexicon, strategy is one of the most widely employed and poorly defined. Executives, consultants, and scholars use it to mean so many different things that it has become almost meaningless without a clarifying definition each time it is cited" (166).

To address this challenge he and his consulting company offer the following definition. "Essentially we decided that an organization's strategy is simply its plan for success. It's nothing more than the collection of intentional decisions a company makes to give itself the best chance to thrive and differentiate from competitors. That means every single decision, if it is made intentionally and consistently, will be part of the overall strategy" (167).

What Lencioni is suggesting is that strategy is the fruit of intentional decisions that are made consistently.

The Relationship between Structure and Strategy

A paper entitled “Modern Theory of Organization” compiled by Štefan Ivanko from the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia for English-speaking students who study under the faculty of public administration offers several insights pertinent to our study. In his paper Ivanko makes a very clear link between strategy and structure. The following statement is made in the context of a discussion of the 7-S Model originally described in “The Art of Japanese Management” by Richard Pascale-Tanner and Anthony Athos (2013:101).

Having established the company’s goals and strategies to achieve the goals, the manager next makes sure that the organizational structure conforms to the company’s strategy. The reason that the company’s organizational structure must follow its strategy is that the organization is responsible for putting strategy into practice. After senior managers have completed the strategy process, including redesign of the organization, they assign tasks to the members of the organization. For the company’s strategy to be carried out effectively, the organizational design should facilitate the assignment and completion of the necessary tasks by managers and employees. (102)

The connection between the strategy and structure is shown here, drawing our attention to the fact, too, that the structure is derived from the strategy. The structures are formed through the organizing, and the organization’s strategy is carried out through them. (102)

Ideally, organizational structure is to be shaped by strategies designed to effectively accomplish a company’s goals. Notice how this thinking culminates in specific mission-critical tasks being intentionality assigned to members of the organization. The need for alignment between structure and strategy may seem obvious but the challenge is that in reality this is often not the case. The reason for this is deeper than strategy or structure as the following statement suggests:

Many organization[al] problems rest in our ways of thinking, because there is a close relationship between the way we think and the way we act, and that many organizational problems are embedded in our thinking. This has very important consequences. First, it encourages us to take ownership of the part we play in shaping the problems that we have to solve.

Second, the appreciation of the close relationship between thoughts and actions can help to create new ways of organizing. (103)

This is alarming when we consider that institutions are designed to reinforce certain ways of thinking that then perpetuate themselves through the corporate action of the individuals engaged in the organizational systems. The solution, this model suggests, is to focus change in the correct place. What the authors are suggesting is that significant change begins with a shift in thinking. This is especially true when contemplating the mission of establishing church planting movements. The structures that are created to execute the mission are of great importance because, “the effectiveness of every human deliberate activity largely depends upon an adequate organization; for organization is a purposeful human activity coordinating all the-necessary production factors into a harmonious whole, directing the operation of the whole towards the realizing of the objectives set” (Ivanko 2013:108).

Both Pierson and Bauer have argued that inattention to mission-critical structures has negatively impacted mission throughout history. For Pierson the issue is congregational structures not recognizing the critical need of mission structures; for Bauer the issue is that congregational structures within Adventism slowly suffocate mission among the unreached unless mission structures are allowed to operate semi-autonomously. Lencioni, Watson, and Ivanko have introduced even deeper challenges that have profound implications for the establishment of church planting movements. Lencioni has pointed out that alignment between the reason for an organization’s existence and its thinking regarding how it will carry out its mission is fundamental to organizational health. Watson and Ivanko have pointed out that there is indeed a critical link between strategy and structure, but institutional thinking and values (Ivanko 2013:104), if incompatible with mission, can have a devastating impact on effectiveness.

Institutional Structures

The industrial revolution with its focus on large scale productivity developed “the guiding principle for organizing enterprises by function, . . . [and] the distribution of work by labor specialization” (Ivanko 2013:30). Since then various models have been developed for understanding organizational structures. One author suggests that there are five kinds of organizational structures with six basic elements that define organizational structures.

Social Movement Organization

In social movement analysis, the acronym SMO (standing for social movement organization) has proved one of the most popular (McCarthy and Zald 1977); however, it has also proved very ambiguous, as it has taken very different meanings among different authors (Della Porta and Diani 2006:140). Social scientists have spent considerable time studying what they call social movements because it is recognized that these movements “continue to be a major force (for change) in the world” (Christiansen 2009:5). So what exactly is a social movement? Christiansen offers the following definition: “Social movements . . . can be thought of as organized yet informal social entities that are engaged in extra-institutional conflict that is oriented towards a goal. These goals can be either aimed at a specific and narrow policy or be more broadly aimed at cultural change” (2).

Social movements are driven by a desire for change within a culture or social system, are informal in nature, and provide the most effective structures for recruiting individuals to transformative action. This last point is powerfully illustrated by the following statement:

How frequent is recruitment through social networks *vis-à-vis* other mobilization channels, such as exposure to media messages, or spontaneous, unsolicited decisions to participate? In one of the first studies to document the importance of personal networks for recruitment processes, Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson (1980) showed social networks to account for the adhesion of a large share (60 to 90 percent) of members of various religious and political organizations, with the only exception being Hare Krishna. They suggested that only sects, overtly hostile to their social environment, attracted a significant share of people with personal difficulties and lacking extended relational resources (see also Stark and Bainbridge 1980). (Della Porta and Diani 2006:117)

If this is indeed true then recruiting through any other means would prove to be tremendously inefficient and ineffective. The importance of personal connections to movements is further illustrated:

Individuals often become involved in collective action through their personal connections to people already involved. Those connections help them overcome the innumerable obstacles and dilemmas that people usually face when considering whether to become active on a certain cause. Not only that: the amount and type of individual networks also affect the chances of people remaining active for a long time, or instead reducing their commitment, or cutting it altogether, after brief spells.

Individuals not only become active in a movement through their previous connections, but also create new connections by the very fact of being involved in multiple forms of activism and associations. From this perspective, individual activists operate as bridges between different organizational milieus, linking, for example, social movement organizations to established political actors or institutions, or organizations mobilized for different causes. (134)

Social networks form the primary structure in which movements form and by which they are sustained. The strength of an individual's relational connections to these networks is critical to the effectiveness of the movement. In order for movements to be seen as inviting they must be perceived as bringing positive change to the network. Objectives, strategies, and ideologies that are seen as hostile or threatening to a community's social networks are doomed to be embraced almost exclusively by social outcasts.

Social movement organizations or structures are quite vulnerable as long as they exist solely as an expression of solidarity around a corporate desire for change. Additional structure or organization is necessary in order for the movement to accomplish its objective. Herbert Blumer first identified four stages in the lifecycle of a movement, *social ferment*, *popular excitement*, *formalization*, and *institutionalization* (cited in Della Porta and Diani 2006:150). According to Christiansen (2009), contemporary "scholars have refined and renamed these stages but the underlying themes have remained relatively constant. Today, scholars refers to the four stages as, *emergence*, defined by an informal process of discovery focused on corporate felt needs and where communication is ad hoc and travels along relational networks (150). The second stage is *coalescence* which come as clarity around discontent and the desired positive change settles into the corporate consciousness of the individuals in the networks and people begin to organize for action (150). *Bureaucratization* is characterized by the following: "In this stage, social movements have had some success in that they have raised awareness to a degree that a coordinated strategy is necessary across all of the SMOs. Similarly, SMOs will come to rely on staff persons with specialized knowledge that can run the day-to-day operations of the organization and carry out movement goals" (3).

This transition is significant for two reasons. At this stage the movement begins to include the early signs of organizational structures that include specialized staff, infrastructure, funding and technology. As these structures mature they can become more and more formal and rigid. At this point it is possible that the movement that gave birth to the institution (designed to support it) begins to die. This stage is referred to as *decline*.

Christiansen points out that decline is not inevitable nor is it always undesirable. There are four possibilities that can accompany decline: *repression* (the movement is quelled by forces outside of it), *co-optation* (internal leadership reconciles or joins forces with the former opposition), *success* (the movement is no longer necessary because its objectives have been accomplished), and *failure* (the movement falls short of the objective that called it into existence (Della Porta and Diani 2006:3).

Christiansen concludes by noting that while the four stages of social movements are helpful both to scholars and practitioners, they should not be seen as linear, distinct, or inevitable. Rather they should be seen as an instructive model for assessing, understanding, and engaging social movements (5).

Mission Movements

There is no doubt that the Christian church started out as a social movement powered by the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit and under the authority of the Word of God. That movement presented a powerful message of promised change and deliverance in the face of the powerful and sometimes brutal Roman Empire. According to Stephen Neill, “By the end of the third century there was no area in the Roman Empire which had not been penetrated to some extent by the Gospel” (1991:35). Evidence that this objective was the result of movement structures can be seen in the following paragraph:

Our next piece of evidence, the famous letter of the younger Pliny to the Emperor Trajan in about the year 112, gives us a very different picture. Pliny, an intelligent, humane, and not unsympathetic observer, was dismayed by the rapid spread of Christian faith in the rather remote and mainly rural province of Bithynia in north-west Asia Minor which he had been sent to govern. He speaks of many in every period of life, on every level of society, of both sexes . . . in towns and villages and scattered throughout the countryside. What was he to do with them? All the handbooks quote the illogical answer of the emperor that Christians were not to be sought out, but that if they were brought before the governor they were to be punished. We are interested at this point not in the legal question, but simply in the growth of the Church. The evidence of Pliny is unimpeachable; we seem to encounter here one of the first mass movements in Christian history. The growth of the Church was so rapid that Pliny had cause to fear that the shrines of the pagan gods would come to be wholly deserted. (Neill 1991:28)

All this happened in the absence of powerful institutional structures because it seems that the mission of the church, the very purpose for which it was established, was to catalyze and support disciple-making movements that would mature into church-planting movements (Watson and Watson 2014:6).

Russell Burrill notes that Jesus “built a movement based squarely on community and diffused leadership with an empowered people (1997:123). “For the first 200 years of the Church’s life, it was a home-based movement. No special church buildings were constructed for Christian worship until the close of the second century (54). In other words the church was defined by movement structures. He points out that “the New Testament church does not have a ministry, it is ministry. All members of the community participated in the one ministry of the whole church. It was organized around the giftedness of the members rather than hierarchal structures of authority and power” (110).

Jesus expected his disciples “to go forth and create communities of mutual care and servant leadership, without the hierarchal structures so apparent in the religions of His day” (125). If this was so then, why is this rarely the case today?

The Relationship between Movements and Institutions

What then is the proper relationship that should exist between movements and institutions? We have seen that clarity about and alignment of mission and strategy are signs of health and effectiveness. Bauer and Pierson argue that the relationship between mission and congregational structures is often fraught with tension. Bauer also pointed out that institutional structures are prone to devour mission structures. We have also identified that what starts out as a movement is vulnerable to shift towards bureaucratization and ultimately decline. Burrill describes what the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church thought about organization. “The earliest Adventists believed that if they were to organize, they must do so biblically rather than simply copying existing organizational structures. Obviously, they couldn’t help but be influenced by such structures, but the one that influenced them most was the most biblical—the Methodist organization” (1997:184).

As a result “the early church quickly developed into a church planting movement because this is what they imagined Jesus wanted when He gave them the Great Commission” (1997:45). Burrill notes that “the entire church structure, including its finances, was organized to support a church planting movement” (307). From Burrill’s perspective there are two things that play a significant role in making this possible, the role of

the pastor and the strategies for the care of members. Members were nurtured in “social meetings” (307) and pastors focused on church planting.

This return to Adventism’s roots must be driven by three factors: the need to be faithful to Scripture and to the counsel of Ellen White, the need to be faithful to its mission, and the need to adequately nurture its believers. Therefore, present-day Adventism must return to a more biblical view of the role of the pastor and to a biblical plan of mutual member care instead of clergy dependency. (308)

Burrill goes on to observe that to return Adventism to its roots as a movement, “[a] radical restructuring of the local church is needed. The role of the pastor as the primary care giver must be replaced by local congregations who once again assume their New Testament role as the chief care givers of the church” (78).

Della Porta and Diani provide a very useful insight into the relationship that should exist between an organization and movements.

Even though social movements do not equate with the organizations active in them . . . , organizations often play very important roles within them. Like any kind of organization, organizations active in social movements fulfill—if to varying degrees and in varying combinations—a number of functions: inducing participants to offer their services; defining organizational aims; managing and coordinating contributions; collecting resources from their environment; selecting, training, and replacing members (Scott 1981:9). Social movement organizations must mobilize resources from the surrounding environment, whether directly in the form of money or through voluntary work by their adherents; they must neutralize opponents and increase support from both the general public and the elite (see McCarthy and Zald 1977:19).

Organizations are also important because they act as powerful sources of identity for a movement’s own constituency, its opponents, and bystander publics. No matter how aware people may be of the complexity and heterogeneity of any movement, its public perception is likely to be associated with its most conspicuous characters. (Della Porta and Diani 2006:137)

This relationship between organizations and movements appear to be the focus of the books, *T4T* (Smith and Kai 2011) and *Miraculous Movements* (Trousdale 2012) where the single minded objective of catalyzing, supporting, and sustaining disciple-making movements defines the structures or organization. The healthiest situation is when the more powerful

structure (the institution) sees as its mission the support of the more vulnerable structure (movements) because this is its mission. It appears that this is the most vital service that can be provided by the institution.

Centralized power and the specialization of leaders and critical roles actually end up working against the very movement most institutions hope will come into being. In contrast, “social movement action on a large scale has always been organized in network forms” (Della Porta and Diani 2006:159)

For this reason it is important to understand how to organize in such a way so as to provide movements to Christ with the best possible opportunity for success. It seems there is considerable flexibility regarding what such structures could actually look like. “The organizations engaged in social movements have often been described as loosely structured, decentralized, and prone to engage in contentious political challenges or countercultural practices. However, research has shown that, in reality, a plurality of organizational models co-exist within any social movement” (161, 162).

Della Porta and Diani point out that hierarchical or collaborative structures can both support movements; however, the organization must understand that it exists to initiate, support, and sustain movements and not the other way around. When this happens the results can powerfully transform the identities of individuals in the movement (89). It could be that this phenomenon helps to explain the observation in Acts 4:13: “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

Lessons from China

The history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in China provides an intriguing case study of the principles explored thus far. The work in China had four major functions, “working for the conversion of souls, publishing religious materials, educating the minds of the local people, and healing their bodies through medical treatment” (Lee and Chow 2015:55) The following presents a picture of the structures employed by the missionaries to deliver and support these services:

In structure, the Adventist *movement* in China was highly centralized and hierarchical. By the mid-twentieth century, all the congregations and institutions were divided into seven regional unions under the China Division, the Adventist mission headquarters in Shanghai. Funded by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in the

United States, the China Division and most regional unions were headed by the missionaries before 1949. This rigid hierarchy created a subordinated relationship between the missionaries and Chinese staff when other Christian missions indigenized their leadership and became self-supporting. A major strength of this centralized model was that Chinese Adventists could easily access American missionary resources and seldom needed to cooperate with other denominations: The drawback was that the Adventists became isolated in Chinese Protestant circles. Nevertheless, the strong American ties shielded the Adventists from Nationalist control before 1949. (Lee and Chow 2015:47)

This structure was able to sustain a “systematic attempt to gain access to the China mission field” (52) with the publishing work serving as a strategic anchor. “After the Communists seized power in 1949, they launched the Three-Self Patriotic Movement to integrate the diverse Protestant denominations into the socialist order” (48). The institutions and structures of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were systematically infiltrated and undermined by servants of the state. It was “against this backdrop, the congregants found themselves in a dilemma, torn between the public need to support the state and the private life of upholding their faith and continuing religious activities at home” (50). This was especially true “in rural areas with relatively weak government control,” where “many Adventists carried out evangelistic work” (50) in spite of the fact that the foreign missionaries had been expelled from the country. During this time the church continued to grow almost doubling in membership between 1949 and 1956 (50).

On many occasions, women led the congregations after the ministers were arrested. What motivated their evangelistic zeal was the belief in God’s providential care and their final deliverance, continuing the Christian tradition of resisting a hegemonic power. Even though the Communists were capable of infiltrating all Christian institutions, they failed to penetrate into the decentralized Adventist network. The Adventists’ survival as a denomination during the repressive period enabled them to expand during the 1980s and 1990s. (51)

When the communist regime infiltrated the institutional structures the “decentralized Adventist network” carried forward an underground movement. “When the Adventists were no longer permitted to hold regular religious activities outside of Three-Self affiliated churches, they embraced activism and created a self-sustaining Christian community rather than abandoning their faith” (Lee and Chow 2015:84). This included the publishing work which continued to play a significant role in the growth of the church (167).

In another article exploring the “symbiotic relationship between social networks and Christian conversion among some Seventh-day Adventists in contemporary China” (Chow 2013:167). Chow argues that

long-standing kinship, friendship, and discipleship networks (*guanxi* 關係) are fundamental to the Adventist conversion process. This extensive web of human relationships helps sustain potential converts’ interest in Christianity, nurture[s] their understanding of Adventism, and reinforce[s] their efforts to cultivate a distinctive Christian selfhood and identity in Adventist terms. These relationships also give meaning to the Adventist congregational practices such as Sabbath observance and healthy lifestyle, insofar as the converts rely on the relational resources of the family and church for support. (Chow 2013:167)

Chow’s article further illustrates the critical role of *guanxi* or relational networks as core to movements. This dynamic may explain the extraordinary growth that the Chinese church has seen. Movement structures serve as the DNA of the work in China. Social networks meeting in homes and using personal resources to carry on the work under difficult circumstances play a central role in the preservation and expansion of the church in China. However, in the absence of a supportive central unifying organization structure one might be tempted to argue that the Chinese church illustrates that without institutional structures the Chinese church was subject to schisms (Lee and Chow 2013:51). This is one of the most significant challenges to the Chinese church today. Adventism is defined by several independent networks that are distinguished by both theological and filial loyalties. One of the greatest challenges faced by the church is the battle for legitimacy and orthodoxy. Strong charismatic leadership defines the fractious landscape and define the contentious relationships that characterize relationships between the various factions.

Conclusion

Strategy, structure, and mission are inextricably linked. In order for corporate efforts to be effective, clarity and alignment between these three elements of coordinated activity are essential. When structures and strategies are not aligned with mission it is possible that even great efforts can be sabotaged, especially when the mission is to initiate, support, and sustain movements. Institutional structures can exist without movement structures. Movements on the other hand cannot exist without just enough structure to initiate, coordinate, sustain, and protect the efforts of the movement.

Both Christianity at large and Seventh-day Adventism in particular clearly started out as movements dominated by movement thinking and structures. In both cases as institutional structures matured and movement structures were undermined, growth slowed or stopped. Pierson, Bauer, Burrill, and social scientists confirmed this natural tendency from the perspective of history and science and have recommended various solutions for rectifying this problem.

The work in China has shown that it is possible for the Adventist Church to flourish in the absence of centralized hierarchical structure; however, such movements are prone to fracture when there is not enough structure to define orthodoxy, create legitimacy, and facilitate communication.

Since movement making is the church's mission it is important not to ask how movements can be integrated into the church but rather how the church can return to its original mandate to initiate and sustain disciple-making movements. The good news of the gospel is most effectively lived and communicated through social networks. In the absence of movement structures the institutional church focuses on selling a message and sustaining institutions. It can even come to see its members as financial and human resources that it can leverage to accomplish its mission. The center of activity is located in committees, conferences, conventions and public meetings. Initiatives, branding, risk management, and power structures become the main concern rather than delivering the product of the gospel, the abundant living Jesus promised (John 10:10). If this gospel is actually going to be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations in our generation then what is needed is the courage to change.

A church that defines itself by movement structures sees the center or activity as taking place in hearts and homes of its members. The mission is living the message, empowering, facilitating, and catalyzing and should define the culture of the organization.

It is my conviction that this journey with its focus on creating movements represents a seismic shift in thinking and behavior. There is no doubt that further research is needed that by God's grace will help create a multitude of disciple-making movements again in many parts of the world.

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