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Alan McMahan

Biola University, alan.mcmahan@biola.edu

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Journal of
The American Society
for
Church Growth

Volume 20
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The Purpose of the *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth* is to communicate recent thinking and research related to American Church Growth.

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Journal of
**The American Society
for
Church Growth**

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**Great Commission Research Network Officers
(formerly: The American Society for Church Growth)**

- President:** Dr. Robert Whitesel
Associate Professor
College of Graduate Studies
Indiana Wesleyan University
(765) 677-1038
E-mail: bob.whitesel@indwes.edu
- 
- Vice President:** Dr. Ed Stetzer
President of Lifeway Research and
Missiologist
Lifeway Christian Resources
(615) 251-2320
E-mail: ed.stetzer@lifeway.com
www.lifewayresearch.com
Blog: www.edstetzer.com
- 
- Second Vice President:** Dr. Robert Logan
President, CoachNet International
Ministries
(323) 225-5953
E-mail: loganoffice@coachnet.org
www.coachnet.org
- 
- Secretary:** Dr. M. Alan McMahan
(See Introduction for contact information and photo)
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(See Introduction for contact information and photo)
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Introduction

Alan McMahan

The Journal of the American Society for Church Growth, since its first publication in 1991, has been on the leading edge of reporting original research and best practices relating to church growth and evangelism in North America. With John Vaughan as the founding editor, and continuing for a much longer time (14 years) with Gary McIntosh as editor, the Journal has made a significant contribution to help the church understand the opportunities and the challenges before it in the ever-changing context of ministry.

With support from others such as C.J. Fithian, who has long served as Layout Editor, and Carol McIntosh, who for years has managed the mailing list among other things, and for John Peck, who contributed his editorial expertise to this issue, the Journal has prospered. Their excellent work behind the scenes has enabled these issues to reach you in good order. The American Society for Church Growth, and the church at large, owes a debt of gratitude for each person's sacrificial labor.

With this issue, I have assumed the General Editorship of the Journal under the new and vigorous sponsorship of the School of Intercultural Studies at Biola University. In the spirit of the Journal's founding, the School of Intercultural Studies, now celebrating its 25th anniversary, has long been in the business of preparing men and women to cross the barriers that prevent people from hearing the good news of the gospel of Christ. Biola's commitment to this task insures the continuation of the Journal into the future, a future that will bring many new opportunities for expansion and impact.

This edition of the Journal serves as a transition piece, moving the Journal toward a new future. The following details some of the changes that are underway:

1. This issue will be the last edition that is published under the name, "Journal of the American Society for Church Growth." The new name will be "Great Commission Research Journal," following the name change of the "American Society for Church Growth" to the "Great Commission Research Network."
2. The first edition of the Journal under the new name will begin with the next issue in Summer of 2009 and will be published thereafter twice a year in Winter and Summer.
3. The Great Commission Research Journal will be expanded in size (from 100-150 pages for the Journal of the American Society for Church Growth to 150-200 pages under the new name). Eventually its content and readership will also be increased in order to report on international research and successful models of evangelism and church growth from around the world.
4. To accomplish what Gary McIntosh has done single-handedly for the last 14 years, we have assembled a team of editors, who will work together to produce a refereed Journal that scans the horizon for emerging research. Making up the team is:

Phil Stevenson, North American Editor
 Director of Evangelism and Church Growth
 The Wesleyan Church
 P.O. Box 50434
 Indianapolis, IN 46250-0434
 E-mail: stevensonp@wesleyan.org
 Blog: sisuphil.blogspot.com



J. D. Payne, Book Review Editor
 National Missionary
 North American Mission Board
 Board
 Associate Professor of Church Planting
 Church Planting and Evangelism
 Evangelism
 Director, Church Planting Center
 ing Center
 The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
 E-mail: jpayne@sbts.edu
www.northamericanmissions.org

Gary L. McIntosh, Dissertation Editor
 Professor of Christian Ministry and
 Leadership
 Talbot School of Theology
 13800 Biola Ave.
 La Mirada, CA 90639
 E-mail: gary.mcintosh@biola.edu
www.churchgrowthnetwork.com



Following very shortly will be other changes and improvements that will deliver a new host of tools and resources for researchers, teachers, consultants, students, and practitioners of church growth, evangelism, and Great Commission strategies. We will keep you abreast of those changes as they develop.

Now would be a good time to renew your subscription to the Journal and encourage your friends to do the same. The Journal is provided as a free benefit to members of the Great Commission Research Network, (www.greatcommissionresearch.net) and would provide a greater benefit than a subscription to the Journal alone.

This issue of the Journal features articles on a variety of salient topics beginning with a favorite contributor, George Hunter. George presents a thematic perspective on how pre-Christians are actually reached, going beyond the more simplistic, linear, singular answers that are often given. Dan Dunn's article continues the focus of reaching pre-Christians but focusing more specifically at the Hispanic sub-culture in the U.S. using the insights gleaned from communication theory.

The next two articles focus on the missional church with Derrick Lemons describing the changes that have taken place within the dialogue on this topic since Karl Barth's first presentation on it in 1932. Phil Stevenson follows with an article using contrasting paradigms to distinguish between being "healthy" or "fit" linking it to what a missional church ought to be.

The next three articles approach a variety of topics led by a refreshing re-examination of the debate between evangelism and social action, in which Norman Wilson seeks to free us from the modernist interpretations that have polarized these two facets of the church's ministry. Drawing from diverse fields such as biology, sociology, and business management, Gary McIntosh examines the relationship between a church's size and its development, recognizing the impact of economies of scale on growth and organizational culture. He summarizes with 12 principles that have implications for a church's ministries and organization. Tom Steffen's insightful observations drawn from his experience

as a missionary in the Philippines shows how narrative theology spanning the whole story of scripture is a superior method of evangelism in an increasingly post-modern America.

This issue of the Journal wraps up with book reviews of *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*, by Alan Hirsch. Kenneth Bickel, Darren Cronshaw, J.D. Payne, Bob Wenz, and Gordon Penfold each render their evaluation of the book and describe its significance for the current ministry context.

In the next months and years to come I believe you will find within these pages helpful insights that will benefit your thinking, your service, and ministry. I will look forward to serving you and together exploring what God is doing around the world.

—M. Alan McMahan, General Editor
Journal of the American Society for Church Growth
Associate Professor and Chair of the Undergraduate Department
School of Intercultural Studies
Biola University
13800 Biola Ave.
La Mirada, CA 90639
(562) 903-4844 Ext. 3269
alan.mcmahan@biola.edu



Evangelizing Pre-Christian People: A Thematic Perspective

George G. Hunter III

Christian leaders are called to love “the Lord of the Harvest” with mind and heart. In our Christian traditions, believers have affirmed some people in leadership roles because, in part, they seem to understand and articulate the tradition’s folk wisdom best, and they seem to have the combination of spirituality and “street smarts” needed to lead the churches into the future that God wills.¹ New leaders, however, too often assume that “our tradition’s” folk wisdom is enough, or they assume that they know as much as the people think they do! Some leaders even assume their own (or their peer group’s, or their tradition’s) infallibility!

Our capacity to actually lead churches and Christian movements, however, is limited by the “Intelligence” that informs our strategic decisions. Computer geeks tell us, “Garbage in, garbage out;” the outputs can be no better than the inputs. The Intelligence that can inform strategic thinking is acquired through learning and discovery. The discoveries usually come from asking the right questions and, like drilling for oil, from asking and drilling in the right places, for long enough, for the insights to emerge. Donald McGavran’s career stands as an enduring model of this principle.

McGavran especially dared to ask the Big Question that most church leaders had ignored for generations (because they had already agreed on the answers!): *How does the Church do Evangelism effectively?* McGavran discovered that all that most leaders knew for sure was their (socially constructed) consensus on how new people *ought* to be reached and how churches *should* grow.² McGavran observed that, often, what a company of people has agreed upon *might not* constitute the valid Intelligence that would be necessary for navigating the future they desire. He

observed that churches that based their local mission upon Evangelical folk wisdom usually walked out of ripe harvest fields "empty handed."

So, when McGavran was a mission leader in India in the 1930's, superintending many churches whose leaders said they were doing "evangelism" but were not actually reaching pre-Christian people, he began asking, "How does the gospel *actually* spread? How do churches *really* grow?" In 1934, from a three-year field-research study of (what came to be called) India's "people movements" into Christianity, J. Wascom Pickett published a pioneering text. In the Indian Christian newspaper, *Sahayak Patrika*, McGavran published a review of Pickett's book. You can infer by his opening sentence that he liked the book: "There has come a book sent by God, and its name is *Christian Mass Movements in India*." With his background in behavioral sciences and field research in his Ph.D. studies at Columbia University, McGavran brought a perceptive mind to appraise Pickett's project.

As McGavran studied the book and then spent a month with Pickett studying growing churches, he became convinced that mission's conceptual frontiers could no longer draw from scripture, mission history, and theology *alone*. The complexity of mission's challenge also required *field research*. We needed to study enough growing churches and Christian movements, in enough tongues and cultures, to determine what growing churches *know* and what they *do* (that other churches do not know and do) to reach people, and grow, and become local Christian movements. Such churches and movements can model the ways forward for other churches. In churches that are growing with integrity and power, the God who acts in history is revealing the reproducible (or adaptable) *principles* that can inform the Christian movement's expansion elsewhere.

So, while on study leaves and supported by occasional research grants, McGavran studied growing churches on four continents over a 20 year period. He studied their growth history, observed their ministries, interviewed leaders and (especially) converts and, in time, described universal patterns that account for Christianity's expansion, presumably everywhere. McGavran's reflection, however, could be *prescriptive*, as well as descriptive. From the New Testament, he challenged the prevailing understanding of the *goal* of evangelism as to "get decisions." From the Great Commission in Matthew 28 and from the ministry modeled in The Acts of the Apostles, McGavran taught that evangelism's goal is to "make disciples," not merely to elicit decisions. Disciples, he taught, *follow Jesus Christ as Lord*, in the

Church and in the world.

Stephen Neill, the Anglican missionary statesman, used to similarly nuance the goals of Evangelism in term of the New Testament term *metanoia*, and he contended that God wants and the world needs the kinds of Christian disciples who have experienced three "turnings." People are called to turn 1) to Christ, 2) to the Body of Christ, and 3) to a vision of the kind of world that Christ wants—in terms like life, justice, and peace. Neill's model becomes especially useful with two additional observations: 1) These three turnings typically take place *one at a time* in a person's life; and 2) they occur *in any conceivable sequence*. (Bishop Neill used to reflect that most of the "useless" Christians were people in whom one or two of the turnings had been experienced, but not yet all three. Furthermore, he said, in Evangelism we are called to invite people into any of the three turnings they have not yet experienced.)

An interest in Stephen Neill's third turning is more in ascendancy than ever before. In many places where evangelical Christianity has grown substantially, from Asia, to Africa, to Latin America, church leaders confess that, although their churches have grown, their societies have not changed. More leaders are now clear that God wants His Will to be done "on earth, as it is in Heaven." So George Otis (www.sentinelgroup.org) produces books and videos dramatizing where "transformations" are taking place. Donald Miller and Ted Yamamori document how Pentecostal Christianity is developing a greater social conscience.³ Pete Wagner, who did his PhD in Ethics, has recently published *Dominion: How Kingdom Action Can Change the World*.⁴ (The new Evangelical desire for Christian influence in social reform is not a new discovery, but a re-discovery of the vision that inspired the nineteenth century Abolitionist Movement.)

The history of an evangelical understanding of *how* we work for a new world may soon parallel the history of our understanding of Evangelism. Once, as in the First Great Awakening, we were clearer about God's role in saving people than the Church's role. McGavran and the Church Growth school discovered more about what *we* do to cooperate with the Great Commission than we ever knew before. Today, evangelicals are clearer about what God does in social reform, and most of our efforts (like organized intercession) are related to the divine side. One day, scholars will do the field research in churches that are making a social difference to discover the reproducible principles behind the human side of Christian social engagement.

We are already clearer than before about one goal of Evangelism: while we are, indeed, called to join The Lord in making

citizens of Heaven, we are also called to join Him in making the kind of citizens for the world that the world needs, in great numbers, to populate the movements that will make a difference.

In time, other field researchers and interpreters joined Donald McGavran in what became "the Church Growth Movement." Such studies, however, were not confined to Church Growth people. In time, a number of behavioral scientists studied some of the same issues.⁵ Christian conversion has particularly been studied from several useful vantage points.⁶ Some scholars, notably Lyle Schaller, have studied churches with interests very similar to those of Church Growth people.⁷

This chapter addresses McGavran's formidable question: *How does effective evangelism actually take place?*⁸ We have, today, advanced some beyond McGavran's strategic wisdom. In this chapter, his most significant single principle will be sandwiched third among four strategic principles which can now be drawn from broader, and later, research. (To aid the reader's memory, I have imposed alliteration upon the four principles.)

Community

Apostolic Outreach is prepared for, and takes place within, and is deployed from, the several forms of Christian Community. As John Wesley famously observed, "Christianity is not a solitary religion." Some Christian leaders, in some generations, have known this since Jesus gathered twelve disciples and shaped them into the symbolic New Israel. The research and reflection behind my book on ancient Celtic Christianity and that movement's approach to mission⁹ helped me to drill deeper in understanding this principle.

The Celtic Christian movement's people were substantially reached by, formed within, and deployed from Christian communities. The Celtic Christian movement lasted from the fifth to the ninth centuries, and was the greatest sustained Christian mission in Christianity's history. The movement reached many of the peoples of (what is now) Ireland, Scotland, and England and, in time, many peoples of Western Europe. Their mission was widely assumed to be "impossible" to achieve—because Rome perceived the populations that the movement targeted as "barbarians;" by definition, people had to be sufficiently "civilized" to become "Christianized." By achieving the "impossible," the Celtic Christian movement brought Europe out of "the Dark Ages" and ushered in "the Holy Roman Empire." Their achievement is unexplainable apart from the contagious power of Christian community in several forms.

In the late fourth century, Patrick grew up in a Briton tribe in (what is now) northwest England. He was raised in a Christian family, and in the local church, and he learned the catechism—though he had not accepted the faith (and had rebelled against it) when, as a teenager, he was captured by pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland. As a slave, he lived much of the time in the compound with other slaves next to the tribal settlement of an Irish leader named Milieuc. In other periods, Patrick experienced isolation while he was herding cattle in a wilderness area miles from the settlement.

In the compound, there were (undoubtedly) Christian slaves who formed into Christian community and included Patrick in their company, praying with and for him. The community of faith back home was praying for him and Patrick now carried vivid memories of that community within him. In the wilderness periods, he began praying, more and more. In time, he became aware of the presence of God, and he recognized this presence to be the Triune God he had learned about in the catechism. Patrick experienced the gift of faith, and became devout. At the settlement, his fellow Christians and his captors observed profound change within him.

Patrick, after six years of life in slavery and now in his early 20's, escaped on a ship and returned to England. He acquired a theological education and served for two decades as a parish priest. In a dream years later, at the age of 48, he experienced a "Macedonian call" to take the gospel to the Irish. With the support of England's bishops and Pope Celestine, Patrick attracted and trained an "apostolic band" to join him in a mission to the Irish. In (or about) 432 A. D., the band sailed for Ireland, and made its way inland to Saul, where they planted the first church of the Christian movement in Ireland.

Patrick served as an "Apostle to the Irish" for the next 28 years. By his death in 470 A. D., the movement had reached at least 40 of Ireland's 150 tribes. Within the next two generations, all of Ireland was substantially reached, and so in one century Ireland changed from the least Christianized to the most Christianized province within the Roman Empire. This achievement came through, and not without, the power of Christianity Community, and through the astonishing proliferation of Christian communities and types of Christian communities.

Their basic early outreach pattern saw the apostolic band setting up camp next to an un-reached settlement—befriending the people, getting in ministry and conversation with the people, inviting the more receptive people into the band's fellowship and, in time, raising up a new church in the settlement, and then

moving on to replicate the process in the next settlement over. In time, the movement proliferated other apostolic bands, which made it possible to reach more settlements. So they proliferated bands that proliferated congregations.

At some point, probably while Patrick still lived, the movement learned from the monasteries of the Eastern Church, which they adapted into a new form of Christian community for the Western Church. In the East, people escaped from the world, and from perceived corruptions in the Church, into the monasteries—to save their souls. Now in the West, by comparison, people joined the monastic communities to prepare to extend the Church and to save other people's souls. Their purpose in (what is now called) "Celtic Spirituality" was to form people for ministry and mission. While the monastic communities were preparing Christians, they were also receiving pre-Christian seekers into their life. Indeed, the ministry to seekers within the monastic community helped prepare people for ministry and witness beyond¹⁰.

The monastic communities proliferated other kinds of communities for reaching and building people.

- They invented a new form of dyad—a group of two people, in which one person was the seeker or the newer Christian, and the other was his or her "Soul Friend." One's Soul Friend was not a superior, but was someone with whom one was willing to be vulnerable and accountable.
- They invented a form of Small Group—of a dozen or so people, whose leader was recognized as devout. Everyone met in their small group, in which they were in ministry with each other and with any seeker in their ranks.
- They proliferated worshiping congregations within the monastic community AND within the churches they planted. The maximum length of the available lumber in Ireland did not permit them to build churches to accommodate more than (say) 50 or 60 people at a time; so, that fact forced what, in any case, would have been their inclination; the monastic communities and the churches in settlements proliferated congregations from the beginning.
- In each season, they were preparing multiple apostolic teams to reach the settlements in their region. (The bands consisted of a dozen or so people; they assumed that Jesus probably got the number about right!)
- The apostolic teams (or "bands") moved out to plant churches in every settlement. The churches, in turn, pro-

liferated congregations, small groups, and ministries.

Celtic Christianity's penchant for Community was not, of course, the sole reason for the movement's expansion. (Church Growth is *never* sufficiently explained by a single cause.) The movement was "culturally relevant." It departed from Rome's mandate to do church "the Roman way" everywhere; it adapted to the local population's language, culture, and aesthetics, virtually everywhere. The movement was "emotionally relevant." Compared to the Roman left-brained rational approach, Celtic Christianity engaged the Irish and other "barbarian" peoples as a faith of the imagination and the heart. Furthermore, in contrast to the (male) clericalism that characterized Roman Christianity, Celtic Christianity was essentially a lay movement AND it included laywomen (such as Brigid and Hilda) in notable leadership. But the movement's grounding in radical community especially has much to teach us. Bede (the eighth century historian) profiles the monastic community at Whitby, founded and led by Hilda: "After the example of the primitive church, no one was rich, no one was in need, for they had all things in common and none had any private property."¹¹

For Protestant Evangelicals today, the most counter-intuitive theme in the Celtic model calls for welcoming pre-Christian seekers into the ranks of faithful groups and congregations *before* they have experienced grace or believed much of anything; *our* usual script, today, is to welcome people *after* they confess the faith. However, some of the most significant research with converts today strongly ratifies the Celtic model. For instance, John Finney and his colleagues surveyed and interviewed hundreds of converts, in several Christian traditions, in Great Britain. In *Finding Faith Today*, they report that most converts experience the gift of faith *through* the relationships they experience *within* a community of faith. For most people, "belonging comes before believing."¹² In my own field research, I have interviewed first-generation disciples since the mid-1960's. I have usually asked, "When did you feel like you really belonged, that you were wanted and welcomed and included in the fellowship?" More than half of the Boomer generation converts, and at least three-quarters of the Generation X and Generation Y converts report that they felt like that *before* they joined, or believed. As Western society becomes increasingly post-modern, the faith will increasingly be even "more caught than taught."

We could easily fill a book with case studies of pioneering churches who have reached and discipled people *as* they have proliferated faith-communities, large and small. One such case will do. When Craig Groeschel was a student at Phillips Theo-

logical Seminary in Oklahoma, he dreamed of starting a new church that one day would proliferate campuses; his faculty discouraged him. Then his Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church said No, the idea was not viable. The Evangelical Covenant Church made room for Groeschel's vision, however, and the rest is a history that is still unfolding.

Craig and Amy Groeschel started (what became) LifeChurch.tv, in a rented dance studio in Edmund, Oklahoma in 1996. Their mission, from the beginning, has been "to lead people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ." Their design, from the beginning, involved 1) multiplying "Life-Groups," which would be ports of entry for many seekers and in which people would get in ministry with each other through relationships, caring, and accountability; 2) it involved multiplying congregations of the Edmund campus; and 3) the vision involved the (then) novel idea of becoming one church with many campuses.

By the end of 2001, seven congregations on two campuses were serving 5500 people per weekend. Three years later, they had four campuses and 16 congregations serving more than 12,000 people per weekend. By the end of 2007, they had expanded to a dozen campuses (AND an "internet campus"), with 49 congregations serving more than 21,000 per weekend. At this writing, LifeChurch's people are now meeting in more than 3000 LifeGroups, including some groups whose people are attached to the internet campus. The church is proactive in mission, locally and globally. The church supports missionaries in six nations on three continents. Whether the people are involved in Habitat for Humanity or some other expression of local mission, or whether they engage in short term experiences in supporting their missions in other lands, they typically serve in *teams*.

Compassion

Most Protestant leaders virtually count on *words alone* to communicate all of the meaning that Christianity has to offer. If (say) preaching and teaching can't get it all done, that is too bad. because that is what we were trained to do and like to do!

However, if we think about it even at the level of ordinary folk wisdom, we already know that "Actions speak louder than words," and "A picture is worth a thousand words;" and when someone's actions contradict their words, or even when their inflection or facial expression suggests a different message than their words, we believe the "nonverbal message" more.

At a more academic level, the anthropologist, Edward T. Hall, discovered that *Culture* is "the silent language," and that a

culture's language is only one of (say) ten "message systems" through which meaning gets communicated—though the communication takes place at a less conscious level than when we communicate through the language message system.

For instance, Hall explained that we also communicate in many ways through Space, and Time.¹³ Christianity has had some knowledge of these dimensions for a very long time. So we have found profound meaning in pilgrimages to "holy places," and we often designate "sacred space" within our churches; and we have used the "holy" days and seasons of the Christian Year to communicate, celebrate, and rehearse the faith's Story and its towering themes. Furthermore, from the earliest Christian movement and throughout much of our history, we have often turned to sacraments, music, drama, the visual arts, and visual symbols (like the fish and the cross) to communicate in ways that transcend mere words.

All of this is preamble to one cogent affirmation: Love Communicates. Love, understand in the New Testament *agape* sense of "good will," communicates volumes. As our fold wisdom reminds us, "People don't care how much you know; they want to know how much you care."

The present state of our understanding is more nuanced than that; the movement of many people toward Christian faith follows a sequence something like this. As a rough generalization:

- People become more receptive to involvement with a church during a season of their lives when they are "between gods;" they have given up on whatever they most recently relied upon to complete their lives and are open to something else.
- They are more likely to visit a church IF they have heard about it,
- And IF the church has a positive public image,
- And IF one or more church members (whom they know and trust) invite them—perhaps several times, or more.
- When they visit, they look for clear signs of *Life*, or *Energy*. Although often they cannot verbalize it, they realize they need Grace or Spiritual Power to overcome their sins and problems, to live new lives and to become the people they were meant to be (and have always wanted to be).
- And they look to see if there are people in the church who are "like" them—who would understand them, with whom they can identify, who might serve as role models,
- And they sense whether they can "relate" to, and make

sense from, the church's language, music, style, and aesthetics.

- IF they get this far, they are now looking to see how *committed* the people are to the church's truth claims and mission. As Dean M. Kelley once observed, most people are not epistemologically sophisticated; they cannot weigh competing truth claims about Ultimate Reality. So they likely believe the group that seems to believe in their message and cause the most, and sacrifice to advance it. (Conversely, mere church-attending nominal Christianity has NO magnetic appeal to lost people who are trying to find The Way.) Growing churches are "high expectation churches;" they expect a lot from their members, and many members rise to meet the expectations; they live by Christian disciplines AND are involved in a small group, a lay ministry, and in evangelism and mission.¹⁴
- Furthermore, IF they get this far they are by now observing how *loving* and *caring* the church is. They have heard that, whatever else Christians are supposed to be, they are people who love other people (and they often expect Christians to love nature's creatures as well). As our song affirms, "They will know that we are Christians by our love."¹⁵ People seem almost hardwired to check for what the New Testament calls *agape love* (which is defined not as a feeling but as "good will on fire").
- By now, also, the church is able to engage seekers more deeply if they have perceived the church to be *credible*. In interviews, they typically comment on how the church's *consistency* (between what it believes and what the church and its people do) impressed and moved them. And they especially comment on how *compassionate* they found the church to be. To misquote Paul ever so slightly: often, of all of the factors seekers look for, "the greatest of these is love."

Specifically, a seeker's radar detects how much the church wants and cares for *them*, and their families, and for people like them. I recently interviewed a couple who transferred from one church to another; they still more strongly affirmed the first church's doctrine, but their new church loved them and their handicapped child much more and they said, "for us, that made all the difference."

Seekers are also moved when they observe churches that engage in visible *outreach ministries* to target populations with special needs. Three examples will suffice:

1. It is almost impossible to find churches with visible ministries to deaf people that are not growing. Seekers are typically moved when they visit a church that cares enough to sign its worship experience, and to engage in other ministries, for the deaf people among them. Such churches typically reach three groups: deaf people, and their families and friends, and many other people who are attracted to a church that includes deaf people.
2. The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod attracts many people because of its remarkably organized and serious outreach to blind people. The denomination took seriously the fact that over 11 million blind and visually impaired people were living in North America, and were one of the nation's most under-served populations. They launched the Lutheran Blind Mission Society in 1994 (www.blindmission.org). Within a decade, the mission was serving blind people with the largest Christian library (of large print books, books in Braille, and cassettes) in North America. The mission trains and equips leaders for blind ministries, and helps faith communities of blind people get organized. Soon, the mission will make hymnals and liturgical service books, in large print and Braille, available to churches.
3. Ministry to addictive people is perhaps the most impressive movement in North American Christianity, and beyond. When two recovering addicts founded Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, the Rev. Sam Shoemaker coached the new movement, but it was not primarily a movement within churches—due to the widespread stigmatizing that alcoholics then experienced from church people. In time, the movement learned more and more about the multiple causes of addiction, became clear that the affliction is a "disease" (in the sense that diabetes and allergies are understood within the "disease" paradigm), and its usefulness and power spread to people in the grips of other "chemical dependencies," and to people with food and gambling addictions.
4. In the 1980's, more and more churches became educated in such matters, and a quiet movement within churches began spreading—building on the 12 Steps of A. A., while offering a more complete revelation and recovery than A. A. can. More and more churches feature, and advertise, recovery ministries and recovery congregations; a huge sign by a church in Chicago reads "Recovery Spoken Here!" Today, the recovery movement is the

"underground awakening" of the early twenty-first century. More people are probably experiencing initial Grace through this movement than through all Evangelism programming, combined. And, when a church reaches addicts, and some experience profound life change, and the church is known for having "miracles" within its membership, this "catalyzes" much wider interest within the community.¹⁶

My colleague Bob Tuttle's flight to Orlando had landed. A man across the aisle had noticed Bob reading his Bible. The man asked, "May I tell you why I joined a church? I was working on a project in Anchorage, Alaska, and visited a church one Sunday. I noticed an attractive well-dressed middle-aged lady sitting on an aisle several rows ahead of me. A homeless young man entered the church. He walked down the aisle; the lady moved over and motioned for him to join her. I saw them smiling and talking together; I saw them sing together from a shared hymnal, and pray together. Following the benediction, she hugged him and slipped him a bill. I approached her, and commented on the lovely way she had treated her son. She replied, 'Thanks, but he is not my son; I never saw him before.' That afternoon, I telephoned my wife and said, 'Let's move to Anchorage. I have found a church that practices what it preaches!'"¹⁷

Connections

Donald McGavran devoted two decades of field research, in Christian movements on several continents, to the Big Question that most church leaders had long ignored: *How* does the Gospel spread? *How* does effective evangelism take place? In raising that question and finding answers, McGavran was defying perhaps the most entrenched myth in the theological academy—that the academy should stick to theory and that considerations of "method" is beneath intellectuals, if not obscene. McGavran discovered, however, that understanding the communication of Christianity's message to pre-Christian populations (especially to different cultures and in different languages) is a more formidable intellectual challenge than most academic intellectuals ever face.

McGavran discovered that growing churches and Christian movements are very complex phenomena, and that growth is always the result of multiple causes AND the Holy Spirit moving in the people's hearts. The mission of Church Growth field research was to identify as many of those causes as possible. Beneath the complexity, however, McGavran discovered that

wherever Christianity is expanding, one principle is always substantially behind it. Contrary to Protestant folk wisdom, the faith does not spread mainly through mass evangelism or media evangelism; it spreads mainly along the *social networks* of living Christians, especially to the social connections of transformed Christians and new Christians. The kinship and friendship networks of Christians provide "the bridges of God."¹⁸ Though multiple causes synergize to produce growth, it is people who reach and bring people, much more than preaching, literature, campaigns, or anything else.¹⁹

Which types of social networks are the most prolific can vary from one context to another. McGavran observed that, in traditional, tribal, and agrarian societies, kinship networks are the most prolific; Christians in those churches mainly reach people to whom they are related, by blood or marriage. In more urban and cosmopolitan societies, however, friendship networks are the most prolific; Christians in those churches mainly reach their friends, colleagues, and neighbors. McGavran also learned that God usually uses several relational bridges, not just one person, to reach most people—reminiscent of the reality reflected in First Corinthians 3:6—"I planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase." Some church growth blends the two patterns. Pastoral, neighborhood, or friendship contacts may reach one person in a pre-Christian family, who then helps reach other family members.

Don Miller and Ted Yamamori's significant study of world Pentecostal Christianity ratifies and extends these insights. While Pentecostal churches in (say) Latin America or sub-Saharan Africa often feature public crusades, such events are more effective in supporting the identity and unity of Christians than in reaching non-believing people. (Sometimes, crusades influence people in one church to join another church, and a crusade may raise the faith's public visibility.) The basis of virtually all conversions, however, is personal relationships between Christians and pre-Christian people. Typically, the mother of a family is reached first, followed by her children and then the father. Following conversion, nurture and maturation in the faith are also mediated relationally. Indeed, people often experience their Pentecostal church like their new extended family; and in their small group life, they care for and minister to each other.²⁰

McGavran's most counterintuitive discovery revealed that *new Christians* can be more reproductive than most church leaders assume; as a group, also, they are more reproductive than first-generation converts who have been Christians for many years; furthermore, they are especially more reproductive than

people raised in the church—IF the church appropriately deploys them in outreach.²¹ This is the case for several reasons:²²

- New Christians usually have many more contacts with pre-Christian people than do long time church members.
- New Christians recall what it was like to try to make sense of their life without Jesus Christ as Lord; many long-time members have forgotten, and many people raised in churches never knew.
- New Christians still have about them the contagion of a new discovery, and the people in their social network who knew them “before Christ” are often attracted to the faith than can change people.
- Moreover, new Christians have not yet had the time to become linguistically corrupted by the “foreign languages” of preachers and theologians; they still understand and communicate in the target population’s vernacular language.

McGavran’s insight about the “Bridges of God” is, almost undoubtedly, the most important strategic principle behind informed Evangelism today. While it substantially *describes* how effective outreach takes place (when it takes place), when churches *prescribe* and teach relational evangelism to their people, the principle’s power is then amplified. At least a hundred million people across the earth are now Christians in part because churches and missions have consciously cooperated with this principle.²³

Churches usually express the principle programmatically in their own way. A church may make a mailing list of every pre-Christian person in a new convert’s social network, and send those people engraved invitations to the service when the convert will join the church, with a reception to follow. Another church may list every convert’s un-churched connections and then, with the convert, visit those persons, get in conversation with them, assess their receptivity, and invite them to become involved. Another church, when it receives new Christians into its ranks, may invite their “bridges” to stand with them as they are received; in time, the church’s people come to assume that such evangelism is “normal Christianity!” An increasing number of churches take a redundant approach to cooperating with the principle; they may do some version of everything in this paragraph, and more.

Once, in a conversation with McGavran, we identified some of the principle’s “unfinished business.” I suggested, “We know that people reach people in their social networks, but do we know *what kind* of Christians help pre-Christian people find their

way?” “We know that strong *feelings* are typically involved in Christian conversion; how do our people make their friends and relatives feel?” “When our people do reach out effectively, what kinds of things do they *say*?” “And what kinds of things do they *do*?” McGavran smiled broadly, agreed that such questions were strategically important and that, to his knowledge, we did not know the answers to those questions. He unilaterally deputized *me* to do the field research to discover the answers!

I did that research, 20 to 30 days a year, for the next six years, in a range of denominational traditions, and in such nations as Mexico, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore, in addition to the USA.²⁴ I interviewed converts, and asked them to describe the person(s) who reached them, how they made them feel, what they said that helped make a difference, and so on. Also, when I led field seminars and workshops, I asked people to join my lunch table who fit the following description: They believed that evangelism is important and ought to be done, but they were not doing it.

I always had a full table! I interviewed at least 80 such groups, and I thereby discovered *the greatest barrier to Evangelism* in our churches. When I asked them *why* they were not doing evangelism even though they believed in it, they usually said something like “I’m not that sort of person.” When I asked them to describe the kind of person who does evangelism, to give me the adjectives, adjectives like these surfaced most often: dogmatic, holier-than-thou, narrow minded, self-righteous, pushy, aggressive, over-bearing, judgmental, hypocritical, insensitive, fanatic. *Over 90% of the adjectives were negative*; sometimes they added terms like “totalitarian,” and “spiritual fascists!” Once I gathered such data, I at last understood why so many of our people inwardly resist serving as “ambassadors for Christ.”

When, however, I asked first-generation Christians in interviews and seminars to describe the person(s) who most served as *their* bridge into faith, they gave me an astonishingly contrasting set of adjectives—such as loving, caring, informed, understanding, accepting, affirming, interested, concerned, encouraging, supporting, kind, and credible.

Notice, there is virtually NO overlap between the two lists! Our people’s folk wisdom (or the Idea planted by the Evil One) has convinced them that, to do evangelism, you have to become someone you wouldn’t want to be, someone who you wouldn’t even want to want to be. Occasionally, a seminar participant would nail the contrast as follows: “We have been duped into assuming that you cannot be like Jesus if you want to reach people for Jesus!” Sometimes, when they perceived that the kind of

people who help other people find faith and new life are NOT like the first list, but like the second, they concluded, "Being an ambassador for Christ *really* means being who we are already at our best, or would love to be!" When enough of our people discover *that*, they will realize that they may be the best prepared generation in centuries to fulfill the Great Commission. If enough of us discover this, our churches will become unstoppable movements.

You may have already anticipated the other contrasts. When I asked my lunch confidantes, "How do the 'evangelistic' type people make non-Christian people *feel*, the following "feeling words" were typical: guilty, damned, anxious, inadequate, angry, trapped, pressured, turned-off, uncomfortable, hopeless. New Christians, however, associated feelings like the following with *their* Significant Other: they felt valued, wanted, accepted, affirmed, respected, important, loved, worthwhile, comfortable, hopeful. People tend to believe their own data, so when attendees saw the contrast between how effective evangelizers allegedly make people feel and how they actually make them feel, they often volunteered, "Well, I would *love* for my friends to feel like that!"

When I asked Christians what the "evangelistic types" *say* and *do*, they gave many answers, but the most frequent were like these. They confront people, "invade their space," sling Bible texts at people, "preach at" people, and "push" people "to make a decision, now." Their message is often an oversimplified single theme from the gospel, often about "getting born again" or "going to Heaven."

What effective evangelizers *actually do and say* is the subject of the final section.

Conversations

Traditional Evangelism is "Presentation" Evangelism; our most entrenched paradigm has programmed us to "present the gospel" to people. For at least a century, several generations of evangelical Protestants have been scripted to learn and rehearse a summary of the Gospel and then orally present it to people in (say) two minutes. We called it "Personal Evangelism;" along with "Public Evangelism" (like Revivals and Crusades), these two approaches were the two tributaries of the Presentation River; presenting the gospel was *the* way to evangelize—to one person, or to 10,000. So we learned "The Roman Road," and "Evangelism Explosion," and "The Four Spiritual Laws," while Latin American Christians rehearsed the "New Life for All" formula. So the content shifted some over time, but the basic ap-

proach did not. We would talk, they would listen; and then we would invite them to decide to believe the message and/or pray the prescribed "Sinners Prayer." If they did, we declared them "Christians!"

Most of us learned that we must do Evangelism *that way*; the Presentation paradigm was the only game plan in town. The paradigm did, indeed, fit the personality and strengths of a small minority of Christians, and through them the approach often produced some new Christians; but the paradigm did *not* fit the personality and strengths of most Christians. Consequently, most Christians who believed that Evangelism should be done that way, did not do it much, or at all. Many people felt "guilty," throughout their entire Christian life, for their "failure" to do this.

While Christians, indeed, can fail to do the Will of God, the model exacerbated the problem. Most of our people have been unable to deliver "Personal Evangelism," in part because the model was insufficient, for at least four reasons:²⁵

- The formula we rehearsed typically left out too much of Gospel. Yes, the Gospel IS about second birth and eternal life, but it is also about the Love, Grace, Righteousness, Goodness, Peace, and Kingdom of God, and it is also about the forgiveness of sins and freedom from Sin, and reconciliation and redemption, and justification and abundant life and sanctification, and more. Furthermore, the Gospel includes Jesus' own message that calls us to a New Life, this side of death, in which we live no longer for our own will but His; and His message's wider themes proclaim a vision of Justice, Peace, and a Redeemed Creation. So our traditional message often omitted much of the Message! Furthermore, our gospel summary sometimes refracted a theme that *did* get included; while, for instance, Christianity IS partly about sharing by faith in Jesus' resurrection, it is even more about *fitting* us for Heaven than merely getting us to Heaven.²⁶
- When we presented a single theme of the Gospel as though it were the whole Gospel, we often observed two outcomes. First, if our single theme did not "scratch where they itched," or if our Answer did not engage any question they were asking, they often inferred that Christianity is "irrelevant" to their questions, issues, and struggles. Second, if they did accept the one truth-claim that we presented, they often assumed that was all that Christianity is about; if we told them later that following

Christ involves (say) faithfulness in marriage, or loving our enemies, or working for peace, or sharing the faith, that wasn't clear in their original contract; they suspected "bait and switch."

- The Presentation approach was based on a too-simplistic model of the Communication of Christianity's message: A Source, speaking perhaps a hundred words in two minutes, should be able to pour enough gospel content into the Receivers mind, without serious loss or distortion, to achieve "instant evangelism." The approach assumed that the Receiver already had enough of a Christian background to understand Christianity's key terms—which, in our increasingly secular society, is less and less a valid assumption. The approach ignored the many other known factors involved in Communication—that meaning gets communicated in many ways, from the credibility of the witnesser and the community, to the role of liturgy, music, testimony, narrative, drama, poetry, visual symbols and arts, and the sacraments, and the Receivers own internal processing of ideas. As we suggested above, Love communicates volumes. The Presentation approach was also oblivious to the fact that, for most people, the process that leads to conversion takes weeks, months, or years, typically a season or two.
- The Receivers often experienced what we called "Personal Evangelism" as *impersonal* salesmanship, or propaganda, or institutional membership recruitment—too much like what they once experienced from a used car salesman, a political candidate, or a fund drive. Indeed, the impersonal "hypodermic" approach to Evangelism, in which we give people a "gospel shot" and hope it "takes," is often counterproductive. When they sense that the witnessing Christian does not even know them, or understand them, or want to, the effort can confuse or alienate them. Sociologist Russell Hale once interviewed un-churched people in the eight most un-churched counties in the USA. He reported, "Most people can't hear until they have been heard."²⁷

Russell Hale's 1979 project prepared us for the bad news and the good news that, 30 years later, have become even more blatant. The bad news is that the population that is even open to a one-way religious presentation is a declining market. The good news is that more people are interested in honest *two-way conversation* than ever before.²⁸ "The Ministry of Conversation" is the reproductive approach whose time has come.

Peter Berger, the sociologist, framed the informed understanding of conversion in societies such as ours. His research taught him that, broadly, there are three essential steps involved in someone's Conversion. 1) Everyone has already been socialized into some "worldview"—a way of perceiving Reality. 2) In a pluralistic society (in which there is more than one worldview, like western society today), the main catalyst that opens people toward another worldview is *conversation* with someone who sees the world, and lives life, through a different worldview. 3) The process of Conversion is complete when a person has been re-socialized into the community that lives by the alternative worldview. So conversion takes place substantially through conversation, and not usually without it.²⁹

Effectiveness in such conversation involves *skills* that, alas, some people have acquired in their socialization and others have not; fortunately, the skills can be taught, and learned. A quarter century ago, many people became more effective conversationalists by studying Barbara Walters' *How to Talk With Practically Anybody About Practically Anything*.³⁰ More recently, four authors have reflected from their research in organizations and produced *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*.³¹ While the book is written especially for people in business, education, and other organizations, the insights are astonishingly relevant to evangelistic conversation. We are already fully aware that conversation with someone about (say) getting a second chance, or making sense of their life, or experiencing their purpose in life through becoming a Christ-follower is, to say the least, a "crucial conversation." Our awareness is ratified in the authors' definition that qualifies a conversation as crucial: "A discussion between two or more people where stakes are high, opinions vary, and emotions run strong."³² The authors teach a range of rather specific conversational skills, including skills for staying focused in the conversation (chapter 3), and for making conversation *safe* (chapters 4 and 5), and for listening with empathy (chapter 8), and for "speaking persuasively, not abrasively" (chapter 7).³³

The field with the clumsy name of "Symbolic Interactionism" provides perspectives for evangelizers—whether or not its founder, George Herbert Mead, had that in mind!³⁴ For instance, Mead pioneered the idea that we tend to define our Identity in ways that reflect how we believe that "Significant Others" have defined us. ("Mead Lite," pop psychology's simplification, says, "I am not who I think I am; I am not who you think I am; I am who I think you think I am.") Evangelism, therefore, would involve knowing some pre-Christian people well enough and liv-

ing credibly enough that when, in conversation, we told people who they could become as a follower of Jesus, they would experience this as affirmation and revelation.

Again, Mead took very seriously the idea that, within each of us, an "internal conversation" takes place, many times, every day; we talk to ourselves, much of the time. Moreover, we usually end up doing what we talk ourselves into doing. Then we tend to define ourselves as a person who does such things, for whom such things are important. This is a significant insight because, when people become new Christians, it is partly because they talked themselves into becoming Christians. In conversational evangelism, it is often useful to ask the seeker what they say to themselves, what they tell themselves about themselves. If they say (for instance), "I'm a loser," we can often earn the permission to tell them they are "wrong," and to suggest what we believe God wants them to tell themselves, and to suggest who they were created to be and, by the Grace through Christ, can be. In my interviews with converts in recent years, I have asked, "How did you start talking to yourself differently in the season when you became a new Christian?" I discovered that new Christians can always get in touch with how they used to talk to themselves, and how their self-talk started to change, and how their new self-talk helped change them.³⁵ We can often function as Christ's agent in coaching people on what to say to themselves. Furthermore, if what we do precedes or reinforces our self-definition to some degree, it is important to involve seekers and new believers in scripture, prayer, group life, worship, service, witness, social involvement, and the other things Christians do *before* they define themselves as people of Christian Faith.

In several ways (at least), the Ministry of Conversation transcends the inherited Presentation model. Conversations can represent more themes of the Gospel than presentations can. The interchange in conversations, in which the other person tells us what they heard us say, gives us the chance to say it differently and clarify our meaning. In conversation, we are free to draw from a distilled version of the message we once learned. For example, I often share from the affirmations³⁶ in the New Life for All movement in Latin America:

- God created all people for Life.
- In their Sin, people have forfeited much of what Life was meant to be.
- God came in Christ to offer New Life
- We can accept and experience that New Life through trusting and Following Christ.

- If we become Christ-followers, we are called to be faithful to that New Life in all of our relationships.

The New Life for All summary is useful, in part because: It engages people's increasing interest in experiencing Real Life *this* side of the grave; and it begins where Scripture does—with Creation rather the Fall; and it does not merely imply the commitment to living our lives by God's will. In conversation, of course, we are liberated from "parroting" the message; it simply informs part of our contribution to the conversation. The other person typically experiences real conversation as *more personal* than what we have long called "personal Evangelism." Finally, in real conversation there will usually be natural moments to include the Holy Spirit in the conversation. (We usually call that "Prayer!") Indeed, people sometimes sense the presence of God during the conversation, and even more often they know the Presence as they see the conversation through a rear-view mirror.

The Ministry of Conversation is not a modern (or post-modern) discovery. It is extensively modeled and reflected in the New Testament, and conversation across social networks substantially accounts for a majority of the converts in most Christian movements in most cultures and in most eras. Historians consistently credit preaching more than is warranted, and conversation (of clergy and especially laity) less than warranted. While church history remembers "the great evangelists" as public *preachers* (perhaps because most writers of church history are ordained!), many of them (such as Jonathan Edwards, Charles G. Finney, and John Wesley) were also known in their lifetime as engaging conversationalists. Samuel Johnson reflected, "I hate to meet John Wesley; the dog enchants you with his conversation, and then breaks away to go and visit some old woman."³⁷

John Wesley's *Journal* reports an extensive ministry of conversation, including letter writing. Wesley coached his people to visit with people in their homes and other places. Wesley taught that conversation permits us to discern what gospel themes people are most open to, and it is the way to "get within" people and to "suit all our discourse to their several conditions and tempers." He concluded that conversation is *necessary* to reach most people. "For, after all our preaching, many of our people are almost as ignorant as if they had never heard the gospel. . . . I have found by experience, that one of these has learned more from one hour's close discourse, than from ten years' public preaching."³⁸

When Christians respond, today, to the unprecedented opportunity for Conversation Ministry, they typically experience

four discoveries:

- When, in conversation with us, seekers are free to ask *questions* about the issues or doubts that have impeded their quest for faith and life, they are often verbalizing this to another person for the first time in their lives. When they ask the question, or state the doubt, or “name the demon”—that gets it out into the open, and it often begins to *lose* some of its immobilizing *power* over the person before their Christian conversation partner ever says much.
- Christians discover that their time spent studying scripture and theology, and rehearsing the Gospel in liturgy, and reflecting upon sermons and lessons and spiritual experience, has NOT been “a total waste” as far as apostolic ministry is concerned! Indeed, Christians often discover that in those experiences they have been *prepared* with some of the insights and *answers* the seeker needs to hear. (Actually, God often gives us “beginner’s luck!”)
- While Christians discover that their Christian formation has already given them some answers to the questions that seekers really do ask, they also discover that they do NOT have answers to some of the other questions that seekers ask. This discovery drives them back to scripture, theology, and caucusing with other Christians who are engaged in witness and, from the questions that they could not at first answer, they *learn* more *useful theology* than they’d learn in an entire degree program in “desk theology.” Indeed, experience in apostolic ministry drives us to a deeper understanding of the gospel than time spent in church and academy, alone, could ever provide.³⁹
- Finally, Christians discover that people ask some questions for which we do not have, and kind not find, fully satisfying answers. (Questions around suffering and natural evil are typical.) But Christians discover that is okay, that seekers do not need all of their questions answered; they only need some of their questions answered—enough to know that Christianity has some good reasons on its side. In any case, seekers do not usually expect Christians to have all of the answers to life’s persistent questions. What helps them is not our answers to the questions we could not answer, but those we could answer. What helps them most is not usually our answers; years later, they may recall almost nothing that we said. Most pre-Christian people, after all, have

never had the opportunity to be in conversation with a trusted Christian who cared, and listened, and understood or wanted to understand, and wasn’t defensive or judgmental in the face of doubts and questions. What makes the most difference is “*the sacramental power of the ministry of conversation.*”

Case: Quest Community Church, Lexington, KY

An increasing number of growing churches are discovering the imperative and subtle power of the ministry of conversation. One case will dramatize the point.

Quest Community Church in Lexington, KY, averaged 148 people in attendance its first year. In its third year, Quest averaged 382; in its sixth year 1,025; now nine years old (as this is written), Quest ranks among the 50 fastest growing churches in the USA—now averaging more than 3400 in weekend attendance, and another 1000 for Wednesday evening worship and teaching for believers. The church’s total weekly attendance exceeds its (3400) membership. The church is building a new auditorium, which will almost triple the seating capacity to 2500. By the end of its seventh year, over 1300 people had become new Christians at Quest. Then, in the church’s eighth year, 1200 people publicly accepted Christ, and in the ninth year 1200 had committed through September.⁴⁰

To reflect from this chapter’s earlier themes, Quest Church’s outreach is community based, nurtured, and encouraged; the whole church seems to function as “the evangelism committee.” Invitation typically takes place across the members’ social networks; over 80% of the new Christians responded to one or more friends. But Quest Community Church was conceived from the ministry of conversation, and the church is rather obsessional about the leaders being in conversation with each other and with the members, and members being in conversation with each other, and especially with the leaders and members being in conversation with pre-Christian people and seekers—within and beyond the church.

Pete Hise, the founding pastor and now the “lead pastor,” worked his way through Asbury Theological Seminary by waiting tables at an Applebee’s Restaurant, where he engaged in conversation with fellow waiters and patrons; at least ten became converts. When Pete graduated from divinity school, he served for several years as evangelism pastor at First Alliance Church in Lexington. Then, in 1999, about 70 First Alliance members joined him in planting the new church. From the beginning, Quest targeted un-churched people, including “people

who don't like church" and people who have been "burned by church."

Quest church has been driven by (what I call) an "apostolic" agenda from its beginning. The church declares that its essential mission is "transforming unconvinced people into wholehearted followers of Jesus." The church understands itself to be "sent out" into the community, and the world, for this purpose. Hise looks upon Lexington as "a mission field." He believes that the society is now so secular, and that secular people are so far from the life of faith, that there are no longer any Church Growth "tips" or "techniques" that a stagnant church can adopt and thereby grow; nor is it possible for a traditional church to merely *add* evangelism to everything else it is doing and see much difference. Pete says, "It's got to be the main thing." Sharon Clements, Quest's worship and arts pastor, adds that the church "has to love lost people; without love, you will do more damage than good."

Quest Church embodies the key features of the apostolic congregation's worldwide profile. For instance:

- The church has "proliferated" congregations—four per weekend, a believers' congregation on Wednesday nights, a Recovery congregation on Friday nights, and a second campus in Frankfort, KY.
- The church has targeted pre-Christian people who aren't at all like "good church people," many with complex personal "issues." The miracles that are now apparent, in some of their lives, have "catalyzed" responsiveness in many other people.
- Quest church has virtually reinvented "cultural relevance" to the point of the complete "casualization of Christianity!" Quest has NO dress code; the drink holders attached to each seat are for coffee mugs. "Worship experiences" feature the music, style, films, and humor of younger un-churched adults. You especially notice the use of indigenous expression: no King James verbiage, no hymnals, no choir (but singing ensembles); the sanctuary is now an "auditorium," the testimonies are now people's "stories," the foyer is the "atrium," the ushers are "the receiving team." The church's auditorium features no traditional visual symbols of the faith, like stained glass windows or even a cross.⁴¹
- The church is passionate about "emotional relevance." Quest targets, welcomes, and engages people with "issues," like addictions and compulsions, spiritual doubts and confusion, self-esteem and identity crises, debts and

depression. Many visitors say they respond to the "energy," the "passion," the "hope," and the "extravagant love" they experience there. Many converts report a new emotional freedom.

- Almost half of Quest's people are involved in "Life-Groups"—in which 20 to 30 people meet, for teaching, ministry with each other, and (in smaller sub-groups) for conversation and prayer. Since "authentic community" is one of the church's core values, they invite everyone to discover, through a LifeGroup, "friends who will do life with you."
- Quest features a range of Outreach Ministries to distinct populations—such as a 13 week support group experience for people experiencing separation or divorce, and a Friday evening ministry for addictive people in recovery, and Good Sense ministries of workshops and counseling for people with financial struggles.
- The church is substantially involved in the world mission of its tradition, The Christian and Missionary Alliance—which is one of the three strongest "mission denominations" in the USA (considering its ratio of members to the number of supported overseas missionaries). Quest sends out multiple short-term mission teams per year, and supports mission on several continents.

Quest Community Church, however, is not merely a clone of the generic apostolic congregation profile. The church has developed its own ways of engaging a city. Take "Questapalooza," for example—"a party for the city." The church now schedules this one-day music and arts festival each Fall. The back windows of church members' cars become a thousand or more "moving billboards" announcing the festival. The event gives every member an "excuse" to invite their friends for the weekend's program—featuring fire works, carnival rides, and noted Christian rock bands, singing groups and soloists. The church, during the festival, publicly baptizes a roster of new believers, while each is telling his or her story on videotape. Going *this* public with their commitment has deep meaning for the converts, and the experience attracts new people toward the church and the faith. Over 1800 people came to the first Questapalooza: over 6500 came to the third.

Most of all, however, Quest Community Church is about the Ministry of Conversation. The church was conceived in conversations at Applebee's Restaurant. The favored mode of Christian witness is faithful conversation. The LifeGroup meetings split for a time into smaller groups, for conversation. Quest Church

modified the Friday experiences for the Recovery community to include a time for conversation, every Friday night.

Quest Church's greatest innovation can be observed at the conclusion of almost every worship experience. The form of the evangelistic invitation is to come forward and get into conversation with someone who will help the person, who is now seeking, to process the Christian Possibility for their lives; the seeker's conversation partner will listen and talk as long as necessary. All of Quest's several hundred leaders, and many other members, are committed, trained, and available for this ministry. They report profound meaning in "mid-wifing" new life.

The leaders reflect together on their experiences in evangelical conversation—to improve in the ministry. They discovered that the conversations are more often about life, and how to live one's life, than about doctrine or ideology. Sharon Clements reports, "Often, the single most important thing we do in these conversations is to ask questions, and then listen." Quest's leaders have learned that it is important to take enough time to earn the right to be heard. With the population Quest reaches, this ministry requires not being experienced to judge the other person; and it may involve appropriate self-disclosure—such as "I once had that same doubt." Quest's people have learned to listen for feelings as well as meanings, and then to rephrase what they are hearing so that the seekers sense and feel that their conversation partner understands them and empathizes with them.

Sharon Clements reports that, often, "People are moved when you give them time." She reports that leaders often experience a lengthy conversation following a service as "an inconvenience;" lunch, or a meeting, or another service, or something is usually scheduled, and waiting. "But our people take the inconvenience of evangelism as a joy." Pete Hise believes that, to reach pre-Christian people today, a church "must create a culture of authentic conversation."

Writer

George G. Hunter III, Distinguished Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth, Asbury Theological Seminary (this article represents a chapter of his forthcoming book, *The Apostolic Congregation: Church Growth Reconceived for a New Generation* (Abingdon, August 2009).

NOTES

1. Some churches elevate their "most spiritual" people to leadership roles. Spiritual devotion is, indeed, a prerequisite to *faithful* Christian leadership but (unless the church lives in an unchanging context, like a medieval village) is never, by itself, sufficient for *effective* leadership. Some "saints" make disastrous leaders; they have learned to love God better with their hearts, but not yet with their minds.

2. That rough Evangelical consensus shifts some over time, but many leaders in recent history have usually agreed that the Christian faith should spread through public revivals or crusades, or through tracts or billboards or bumper stickers, or through radio or television programs, or through an internet website, or through the Roman Road or the Four Spiritual Laws or some other formulaic approach to preaching to people, one on one.

3. See Donald L. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

4. C. Peter Wagner, *Dominion: How Kingdom Action Can Change the World* (Chosen Press, 2008)

5. See, especially, the writings of Rodney Stark, such as *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), Roger Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America: 1776-2005: Winners And Losers In Our Religious Economy*, rev. ed. (Rutgers University Press, 2005), and Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

6. See, especially, Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). Someone, one day, will read the literature on conversion and interview Christian converts in a range of churches and populations, and will write an influential text in "applied conversion studies."

7. Schaller has published over 40 books and has scattered his insights for informing congregational and denominational growth. Five books are most obviously related to expanding Christianity's ranks: *Growing Plans* (Abingdon, 1983), *44 Ways to Increase Church Attendance* (Abingdon, 1987), *44 Questions for Church Planters* (Abingdon, 1991), *44 Steps Up Off the Plateau* (Abingdon, 1993) and *A Mainline Turnaround*:

Strategies for Congregations and Denominations (Abingdon, 2005). Two books especially address major paradigm shifts that many churches need to experience: *The Seven-Day-A-Week Church* (Abingdon, 1992) and *From Geography to Affinity* (Abingdon, 2003).

8. In McGavran's last major book, he clarified that the years of field research were primarily to inform "effective evangelism." See Donald A. McGavran, *Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1988). Nevertheless, the second edition of *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980) remains his most comprehensive reflection. The 1990 third edition is essentially a condensed version of the second edition.

9. See George G. Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000)

10. We know of at least one monastic community in the West that pre-dated the Celtic movement—the community of St. Martin of Tours—where Martin launched the first mission to rural people in Europe. We believe that Patrick, then perhaps in his late 20's, once spent time at Tours and reflected his way toward a somewhat *different* approach to reaching the Irish.

11. Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, translated by Bertram Colgrave (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1969) Book IV, ch. 23.

12. See John Finney, *Finding Faith Today: How Does It Happen?* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1992).

13. Hall introduced his (then) revolutionary idea that "culture is communication" in *The Silent Language* (Greenwich, CN: Fawcett Publications, 1959). *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) more thoroughly explored how humans communicate through space, and in *The Dance of Life* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1983) through time. *Beyond Culture* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976) is his most nuanced treatment of these themes. His autobiographical *Anthropology of Everyday Life* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1994) reflects upon his experience in discovering other "primary message systems" within cultures.

14. See Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972). Kelley reported that "strict" or "demanding" churches grow. In this writing, I have revised these insights to reflect how many of us, within Kelley's tradition, now characterize growing churches as "high expectation churches."

15. The study interpreted by Win Arn, Charles Arn, and Carroll Nyquist, *Who Cares About Love?* (Arcadia, CA: Church Growth Press, 1986) reviewed questionnaire data from thousands of laypeople in hundreds of churches. The study demonstrated a compelling positive correlation between a church's growth and its people's perceptions of how loving and caring the church's people are toward each other, toward

visitors, and toward the community outside the church. When they compared data by denomination, the dozen denominations that scored highest on "the Loving-Caring Quotient" were all growing.

16. Some church leaders regard my chapter on "Recovery Ministries as a Prototype for Outreach Ministries" as the best short introduction to addiction theory, the recovery movement, and recovery ministries. See George G. Hunter III, *Radical Outreach: The Recovery of Apostolic Ministry and Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003) 119-148.

17. To root your mind and soul deeply in the apostolic tradition, read Robert G. Tuttle, *The Story Of Evangelism: A History of the Witness to the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006).

18. For McGavran's first and most comprehensive reflection on the gospel's spread through social networks, see Donald A. McGavran, *The Bridges of God* (New York, NY: Friendship Press, 1955). McGavran's discovery has been replicated many times. "Diffusion" scholars have demonstrated, for instance, that (presumably) all "innovations"—such as new ideas, technologies, and products spread across "diffusion networks." See Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, Fifth Edition (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003) chapter 8. More recently, scholars have discovered that *happiness* spreads across social networks! Indeed, "Happiness spread outward by three degrees, to the friends of friends of friends." See Maria Cheng, "Study Says Happiness Transfers from Person to Person," *Lexington Herald-Leader* (December 5, 2008) A-3.

19. The book by Win and Charles Arn, *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples: Every Christian an Effective Witness Through an Enabling Church*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998) is the most enduring approach to the ministry of evangelism based upon Church Growth research and reflection.

20. See Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) especially pages 22-25 and 197-199.

21. Willow Creek Community Church has taught converts, throughout the church's history, that the ministry of witness is central to Willow Creek's "Seven Step Strategy" for every member. Nevertheless, Willow Creek's recent self-study reported that their more mature converts are more like to engage in witness than newer converts. See Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Reveal: Where Are You?* (South Barrington, IL: Willow Creek Association, 2007). I would suggest that the main reason for this is that Willow Creek's model expects Christians to engage in the ministry of witness *alone*—on the job, at the health club, etc. Most new converts, however, cannot (or feel they cannot) carry that much weight, alone. In the following paragraphs I show how, in the Church Growth tradition, we recommend that mature Christians join new Christians in their outreach.

22. McGavran and I once identified these reasons in a lengthy con-

versation, each of us drawing from our interview data.

23. We lack the sufficient data to validate this claim. I offer it as a very conservative estimate.

24. For a more complete report on this research see George G. Hunter III, *To Spread the Power: Church Growth in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987) chapter 4.

25. This reflection is consistent with Willow Creek Community Church's Evangelism curriculum which, in the first lesson, helps people to discover that (what I have called) the Presentation approach IS one of eight approaches to faith-sharing we find modeled in the New Testament. See Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Zondervan, 1996). I am suggesting, however, that the Conversation model (which the *Contagious Christian* project did not feature) is the model most modeled and reflected in the New Testament, especially in the ministry of Jesus. (For verification, begin with John 4 and then peruse the rest of the New Testament!) Furthermore, I am suggesting that most (if not all Christians) can engage in the Ministry of Conversation.

26. See my book *Christian, Evangelical and . . . Democrat?* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006) chapter three, "Christianity's Gospel and Its Ethic," for a more complete discussion of essential Christianity vis a vis the domesticated Christianity that many church people assume.

27. James Russell Hale, *The Unchurched: Who They Are and Why They Stay Away* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980).

28. I should have reached this conclusion much sooner than I did. In the years when I was giving gospel presentations, when the receptors became people of initial faith—it was not because the presentation accomplished that objective. Rather, my presentation raised questions in their mind, and they maneuvered me into conversation, usually multiple conversations over time, and it was the ministry of conversation that helped make the difference—especially when we included God in the conversation!

29. See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Anchor Press, 1967). This understanding of conversion is spelled out in the second half of the book, which focuses on "Secondary Socialization."

30. (Doubleday Books, 1983). As I recall, the word *with* was a major theme; we learn to talk with people, not to them.

31. Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002).

32. *Crucial Conversations*, p. 3.

33. Richard Peace's *Holy Conversation: Talking About God in Everyday Life* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2006) is an excellent Christian source for preparing God's People for the Ministry of Conversation. It is designed to prepare conversationalists for Christ within

groups, in 12 sessions.

34. Mead was a philosopher and social psychologist at the University of Chicago. His foundational text was actually written, following his death, from the class notes of several of his students. First published in the early 1950's, the most available version is George Herbert Mead and Charles W. Morris, *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (University of Chicago Press, 1967). Mead, son of a clergyman, probably would have liked the Church taking his insights seriously!

35. For some analogous cases and inspiring reading, read some of the many published testimonies in the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. These first-hand stories consistently feature how the people used to talk to themselves when they were in the grip of addiction's mysterious power, and how they began talking to themselves differently that helped lead to their recovery. See *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th. Ed. (New York City: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 2001)

36. The five affirmations are always the same, but the phrasing varies.

37. Quoted in Stanley Ayling, *John Wesley* (Cleveland and New York: William Collins Publishers, Inc., 1979) 5.

38. John Wesley, *Minutes of Several Conversations*, in Samuel Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978) 8:303.

39. Vincent Donovan spent 16 years as the (Roman Catholic) Apostle to the Maasai people of East Africa. His *Christianity Rediscovered* (Chicago: Orbis Books, 1978) reflects, as in the title, how much he learned about Christianity's gospel and ethic from the experience of interpreting its meaning to a pre-Christian population of a very different tongue and culture from his own.

40. Quest's figure for "new Christians" includes people who had been nominal members of other churches (at least at one time) but had never been, by their own report, serious Christians. The church's data does not permit me to say, with precision, how many of these people represent "transfer growth" and how many represent "conversion growth." My interviews with new Christians at Quest would indicate that about half represent conversion growth; they'd had no prior church to transfer from. My sample, however, is not large enough to validate my "educated guess."

41. Quest Community Church is a member of the Willow Creek Association. That association has been remarkably influential in spreading the "seeker church" model; the three largest churches in Lexington are all members of the Willow Creek Association, and we observe a similar pattern in many cities. Chicago's Willow Creek Community Church was founded in 1975 as (what I have called) an "apostolic experiment," and I regard it as the most important apostolic experiment in my life-

time. I was, I am told, the first professor in theological education to interpret insights from the Willow Creek project to the wider church. My books, such as *How To Reach Secular People* (Abingdon, 1992), *Church for the Unchurched* (Abingdon, 1996), and *Radical Outreach: The Recovery of Apostolic Ministry and Evangelism* (Abingdon, 2003), introduced Willow Creek to many church leaders and (I am told) "legitimized" Willow Creek as a church "worth learning from." Willow Creek decided, early, to omit visual Christian symbols when they built their first facility. Innovative leaders do not get every decision right, and I have never heard or read a compelling argument for the omission of symbols. I suspect that Willow Creek's leaders bought, unreflectively, into the widespread (but unspoken) Evangelical Protestant bias that the sense of *hearing* is the only sense that matters, and that *words* are the main (if not the only) medium of God's revelation. While Protestants are not obligated to replicate Roman Catholic "smells and bells," I submit that all of the senses *do* matter, that multi-sensory communication is often more powerful than what can be achieved through hearing alone, and that the next pioneering churches may show us how to indigenize Christian symbols to the target population's aesthetic—as we have already learned to do with their favored genres of music. In every other major mission field on the planet, we have already learned how to develop indigenous expressions of Christian symbols.

Insights from Communication Theories that Inform Ministry with Pre-Christian Hispanics in the USA

Dan W. Dunn

Abstract

This article discerns insights from three communication theories to inform ministry with pre-Christian Hispanics in the USA. Pearce's Coordinated Management of Meaning theory speaks of the co-construction of social realities in diverse circumstances. Christians have experienced what it is to be diverse and yet through Jesus' love be able to co-construct an identity that focuses on our shared commitment to Him and His purposes. Combining our experience with insights from Pearce would equip us to contribute to the process of identity construction that Hispanics engage in. Baxter and Montgomery's Relational Dialectics Theory could guide congregations in helping families plot a course through the complexities of relationships. Finally, Hammerback and Jensen's theory of Reconstitutive Rhetoric helps us understand the value of inviting pre-Christian Hispanics to embrace a new identity that not only tells them how to act but also who to be.

According to the US Census Bureau, the 2006 population of Hispanics¹ in the United States was 43.2 million, which represents 15.5% of the total population in the USA. Between 2000 and 2006, the growth rate of Hispanics was 24.3%, compared to a 6.1% growth rate for the population as a whole. This rapidity of growth is expected to continue, so that by the year 2010 the Hispanic population is estimated to reach 47.8 million, and by 2020 it will reach almost 60 million.² In 2006 the Pew Research Center conducted a survey of Hispanics and American Religion (they refer to Hispanics as Latinos), and in this survey 7.8% of Hispanics self-designated as being secular.³ Based on the Census Bureau Survey figure of 43.2 million, 7.8% represents 3,369,600 Hispan-

ies with no religious affiliation. Additionally, even though 92.2% of Hispanics say they are religious, only 63% of Hispanics attend religious services once per month.⁴ The remaining 37% would constitute a population of almost 16 million Hispanics. A conservative estimate, therefore, is that among the Hispanics who live in the USA, between 3 million and 16 million of them are currently not experiencing the joy of a life fully invested in Christ and lived in relationship with His people. This represents an enormous mission field to be reached with the transforming love of Jesus Christ.

Effectively reaching these persons represents a difficult task due to the complexity of Hispanic realities in America. The matrix of ethnicity, immigration status, language preference, socio-economic "place" and other factors makes it difficult to know the "who" for whom a local congregation should contextualize its ministry. However, with the assistance of social science research, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, I believe it is possible to address complex issues well enough to glean tentative insights for effective apostolic ministry with Hispanic pre-Christians. There are a myriad of possibilities for research in these arenas, so it is impossible to deal with all of them in one article. My objective in this article is to focus on three specific theories from the field of communication to gain insights for ministry with Hispanics in the USA.

The first communication theory that offers promise for our journey is the Coordinated Management of Meaning theory developed by Barnett Pearce and Vernon Cronen. The central crux of their theory is that "*persons-in-conversation co-construct their own social realities and are simultaneously shaped by the worlds they create.*"⁵ They view their theory as eminently practical because it addresses how we can create a better social world together. As they extend their theory they offer ideas and models to help teachers, parents, social workers, therapists, and many others become more effective in a wide variety of communication situations. Four tenets in particular are germane to CMM:

- The essential social process of human living is the experience of people in conversation.
- How we communicate is often more important than what we communicate.
- The conversation interaction is experienced reflexively, so that we are continually being formed in relationship to our conversations.
- Persons-in-conversation are curious participants in a pluralistic world – curious rather than certain, participants rather than spectators, and pluralistic truth rather

than singular truth.⁶

Because we live in a pluralistic world as curious participants and are continually involved in formational processes, Pearce recommends a style or form of communication he terms as dialogic. An important piece of dialogic communication is that persons distinguish between their personal identities and the relationship that exists between them. This enables persons with different perspectives (each shares his or her own identity) to nevertheless communicate with one another respectfully (honoring the relationship between them as co-participants). As persons engage in dialogic communication they are able to coordinate meaning in the social world they are creating. Coordination is the word chosen because this theory honors that persons will disagree with one another so the goal is not to achieve common interpretation but shared action. The notion of sharing is particularly important because "the reconstruction of contexts, and most other things worth doing, cannot be done unilaterally or in a single act. Social change, just like its apparent opposite, social order, is co-constructed in a recursive process that reconstructs us as persons, relationships, and institutions."⁷

This theory has strong potential for informing our ministry with pre-Christian Hispanics. Due to complex issues such as immigration, language, and identity, Hispanics continually experience the kind of co-constructive process to which Pearce and Cronen refer. Consider identity, for example. I have a friend who moved to America from Puerto Rico seven years ago. He married a girl from Salvador who has been here four years. They are both bi-lingual but are far more comfortable speaking Spanish, and yet they also both work with companies where English is predominant. If they continue living in America, they will experience a constant co-construction of their identities. The "players" involved in this co-construction will include them, their Hispanic friends, their Anglo friends, their co-workers, their bosses, American cultural influences, their work environments, and many more. How will "meaning" in their lives be constructed and coordinated? Who will help them in that process?

Geoffrey Fox has written about the construction of Hispanic identity in the midst of such dizzying complexities. He notes that Hispanics in America are constantly shifting their identities, and he asks a penetrating question: "If identities can be shifted that easily, how deep and important can they be? What is the relationship between my identities and my 'self'? Or are they the same thing?"⁸ I submit that the Coordinated Management of Meaning theory can assist Christians in helping pre-Christian

Hispanics navigate their lifelong journey of identity co-construction. More importantly, as this journey is shared with non-Hispanic Christians, I believe we can remind ourselves that virtually all persons experience lifelong identity shifts. This is not limited to Hispanics. Felix Padilla writes that "people may shed, resurrect, or adopt ethnicity as the situation warrants,"⁹ and Ilan Stavans proposes that "we are currently witnessing a double-faceted phenomenon: Hispanization of the United States, and Anglocization of Hispanics."¹⁰

I suggest that a deeper understanding of the co-construction of social realities could bear tremendous fruit in evangelization. For example, as Pearce develops his theory in more detail, one of the issues he deals with is "consensual rules." He offers three coordination strategies related to consensual rules; casting, mirroring, and negotiation.¹¹ Space does not permit a deeper investigation of these strategies. I simply want to emphasize that there is much gold to be mined in Pearce's work, and Christians would benefit greatly from digging more deeply into his theoretical veins. These kinds of insights could provide wise counsel to Christians in their ministry with pre-Christians Hispanics. As persons united in Christ, we have experienced what it is like to speak different languages or come from different geographical locations or share different ethnic backgrounds and yet through Christ's love be able to co-construct an identity that focuses on our unity in Him and our shared commitment to His purposes. Combining our experience with insights from Pearce would equip us to contribute to the process of identity construction that pre-Christians engage in. Local churches could take the initiative in this kind of endeavor and *proactively* form communities united in Christ rather than waiting to *reactively* respond to conflicts within their communities.

Our second communication theory is the Relational Dialectics Theory, which is designed to help make sense of the "dynamic knot of contradictions"¹² that we experience in our more intimate relationships with family and close friends. Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery note that in these relationships there is "a ceaseless interplay between contrary or opposing tendencies."¹³ The three dialectics that most commonly impact intimate relationships are integration-separation, stability-change, and expression-nonexpression. Baxter notes that these three "families of contradictions" are by no means the only ones which people experience in their intimate relationships, nor are they simplistic entities. Rather, they "have multiple strands of meaning that are constituted differently depending on the particular kind of relating...."¹⁴

In later development, Baxter focused on Mikhail Bakhtin's thoughts concerning dialogue and began to highlight five emphases from his work:

- Dialogue is a constitutive process – communication is not a *part* of the relationship, but is what creates and sustains the relationship.
- Dialogue as dialectical flux – it is complex and messy, so don't expect it to be otherwise
- Dialogue as an aesthetic moment – in the midst of the complexity, we experience those peaceful and exuberant times when we know that we have truly communicated together
- Dialogue as utterance – this highlights that multiple voices are necessary in communication
- Dialogue as a critical sensibility – we must critique dominant voices, we must allow all voices to be heard¹⁵

The theory of relational dialectics provides a sense of relief to some people because it helps them understand that the tensions which they experience in their close relationships are normal. The five strands of dialogue also provide insights that assist people in navigating the complexities of our intimate relationships and experiencing those blessed exuberant aesthetic moments. More recently Baxter has developed a second-generation view of Relational Dialectics in which she has nuanced her understanding of aesthetic moments. She identifies three types of "consummatory [sic] moments" that are experienced in intimate relationships, "the wholeness of temporal continuity with the past and with the future, the wholeness of a relationship forged out of distinct selves, and a sense of oneness with the flow of the conversation or with the immediate surroundings."¹⁶

Baxter's three "consummatory moments" offer fresh possibilities for ministry with Hispanics. Concerning the "temporal continuity with the past and with the future," I am thinking particularly of congregations that are located in communities with a mixture of first-, second-, and third-generation immigrants. Many studies have revealed the changes that occur between these immigrant generations and the resulting problems that can ensue. For example, Helen Ebaugh and Janet Chafetz address the dilemmas that immigrant congregations face in terms of which language(s) to utilize in ministry settings.¹⁷ Recognition of the wholeness that comes when people experience temporal continuity with the past and with the future could prompt congregations to develop events that provide such continuity. If the congregation is comprised of Venezuelans they could celebrate

Venezuelan Independence Day on July 5th, in addition to celebrating America's Independence Day on July 4th. This would provide continuity with their past experience in Venezuela and their present experience in America. To offer a sense of continuity with the future, in conjunction with a new understanding of their identity in Christ, they could celebrate Conversion Days or Spiritual Birthdays. Similar ideas could be generated around the themes of the other two consummatory moments.

Another important facet of the Relational Dialectics theory is the foundational premise that contradictions and the interplay between them are *normal* for people in close relationships. As Christians minister with Hispanics they would benefit from an awareness that the American portrayal of the "ideal family" that always gets along well and seldom disagrees is simply not consistent with reality. This is especially pertinent in regard to the Hispanic cultural value of familialism, which refers to "the importance of relatives as referents and as providers of emotional support."¹⁸ Churches could help families plot a course through the complexities of relationships; a course that honors the esteem they have for one another while at the same time acknowledging that contradictions and disagreements are the norm for relational dynamics and thus are not to be viewed as automatically damaging or sinful.

A spinoff of this part of Baxter's theory is her realization of the role that ritual can play in creating wholesome moments. "Rituals are repeating events in which parties pay homage to some object, often their relationship."¹⁹ Think of what a creative congregation could do with that idea! They could host a Family Day, not just for the church but for the community as a whole. They could have the families express appreciation to one another. They could anoint family leaders with oil and pray a blessing over them. They could highlight the oldest members of the families and also the youngest. They could celebrate baptisms. They could reaffirm marriages. They could connect these and other activities with the Biblical theme of the great cloud of witnesses. An imaginative congregation could use Baxter's concepts as a springboard to create ministries that would have a huge impact in their community.

The final communication theory we will investigate is the Reconstitutive Rhetoric theory advanced by John C. Hammerback and Richard J. Jensen. Based in large part upon the influence of Cesar Chavez upon the Mexican-American population in the Southwest in the 1960s and 70s, they suggest that Reconstitutive Rhetoric moves beyond rhetoric's traditional goal of persuasion to the formation of a new social identity. Persons are not

simply persuaded to adopt a certain point of view, but rather are "reconstituted" in terms of their social identity to the degree that they "act out a new way of life."²⁰ To underscore the critical distinction between persuasion and constitution in rhetoric, Maurice Charland uses "conversion" to describe what occurs in constitutive rhetoric. "The process by which an audience member enters into a new subject position is therefore not one of persuasion. It is akin more to one of conversion that ultimately results in an act of recognition of the 'rightness' of a discourse and of one's identity with its reconfigured subject position."²¹

Hammerback and Jensen name their theory *Reconstitutive Rhetoric* to convey their particular interest in how rhetoric helps create social identity among a group of people who already have a social identity. They utilize a three-part model to describe the primary dimensions of the theory; the *first persona*, the *substantive message*, and the *second persona*.²² The first persona refers to how the audience views the communicator. Audience perception is influenced by several factors, including the communicator's character, personal history, and intelligence. In situations such as that of Cesar Chavez, personal history can aid in the process of identification as the communicator engages with the audience through shared experiences. The second component of the model is the substantive message, which refers to the central themes, explanations, and arguments that the communicator both shares and embodies. The embodiment of the message by the communicator works in consort with the identification referred to above. If the rhetor can demonstrate that he or she truly personifies what is being communicated in the themes and arguments, and if that rhetor has already achieved a personal identity match with the audience through shared experiences, then "the rhetorical potency of identification is therefore magnified, with both the rhetor and message connecting closely and personally with the audience."²³ The third aspect is second persona, which refers to the rhetorical portrayal of who the audience is encouraged to become. They are invited to reconstitute themselves as someone different from who they are now, and the rhetorician delineates the characteristics and actions of the "new person" or "new group" that they are urging them toward. "By identifying with the rhetor and message, audiences can be adjusted to a second persona that tells them who to be and how to act."²⁴

This model has vast potential for ministry with Hispanics. I am especially interested in the "second persona" concept as it relates to persons' continual search for identity. I believe that Christians could take the lead in their communities to communi-

cate the Biblical portrayal of the "new people" that God is calling them to be. Identity is a complex notion for most people, and even more so for Hispanics in America, because identity is so closely related to ethnicity. George Hicks provides useful insights for discerning the complicated strands of identity and ethnicity. He notes that in spite of past attempts to devalue the role of ethnicity in peoples' lives, it sometimes remains an essential component of human identity. Conversely, however, ethnicity must be seen as only one facet among several that contribute to a person's identity, and it must be considered within its contextual matrix. This perspective allows persons to value and utilize their ethnicity in ways that make best sense to them in the particular roles they assume within particular contexts, which provides them with more flexibility in role choice. "People often have a repertoire of ethnic attributes from which they can select the ones most suitable to a given situation. The possibility is opened for people, as it were, to leap back and forth across several ethnic boundaries."²⁵

"Leaping back and forth" is an appropriate image for many American Hispanics. In *Living in Spanglish* Ed Morales invites Hispanics not only to be aware of the transitory nature of the formation of their ethnicity and identity, but to joyfully embrace it. In so doing, they will discover that "Spanglish is the state of perpetual, chameleonlike flux"²⁶ and "a fertile terrain for negotiating a new identity."²⁷ In conjunction with Reconstitutive Rhetoric's call to portray a second persona for people to embrace, these insights from Hicks and Morales encourage Christians to invite pre-Christian Hispanics to adopt a new identity as people created and loved by God, redeemed in Christ, and both shaped and used by the Holy Spirit. Hispanics are already living "in the hyphen." They are already in "chameleonlike flux." They are already "leaping back and forth across several ethnic boundaries." Let the church not only join them, but guide them, so that the church calls them not to new identities that the world will offer them but rather to their most important new identity as the people of God.

A strong and imaginative portrayal of a new identity as the people of God could have tremendous appeal for many Hispanics, especially if that portrayal includes the Biblical themes of release for the oppressed, help for the poor, and the end of domination and subordination. Daniel Carroll has written an article that is quite pertinent to this discussion. In the face of globalization and its economic impact worldwide, he points us toward a "hermeneutics of responsibility." He (along with many others) contends that globalization has brought greater wealth to

some people, but that it has also widened the gap between the rich and the poor, and "led to pauperization of the masses, cuts in social spending, heavier foreign debt, higher inflation, a worrisome upsurge in unemployment, and greater political unrest."²⁸ This is especially true in Latin America, so he recommends that we attend to some of the emphases found in Latin American liberation theology as we share Christ in this era of globalization. In this context, then, the continual plight of the poor "prods us to seek how globalization might acquire a kinder face as well as to expose its capacity for evil; they remind us that globalization is a finite creation by fallen creatures in a fallen world and that our ultimate hope lies beyond and above this economic system, in the kingdom of God's son."²⁹

There are at least two reasons that Carroll's "hermeneutics of responsibility" informs ministry with Hispanics in America. One is that many Christian Hispanics have been influenced by liberation theology or at least have awareness of its predominant themes. A second reason is that many Hispanics experience poverty, prejudice, and oppression in America just as do their counterparts in Latin America. Following Carroll's guidance, therefore, any portrayal by the church of a second persona would need to include ways to address the social, economic, and political realities of life as Hispanics in America experience it. We cannot ignore those realities and expect to reach pre-Christian Hispanics effectively.

Daniel Ramirez would strongly agree with this assessment. In an article titled "Public Lives in American Hispanic Churches: Expanding the Paradigm," he urges us to shift our thinking so that we conceive of culture and religion *as* politics. "By taking seriously Latino believers' cultural artifacts and thickly describing the course of their life-in-community, we will arrive at a fuller, more complex understanding of the stakes as they see them at the intersection of faith and civic life."³⁰ We get more assistance from Bryan Stone regarding this issue because he merges the two concepts under discussion. He deals with the need to address social, political, and economic realities *and* the Biblical view of the "people-hood" of God –

Jesus talked about the reign of God as a radically new order that comes to put an end to the age-old patterns of wealth and poverty, domination and subordination, insider and outsider that are deeply ingrained in the way we relate to one another on this planet. But in order for that new order to become a serious option *for* the world, it must be visibly and imaginatively embodied *in* the

world. And if Scripture is a faithful witness, the purpose of God throughout history is the creation and formation of a new *people* whose mission is to do just that.³¹

Resources like Carroll, Ramirez, and Stone offer promising guidance for Christians who set about the task of portraying a new identity for pre-Christian Hispanics that will take them and their life contexts seriously.

An additional issue that must be included in this discussion is the relationship between identity and behavior. Based on my ministry experiences in Latin America and among Hispanics in the USA, I would suggest that too often Christians invite pre-Christian Hispanics to change their behaviors rather than their identities. To use Hammerback and Jensen's language, we tell them how to act without first telling them who to be. We speak with them about the ethical implications of a relationship with Christ much more than about the identity implications of that relationship. I do not propose that we ignore the ethical implications of a restored relationship with God through Jesus. They are of utmost importance. However, if our primary focus is on behavior then we will not touch pre-Christian Hispanics deeply in their "inner core." More than inviting them to stop drinking—start praying—stop gambling—start attending church—stop illicit sexual behavior—start reading your Bible—stop gossiping—start participating in a small group, etc., we could invite them to embrace a new identity in Christ and with Christ's people, and Jesus-honoring behaviors will grow out of that identity.

How specifically contextualized should we portray the identities we ask pre-Christian Hispanics to embrace? I honestly don't know. This is a question which invites wisdom from many persons who have experience with evangelistic ministry among Hispanics. What I believe I do know, however, is that effectively apostolic ministry with pre-Christian Hispanics in the USA will require a strong shift toward an identity-based framing of the gospel and away from a behavior-based framing of the gospel. I invite all servants of Christ who are passionate about reaching these persons with the good news of Jesus' love to pray, observe, research, and develop additional insights along these lines.

To a certain degree we have now come full circle, for our first two communication theories offer insights for how to actualize the "second persona" concept of the third theory. Christians engaged in the process of developing a contextualized second persona would need to commit to constantly manage and coordinate their meanings (Pearce's Coordinated Management of Meaning) and also remember that conflict and contradiction are a normal part of intimate relationships (Baxter's Relational

Dialectics). As they recurrently participate in this co-constructive (Pearce) process they will be embodying (part of the first persona of Reconstitutive Rhetoric) the kind of ongoing journey of identity formation which they are trying to portray, and thus they will both model and experience what it means to be Christ's pilgrim people.

As we conclude our investigative journey, we can celebrate the insights we have gained through this research and we can also celebrate the awareness that we have only scratched the surface of what can be learned from the social sciences to enhance our evangelization efforts. Many new understandings related to Hispanics in America have come to light as a result of social science research, and the church of Jesus Christ must avail itself of these understandings and utilize them to reach pre-Christians with the life-transforming gospel. The Apostle Peter told Christians that "once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God."³² May we commit ourselves to a continual quest for fresh insights concerning how we can encourage pre-Christian Hispanics to accept Jesus' invitation to become a part of the people of God.

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Writer

Dan W. Dunn: Associate Professor of Evangelism, Wesleyan Seminary of Venezuela.

NOTES

1. There is no single term that serves as an adequate descriptor of the population this article relates to. I will use two descriptors interchangeably: "Hispanic" and "Spanish-speaking" (or "Spanish speakers"). I have chosen to use "Hispanic" simply because that is the term the Census Bureau has adopted. I use it knowing that other terms will be preferred by some readers, most prominent of which would be "Latino/a." I have chosen to occasionally use "Spanish-speaking" to honor the fact that not all Spanish speakers that congregations might reach through apostolic ministry will consider themselves Hispanic or Latino/a, and also to acknowledge that amidst complex issues such as ethnicity, immigration status, and citizenship, the most common factor present among the population this project relates to is their preference for experiencing Christian worship and ministry in the Spanish lan-

- guage.
2. Census Bureau Power Point presentation titled "Hispanics in the United States," located at www.census.gov.
3. "Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion" (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2007) 7.
4. *Ibid.*, 16.
5. Em Griffin, *A First Look at Communication Theory*, 6th ed. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 66.
6. *Ibid.*, 70-72.
7. W. Barnett Pearce and Kimberly A. Pearce, "Extending the Theory of the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) Through a Community Dialogue Process" (*Communication Theory*, 10:4, November 2000, 405-423), 421.
8. Geoffrey Fox, *Hispanic Nation: Culture, Politics, and the Constructing of Identity* (Secaucus, NJ: Birch Lane Press, Carol Publishing, 1996), 228.
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10. Ilan Stavans, *The Hispanic Condition: The Power of a People*. 2nd ed. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2001), 9.
11. W. Barnett Pearce, "The Coordinated Management of Meaning: A Rules-Based Theory of Interpersonal Communication" (*Explorations in Interpersonal Communication*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1976, 17-35), 25.
12. Griffin, *A First Look*, 161.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Leslie A. Baxter, "A Tale of Two Voices: Relational Dialectics Theory" (*The Journal of Family Communication*, 4(3&4), 2004, 181-192), 185-186.
15. Griffin, *A First Look*, 167-171.
16. Baxter, "A Tale of Two Voices," 187.
17. Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz, "Dilemmas of Language in Immigrant Congregations: The Tie That Binds or the Tower of Babel?" (*Review of Religious Research*, 41:4, 2000), 432-452.
18. Gerardo Marin and Barbara VanOss Marin, *Research with Hispanic Populations*, Vol. 23 in Applied Social Research Methods Series (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991), 2.
19. Baxter, "A Tale of Two Voices," 187.
20. John C. Hamnerback and Richard J. Jensen, *The Rhetorical Career of Cesar Chavez* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), 45.
21. Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the People Quebecois" (*The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73:2, 133-150, May 1987), 142.
22. Hamnerback and Jensen, *The Rhetorical Career*, 51.
23. Hamnerback and Jensen, *The Rhetorical Career*, 52.

24. Ibid., 54.
 25. Ibid., 17.
 26. Ed Morales. *Living in Spanglish: The Search for Latino Identity in America* (New York: LA Weekly Books, 2002), 5.
 27. Ibid., 6 (emphasis added).
 28. M. Daniel R. Carroll, "The Challenge of Economic Globalization for Theology: From Latin America to a Hermeneutics of Responsibility," 199-212 in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 202.
 29. Ibid., 211.
 30. Daniel Ramirez, "Public Lives in American Hispanic Churches: Expanding the Paradigm," in *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*, ed. Gaston Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, 177-195 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 192.
 31. Bryan Stone. *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 12 (emphasis on "people" added).
 32. 1 Peter 2:10a, *The Holy Bible*, New International Version.

The Evolution of Missional Church Characteristics

Derrick Lemons

Missional Church

The missional church movement pivots on the statement that a church in mission is being sent out and called beyond to interact with the outside culture, share Christ, and serve the community (Barrett et al. x, Bevans and Schroeder 8-9). The history of the missional church movement provides an informative starting point for understanding how existing cultures should change to embrace these ideals.

The modern missional church movement began in 1932 with a paper that Karl Barth gave at the Brandenburg Mission Conference. In his paper he said the following:

The congregation, the so-called homeland church, the community of heathen Christians should recognize themselves and actively engage themselves as what they essentially are: a missionary community! They are not a mission association or society, not a group that formed itself with *the firm intention* to do mission, but a human community called to the act of mission [emphasis authors]. (Guder, "From Mission")

From Barth's paper Karl Hartenstein in 1934 coined the term *missio Dei* to intentionally make the point that churches do not exist for themselves. They exist to participate in God's mission to the world. After World War II, the missional church movement remerged at a meeting in 1952 in Willingen, Germany. One of the historically significant parts of the Willingen, German meeting was that Lesslie Newbigin began to help guide the discussion about the missional church movement (Bevans and Schroeder 290).

The missional church model of ministry continued to build momentum in 1958 at Achimota, Ghana at the International Missions Council meeting. After this meeting, Newbigin published a pamphlet which summarized the current understanding of a missional church. The following quote highlights the heart of Newbigin's message:

(1) "the church is the mission", which means that it is illegitimate to talk about the one without at the same time talking about the other; (2) "the home base is everywhere", which means that every Christian community is in a missionary situation; and (3) "mission in partnership", which means the end of every form of guardianship of one church over another. (Bosch 370)

Newbigin's understanding of these issues grew and culminated in his seminal work *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, published in 1989. This work opened the gates for David Bosch, Darrell Guder, and others to expand the influence of the missional church movement. Guder et al. should receive credit for coining the term missional church. They hoped to forever marry the church identity to mission (Guder, "From Mission").

At the present, one focus within the missional church movement is on describing what a missional church looks like, e.g., what patterns should be seen in a missional church. Although 57 years passed between Barth's paper and Newbigin's sketch of missional church characteristics, the 16 years since 1989 have involved a flurry of activity to recast and expound upon Newbigin's work.

Patterns of a Missional Church

Many people are confused about what are the essential characteristics of a functional church. The two most popular figures who set forth the essential characteristics of a functional church are Rick Warren and Christian Schwarz. Warren focused on what he called the five biblical purposes of the church: worship, fellowship, discipleship, membership, and evangelism. Schwartz introduced eight quality characteristics of a healthy church: empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships. Warren and Schwartz filled a niche by encouraging failing churches to become purposefully healthy.

However, the major problems with the focus of becoming purposely healthy are that these church models assume that (1) the goal is to attract people to church, (2) the task of ministry is

to take care of those who have been attracted, and (3) mission is just one of many activities of the church. In contrast, the missional church movement sees the Church's biblical call as preparing laity to be sent as missionaries to their own communities (Guder et al. 5). The Church's biblical call as a missional community ministers to its larger community setting and prepares its members to be sent as missionaries. Therefore, mission becomes the all-encompassing vocation of the church instead of just one of many activities of the church. The fact that Lesslie Newbigin's list of characteristics pre-date any list from other missional church proponents verifies his influence in the missional church movement; other missional church proponents built on and made more explicit Newbigin's characteristics (Guder, "Dissertation").

Newbigin listed six characteristics of a missional church (see Table 2.1) which assumed the Church's missional nature. The term missional was coined by Guder et al. although missional clearly fits what Newbigin articulated in his works (Guder, "Missional Church" 11-12). Newbigin's six foundational characteristics of a missional church are the following: the missional church (1) praises God, (2) stands on Christian truth, (3) engages with secular community, (4) empowers to disperse, (5) models exemplary community, and (6) is grounded in Christian history and focused on the eschaton (227-232).

From Newbigin's genesis, people have been further defining these characteristics. In order to communicate the living nature of these characteristics, missional church proponents have called them patterns, practices, indicators, elements, and principles. In the paragraphs that follow I describe the work of missional church proponents, particularly as they relate to the work of Newbigin (see Table 2.1). Admittedly, most missional church proponents are very resistant to their missional ideas being limited or confined lest the richness of meaning be lost (Frost, "Dissertation"). However, these categories and patterns will be refined as they are tested in the real world.

Darrell Guder et al. at the Gospel and Our Culture Network in America were the first to expand upon Newbigin's characteristics. They came up with twelve *indicators* of a missional church that connect with all six of Newbigin's characteristics: (1) engaging celebrative worship, (2) proclamation of the gospel, (3) discernment of God's specific missional vocation in order to be sent as missionaries, (4) hospitality, (5) visible impact on community, (6) growth in discipleship, (7) informed by Bible, (8) community, (9) distinctively Christian (10) Christian behavior, (11) loving accountability, and (12) community in process (Guder, "Empiri-

cal Indicators”).

Tim Keller articulates nine *elements* of missional churches: they (1) discourse in the vernacular, (2) enter and re-tell the culture's stories with the gospel, (3) theologically train lay people for public life and vocation, (4) hold Christian community as counter cultural and intuitive, (5) practice Christian unity as much as possible on a local level, (6) live in the city, (7) stand on doctrinal-truth/experience, (8) live in kingdom hope, and (9) work for the common good of the whole city (“Missional Church”; “Dissertation”). Keller's elements connect with five of Newbigin's six missional church characteristics, and his third element (i.e., theologically train lay people for public life and vocation) bridges two of Newbigin's characteristics (engages with secular community and empowers to disperse). Out of all of the missional church proponents surveyed in this review, Keller has created his missional approach to ministry while serving an existing church. He summarizes his missional development by saying, “I'm doing this stuff as I write it” (“Dissertation”).

Two other missional church proponents, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, cite the work of Guder et al. and then add three principles to “give energy and direction” to Guder et al.'s indicators (Hirsch, “Forge Mission Training Network”). They say that the missional church is: (1) incarnational, (2) messianic, and (3) apostolic (Frost and Hirsch 11, 12). Interestingly, by mapping these three principles alongside Newbigin's characteristics (see Table 2.1), one can see that their ideas are not novel, but rather help to expound on Newbigin's characteristics. The term “messianic” straddles Newbigin's characteristics of praising God and engaging with the secular community. Frost and Hirsch believe that messianic means God is worshipped in all places and God's prevenient grace covers even the secular arena (Frost, “Dissertation”). In order to prescribe more than describe, Frost and Hirsch use different language from the indicators of Guder et al. and the characteristics of Newbigin. They feel that merely describing what a missional church looks like is not enough. Frost and Hirsch believe that missional churches must radically critique existing church structures, and they hope to communicate this need by adding more action-oriented words (Hirsch, “Forge Mission Training Network”).

Milfred Minatrea outlines nine practices of a missional church: (1) rewriting worship, (2) living apostolically, (3) expecting to change the world, (4) sending out for mission, (5) teaching to obey, (6) holding a high threshold for membership, (7) being authentically Christian, (8) ordering actions according to pur-

pose, and (9) placing kingdom concerns first (29-139). Minatrea correlates or expands on all but one of Newbigin's characteristics (see Table 2.1).

Lois Barrett et al. (also part of the Gospel and Our Culture Network), in their work *Treasures in Clay Jars*, discerned eight patterns of missional churches. These church patterns are: (1) worship as public witness, (2) missional authority, (3) missional vocation, (4) biblical formation and discipleship, (5) risk-taking as a contrast community, (6) practices that demonstrate God's intent for the world, (7) pointing toward the reign of God, (8) dependence on the Holy Spirit (xii-xiv). The eight patterns correlate well with Newbigin's characteristics (see Table 2.1). Perhaps the most significant contribution Barrett et al. have made to missional church understanding is that they drew their patterns from actual missional churches. Using Guder et al.'s indicators, Barrett et al.'s group identified several churches that are consistent with the missional idea, and extracted their eight patterns from the study of these churches. Therefore, the theoretical characteristics of a missional church were more practically considered. From this study three new themes emerged to emphasize risk-taking, group prayer and leadership (Guder, “Dissertation”).

After reviewing and comparing all of these characteristics, indicators, elements, principles, practices, and patterns, I see an apparent move by missional church proponents to synthesize the basic pieces of a missional church. To date, no one has expanded outside of Newbigin's foundational six characteristics of a missional church. They have helped to further explain Newbigin's characteristics. Although Newbigin's characteristics still seem to control the understanding of what a missional church looks like, the missional church movement on the whole is in its infancy. Therefore, in the future someone will surely add an additional characteristic which will be woven into missional churches.

Table 2.1. The Evolution of Missional Church Characteristics

Newbigin—1989	Guder et al.—1998	Keller—2001	Frost and Hirsch—2003	Minatrea—2004	Barrett et al.—2004
Characteristics	Indicators	Elements	Principles	Practices	Patterns
<i>Praises God</i>	Engaging celebrative worship		Messianic	Rewrite worship	Worship as public witness
<i>Stands on Christian truth</i>	Proclaims the gospel	Stands on doctrinal-truth/experience			Biblical formation and discipleship
<i>Engages with secular community</i>	Discerns God's specific missional vocation	Discourse in the vernacular	Incarnational	Live apostolically	Missional vocation
		Enter and retell the culture's stories with the gospel	Messianic	Expect to change the world	
	Practices hospitality	Theologically train laypeople for public life and vocation		Mission-sending	
	Visible impact on community	Work for the common good of whole city			
		Live in the City			
<i>Empowers to disperse</i>	Growth in discipleship	Theologically train laypeople for public life and vocation	Apostolic	Teach to obey	Biblical formation and discipleship
<i>Models exemplary community</i>	Bible informs community	Christian community as countercultural and counter-intuitive		High threshold for membership	Missional authority
	Distinctively Christian	Practice Christian unity as much as possible on local level		Authentically Christian	Taking risks as a contrast community
	Christian behavior			Order actions according to purpose	Practices that demonstrate God's intent for the world
	Loving accountability				
	Diverse constituency				
<i>Is grounded in Christian history and focused on the eschaton</i>	Community in process	Lives in kingdom hope		Place kingdom concerns first	Pointing toward the reign of God
					Dependence on the Holy Spirit

Writer

Derrick Lemons: Instructor, University of Georgia.

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Fit Churches Missionally Engaged

Phil Stevenson

Dr. Gary McIntosh made the following observation in a lecture he was giving regarding the connection between a healthy and fit church: *If I were to go to the doctor for a physical I would be deemed healthy. There is nothing to indicate that I might be unhealthy. However, if I was to attempt to run one or two miles I would be very winded, as I am not fit (this is not to say he is not fit as of this writing). I wonder if there is a difference between a healthy and a fit church.*

This concept of church health and fitness has intrigued me. Is there a difference between a healthy church and a fit church? Might a church move from unhealthy to healthy, but fall short of fitness? If a church can be healthy, but not fit, what does that mean? How does a healthy church move toward fitness? Does a healthy church need to be fit in order to be effective? My short conclusion is that a church can be healthy but not fit. And just as in our physical being, fitness can enhance health. Therefore, healthy churches should move to fitness.

What does a fit church look like? In a broad stroke, a fit church is a missional church. I will go into further detail as to what it means to be missional, but as a beginning point I provide a list taken from the book, *Breaking the Missional Code*. In this book the authors, Stetzer & Putnam, make the following contrast between healthy and missional. I have inserted "fit" as a descriptor of missional.

Healthy Church

Members as ministers
Discipleship
Development Programs
Team Leadership
Reaching Community

Missional (Fit) Church¹

Members as missionaries
Missional living
People Empowerment
Personal mission
Transforming Community

Training	Releasing
Internal group multiplication	Church planting multiplication
Diversity	Mosaic
Ecclesiocentric	theocentric
Great Commandment	Missio Dei

Defining Fitness

The Stetzer/Putnam list highlights the distinction can be made between that which is healthy and that which is fit or missional. Using fitness and missional interchangeably, let's delve a bit deeper into what it means to be missional.

To be missional is to participate in the ministry of Jesus to the world, and to be the "incarnational" presence of Jesus in the world. A missional church moves outward as a rescue force. A missional church is unwilling to stay safely sequestered in the confines of its "building," but it has as its passion to connect with those in the community in which it has been placed. To be missional is to live a transformed life in front of those outside the walls of the church.

Being missional is going out into the culture to engage the culture in order to connect those in the culture to Christ. In essence it is Great Commission living (Go and make) with a Great Commandment heart (Love your neighbor). It is in going out a church gains a level of fitness. Just as a healthy person may not do any intentional exercise, a healthy church can become self-absorbed and unwilling to be intentional in its exercise...going out!

Being sent and going out is central to the ministry of those who follow Christ. It is an extension of Jesus being sent by the Father into the world. God the Father sent God the Son and God the Son sends us empowered by God the Spirit. As Jesus *was* the incarnation of God in the world, the church *is* to be the incarnation of Jesus in the world.

The need for churches to become fit is huge. We must get ourselves on a fitness program. Reggie McNeal states: "The need of the North American church is not a methodological fix. It is much more profound. The church needs a mission fix."²

- The combined populations of the United States and Canada comprise the third largest mission field of unsaved persons in the world (only China & India have more)
- There are an estimated 350,000 churches in the United States, with an average attendance of about 125 persons per church
- If every church in America doubled its attendance, there

would still be 190 million people not in church on an average Sunday

- The number of Americans who have "no religious preference" has doubled from 1990 to 2001, reaching 14% of the population³

The church cannot afford to do business as usual and make the impact that is needed. We cannot afford to remain in our healthy, but flabby, state and expect to have long-lasting impact. "The current church culture in North America is on life support. It is living off the work, money, and energy of previous generations from a previous world order."⁴ It is time to get on a fitness program. It is time to stop telling ourselves we will begin tomorrow. It may begin with walking before running, but it must begin now!

Fitness as Lifestyle

A mentor once told me that a one-word definition for motivation is dissatisfaction. Until a person is dissatisfied enough, they will never be genuinely motivated to change. My dissatisfaction came at the end of 2005. I know I had put on weight, but unless I saw a picture of myself I had all kinds of rationale as to why I wasn't really overweight. I was having yearly physicals and everything was fine. The key indicators (blood pressure, prostate, cholesterol, etc...) were alright. Yet when it got to the point I didn't want a picture taken, or if I did I would not look at it, then it was time to change. I was dissatisfied. I realized I was healthy (free of disease) but I was not fit.

Churches need to become dissatisfied with themselves. They need to look at a different picture of themselves. A church may be alright in some key areas (unity, Bible teaching, small groups, pastoral care, evangelistic events, etc...), but are they engaging their community? Are they serving outside of themselves? Are people coming to Christ? Are people being baptized? It could be there is a refusal to get their picture taken in these areas; and if they do, they prefer not to look. A church may be healthy (free of spiritual disease), but is it fit?

Out of my dissatisfaction came choices: 1) Eat differently, but not diet; 2) Exercise regularly. The idea was to begin with what could be handled and take small consistent steps. I wanted a different lifestyle, not a quick fix that would be lost. So in January 2006 the determine course was set: eat differently, exercise regularly.

Churches need to make choices out of their dissatisfaction. These choices will result in changes. The first choice is to be honest. Churches tend toward one of three corporate mentalities

1. An emphasis on *membership*. This is the "club" mentality. Much like a club, the church exists for its members. This keeps the church ingrown and tends toward ill-health.
2. An emphasis on *ministers*. This is the "community" mentality. There is a desire to understand gifts, talents and service, but typically the service is for those in the church. People are mobilized, but in a limited capacity. This church may be healthy, but since most of its energy is to serve those who enter in they may not be fit as it has been defined here.
3. An emphasis on *missionaries*. This is the "cultural" mentality. The church exists for those out in culture they have been called to serve. Members are mobilized to minister, but the ministry is outward focused.

A church must know the mentalities with which it functions. A proper understanding allows for the opportunity to make correct choices. It will be a challenge for a church to move from the "club" mentality to the "community" mentality and more so to move to the "cultural" mentality. *"Member values clash with missionary values."*⁵

The present mentality dictates the course of action a church needs to take. It also dictates the pace at which it can go to make the necessary changes. It's one thing to move from minimal activity to more frequent activity, and something completely different to move from a sedentary lifestyle to an active one. A fitness lifestyle can be undermined if one begins too quickly. Early encouragement helps a person, or a congregation, stay on course to the life they want.

A second choice is to identify and remove roadblocks. One major roadblock for me was exercise. I needed a place to do this, so I joined a local YMCA. That helped for a time, but soon it became easier to not go than to go. The big reason: it was not convenient. Next, I tried walking/running outside. That lasted only as long as the weather was good. And in Indiana, that is not always the case, so this too waned. So, I had to choose to overcome two major roadblocks: inconvenience and inclement weather. The solution was to buy a treadmill. It was convenient, (in my house), and I got to stay inside to avoid the problems of the inclement weather.

In my Wesleyan tradition there are three big roadblocks that keep us from becoming fit. They are heritage, holiness and houses.

We neglect our heritage. The Wesleyan movement was birthed in going. John Wesley claimed the world as his parish, not four walls of a church. He proclaimed, *"We cannot expect them*

to seek us. Therefore, we should go and seek them." Social action and involvement in the ills of society are not just Wesleyan, they are Christian. It is who we are as Christ followers. We have neglected this too long. It is time to rediscover our spiritual roots.

In reality any movement could have the same roadblock. Our entire Christian movement was birthed in encountering the society in which it found itself. Throughout history those who called themselves followers of Christ railed against injustice, immorality and abuse of others. A fit church will recognize this roadblock and demolish it.

We compromise our holiness. This may seem odd, but we have used holiness to disengage from the world. Historically we have fled the "hotbeds" of sin (e.g. cities) to remove ourselves from its influence. We have removed ourselves to be "set apart" unto the Lord.

This is a misunderstanding of the holiness doctrine. We are sanctified to be in the world, not drawn out of it. We are set-apart not to depart, but delve deeply into society. Holiness informs us that we can have a *clean heart, even though we have dirty hands*. We are sanctified to serve with confidence in the Savior we have committed ourselves.

Call it what you will: Holy Huddle, Circling the wagons, pulling into purity; the result is the same...we remove ourselves from the world. The church is an investment in its cultural setting. It is placed there to return Kingdom dividends. Fear of being compromised by sin results in being diluted in impact. People in a fit church will move out in faith even though they have fear.

We build our houses at the expense of ministry. We have shifted from building up people, to building bigger and better houses, or places of worship. We do this at the expense of neglecting the needs around us. We might take to heart the words of the prophet Haggai when he declares, "You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the Lord Almighty, while you are all busy building your fine houses" (Haggai, 1:9).

In this passage Haggai is referring to the neglect of the temple, but we know, now, that the true temple is a spiritual house. "And now God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple..." (I Peter 2:5). We can get so caught up in the "building" (facility) of the church that we forget we are called to the *building* (people) of the church. The building of the spiritual temple begins with connecting people to Jesus. "...And God has given us the task of reconciling people to him" (II Cor.5:18).

It can happen to any church. The emphasis on having a nice building at the expense of ministering to those we are called to engage. There is not one thing wrong with a building as long as it is viewed in the proper context as a tool, not an end in itself. A fit church views their facility as a sending center not merely a gathering place. It is an outpost, not a fortress. It is the hub of ministry activity, not a hangout for saints.

Once choices have been made, you have to live with those choices. John Maxwell says, "*You make a decision once...then you manage it daily.*"⁶ A church that has chosen to move toward fitness must manage this choice. In my example I have managed the choice by stop eating when I am full, run 4-5 days per week, and track my progress. These three things have helped manage my one choice. It has been in the daily management changes happen.

How does a church track its progress? There are three tracking systems that may help: 1) Equip people for mission; 2) Engage the culture; 3) External focus.

Equip People for Missionary Work

A fit church will equip their people as missionaries to their culture. They will be given tools to better understand the post-modern, post Christian world in which they live. Training in conversational evangelism will be a critical component of this equipping. Leaders of fit churches are not content with past methodologies they understand that culture shifts, so do the rules of engagement. People should be culturally-equipped to be Jesus in their world. Evangelistic methodology is not about getting people out of their indigenous environment into a new environment; it is about enabling believers to recognize their indigenous status and sharing the Good News within the context of that status.

Engage the Culture

Fit churches strive to view their community through the eyes of a missionary. The culture is "exegeted." That is, you figure out what the culture says, and what the culture means, then meet what it needs, not what you think it needs. A missionary attempts to understand the culture they are sent to without assumptions. They don't assume their culture, they want to understand it. A culture that is understood is better engaged. Ministry can flow toward the actual needs of the community, not perceived needs.

The first church I pastored was in Southern California. Ken was a member of that church. Ken loved sports. He oversaw the

church's athletic ministry. When I arrived, we had a softball team and basketball team, both of which participated in local church leagues. He was well-connected to city softball leagues. He umpired for many years and competed on city teams.

One day as we were chatting, Ken shared his heart to use sports to reach men and women in the city. I looked him in the eye and said, "Ken, God wants to use you to do just that. I will do all I can to help you." Tears welled up in this bear of a man. It was at that point he felt a release to engage the sports culture of that city.

God honored Ken's heart. We grew from one softball and basketball team competing in church leagues to five softball teams (men's, women's and co-ed), two co-ed volleyball teams and one basketball team. Most of the teams were in the city league and were largely populated by un-churched people. Many came to Christ as a result of those teams.

What happened? Ken was released to engage his culture. It was the "culture" of city sports. He was freed to engage people where they were with a method they could connect. People played on a church team, but did not have to attend the church; yet many began to attend. People played on a church team, but did not have to confess Christ as Lord; yet many began to do just that. A church with a missional approach does ministry to connect with people, not simply connect them to church.

External Focus

It is easy for a church to become preoccupied with itself. Inward musing is much easier than outward ministry. This is where the importance of placing emphasis on members-as-missionaries is critical. A missionary mentality focuses externally. It strategically looks outside itself to determine the best methodology to engage the culture.

In recent years local churches have ramped up their membership expectations. Membership has become a statement of higher commitment, not merely increased privilege. This begs the question: Why would "membership" in the Kingdom be any less demanding than membership in a high-expectation church?

Believers will never be effectively mobilized apart from a deep sense of service. Salvation is both personal (saved from our sin) and community (saved to engage in purposeful service). This common, but divergent salvation results in active participation in mission. It is the mission of responding to our "sentness."

We are saved to be a missionary people. The church is to equip its people for this salvation purpose. This equipping is about three things: community, spirituality and mission. Each is

separate, but intimately connected in their role of mobilization.

The challenge is balance. Salvation can be, selfishly, an end point; but service can be misconstrued as the only indicator of our salvation. Salvation is not just for us, but for others; yet we must not forget it is for us! However, our salvation is best lived out in our service for others. God saves us personally, so we might serve publicly.

This is the emphasis the community of believers must place on membership. Members are to be missionaries in their world. Missionaries are not those who venture cross culturally, nor overseas. Missionaries are people who boldly engage their world in purposeful living.

A missional (fit) church invests beyond itself. It is recognizing that the "scoring system" is much more than measuring what happens on the property, or in the building. Keeping score is not the issue. We do, and should, keep score. What changes is the scoring system. "Our definition of church is what we do seven days a week, almost twenty-four hours a day, all year long! It is just who we are."⁷

For example, I am not a fisherman, but it would seem logical that the success or failure on a fishing outing would be based on the number of fish caught. This makes sense, but it is not necessarily the case. I came across this definition of a successful fishing trip, "Spending a day without a cell phone or a pager and not missing it."

This definition changes the effectiveness of fishing. Once the score is understood then the necessary steps can be taken to be effective in the scoring system. A church that determines to ask this question of mission is moving from programs to process, models to mission, attraction to incarnation, seating to sending, and decisions to disciples. It is moving toward a corporate lifestyle of fitness.

Conclusions

The prayer had to be said. Words were not enough. Jesus was soon to be arrested, tried, abandon, crucified, dead, buried and, eventually, resurrected. But what he had shared was too much. His disciples may have thought they understood what he was sharing (John 16:16-28). They told him so when they declared, "Now we understand..." (John 16:30). But he knew they really did not understand. How could they? They were about to enter one of the darkest times of their "follower-ship."

They would see him dead on a cross. The vividness of his death would extinguish their hope like a bucket of water poured on a lit match. And once hope is gone discouragement, disen-

agement and disinterest are not far behind. It would be easy for them to compromise on their call. The words they said they had understood would be lost in the hollowness of his death. They needed prayer. A prayer that would empower them once the realization of his resurrection shattered the reality of his death! They would need to be reminded that they are a missionary, sent, people; because he was a missionary, sent, Savior.

The prayer of Jesus, recorded by John in the seventeenth chapter of his gospel, clarifies missional ministry. In this prayer of commissioning, Jesus vividly portrays the missional aspect of ministry: His, the disciples and ours.

The missional ministry of Jesus: God gave (sent) His Son into the world out of His love for the World (John 3:16-17). God did this out of a heart of salvation, not condemnation. Jesus undergirds this in his prayer when he declares, "And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth" (John 17:3). Jesus makes clear that the strength of his followers is that they understood his being sent. "Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, for I have passed on to them the words you gave me; and they accepted them and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me."

The missional ministry of the disciples: Jesus' physical ministry on the earth was limited to a three-year span. He was going to depart and leave them behind (John 17:11). They would now need to take up the "sent" mantle. They are not to be taken out of the world (John 17:15), but sent into the world as Jesus modeled for them. "As you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world" (John 17:18). Being sent, going out is central to the ministry of those who follow Christ. It is an extension of his being sent by the Father into the world.

The missional ministry of the twenty-first century: He extends the same ministry to us today. The same prayer he prayed for his followers in the first century he prayed for us. "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me because of their testimony" (John 17:20). We are part of the "all who will ever believe." Our acceptance of the message! Our decision to believe should result in the same "sentness" of the first disciples. The time distance between us and the death and resurrection of Jesus does not negate the commission to being sent.

The church has lost this missional mentality. We have forgotten it is not about people coming to us, but us going to people. When we go! When we fully engage in being sent we extend the ministry for which Jesus prayed. It is in our going that we fulfill the prayer of Jesus. In a sense, it is in our "sentness" we

are an answer to Jesus' prayer.

"My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father—that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you *sent me*" (John 17:21).

"I in them and you in me, all being perfected into one. Then the world will know that you *sent me* and will understand that you love them as much as you love me" (John 17:23).

"O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you *sent me*" (John 17:25).

It is clear that when we respond to our missional call the world catches glimpses of Jesus. The church's willingness to engage the world in the world is a singular clarion call to the reality of God! People best see God and engage God when His church is going out.

It is the church acting in its "sentness." Salvation is not an ending, but a radical beginning. When we stop at "our" salvation we negate our deep felt gratitude. It is out of our gratitude our call to serve springs. Service is more than an activity we engage in, but it is a responsibility in which we must immerse ourselves. Service is a tangible living out of being sent. Missional engagement is the earmark of a fit church.

Writer

Phil Stevenson: Director of Evangelism and Church Growth, The Wesleyan Church.

NOTES

1. *Breaking the Missional Code*, Stetzer & Putman, Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, c. 2006, p.49
2. *The Present Future*, by Reggie McNeal, p.10
3. *Christian Science Monitor 2001 Survey*, quoted by Reggie McNeal in *The Present Future*, p.3
4. *The Present Future*, by Reggie McNeal, p.1
5. *The Present Future*, by Reggie McNeal, p.1.
6. *Today Matters*, by John Maxwell, New York: Center Street Publishers, p.15, c. 2004
7. Tillie Burgin, quoted in *Breaking the Missional Code*, c.2006, p.59

Evangelism and Social Action—Revisiting an Old Debate: Good News for Immigrants and Evangelicals Too

Norman G. Wilson

How did evangelicals come to debate whether or not there is a connection between evangelism and social action in the first place? And why is this question so crucial regarding the ministry of evangelicals among immigrants? In this essay, I will address the character of this debate, call attention to the inadequacies of modernist theological responses, suggest ways in which post-modern evangelicals can provide a more adequate and biblically faithful approach, and explore its implications for ministry among immigrants.

Laura's Parents Would Not Understand

Karisa, an innocent little Hispanic girl in our church, is crying on the floor in the corner until Laura gives her a gentle hug, assures her that it was just a little bump on the elbow, and then dries her tears with a Kleenex¹. As I watched them, I remembered Laura's words to me the day before in my office at the university. "I don't think I can talk with my family over the school break about what God has been teaching me here at Iglesia Amistad Cristiana. Even though they are good Christians, they just wouldn't understand."

Each semester several students from my evangelism class, including Laura, complete their ministry practicum at the Hispanic church to which my wife and I belong. Most of them come from middle class evangelical homes and are preparing for cross-cultural careers in North America or abroad.

When little Karisa's sobbing had subsided, I overheard her say to Laura, "My daddy doesn't have to go to work anymore."

Later at the church dinner, I sat beside Karisa's dad, Jaime, and asked him how things were going. After a brief pause, he

poured out his heart. "My boss of ten years had to lay off most of his workers due to the economy," he confided in me, "so a month ago I went to another company. But last Thursday they told me that my documentation wasn't approved and that I couldn't work for them anymore."

God continues to speak to Laura and use her in ministry among these marginalized immigrants and their children. She knows deep in her heart that God has called her to serve here, even though she still struggles with how to explain it to her parents.

In recent years, many Hispanic pastors in the United States minister to significant numbers of undocumented immigrants in their churches and thus carry heavy burdens for families that are affected every day by the protracted immigration controversy. Meanwhile, most are feeling isolated from other Christian churches in their communities.

At the same time, other evangelical pastors and their congregations are generally unaware of the suffering in immigrant communities, and even if they are, many seem reluctant to get involved. Occasionally I will hear a pastor say, "Sure, I'm concerned, but I don't want to break the law by helping illegals." And that seems to settle the question in their minds about getting involved.

The Rationalistic Captivity of Evangelical Theology in Modernism

So how did evangelicals come to debate whether there is a connection between evangelism and social action? The answer to this question is related in large part to the rise of modernism and what I call "the rationalistic captivity of evangelical theology." For a major part of the last century, evangelical theology was largely shaped by an immense confidence in human reason. This resulted in a "rather loose and disorganized collection of factual, propositional statements"² drawn from the Scriptures and shaped by a rationalistic Western worldview.³ Theology was only to be known cognitively, with little or no consideration of other ways of knowing. This reductionist and simplistic approach impoverished evangelical theology, because "...the heart has its reasons which reason does not know⁴... [and] we know truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart, and it is in this last way that we know first principles."⁵

These developments greatly influenced the way that the discussion about evangelism and social action was framed and the terms were defined. During the early part of the past century, liberal mainline theologians overemphasized social action while minimizing evangelism. In reaction, evangelicals went to the

other extreme, emphasizing evangelism and distancing themselves from social action. In the heat of the controversy, the meanings of both terms were truncated. On the one hand, the concept of "evangelism" or "ministries in Word" came to be defined predominantly as "soul winning." This reductionist perspective often was expressed by the popular phrase "Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing." On the other hand, the concept of "faith in action" or "compassionate ministries" or "ministries in deed" was referred to as "social action" and considered unrelated intrinsically to one's spiritual salvation. Thus in practical terms, the controlling rationalistic paradigm of twentieth-century evangelical theology separated "the ministry of reconciliation" from "the message of reconciliation."⁶ Even many of those who considered social action important still did not see it related in any intrinsic way to evangelism.⁷

Three Modernist Models Regarding Evangelism and Compassionate Ministries

In order to resolve the modernist dilemma that arose regarding the relationship between evangelism and social action, at least three models have typically been offered.⁸ First, some considered compassionate ministry to be a means to evangelism, thus viewing compassionate ministries as "pre-evangelism." With this approach, compassionate ministry serves as "the bait" or "the sugar on the pill." In response to this model John Stott writes, "While in its best form it gives to the gospel a credibility it would otherwise lack...the smell of hypocrisy hangs round our philanthropy."

A second model for relating compassionate ministries and evangelism saw compassionate ministry essentially as an outgrowth of evangelism. People are saved first, spiritually speaking, and then outward changes take place as a result of this spiritual transformation. While this understanding is sounder biblically and theologically, seeing evangelism only as the cause and compassionate ministry as the effect doesn't accurately and completely reflect the all-encompassing way that God works in and through us.

A third and more adequate model for relating compassionate ministry and evangelism considers both to be mutual partners. As such, we are charged with both the ministry and the message of reconciliation, thus proclaiming Christ in both deed and Word.⁹ Note, however, that evangelism and compassionate ministries are still considered to be two separate, essentially unrelated activities, brought together into a partnership only for a pragmatic outcome, which is effective ministry. Thus, this model

still belongs to the modernist perspective, which is oriented to dichotomistic ways of thinking and knowing in contrast with more connected, integrated, holistic approaches.¹⁰

In response to all these modernist models taken together, several observations are appropriate. First, the motive of each was generally to promote greater understanding, faithfulness and effectiveness in fulfilling the Great Commission of our Lord. Second, each represented a serious theological attempt to engage the rationalistic modernist world in a contextually relevant way. Notwithstanding the inadequacies of these modernist approaches, the scriptures give clear guidance to all believers regarding evangelism, social action, and compassionate ministry among immigrants, as can be seen in the following section.

Scriptural Principles for Ministry among Immigrants

Throughout the Bible, we are called to love and reach out to the marginalized in our midst, with particular attention to sojourners and pilgrims regardless of their legal status.¹¹ It is particularly ironic for evangelicals to turn their backs on their immigrant brothers and sisters in need, considering that their name itself—Evangelical—comes from the biblical phrase “Good News.” Christ used this word at the beginning of His ministry, when He announced His purpose for coming to earth:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach *good news* to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.¹²

Then later in His ministry, our Lord made a clear connection between the way we respond to those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, and prisoners, and how we will be judged in that final day when we stand before the throne of God.¹³

As followers of Jesus Christ, we cannot turn our backs on the sojourners and immigrants among us, even though some of them may be undocumented. No Christian, least of all a pastor, ought to say, “Sure, I’m concerned, but I don’t want to break the law by helping illegals.” First, the Bible sets forth a number of important kingdom principles that provide guidance regarding how believers ought to relate to immigrants,¹⁴ of which an important one is “...respect [for and submission] to the laws of the land, *except when they are in contradiction to biblical principles* [The italics and emphasis are by the author].”¹⁵ Second, we must not overlook the innocent dependents of all immigrants, including millions of vulnerable children. Third, our Lord Himself admon-

ished us not to judge others.¹⁶ Rather, our citizenship in God’s eternal kingdom calls us to witness visibly to all its eternal realities today, even as we envision our mutual celebration someday with that “great multitude that no one [will be able to] count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb... [and crying out]... ‘Salvation belong to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”¹⁷

Thus, while a modernist lens may cause believers to lose sight of the intrinsic connections between both Word and deed in the proclamation of our Lord’s “Good News,” even then, to hold back from responding to those who are in need would be to disobey the clear teachings of Scripture and our Lord’s commands.

Modernist Approaches are Found Wanting

For a growing number of believers including many younger evangelicals, the modernist approaches to evangelism and social action have been weighed in the balances and found wanting in a variety of ways. “What’s the point of this conversation?” my students often ask as we discuss the relationship between evangelism and compassionate ministries. To them, it is clear from Scripture that they go together. According to author James Choung about the Good News, “...when we oversimplify it...then we only share one side of the story, even if we don’t mean to. We miss the big picture.”¹⁸

These modernist approaches often raise serious questions from the perspectives of coherency and common sense when applied to a number of social problems such as “illegal immigration.” Something is amiss when a theological system takes one kingdom principle—submission to the law—and uses it without discretion to trump a host of other kingdom principles, as when a Christian pastor or believer can ask “But what if they’re illegals?” and then think that this possibility excuses one from responding compassionately to the sojourners and foreigners among us.¹⁹ How can only judgment and condemnation by evangelicals be offered as “Good News” to those who are helplessly trapped in a political and economic quagmire?

The sad irony is that instead of proclaiming good news in today’s immigration crisis, our disorganized and divisive voices have been lost in the cacophony of sounds coming from the world. Our nation and churches have not heard a prophetic word from the Lord on this matter. As a result, evangelical Christians are missing a

huge opportunity to make a significant difference in the lives of millions of individuals who have chosen to come and live among us.²⁰

Writing about the popular consensus among modernist Christians as to what evangelism is and is not, Bryan Stone states:

Christian evangelism, as it is commonly understood and practiced in North America today, neither lends itself to compassionate ministry nor, if it is consistent with itself, even coexists with compassionate ministry. On the contrary, it excludes and even undermines compassionate ministry.²¹

He then sets forth the following six fundamental features of the prevailing consensus among evangelical modernists regarding the meaning of evangelism:

1. It stands upon the pedestal of a fundamental dualism between an immortal soul and a perishable body that houses this soul during its relatively short journey on earth.
2. It has a clear preference for personal salvation over corporate salvation.
3. It views human existence as a test rather than a constructive project.
4. It has a predominantly (if not exclusively) otherworldly or next-worldly understanding of salvation.
5. It emphasizes the quantitative rather than the qualitative view of our salvation.
6. It measures the normative Christian experience of salvation in terms of an instantaneous conversion experience, referred to by phrases such as "accepting Jesus as your personal Savior," "allowing Jesus into your heart," or "being born again."

While each of these six features has roots in the scriptures, their overall effect taken together has been to reduce the entire experience of salvation to a single momentary decision and experience. Salvation itself is characterized basically as dualistic, individualistic, private, and otherworldly. As such, the broader message of God's Word and Jesus' example that calls for an authentic response to a compassionate God is greatly diminished or totally lost.²² Plainly stated, any conceptualization of the Gospel that does not consider evangelism and compassionate ministries to be thoroughly integrated is not biblical.²³

These questions and concerns regarding the inadequacies of

modernists' approaches to evangelism and social action ought to serve as prompters for all evangelicals to reexamine their theological approaches, explore other alternatives, and consider their implications in the light of the Word of God.

Shifts in Post-Modern Evangelical Theologies And Ministry among Immigrants

In recent years, a number of shifts of emphases are beginning to emerge among post-modern evangelicals, as they seek more authentic and faithful ways of understanding God's Word and obeying Him.²⁴ In fact, many of them really represent a return to earlier perspectives, values, and traditions from twenty centuries of our Christian heritage and teachings. Following are five of these shifts that have significant implications for ministry among immigrants, presented such that each flows from and builds upon the previous one.

Shift from Propositionalism to Story-oriented Theology

One key shift among post-modern evangelicals is from reading the scriptures primarily as a sourcebook of propositions to reading the Bible as narrative. On one hand, evangelical modernists developed systematic theologies based primarily upon rational analyses of the written Word. Typically, this involved taxonomies that were shaped by a western worldview.

On the other hand, post-modernists place their primary trust in the Sacred Story to communicate God's multidimensional and transcendent Truth. To them, given that compassionate ministries and evangelism are intrinsically interwoven in the narrative, it does not seem appropriate to try to parse them out and analyze them. In fact, doing so seems to violate their spiritually nuanced and intrinsically interdependent relationship that is portrayed in the sacred text. Whereas modernists focused on precisely defining evangelism and compassionate ministries in rationalistic ways, post-modernists are more willing to allow the biblical narrative to bear witness holistically regarding the meanings of these terms.

This shift from reading the scriptures primarily as a sourcebook for theological propositions to reading them as sacred narrative has huge implications regarding ministry among immigrants and all marginalized peoples. The evangelical modernist, taking the perspective of a third party rationalistic analyst, is more predisposed toward a detached consideration of the sacred text and its meaning.

In contrast, post-modern evangelicals are more inclined to see themselves as participants in the sacred story of salvation

history within which all believers find their identity. This change in perspective involves a radical shift from being a passive observer to becoming an active participant and thus comprehending a more holistic sense of the meaning of the text.

As believers and spiritual pilgrims ministering among immigrants in North America, our individual stories merge and become part of the sacred story of God's people. We are first and foremost citizens of an eternal kingdom and are journeying together with them in this land that is not our permanent home.

Shift from Ahistorical to a New Appreciation of Tradition

A second shift among post-modern evangelicals is from the ahistorical attitude of the twentieth century to a new appreciation of Christian tradition. This refreshing change in perspective comes from reading the Scriptures as narrative, bringing us back to a key biblical truth, namely that all of God's people are sojourners and pilgrims.

In contrast, many evangelical modernists in America lack an awareness and sense of connection with God's people throughout Christian history and around the world. Many Christians have become enmeshed in the surrounding culture, such that today they are virtually indistinguishable from other North Americans. This definitely *is not Good News*, considering the numerous similarities between evangelicals and other Americans in areas including sexual disobedience, physical abuse in marriage, divorce, materialism, selfishness, and racism. The disconnect between one's profession and witness is appalling.²⁵

Meanwhile, post-modern evangelicals are rediscovering what it means to live in but not be of this world. The Bible tells us that we are citizens first and foremost of God's eternal kingdom that He is establishing on earth and in heaven rather than of worldly kingdoms. Younger evangelicals, in their spiritual pilgrimages, are drawing fresh inspiration and insights from the sacred narrative and bringing a wealth of resources from the Christian tradition into daily disciplines, worship, and life.

The scriptures tell the story of nations and peoples in continual movement and flux, often in search of a better home and life. We are repeatedly reminded that God is ultimately in charge. He is the one who "...made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out [our] appointed times in history and the boundaries of [our] lands...so that people would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him...For in him we live and move and have our being."²⁶

As believers become active participants in the sacred narrative, they come to understand their true identity as part of God's

people and discover how they should live out their faith in relationship with their immigrant brothers and sisters. Paul, speaking of Christ, was explicit about the implications of this truth in his letter to the Ephesian believers:

For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.²⁷

Shift from Rational Arguments to Truth Verified through Communal Embodiment

A third shift among post-modern evangelicals is from rational arguments to an appreciation for truth verified through communal embodiment. Robert Webber says:

The question "How do we know Christianity is true?" will continue in the postmodern world to be a matter for discussion. But... if reason and science are no longer able to bring us to truth, what will? ... The goal of post-modern apologetics is to recover the role of the church as the interpreter and the embodiment of truth. Thus faith is not born outside the church but within the church as individuals see themselves and their world through the eyes of God's earthed community.²⁸

As believers today take seriously the sacred story of God's people in the scriptures and throughout the centuries, a growing number are coming together into visible communities, characterized by (1) significant daily interactions, (2) socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, and generational diversity, (3) unconditional love and acceptance, (4) mutual care and generous sharing, and (5) joyous living and celebration. Their sense of identity and shared purpose inspires and empowers them to embody through community life the principles and realities of the kingdom of God as a testimony to their unity in Christ. They seek practical ways to show hospitality to strangers and respond to those in need in their community and beyond. In this way, strangers, immigrants and all who are marginalized are invited to become part of a living, affirming, caring body of believers, thus giving a cogent and visible witness of the truth that sets us free.

The purpose of involving Laura and my other students in ministry among immigrants is not merely to give them unique ministry opportunities. Rather their experiences in diverse

Christian communities are crucial to their spiritual and professional formation for effective ministry in a hurting world. A key requirement is for each student to ask God to bring at least three new people into their lives with whom they can share their faith in deep and significant ways. Every semester my students report that they receive fresh new insights and perspectives and are deeply transformed through these relationships.

Shift from Theory to Action

A fourth shift among post-modern evangelicals is from theory to action. For decades, many evangelicals have seemed more predisposed to analyzing, debating and quibbling. However, younger followers of Jesus are no longer willing just to talk about how true Christians ought to live. Instead, they are eager to radically follow and obey Christ in both Word and deed.

The story of the Good Samaritan is particularly appealing to younger believers because the contrast between theory and action is clearly illustrated.²⁹ To begin, Jesus' response to the law expert's question "And who is my neighbor?" is very instructive. Instead of getting drawn into an abstract debate, Jesus takes his inquisitor for a walk down a dusty pathway between Jerusalem and Jericho. Promptly they come upon a man abused by robbers and left by the wayside. Soon, a priest and a Levite had passed by and disappeared down the path, and only a Samaritan was available to help.

Interestingly, Jesus asks the question, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor?" in such a way that the scribe was compelled to imagine himself to be the one laying by the wayside, needing to accept a helping hand from a despised foreigner.

In responding, the scribe could not even bring himself to utter the despicable word "Samaritan." Instead, he could only mumble, "The one who had mercy on him."³⁰

The message was clear. True followers of Christ cannot allow themselves to get caught up in endless philosophical debates. Instead we are called to put our faith into action and reach out to all those in need, including strangers, foreigners, and immigrants too. The Samaritan's role in this story was not a coincidence. Nor is it a coincidence today that God has brought immigrants from all over the world to our doorstep. Our role as true followers of Jesus is not to engage in endless debates, but rather to reach out with love and compassion to those who are in need and searching for Good News that will transform their empty lives.

Shift from Church Growth to Missional

A fifth shift among post-modern evangelicals is from Church Growth to Missional. Missiologist Gailyn Van Rhee states

The Church Growth and Missional movements represent two very different emphases. The Missional perspective accentuates theological reflections and historical perspective and the Church Growth movement cultural analysis and strategy formation.³¹

While recognizing our indebtedness to the Church Growth movement, Van Rhee asserts

The seeds of syncretism were rooted in the very principles of cultural analysis and strategy formation employed by this movement. Practitioners succumbed unintentionally to the humanistic suppositions of the Modern Era. Assuming that they could chart their way to success by their ingenuity and creativity, Church Growth practitioners focused on what humans do in missions rather than on what God is doing.³²

For centuries, the Western church had allowed the cultural context to shape both her structures and practices in many subtle and pervasive ways.³³ As a corrective to the modernist evangelicals of the previous century, there is a growing awareness in recent years among missiologists and younger evangelicals that churches ought to be Missional at their core.

The younger evangelicals, on the other hand, are recovering the church as a counterculture. The church, this view argues, should not seek to integrate itself with culture or to baptize culture. Instead, the church should see itself as a mission to culture.³⁴

This shift to seeing the church as Missional and North America as a mission field is providing fresh perspectives and opportunities regarding how to minister faithfully both at home and abroad.

The Missional church is not just another phase of church life but a full expression of who the church is and what it is called to be and do. The Missional church builds upon the ideas of church growth and church health but brings the lessons learned from each into a full-blown missions focus—within their local mission field as well as the ends of the earth. To be Missional means to move beyond our church preferences and make Missional deci-

sions locally as well as globally.³⁵

What a great time to be a Missional church in North America today, where the world has come to our doorstep! The Hispanic church that my wife and I attend is a microcosm of the growing multiethnic and multicultural fabric of our nation. On a typical Sunday we worship with people from The Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, the United States, Puerto Rico, Argentina, Guatemala, El Salvador, and a multitude of other nations both Hispanic and otherwise. Throughout each week North Americans join our immigrant brothers and sisters in Christ praying for and interacting with their family members from all over the world. Witnessing God's Kingdom coming to pass on earth as it is in heaven in the lives of these new believers and their families brings genuine joy beyond description!

These five shifts in post-modern evangelical theologies, when taken together, provide fresh, new opportunities to witness to our faith and engage our world in more appropriate, relevant and transformational ways. As such, they also offer evangelicals more biblical approaches for relating to the immigrants among us as witnesses of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Getting Laura and Her Parents Back on Speaking Terms

Meanwhile, here is the advice that I am sharing with Laura as she prepares to head home for the school break. First, reconnect with your parents in your shared stories, as a family and as members of the Body of Christ. Talk again about how God so loved the world that He sent His only Son for us all and how this Good News has transformed your lives and family. Recall with them how we are part of this old, old story together with pilgrims and sojourners spanning nearly twenty centuries. They will be thrilled to hear how you are growing in your faith and in your walk with Jesus Christ.

Second, share the joys that you have experienced in reaching out to others in Jesus' wonderful name—to friends and acquaintances nearby, to strangers across the street and downtown, and to peoples from around the world. Tell them about little Karisa and how fulfilling and thrilling it is to see God at work through you as you are investing in her life and family. If questions arise about her family's legal situation, admit that you do not understand the whole situation and that you do not know the answers. Then tell them more about little Karisa, an innocent child growing up in a complicated and unwelcoming world. Assure your mom and dad that you know at least one thing for sure—that God brought you into this little girl's life to hug her, to wipe her tears, and to be her friend.

Finally, ask the Lord to equip and empower you as you minister for Him in both Word and deed. Seek His guidance by examining the Scriptures and walking in obedience. He will speak to you through the gentle promptings of His Spirit and in communion with the body of believers in Christ. And as you pray, ask Him to allow His whole Truth to speak in fresh ways to your mom and dad, about His kingdom coming to pass on this earth, which is...

Good news [for] the poor...freedom for the prisoners...recovery of sight for the blind, [and release for] the oppressed... [proclaiming] the year of the Lord's favor.³⁶

Writer

Norman G. Wilson: Professor in the College of Arts and Sciences, Indiana-Wesleyan University.

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NOTES

1. The persons in this story are real but their names have been changed.
2. Grenz and Franke 2001, 13
3. See Webber 2002, chapters 1 and 2, for a very helpful analysis of the modern history of evangelicals.
4. Pascal. 1660. Section IV "Of the Means of Belief", No. 277
5. *Ibid.*, No. 282.
6. 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 NIV
7. See McIntosh 2004, pp. 7 ff., for a helpful summary of the background of these ideas.
8. Cf. Wilson (2005) for a fuller discussion of these models and their implications. The author is influenced regarding these three views by John R.W. Stott (1975), in *Christian Mission in the Modern World*.
9. 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 NIV
10. See Wilson 1997, 70 ff, for a discussion regarding how cognitive and learning styles can shape theology in diverse cultural situations.
11. E.g., Exodus 22:21, 23:9; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19, 16:12, 24:18, 22 NIV
12. Luke 4:18, 19 NIV
13. Matthew 25:35-46 NIV
14. E.g., The Wesleyan Church "Position Statement on Immigration" (June 2008) identifies eight biblical principles to guide the responses of believers regarding the immigration situation, including (1) the Creation Principle, (2) the Great Commandment principle, (3) the Sovereignty Principle, (4) The Submission Principle, (5) the Hospitality

- Principle, (6) the Great Commission Principle, (7) the Grace Principle, and (8) the Justice Principle. Cf. Wesleyan Church, The. 2008 (June).
15. *Ibid.*, 4-5
 16. E.g., Matthew 7:1-3; Luke 6:36-38
 17. Revelation 7:9, 10
 18. Choung 2008, 52.
 19. Cf. previous section and footnote regarding kingdom principles.
 20. Wilson 2006 (Fall)
 21. Stone 1996, 143
 22. *Ibid.*, 143-7
 23. James 2:14-26
 24. I am indebted to Robert E. Webber (2002) in his book *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* regarding my discussion of these shifts in post-modern evangelical theologies.
 25. Horton, in Sider 2005, 17.
 26. Acts 17:26-28 NIV
 27. Ephesians 2:18-20 NIV
 28. Webber 2002, 104
 29. Regarding the following discussion of *The Good Samaritan*, I am indebted to David I. Smith (2009), having drawn from ideas in an earlier draft of the fourth chapter of his forthcoming book entitled *Learning from the stranger: Christian faith and cultural diversity*.
 30. Luke 10:25-37 NIV
 31. Van Rheenen 2006, 3
 32. *Ibid.*, 1
 33. Cf. Guder 1998, 5 ff. and Carter 2006, 14 ff.
 34. Webber 2002, 132
 35. Stetzer and Putnam 2006, 49
 36. Luke 4:18, 19 NIV

The Impact of Size on the Growth and Development of a Church¹

Gary L. McIntosh

Over the years my wife and I have attended several different churches. In every one of them the welcoming process was quite different. Right after we were married, we began attending a small church. The church averaged about fifty people at its Sunday morning worship service. People greeted us warmly before and after the worship service, and the pastor's wife invited us to lunch at her house. Only later did we discover that this was a normal practice for the pastor and his family. Each week they planned on having someone over for lunch. If a guest came to church, which was not often in their small congregation, the guest was invited. When no guests were present at the service, they invited one of the church families. The second time we attended, one of the leader's families asked us to go to dinner. All of these lunches and dinners provided a personal welcome that we appreciated, and which eventually helped us join the church.

A few years later my wife and I moved to a new city and began looking for a church home. One of the churches we visited was quite large, averaging over 1,000 people at worship each week. We never met the pastor face-to-face, nor spent any time at lunch or dinner with his family. Greeters met us at the entrance to the church, and then escorted us down the church hallways to Sunday school classes and into the expansive worship auditorium. An information table provided brochures on several church ministries, and we received a letter from the pastor later in the week thanking us for our visit, as well as inviting us to return. Getting involved in the church took place through a formal membership class that newcomers were expected to attend. The organized process for welcoming visitors was quite impressive.

The church we finally settled into was a medium size church averaging about 200 people each Sunday. Two worship services allowed the church to squeeze more people into the rather small facility. Even though the church had no formal welcoming process, we were invited to attend a bowling and pizza night with a class of younger married couples. As we developed friendships with people in the class through other social events, we gradually found ourselves involved in church activities and ministry.

Our experience of being welcomed in these three churches illustrates the fact that churches operate differently depending on the size of the congregation. "Right sizing" the various ministries and processes of communicating, welcoming, training, involving, and a host of other activities is crucial for smooth operation, as well as increased growth, of a church. As a church grows, it cannot simply employ business as usual practices. Larger churches are not simply bigger versions of smaller churches, but in reality an entirely different structure that requires different operational procedures.

Impact of Size on Organizations

The impact of size on organizations and organisms is recognized in several disciplines. Various researchers in such diverse fields as economics, business management, sociology, biology, and missiology have all acknowledged the impact of size on organizational development. For example, studies in biology speak of "power scaling relationships," which are mathematical determinations of how characteristics change with size in different species. Geoffrey B. West, writes,

...metabolic rate increases as the $\frac{3}{4}$ power of mass. Put simply, the scaling law says that if an organism's mass increases by a factor of 10,000 (four orders of magnitude), its metabolic rate will increase by a factor of only 1,000 (three orders of magnitude). This represents an enormous economy of scale: the bigger the creature, the less energy per pound it requires to stay alive. This increase of efficiency with size – manifested by the scaling exponent $\frac{3}{4}$, which we say is "sublinear" because it's less than one – permeates biology (2007: 34).

The following are brief summations of the research from the arenas of management, sociology, and church growth on the impact of size in organizations.

Business Management

Research in management theory reflects on the sig-

nificance of size in managing a business. Larry Greiner, Professor of Management and Organization at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business writes, "A company's problems and solutions tend to change markedly as the number of its employees and its sales volume increase. Problems of coordination and communication magnify, new functions emerge, levels in the management hierarchy multiply, and jobs become interrelated" (Greiner 1998:56). Anyone who has been involved in small and large companies can resonate with Greiner. The ease with which one communicates with five employees is very different than trying to communicate with fifty employees or with 500.

Henry Mintzberg, Bronfman Professor of Management at McGill University, also acknowledges the importance of understanding the impact of organizational size on management practices. "The size of the overall organization appears to have a considerable effect on what senior managers do," writes Mintzberg. "Specifically, we find that chief executives of smaller organizations engage in fewer formal activities but are much more concerned with the operating work of their organization" (Mintzberg 1973:104). Mintzberg observes that in business enterprises senior executives of smaller companies tend to focus on 1) operating the organization, 2) internal issues, 3) maintaining workflow, 4) real-time concerns, and 5) informal-connections. In contrast executives of larger companies tend to focus on 1) directing the organization, 2) external issues, 3) maintaining wide perspective, 4) future-time concerns, and 5) formal-connections. In a later book Mintzberg suggests three hypotheses concerning effects of size on organizational structure.

1. The larger the organization, the more elaborate its structure—that is, the more specialized its tasks, the more differentiated its units, and the more developed its administrative component.
2. The larger the organization, the larger the average size of its units.
3. The larger the organization, the more formalized its behavior (Mintzberg 1983:124-126).

An additional example from the business field comes from Theodore Caplow. Writing in *How to Run Any Organization*, Caplow introduces the concept of "discontinuities of scale." He notes,

The diminution of consensus about organization values and goals is a normal consequence of growth, attributable in part to the inherent difficulty of getting a larger number of people who know each other less well to

agree about anything, in part to the importation of new people and ideas, but mostly to the brute fact that as an organization grows, its relationships to its members and to the environment necessarily change, so that its original values and goals become somewhat incongruent with its current program. These problems are magnified by discontinuities of scale. An organization cannot grow indefinitely in small increments. Sooner or later it makes a quantum leap that transforms its whole character: the company acquires a second factory in another state; the family has its first child; a summer camp adds a winter program. Often the people involved do not realize that anything significant has occurred until they discover by hard experience that their familiar procedures no longer work and that their familiar routines have been bizarrely transformed (Caplow 1976:178).

As organizations grow, Caplow submits that one can expect theft to rise, original members to become obsolete, and an increased dependence on outsiders. He offers five standard methods for coping with organizational growth: team management, decentralization of operations, standardization of procedures, centralization of financial control, and expansion of communication (179).

Sociology

Early insight on the impact of numbers in social life comes from Georg Simmel (1858-1918). A translation of his work by Kurt H. Wolff, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, published in 1950 contains a large section on "Quantitative Aspects of the Group" (Wolff 1950:87-177). In this work Simmel acknowledges that larger groups must develop new forms, forms that smaller groups do not need. He comments, "It will immediately be conceded on the basis of everyday experiences, that a group upon reaching a certain size must develop forms and organs which serve its maintenance and promotion, but which a smaller group does not need" (Wolff 1950:87). Additionally, Simmel recognizes that some groups have sociological structures that make it impossible for them to increase in size. For instance, he mentions "the sects of the Waldenses, Mennonites, and Herrnhuter" (89-90). The social structure of such groups demands a tight solidarity that cannot be experienced in larger group structure. Simmel notes that the larger an organization becomes the less inclined it is to radicalism, the more important simple ideas become, and the greater the decrease it experiences in inner cohesion (93-95).

One insight Simmel mentions that I have not found in other

works is the relationship of absolute and relative numbers. For instance, he asserts that the relative impact of key individuals increases as the group grows even if the number of key people remains proportionally the same. Thus, "it is easier for an army of 100,000 to keep a population of ten million under control than it is for a hundred soldiers to hold a city of [10,000] in check, or for one soldier, a village of 100...in spite of the fact that the numerical ratio remains the same" (97-98).

Simmel also introduces the concept of the intermediate structure, which is neither small nor large. "The character of the numerically intermediate structure, therefore, can be explained as a mixture of both: so that each of the features of both the small and the large group appears, in the intermediate group, as a fragmentary trait, now emerging, now disappearing or becoming latent" (Wolff 1950:116). According to Simmel, the intermediate structure shares the essential character of both the smaller and larger structures. The amount of sharing, however, alternates between the smaller and larger characteristics (i.e., the intermediate structure moves back and forth between small and large aspects).

David O. Moberg reviews several aspects related directly to church size in *The Church as a Social Institution* (1962). Regarding church conflict he remarks, "Some evidence indicates that petty jealousies, bickering, back-biting, spites, and personal or factional quarrels are the most prevalent in small congregations which stress intensely emotional types of religious experience (Moberg 1962:270). Speaking about people's commitment he writes, "Increasing size of a church congregation appears to be accompanied by a diminution of the average member's sense of obligation to work, give, and participate" (41). Addressing the importance of evaluation he reports that one study found four factors of church vitality: youthful vigor, financial giving, increased membership and baptism, and consistent growth. He then notes that, "the larger churches outstripped smaller ones on all four measures" (219-220).

Another sociologist, Paul E. Mott, addressed the impact of population size on organizational development. In *The Organization of Society* (1965) Mott outlines thirteen propositions regarding population size and social structure. In the interest of space, just a sampling of his ideas will be mentioned. Mott attests that as organizations increase arithmetically, "the number of possible channels of interaction increases geometrically" (Mott 1965:49). Or, put another way, as the size of a group increases by addition the number of communication pathways multiplies. Thus, the larger the organization the more difficult the communication

process. Furthermore, as the organization grows larger the number of roles increase and become more formalized. While one leader may be sufficient for small organizations, it will take more leaders fulfilling more formal, specialized roles as the organization becomes larger. Lastly, Mott states that as the organization enlarges, the authority structures become decentralized, which in turn creates increased levels of influence and rank in the organization (Mott 1965:38-70).

Sociologist Ronald L. Johnstone builds on Mott's analysis in *Religion and Society In Interaction* (1975). Summarizing Mott's major thesis, Johnstone comments,

As groups increase in size, the degree of consensus among members concerning goals and especially norms decline. In great part a basic problem of communication and interaction is involved here. As groups grow, a point is reached when not everyone can interact with everyone else; nor can any one person interact with all the others. Levels of understanding and commitment to goals and norms cannot be maintained. Not only can't people share as fully with one another and reach truly common understandings by involving everyone in decision and policy making, but also problems of increasing diversity arise as more members come in. In fact, each new person is a potential disrupter, if not a potential revolutionary, inasmuch as the ideas he brings with him or that he may develop may challenge fundamental tenets of the group. Obviously, the tight-knit, integrated, primary-group-like relationship that may have existed at a group's inception and during its early development begins to submit to increasing diversity and more specialized interests as different elements enter (Johnstone 1975:106-107).

Johnstone discusses several additional issues that organizations face as their size increases: declining norms, increasing deviance, development of specialized roles, greater role autonomy and coordination, and increasing bureaucracy (107-108).

Church Growth

No one in the church growth field has addressed the issues related to congregational size as widely as Lyle E. Schaller. As early as 1973, Schaller differentiated his advice on the basis of small, medium, and large church categories. In *The Pastor and the People* (1973, 1986) he defined a small church as one with fewer than 100 people at worship, a medium church with 100-200 wor-

shippers, and a large church with over 200 worshipers (Schaller 1973/1986:145-147). Two years later he observed in *Hey, That's Our Church!* that churches tend to group at four size levels or plateaus: 30-35, 70-85, 115-135, and 175-200 (1975:39-50). This appears to have been the first time that the natural gathering of churches around certain size measures was recognized in church growth literature.

In most of his books Schaller discusses the impact of size as almost a side issue. For example, in *Effective Church Planning* (1979), it is within the context of a discussion of small and large groups that he introduces some of the same findings noted by several sociologists. He writes, "In the well-managed small group the internal communication system usually is informal, unstructured, and highly effective. In the large group the internal communication system must be intentional, systematized, structured, and redundant (1979:29).

Schaller wrote three books in the 1980s specifically targeted to different sized churches. The first was *The Multiple Staff and the Larger Church* (1980). This was followed by *The Small Church IS Different* (1982) and *The Middle Sized Church* (1985). Not only did these three books signal a new approach to church growth (i.e., one based on size), but they also communicated new definitions of small, medium, and large. Schaller classified churches into seven categories: fellowship (35), small (75), middle-sized (140), awkward size (200), large (350), huge (600), and minidenomination (700) (1980:27-35). This division eventually developed into the following widely used analogy of church sizes.

<u>Average Attendance</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Analogy</u>
<35	Fellowship	Cat
35-100	Small church	Collie
10-175	Middle-Sized	Garden
175-225	Awkward Size	House
225-450	Large	Mansion
450-700	Huge	Ranch
700+	Mini-denomination	Nation

Schaller presented basic church size strategies to increase church membership in *Growing Plans* (1983). This book is built around three major questions: How do small churches grow? How do middle-sized churches grow? How do large churches grow? Each of the chapters presents ideas for growth founded on size theory. Finally, writing in *The Very Large Church: New Rules for Leaders*, Schaller claims, "...next to the congregational culture, size is the most revealing and useful frame of reference for examining the differences among congregations in American

Protestantism" (2000:27).

Along with Schaller, an early church growth writer who influenced church size thinking was David A. Womack. In *The Pyramid Principle of Church Growth* (1977) Womack introduced the concept that churches tend to cluster at certain sizes. Building on earlier research by statistician George Edgerly, Womack wrote that churches tend to cluster at 35, 85, 125, 180, 240, 280, 400, 600, 800, and 1,200 average worshipers (1977:17). The growth problem, according to Womack, is that churches do not expand their organization to fit the needs of the next size of church, and they plateau at predictable size levels. Thus, he writes, "If a church wishes to serve more people, it must first expand its base of organization and ministry (1977:15).

While completing his study of the Church of the Nazarene for his doctoral program at Fuller Theological Seminary, Bill Sullivan became interested in the challenge of assisting churches to break the 200 barrier. A statistical analysis of Nazarene Churches in 1983 discovered that "nearly 90 percent have fewer than 200 members. Indeed over half of the churches have fewer than 75 members" (Sullivan 1984:15). After conducting further research to see what factors caused churches to remain below two hundred in size, as well as how churches effectively broke the 200 barrier, he published *Ten Steps to Breaking the 200 Barrier* (1988). This book provided practical insights on how church leaders could manage the growth of a church beyond two hundred in size. It was later revised as *New Perspectives On Breaking the 200 Barrier*.

During the 1990s church consultant, Carl George, wrote two books based on the hypothesis that as churches grow they must change their organizational structure. *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (1991) focused on answering the question "How can a church be large enough to make a difference in the world while remaining small enough to care about people?" George shares, "Almost every growing church I've encountered faces insurmountable limits on its ability to expand its structure without serious disruption in quality" (1991:43). He further attests, "Churches find that each time they grow a little, their quality lessens, so they must scramble to implement a new organizational system geared to their current size" (1991:42). The answer to this organizational dilemma, according to George, is to become a meta-church.

The name Meta-Church, then, is quite distinct from megachurch. This new label allows for greater numbers, but its deepest focus is on change: pastors' changing their minds about how ministry is to be done, and

churches' changing their organizational form in order to be free from size constraints. A Meta-Church pastor understands how a church can be structured so that its most fundamental spiritual and emotional support centers never become obsolete, no matter how large it becomes (1991:51-52).

Meta-Church theory calls for a new social architecture that is people-centered, ministry-centered, and care-centered. It builds on the analogy of yeasts (geometric growth of small groups over time), which allows for continual growth and personal care regardless of how large a church becomes. George says, "The Meta-Church can grow to any size without revising its social architecture for ministry or sacrificing quality of discipleship (1991:177).

Building on Schaller's analogy, George offers the following breakdown of churches by size.

<u>Worship Attendance</u>	<u>Analogy</u>
<35	Mouse-Size Church
35-50	Cat-Size Church
100-200	Lap-Dog-Size Church
200-1,000	Yard-Dog-Size Church
800-1,000	Horse-Size Church
3,000-6,000	Elephant-Size Church
30,000+	Metropolis-of-Mice Meta Church

At the time George wrote this book, less than fifteen churches had grown larger than 6,000 worshipers in the United States. He predicted, however, that "one day soon, North American churches of 25,000 to 50,000" would appear in every metropolitan area, a prophecy that has come true in part. Leadership Network reported in January 2007 that there are 1,170 churches with worship attendances between 2,000 and 9,999, as well as forty churches averaging over 10,000 in worship attendance (Leadership Network 2007:35).

In a follow-up book, *How to Break Growth Barriers* (1993), Carl George specifically deals with the 200, 400, and 800 size barriers. He declares that, "Churches have more in common by their size than by their denomination, tradition, location, age, or any other single, isolatable factor" (1993:129). After demonstrating the predictable barriers, or sizes, around which churches cluster, he addresses several issues of organizational capacity necessary to break the 200 barrier: parking availability, space for classes and seating, and expansion/relocation. To pass the 400 barrier, George recommends changes in the roles of the board and staff. Essentially, operational functions must begin to be shifted to the

staff, while policy-setting functions remain with the board. Growing beyond 800 requires changes in marketing, facilities usage, and organizational design. In part leaders must establish reasonable spans of care, use niche marketing to reach new people, focus on life-stage ministry, and offer multiple worship services (see 1993:129-164).

Two other books appeared at the end of the 1990s by church growth authors that continued to enhance our understanding of church sizes. Elmer Towns, C. Peter Wagner, and Thom S. Rainer authored *The Everychurch Guide To Growth: How Any Plateaued Church Can Grow* (1998). Wagner offered insights on breaking the 200 barrier, Rainer ideas on breaking the middle-sized (400) barrier, and Towns thoughts on getting over the 1,000 barrier. The second book, *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Bringing Out The Best in Any Size Church* (1999), also addressed moving through the small, medium, and large forms of church. In this book I attempted to bring together all of the church growth thought up to that time related to small, medium, and large church sized strategies.

The most recent books to reflect on the implication of size on church growth were published in 2003, 2005, and 2006. *Overcoming Barriers to Growth* by Michael Fletcher submits that there are really only two barriers to the growth of a church: the 100/200 barrier and the 700/800 barrier (2003/2005: 20). *The Myth of the 200 Barrier*, written by Kevin E. Martin, takes a contrarian approach. He rejects the thesis of a 200 barrier, but espouses a dividing line (barrier?) at 150. However, Martin does admit that churches tend to cluster at predictable sizes (2005:11). While not strictly a study on church sizes, *Confession of a Reformation Rev.* (2006) by Mark Driscoll is a testimony of how God worked in the ministry of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington. Driscoll writes, "Churches, like children, have a shoe size that they will grow into. As a church grows, it must accept it size" (2006:28). The bulk of the book is a description of the challenges and changes that Mars Hill Church went through at predictable size levels: 0-45, 45-75, 75-150, 150-350, 350-1,000, 1,000-4,000, and 4,000 to 10,000.

A summary comparison of the breakdown of church sizes according to church growth writers is as follows:

<u>Schaller</u> <u>(1975)</u>	<u>Womack</u> <u>(1977)</u>	<u>Schaller</u> <u>(1980)</u>	<u>George</u> <u>(1991)</u>	<u>McIntosh</u> <u>(2007)</u>
30-35	50	<35	35	35
70-85	90	35-100	50	85
115-135	120	100-175	100	125
175-200	200s	175-225	200	200
	300s	225-450	400	400
	600	450-700	800	800
	1,200	>700	1,000	1,200
			3,000	3,000
			6,000	6,000
			30,000	10,000

My listing above is not based on any scientifically gathered data, but a summary "best guess" based on the observations and studies I have gathered. Several researchers already mentioned above agree on the general barriers up to 800 in size. A recent D.Min. dissertation, by David B. Vasquez, confirms the existence of predictable clusters of churches at 1200-to-1500, 3000, and 5000-to-6000 in size (Vasquez 2006:122-124).

David Vasquez suggests that the points at which churches tend to cluster are not hard numerical numbers, but rather are "ranges" of numbers around which churches tend to cluster. For example, the 200 barrier is not a hard number, but is more of a range, say between 150-250. Thus a church, which plateaus at 150, is still struggling with the 200 barrier, as is the church that plateaus at 250. Martin's statement that the 200 barrier is a myth, based on his reading of *The Tipping Point* (2002), by Malcolm Gladwell, is moot. While, there clearly is no research data that supports a hard numerical barrier at 200 (as Sullivan's study of the Church of the Nazarene pointed out in 1985), there is research data that supports numerical ranges (or clusters), which can be spoken of as barriers. The same holds true for 400, 800, 1200, or any other point on the chart above.

Leadership network reports the following percentage breakdown of churches in the United States as of 2007.

<u>Worship Attendance</u>	<u>Protestant Churches</u>
1-99	177,000 (59%)
100-499	105,000 (35%)
500-999	12,000 (4%)
1,000-1,999	6,000 (2%)
2,000-9,999	1,170 (0.4%)
10,000+	40 (0.01%)

(Leadership Network. Innovation 2007).

Based on research by John Vaughan, the following chart

gives evidence that churches are continuing to grow above 2,000 in size, and at a faster pace than ever.

Year	Total Mega Churches
> 1970	10
> 1980	50
> 1983	74
> 1985	100
> 1990	250
> 1998	400
> 2000	500
> 2003	700
> 2004	850
> 2005	1,200
> 2007	1,400+

(Unpublished statistics from John Vaughan, 2007).

While it used to take a church from 15-50 years to grow larger than 2,000 worshippers, it now appears to be happening in a little as five to ten years in several reported cases. Given current trends, we are most likely going to see even more large churches in the future. Thus, it is pivotal that we understand the dynamics of how larger organizations, including churches, grow.

What Have We Learned?

Leaders like to talk about a church's DNA, and how it controls the growth and development of their church. In living organisms DNA is the nucleic acid that contains the genetic instructions used in the design of all known life. Some compare DNA to a set of blueprints, a recipe, or a code since it contains the directions to build organisms cells. Thus a church's DNA carries the information that quietly guides the way a church is formed.

Part of understanding a church's DNA is appreciating the rules that appear to govern the growth, decline, and fruitfulness of social organizations. Although church growth is ultimately the work of God the Father (See I Cor 3), there are general connections between a church's size, relationships, and organization that have crucial implications for its growth. The following are a dozen essential facts that we have learned about the impact of a church's size on its DNA.

First, the larger a church becomes the more numerous and complex the relationships and organizational structure. For example, in a small group consisting of ten people there are forty-five potential relationships. However, in a church of one hun-

dred people there are 4,950 potential relationships. And, in a church of five hundred there are 124,750 potential relationships!² This is why, as a church grows larger, the leaders sense the need to work harder at communication, long-range planning, and building unity.

Reflecting on the organizational needs of a growing church, Lyle Schaller explains, "It probably will need a more complex organizational structure" (1985:129). He goes on to suggest that as a church grows larger it needs a longer time frame for planning, a heavier emphasis on outreach, and a greater reliance on large group organizing principles.

Second, the larger a church becomes the more it must break down into midsized and smaller units to maintain care and communication. Carl George addressed this issue in this pace setting book *Prepare Your Church for the Future*. George predicts, "All churches, no matter what their size, must deal with a certain organizational issue if they're to experience the ongoing, quality growth that stems from Christ's Great Commission to 'make disciples' (Matthew 28:18-20)" (1991:42). Later George defines this certain organizational issue as "Churches find that each time they grow a little, their quality lessens, so they must scramble to implement a new organizational system geared to their current size" (1991:43). As churches increase in size, and in the number of relationships as found in the first point above, it becomes increasingly difficult to provide care for and involvement of additional people. George discovered that churches must become ever smaller as they grow ever larger. Thus, the larger a church, or any organization, becomes the more it must break down into smaller units to maintain an actable level of care for its members. Thus, an emphasis on small group ministry is absolutely necessary, as a church grows larger if it hopes to maintain a positive flow of communication and pastoral care to all of its worshippers.

Third, the larger a church becomes the more it must develop specialized roles and functions, as well as increasing the total number of roles. Jethro's advice to Moses in Exodus 18 is the classic biblical illustration of this point. Observing the struggle of Moses caring for the concerns of the people of Israel, Jethro suggested that he break down the oversight into subdivisions of leaders. Jethro recommended that Moses select leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens (See Exodus 18:21). Minor disputes among the people of Israel were handled at the lowest level, while major disputes were pushed further up the path of leadership. Thus, not only did Moses expand the number of leaders, but also those at the different levels took on more specialized roles. Likewise as churches grow up and beyond each

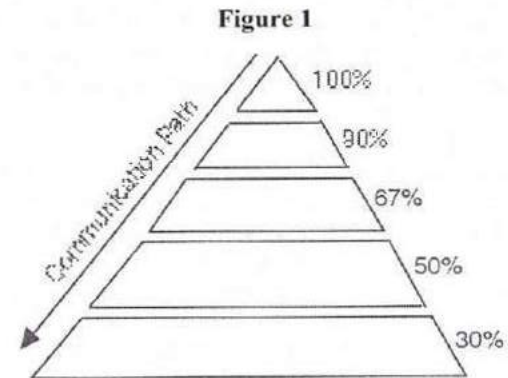
step or plateau, they must increasing add additional leaders while expanding the types and functions of roles. In smaller churches evangelism, assimilation, and pastoral care all take place in one unit. However, in larger churches these elements become specialized, each functioning as separate units. This puts a premium on specialization, association, and cooperation in larger churches.

Fourth, the larger a church grows the more specialized and diverse its subgroups must become. When churches are small it is normal to find that they offer a limited number and array of small group studies. However, as churches grow larger they begin offering an ever-growing number of specialized groups—12 step groups, support groups, task groups, etc. This is tied to the issue of critical mass. A smaller church may have only one or two families with a special needs child. While the church leaders are no doubt concerned for the special needs of the two families, there will not be sufficient critical mass to offer a small support group or specialized class for them. As a church grows larger, however, it will soon amass a number of families with special needs children. With the increased critical mass it will be able to offer a support group and/or special needs class aimed directly at this need.

Fifth, the larger a church becomes the more its roles are formalized, and the number of levels of lay and staff roles increase. When small churches begin adding staff members it is quite common to use simple names like associate pastor or assistant pastor or director of children's ministry. These simplistic titles cut wide swaths of understanding the role and function of these staff members. However, as a church grows larger the titling of each staff member becomes more specific and formal, such as associate pastor of assimilation, administrative pastor, or director of preschool. The formalization of the role and title narrows down the exact function that each person does in the performance of his or her role. The same occurs with lay roles and titles. Smaller churches may have elders and deacons, but larger churches have administrative elders, ruling elders, ministering elders, shepherding elders, and a host of other more specific titles and functions.

Sixth, the larger a church becomes the more important regular communication of its vision, values, mission, and philosophy of ministry is in order to maintain common norms. Maintaining unity of purpose and direction becomes ever more difficult as a church grows larger. The increasing number or relationships means the use of the grapevine, which was used to effectively communicate when the church was smaller, no longer works. In

addition the natural process of communication creates loss a every level on the communication chain (see figure #1).



At the top level, a message is shared with an expectation that the people will remember 100 percent of it. But, as one can see, the second level of leadership actually catches only about 90 percent of it. As the message is communicated further down the various levels of church leadership, more and more of it is lost until fewer and fewer people understand it. At the third tier of leadership, only about 67% of the message is heard. The fourth tier receives only 50%. When the communication reaches the congregation, only about 30% of the message is received. A message in a small church only has one level to travel to reach the entire congregations, which is why the grapevine works so well. Yet, as can be seen from the figure above, the large church has numerous levels that a message must traverse before it reaches the entire congregation. Thus, growing churches find that redundant systems must be put in place to insure permeation of communication throughout the entire church.

Seventh, the larger a church becomes the more authority key influencers gain. The decision-making processes in smaller churches is often driven by the entire congregation, that is the congregation desires, and feels they must have, a say in almost all decisions made on behalf of the church. Such an organizational approach to decision-making can work very well because the church is small enough for members to have a sufficient breadth of knowledge about the entire church ministry to make wise decisions. As a church grows, however, members of the congregations begin to realize they no longer have the breadth of understanding of the church program to make good discussions. When the church becomes mid-sized many decisions are handed over to a board and various committee. But, when as a church

moves on to become a larger size, the congregation and board gradually come to understand that only the senior pastor and members of the pastoral staff have enough knowledge of the total church ministry to make day-to-day functional decisions. The larger a church grows the more the senior pastor and pastoral staff gains authority as the key influencers of ministry direction. The larger a congregation becomes the more the congregation follows the senior pastor's vision.

Eighth, the larger a church becomes the more potential exists for conflict among various parts of the organizational system. The relational character found in smaller churches allows for good communication and coordination of ministry functions. While smaller churches do experience conflict, there appears to be a greater opportunity for disharmony as the church grows due to the increased difficulty in communicating with larger groups of people. Conflict arising from the use of facilities, distribution of finances, coordination of plans, and a host of other related issues becomes more probable as a church increases in size. Therefore larger churches must focus on assisting subunits to co-relate, and function with harmony and less friction.

Ninth, the larger a church becomes, the more decentralized the ministry. It is possible for a single person to oversee, coordinate, and control a church while it is small. But, once a church mid-sized, it becomes increasingly impossible to do so. As leaders share ministry leadership with others, push care giving and decision-making down to the lowest levels of lay ministry, decentralization beckons.

Tenth, the larger a church becomes the more necessary it is that it learn from other churches of equal or greater size, even from churches of different theology, polity, or any number of identifiable aspects. Its size is the primary definitive characteristic. Other than a church's cultural context, its size is the main determinant of its organization. Growing churches soon discover that fewer and fewer churches are available from which they can learn. Since most denominations and church associations are made up of smaller churches, as a church grows it may find very few churches in its own theological family from which it can learn. Thus, larger churches look to churches of their same size in other church families as a place to learn how to take it to the next level.

Eleventh, the larger a church becomes the more it must focus on issues and needs further removed in time and space. A small speedboat can be turned around in a very short space. However, to turn an ocean liner around takes many miles and a longer time frame in which to do so. The same is true of churches.

Smaller churches are like speedboats in that they can turn very quickly if the pastor and people desire to do so. Larger churches, much like ocean liners, need much more time to communicate the necessity, the plan, and the procedure for turning in a new direction.

The same is true regarding a church's span of ministry impact. Smaller churches generally focus on ministry needs close to home in their neighborhood, city, or state. Larger churches look to meet ministry needs in the nation and world due in part to greater resources and vision. To reach the next level a church must solve problems in a smaller space before it can concern itself with issues in a larger space. This means that the larger the space (city, state, nation, world) and the longer the time (week, month, year, multiple years) the fewer churches will be involved in solving problems at that level. Thus, the leaders of larger churches must increasingly be more adept at strategic planning (see figure #2).

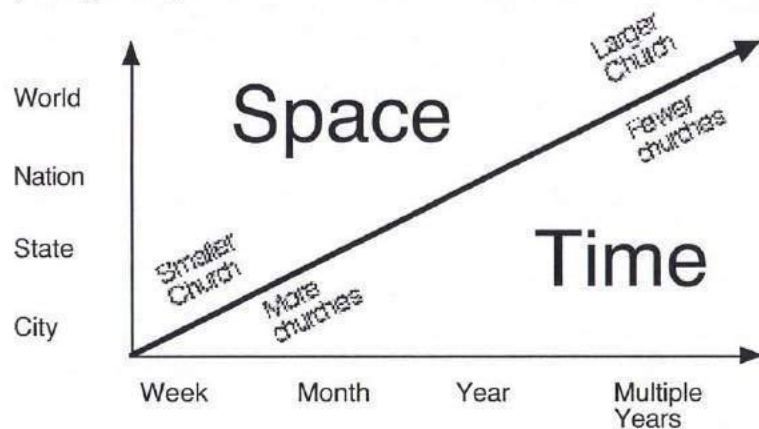


Figure #2

Twelfth, the larger a church becomes the more important it is that that it continue to innovate. As churches grow larger in size they demonstrate economy-of-scale relationships, that is, a doubling of size requires less than a doubling of resources. For example, a small church can add a second worship service, and include more people, without needing to add a second worship leader. One worship leader can lead two or three different worship services, which allows the church to double or triple without increasing its cost for paying an additional worship pastor. An opposite effective occurs regarding creative output. A phe-

nomenon called "super linear scaling" takes place regarding creativity, that is, as a church increases in size it expands its ability to innovate. Thus is it no surprise that most of the new ministry programs are designed, tested, and developed by larger churches rather than smaller ones. Not only are larger churches more innovative than smaller ones, it apparently is important that they continue to innovate. Geoffrey B. West, president of Santa Fe Institute in Santa Fe, New Mexico, declares, "In the absence of continual major innovations, organizations will stop growing and may even contract, leading to either stagnation or ultimate collapse. Furthermore, to prevent this, the time between innovations must decrease as the system grows" (2007: 35).

Summary

From numerous fields of research, it is apparent that the nature of all organizations and organisms is to change as they increase in size. This is no less true in the churches we love and serve. As we continue to grapple with the challenges of understanding and applying church size strategies to impact our churches, it will have far reaching effects.

Writer

Gary L. McIntosh: Professor of Leadership and Church Growth, Talbot School of Theology.

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NOTES

1. Portions of this paper were presented at the Association of Nazarene Researchers and Sociologists annual meeting in 2007.
2. There is a mathematical formula that can be used to calculate how many potential relationships are possible given a certain number of people in a church. If n is the number of people, then $n(n-1)$ equals the total number of possible relationships.

Evangelism Lessons Learned Abroad that Have Implications at Home

Tom Steffen

After months of culture and language acquisition, medical work, and teaching literacy we were finally ready to present the gospel to the Antipolo/Amduntug Ifugao,¹ an animistic tribe with a Roman Catholic veneer residing in central Luzon of the Philippines. These are the people we had laughed with, cried with, eat with, sweat with, and yes, shivered with from December through February for almost 8 years. They invited us into their lives, providing multiple opportunities to learn from and serve them in word, deeds, and signs (Lk 4:16-19; 19:9-11).

I began as I was taught—start with the authoritative source of the message, the Bible. Then move to God and Satan, contrasting the two's attributes—something often missed in most contemporary evangelism. From there, address the creation of the world, animal life, and people, then the fall, and the resulting consequences—broken relationships (human, material world, spiritual world) in desperate need of restoration. When the Ifugao understand the above concepts, present the solution to the dilemma created, the Restorer, Jesus Christ. To make sure the Ifugao understood each lesson, I reviewed it through a series of questions that were designed to capture the central points. Rather than relying on the oft-accepted evangelism ritual of "pray this prayer," I looked for transformed behavior that would include an allegiance change, desire for the Word, reordered relationships and use of resources (time and finances), and the desire for public baptism (Steffen 1997a, 146). Authentic followers of Christ change beliefs and behaviors.

To complete the discipleship process (from the crosscultural church planter's perspective driven by an exit strategy) a general outline for ongoing follow-up followed evangelism. It dealt with

the Christian walk, teachings on the universal and local church, leadership, and a number of Christian doctrines, e.g., reconciliation, the Holy Spirit, prayer, eschatology. Just as the evangelism was presented from a systematic theology perspective, the same was true of follow-up. Doctrines were often presented randomly. Sometimes current needs dictated the content covered; other times, the preset order of the topics in the curriculum ruled.

In my mind the linear logic of the above evangelism model flowed freely and purposely from point to point—Word, God, Satan, humanity, sin, judgment, Jesus Christ. The concepts built to a climax as they moved through the topical sequence from innocence to separation to solution—Bible as source, protagonist (creator, initiator, love, sovereign, just...) and antagonist (con- niver, deceiver, jealous, liar...) contrasted, creation, fall, and solu- tion.

Ifugao narrative logic, to my great surprise, did not perceive it that way. In fact, they found it extremely boring, difficult to follow, and hard to communicate to others. So much for starting a sustainable church-planting movement!

It finally dawned on me—*people learn differently and I must adjust my teaching style accordingly*. Perplexed but not paralyzed I began to rethink the failed evangelism model, considering more contextual models that would move beyond my preferred propositions while at the same time guard the gospel (1 Ti 6:20).

This article will address my journey in evangelism among the Ifugao of the Philippines and years of consulting and teaching on the topic at home and abroad. It will seek to take the things I've learned in cross-cultural settings and demonstrate possible implications and applications for a postmodern, post-Christian, post-literate, post-denominational, post-commitment generation in the USA.

Ifugao Preferences with Possible Western Implications

While receiving teaching on socialization (enculturation) in pre-field training, somehow it never registered to study this aspect of Ifugao culture in-depth. How do Ifugao prefer to learn? How do they teach each other? Here are a number of the differences discovered. It's little wonder why the Ifugao were not impressed with my evangelism model.

While working a missionary candidate school a couple of years ago, one of the accepted candidates queried: "Don't we need to teach people to think linearly so that they can understand Scripture?" The candidate eloquently articulated what I had previously considered a basic need of the Ifugao. Rubem Alves (1990) captures what I inadvertently attempted to do

pedagogically to the unsuspecting Ifugao.

'Please, tell us your stories', the villagers said to the newcomers. The villagers were all silent and smiled as the Enlightened began telling the truth. But they did not tell stories. They opened thick books, treatises, commen- taries, confessions—the crystallized results of their work. And it is reported that, as they spoke, the stars began to fade away till they disappeared, and dark clouds covered the moon. The sea was suddenly silent and the warm breeze became a cold wind..

When they finished telling the truth of history and inter- pretation the villagers returned to their homes. And, no matter how hard they tried, they could not remember the stories they used to tell. And they slept dreamless sleep.

As to the members of the order, after so many years of hard scientific work, they had their first night of sound sleep, also without dreams. Their mission was accom- plished. They had finally, told the truth. (71)

The Ifugao wanted stories; I gave them systematic theology. They wanted relationships, I gave them reasons. They wanted a cast of characters, I gave them categories of convenience. They wanted events, I gave them explanations.

While I succeeded initially in dimming the stars, covering the brightness of the moon, calming the churning sea, and turn- ing warm winds into cold, cutting ones, unlike the people men- tioned in the quote, the Ifugao would have no part of it—they did not want dreamless nights. Fortunately, they refused to take part in the mental gymnastics I had inadvertently asked them to participate (Steffen 2005a). Following are some of the challenges that changed my evangelism approaches, each of which has some implications for western evangelism. What do the post- moderns want? What are we giving them? What do they really need?

Ifugao Preference: Whole to Part

Reflecting back over the western evangelism model revealed a part-to-whole approach. While I followed the western teaching style that preferred to approach a lesson from part to whole, the Ifugao found their attention focused not on the present lesson, but rather trying to discern the metanarrative that supposedly tied the lesson (and lessons) together, and defined the lesson(s). The western approach forced the metanarrative to evolve over- time, in this case several months of teaching, the exact antithesis

of the way Ifugao preferred to learn—whole to part.

The Ifugao love to hear the sweep of Scripture or select slices of it, such as a whole book or letter, storied or sung. One example of this is the Bible story from creation to the ascension. Using a traditional Salidumay tune, the lead singer (often female) composed the story as she went along (creativity within boundaries that promotes mystery) with the first stanza being a short summary of the direction of the story (whole to part)² and those listening sing the chorus (participation) after each of the 52 stanzas (repetition). The formulaic end of the song demonstrated a high respect for the ability of each participant to discern truth without outside pressure: "Ngenamung hu nemnem yu tep ag pepilit Jesus, ngenamung kayun tuu" ("Your minds are free to decide, Jesus does not force, it's up to you"). This song offers singer-searchers exposure to the Source of Truth; they sing their way to Truth. Similarly, followers of Jesus sing their way to biblical authenticity.

Whole-to-part thinking and processing was foreign to most of my expensive formal education. My teachers rewarded those who could best unpack meaning, not just from a chapter, paragraph, sentence, phrase, or even a word, but from the very syllables that comprised the word in question. Consequently, the big picture sweep never seemed that important to me, maybe because it seemed impossible to grasp? Or, that I was never really taught to appreciate it? Or maybe, because western culture did not reward it?

Seminary professor David Wells (1993), commenting on the fragmenting of knowledge within the seminary curriculum, makes this insider's observation:

Subjects and fields develop their own literatures, working assumptions, vocabularies, technical terms, criteria for what is true and false, and canons of what literature and what views should be common knowledge among those working in the subjects. The result of this is a profound increase in knowledge but often an equally profound loss in understanding what it all means, how the knowledge in one field should inform that in another. This is the bane of every seminarian's existence. The dissociated fields—biblical studies, theology, church history, homiletics, ethics, pastoral psychology, missiology—become a rain of hard pellets relentless bombarding those who are on the pilgrimage to graduation. Students are left more or less defenseless as they run this gauntlet, supplied with little help in their efforts to determine how to relate the fields one to another. In the

end, the only warrant for their having to endure the onslaughts is that somehow and someday it will all come together in a church. (244-245)

As I reflect back on how I learned Scripture it was definitely random and piecemeal, a little from here, a little from there. Even Old Testament Survey and New Testament Survey classes did little to catch the sweep of a Testament, the combined two Testaments, or the individual books and letters in either Testament. Teachers seemed to prefer spending significant time discussing controversial parts of a book or letter than capture its theme or its relationship to the big picture. We certainly never would have thought to sing our way through the Bible. Sadly, I bought into my teachers' biases, something the Ifugao had tremendous difficulty processing, much less accepting. Fortunately for both of us I took a learner role. I soon learned that relevant curricula for the Ifugao calls for lessons, and series of lessons, that move from the whole to the part (Steffen 1997b).

Possible Implications for Western Evangelism

1. In a post-Christian society evangelists can no longer assume that the metanarrative of Scripture is still known much less understood. The comments of this western seminary student should give us pause in continuing to use a fragmented, compartmentalized approach to communicate Scripture and the gospel.

In my own life, I question if I have let myself become too bogged down in the details of seminary. It has seemed as though each course has been a separate piece of the puzzle, which I have had to figure out how to arrange in my understanding of the gospel. This fragmentation has caused me to lose sight of the big picture—the overall story of the God's plan, the gospel. Could this compartmentalization be the reason why I have struggled to maintain a vibrant relationship with God throughout my time in seminary? Could this be related to the fact that I have forgotten the stories of my powerful God and reduced Him to a subject that I study in seminary? Have our congregations done the same because we've failed to communicate the awe-inspiring stories of God working throughout history?

Perceptive. This wise student understands that he is likely to perpetuate such fragmentation to those he witnesses to and teaches because teachers tend to teach as taught.

A correction is needed. Typical seminary Bible curriculum

begins with an OT Survey class in the first semester followed by NT Survey in the second semester, signaling to students that the last quarter of the Scripture supercedes the first three-quarters in that both receive a semester of study. Many other courses are sprinkled in both semesters, causing some of the confusion expressed in the above quote. This is particularly true when more attention is given to minutia in the survey classes rather than a book's or letter's contribution and connection to the metanarrative. When teachers of other courses fail to show their connection to the sweep of Scripture, fragmentation ferments.

It seems a better curriculum schema that could help improve evangelism would be to begin with a course that covers Genesis through Revelation in the first semester entitled Bible Survey (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School now does this). Teachers of other courses would then show how and where each of their courses fit in with the Bible Survey course. If curriculum designers believe that more depth should be added, layer it by adding OT and NT survey classes later. Such training for evangelists should help provide postmoderns vital background necessary for grasping the gospel.

2. *Evangelists should reintroduce key characters over time to add depth to familiar themes.* For example, NT writers reintroduce OT characters, Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, to highlight aspects of doctrines and values. This should be true of individual lessons or a series of stories.

Commercial advertising has become astute at doing this by using a single character and following his or her life over time while emphasizing a certain theme or product. One of my favorite examples of this is the fat, uptight PC representative dressed in a stuffy suit and tie who is always trying to undermine the relaxed, youthful, thinner, casually dressed Macintosh rep, but continues to make himself and his product look foolish and inferior, advertisement after advertisement. Repetition with creativity will speak loudly to postmoderns.

3. *Evangelists should be able to state the theme of the Bible in a couple of sentences.*³ Capturing the metanarrative of Scripture in a few sentences is a difficult challenge but here is an attempt:

God's persistent and passionate pursuit to glorify himself through the institution of his rightful rule through grace and justice by defeating spiritual powers, restoring broken relationships with repentant people, resulting in Spirit-comforted communities of loyal, enthusiastic, willing worshipers-co-laborers that enjoy refreshing rest in a material world that impatiently awaits final restoration.

How could this be rewritten to be more memorable rather than attempting to capture content? What questions could be asked that will help highlight some of the overlooked concepts of the metanarrative, such as, the cosmic battle being fought between God and Satan? The issue of justice so prevalent in the OT?

How could art be used to communicate it? Drama?⁴ Song? Dance? Poetry? Proverbs?⁵ One of the most memorable student presentations in the Theology of Mission class⁶ was a girl who danced her understanding of the metanarrative of Scripture. There were few dry eyes when she finished.

4. *Guard the identity of each member of the Trinity by covering the sweep of Scripture.* Without such a sweep, the definition of the Trinity becomes skewed, impacting evangelism (see Figure 1). In that the American church tends to be fixated on the NT, the last 25 percent of the story, an understanding of God the Father provided in the OT, 75 percent of the story, is jeopardized. Nowhere in Scripture is the awe of God, which is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10) and the road to Christianity, more dominant than in the OT. Perhaps this is why Christianity in North America today is so nominal and anemic?

The power of the Holy Spirit is not only evident in Acts, but in the creation story as well. Moving to the NT, the bookends provide two very different pictures of Jesus Christ. The first bookend, the gospels, shows a loving, humble, human being that experienced birth, death, resurrection, and ascension (vulnerability). In evangelism from this perspective, Jesus becomes a lovable lamb.

The last bookend, Revelation, reveals a warrior-king ready to set things right through deadly and decisive warfare (invincibility). In evangelism from this perspective, Jesus becomes a righteous judge. In that this is usually seen as "politically incorrect", it is rarely included. Jesus represented by a Lamb takes over. But one bookend without the other depreciates the total person and message of Jesus Christ.

In the "Chronicles of Narnia" movie, Thomas the Fawn and Lucy understand the differences between the two bookends. When Thomas said to Lucy, "He's not a tame lion," she responded, "But he's good!" The Lion and Lamb must both be understood to have a correct picture of the infinite Jesus, even while startpoints may differ. To forego an inadequate understanding of any member of the Trinity, and the gospel, the whole will of God must be covered to provide sufficient foundation.

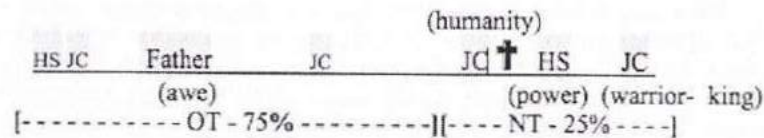


Figure 1: Capturing the Complete Trinity

5. *Avoid starting evangelism in the New Testament (NT).* The NT has incorrectly become the startpoint for much evangelism, the gospel of John being a favorite. But have you ever tried to read the first chapter of John while blocking out what you know about the Old Testament (OT)? As one female Chinese house church leader complained to me on the mainland, "We can't understand John." Nor can most westerners. The NT was never intended to introduce Jesus Christ to the world. Just as Jesus required a forerunner, so does the NT. The OT serves as this role.

The OT constitutes three-fourths of the Bible with the last quarter going to the NT. Don't wait until the movie is three-quarters of the way through before entering the theater and trying to discern who is doing what to whom and why. If you do, your interpretation of the movie may be quite different from that of the producer.

Post-Christians will require an adequate OT foundation for the gospel. It's time to relieve the NT of most-favored-nation (testament) status, and bestow it on the OT. To fail to do so may result in a faulty, flimsy, fickle, fragmented, or worst yet, a false understanding of the gospel. We must not forget that foundations are all too often forever. A firm foundation is required for a sustainable church-planting movement (McIlwain 1993). Two OT passages and 13 NT passages, as found in *Evangelism Explosion*, will no longer cut it.

6. *Covering the sweep of Scripture allows for all topics related to evangelism to be covered.* This includes *power encounters* and *signs and wonders*. While these were demonstrated in both testaments, they often go overlooked or are discounted in western evangelism. I deeply appreciate Chuck Kraft's differentiation between truth encounter, power encounter, and allegiance (commitment) encounter, as well as his challenge not to overlook any of the three in evangelism.

For those whose theology does not permit the use of power encounters or signs and wonders, some other means should be incorporated to address these areas of life because the gospel addresses the total person (Acts 4:12). This could be done through inviting in those who minister in these areas, or provide some other secular means to accomplish the same. We do all an injustice by overlooking power issues on the individual, family,

community and national levels, for we limit the width and depth of Christianity.

If Christianity is a way of life, then it must address *all* areas of life. Power encounters, signs and wonders, and the gospel message provide a one-two punch that addresses the entire person. People who think holistically, like the Ifugao and maybe 70 percent of the world, never see a bifurcation between the two. Nor should we in a postmodern world.

Some will want to prioritize one over the other as Donald McGavran did when liberals within his denomination hijacked the true meaning of evangelism. Winning people to Christ lost to social activities in both funding and personnel. To rescue and prioritize the true meaning of evangelism from social action he coined the term "church growth." That does mean that McGavran did not fight ruthless landlords or feed the hungry.

While I have never had to face the extreme situation that McGavran did, I prefer primacy over priority. With the Ifugao, we began with literacy and medical. We did not see this as inferior to proclaiming Christ, or a standalone ministry, or a means to gain opportunity to verbalize the gospel. Rather, it was a way to demonstrate God's love. Verbalization of the gospel eventually followed.

Others may want to start with the verbal and move to the visible. Context should determine startpoints, but both must eventually be implemented in that the Great Commission and the Great Commandment demand execution. It's not an either/or but rather a both/and (see Wright 2006 for an excellent discussion on this). Most postmoderns will prefer primacy to priority.

7. *Covering the sweep of Scripture challenges syncretism.* Francis Popovich (1998), an SIL Bible translator, believes that the lack of an Old Testament translation helped lead to syncretistic practices among the Maxakali of Brazil. The absence of stories about Joseph, Moses, David, Elijah, Elisha, and Daniel created an inadequate theology of God to challenge existing unbiblical practices. Scriptures taught through the OT not only provide a firm foundation for the gospel, they also establish expectations for deep-level worldview transformation because they teach the awe/fear of God (the beginning of wisdom) through those who obey and/or disobey his will. This approach will help challenge postmoderns to commit to deep-level worldview transformation.

8. *Join the growing numbers who evangelize by using the story-sweep of Scripture* (Steffen and Terry 2007). Here are some past and present examples, some of which incorporate the visual and verbal. The story sweep offers a credible rival story to that of the

postmodern's belief that no such metanarrative does or can exist.

Working out of one of the Hudson's Bay Company twenty-eight outposts, Fathers Francis Blanchet (1795-1883) and M. Demers of the archdiocese of Quebec began the first Catholic mission outpost north of the Colombia river in Cowlitz, Washington in 1839. During the construction of the Cowlitz Mission the Nesqually Indians asked Father Blanchet to be instructed in Christianity by a "real blackrobe."

Not knowing their culture or language, Blanchet made a ladder (long flat stick) in July of 1842 to teach the main truths of the Catholic faith. Some of the markings included a series of dots and bars (40 horizontal bars represented 40 centuries BC, 33 dots represented the life of Christ, 18 horizontal bars represented 18 centuries AD, 42 dots stood for 42 succeeding years, a tower, an ark, a mountain represented Mount Sinai, a temple, star of David, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, three crosses, the Twelve Apostles, Reverends Blanchet and Damers). Father Blanchet presented many of the "Catholic Ladders" to the chiefs among the Northwest Indians as gifts, assuring that the Christian story would spread throughout the 100,000 Indians living in the territory. The Catholic Ladder, much like the totem pole, told stories through symbols. Unlike the totem pole it could be transferred from place to place without great difficulty (Steffen and Terry 2007, 321).

In *Communicating the Gospel to Illiterates*, Hans Rudi Weber (1957) views the Bible as "God's picture book" which includes "great drama" and "great symbol." He therefore advocates "chalk and talk" evangelism that incorporates storytelling and simple drawings. Draw the picture, tell the story, and contrast it to traditional legends. Weber goes on to claim that the New Testament alone is insufficient for challenging traditional tribal myths or should be the final goal of Bible translators:

We can only confront mythological thinking with redemptive history if our proclamation comprises the whole of the Bible, the message of the Old and the New Testaments. It is therefore fundamentally wrong to tell illiterates only stories from the New Testament, as is so frequently done. It is wrong to translate only the New Testament, or portions of it, as is the general practice. (44)

In northwest China, several Christian workers have partnered together to create four circular drawings that cover Genesis through Revelation. Using local art design and colors the drawings speak forcefully. The first drawing was placed on a

calendar, decorating many households. Concentric circles moved from the inside (Trinity) to the seven days of creation to the central stories found in Genesis 1-11, providing an instant evangelistic tool.

What is the western postmodern iconography of "chalk and talk?" The Catholic ladder? The Chinese calendar?

The Bible Survey, OT Survey, and NT Survey courses can be taught in other ways besides a talking teacher. Ken Berding (2000), professor of biblical and theological studies at Talbot School of Theology, produced *Sing Thru the Bible*. Broken into seven parts, professional singers use around a half dozen different tunes as they sing through each of the 66 books in around 30 minutes. While a cohesive metanarrative that ties it all together seems absent, this is nevertheless a great attempt to learn all 66 books through song. How could this approach be applied to postmodern evangelism?

Vic Anderson, associate professor of Pastoral Ministries at Dallas Theological Seminary, with 15 years in Ethiopia with SIM, stories Genesis through Revelation in 30-40 minutes in chapels, small groups, and Sunday morning services. Music, lights, and paraphernalia add to the one-person presentation of "God's Plan for the Ages." This is a great evangelism tool for post-Christians of the west.

Australian David Fitch, in "Missional Misstep," recognizes the need to move beyond a fragmented story to "the biblical story of God's mission in and for the world, from Israel all the way to the Second Coming, in order to even know what it might mean to confess that 'Jesus is Lord'" (2008:38). The evangelism model Fitch proposes will lead the postmodern back and forth between God's salvation for the world and what he wants to do: forgive us and shape us.

James Choung (2008) has moved from four laws to four circles, calling it the "Big Story" www.youtube.com/user/jameschoung. Following the biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and mission, this model moves from "Designed for good" to "Damaged by evil" to "Restore for better" to "Sent together to heal." The circle diagrams serve as aids for postmoderns to better grasp the core message. It moves from a strong immediate decision-making presentation to a transformational journey; from a focus on afterlife to mission-life. This model is strong on contextualization. Readers will have to determine if there is sufficient 'critical' included in the contextualization (Hiebert 1987).

YFC promotes the use of three stories for postmodern evangelism (see video at www.3story.org/start/). They argue that there is one grand story, God's story, that we all fit into. God's story

intersects with my story and their story. The model is seen as a lifestyle, not a tool. It prefers authenticity over performance; it is non-formulaic, not three steps but three integrated stories; it's not a quick decision made after hearing a few quick propositions, but rather a journey you take together with your non-follower friend for as long as it takes.

9. *Make evangelism and follow-up two chapters of the same book, not two different books.* Contrast this to typical evangelism and follow-up model where evangelism is seen as one book followed by a totally different book for Christian maturation. For example, evangelism begins with the Four Spiritual Laws followed by *The Purpose Driven Life*. It is up to the young follower of Christ to connect the dots. Evangelism and follow-up should be seen as one continuous story, preserving the metanarrative of Scripture as it outlines and details follower expectations. In that many postmoderns view life as a journey, they will prefer to see how evangelism naturally ties to follow-up, creating a seamless story.

Ifugao Preference: People Over Propositions

Another observation discerned about the evangelism model I used was its preference for propositions over people. Boiling the long stories down to key propositions seemed economical and practical to this pragmatic North American (and those who designed the model). God is creator, love, sovereign, initiator. Satan is an imitator, deceiver, liar. In fact, the stories would eventually become periphery, needed only occasionally to refresh memory. After all, the Bible is a *big* book and teachers need to get to the bottom line as soon as possible.

But the Ifugao preferred to hear about humans interacting with other humans, spirits, and ancestors. They responded to the earthy, not ideas; to events, not abstract concepts. Most Ifugao would totally agree with Gabriel Fackre (1983):

Narrative speaks in the idiom of the earth. Reality meets us in the concretions of time, place, and people, not in analytical discourse or mystical rumination . . . Would a historical God speak to us in any other way than through history first and then in the 'history-like' accounts of biblical narrative, the extraordinary in the ordinary? (345-346)

Nor would they care how long it took to get there, or how many times it was repeated. Evidential apologetics did not impress the Ifugao; they preferred experiential apologetics.

Possible Implications for Western Evangelism

1. *Character evangelism offers postmoderns an alternative world-view through surprise identification.* Susan Shaw correctly points out that, "That truths of stories are made, not by logical persuasion, but by experiential engagement. Stories do not convince by argument; they surprise by identification" (1999:61, italics mine).

Prophets, priests, kings, rogues, Pharisees, tax collectors, adulterers, mothers, beggars, business people, farmers, slaves, shamans, teachers, leaders, offer possible identification points for postmoderns as they see their own lives personified. Bible characters offer them "alternative ways of knowing and relating" (Bradt 1997:149). And they do it in a way that respects the listener's ability to think things through and reach their own conclusions without outside pressure. What if such listeners could not stop talking about the captivating characters they meet from the pages of the Bible?

Jurgen Moltmann (1981) notes that a "sacred thread" interweaves its way "through the biblical testimonies" (95). Following are some OT Bible characters, "biblical testimonies," that could be used in evangelism to provide points of identification:

Adam—sin / fall / promise for humans and material world;
 Noah—hope for all creation;
 Abraham—justification by faith;
 Moses—law and grace;
 Job—God's sovereignty over Satan and circumstances;
 David—kingdom rule;
 Jonah—God initiates grace for the undeserving.

What NT characters would you add that connects to the lives of post-moderns?

2. *Develop character (earth up)⁷ theology for evangelism and follow-up.* Abstract systematic theology has helped produce abstract systematic evangelism models. Could the development of character theology move us beyond this to real life? To real people? To the concrete? To evidential apologetics? To earth up theology?

Concrete characters that personify abstract theological concepts should dominate the landscape of evangelism curriculum because they paint the face of God. The Bible becomes a friend to western postmoderns through the friends made between its covers, providing evidential apologetics opportunity to work.

What is true for evangelism should also be true for teaching followers of Christ. For example, Sarah and Abraham, Rachel and Jacob, Hanneh and Elkanah, Elizabeth and Zechariah, and the Shunammite woman address barrenness (see Wilson 2007,

22-28). A cast of characters for Christmas, Easter,⁷ Communion, giving, leadership development, followership development, and so forth should be commonplace in the mental libraries of Bible teachers and their listeners.

A quick aside. Some readers will wonder why teaching for followers of Christ is included in an article that focuses on evangelism. That's because evangelism and follow-up should be seen as integrated discipleship. The first part of the story prepares for the next part of the story because it's the ongoing story found in Scripture, God's Sacred Storybook. While it takes more time to lay a firm foundation for the gospel, it is not wasted time in that it is follow-up in advance.

Character theology moves from the concrete (Adam) to the abstract (sin), and back to the concrete (Adam), which should work well with postmoderns. Each character used, however, should make God the hero of the story. Charles Koller (1964) expresses it this way:

...the Bible was not given to reveal the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but to reveal the hand of God in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; not as a revelation of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, but as a revelation of the *Savior* of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. (51)

The Adam story, e.g., should take the listener beyond Adam and Genesis to the second Adam, the King of Kings.

3. *Determine the minimal number of Bible characters that should be covered in the evangelism model.* Of the 2,900 plus Bible characters, what is the *minimal number* that should become part of the western evangelism model? This does not mean that secular characters could not be used, but it does mean that Bible characters should not be overlooked or underplayed because they are important not only for evangelism but also Christian maturation. The evangelism models should come in multiple versions, from short to medium to long, which means the number of characters will vary in each.

4. *Determine the minimal number of Bible characters that new believers should know within the first year.* Of the 2,900 plus Bible characters, what is the *minimal number* that should become part of the western believer's "Character Collection" within the first year (Steffen 2005, 101)? Most postmoderns will prefer to study the lives of characters over propositions.

Ifugao Preference: Stories Over Propositions

Moving from "people over propositions" to "stories over propositions" is a short jump for most Ifugao as demonstrated in

the following story. As I began to teach publicly, I soon realized that the Ifugao found it difficult to follow my propositional presentations about God, Satan, sin, and so forth, and found it even more difficult to explain them to others. It did not take this discerning teacher long to figure out that plan B was necessary. A sustainable church-planting movement continued to seem a remote possibility.

So I added a number of stories from the Old Testament to illustrate theological propositions through concrete characters and events (e.g., creation, the fall, Cain and Abel, the flood, the escape from Egypt, the giving of the Ten Commandments, the Tabernacle, Elijah and Baal). Because only small portions of the Old Testament had been translated into the dialect at that time, I bought a number of children's storybooks in Manila and had them translated. The people soon wore them out, obviously enjoying them. From then on I integrated stories and propositions into all my evangelistic efforts. At least now the propositions had a human (earthly) foundation from which to emerge.

As a number of Ifugao began to follow Christ they wanted to tell friends of their newly-found Friend and Savior. As I listened to their witnessing I seldom heard the use of propositions. Moreover, I noticed the same was true as I listened to young believers tell other believers basic doctrines. So I decided to further revise my teaching approach. While I did not drop teaching foundational doctrines through propositions (just could not part with them), I now spent the majority of my time teaching New Testament letters from whole to part, beginning with the theme of the letter, and also showing their connection to previous Bible texts, all the while building on things already covered in evangelism.

Possible Implications for Western Evangelism

During my formal studies at a Bible Institute and later at a Bible college, the Bible became a textbook to me, albeit a Sacred Textbook. I learned to isolate propositions and gather supporting proof-texts. The more proof-texts, the more solid the case. Hermeneutic studies, with roots dug deep into modernity, promoted historical-grammatical methodologies.⁸ This approach offered control over the text through categories of convenience, effectively minimizing the mystery and messy nature of narrative (to some) while resulting in a fragmented understanding of Scripture. I ended up with lots of clothes (doctrines), but no clothesline (metanarrative).

The perceptions of the Bible are numerous. Some see the Bible as a *Sacred Encyclopedia*, full of facts. Others see the Bible as a

Sacred Self-Help book that can meet whatever one's emotional need. Still others see it as a *Sacred Private Devotional* for inspiration and encouragement or a *Sacred Rule Book* that demands certain behavior. All however, result in a fragmented understanding of the message of Scripture.

There is another option that incorporates all of the above. I finally realized, through the help of the Ifugao, that if the Bible is seen as a *Sacred Storybook*, the integration of facts, imagination, and emotions, and everything else found in the other ways Scripture is perceived, becomes possible. More importantly, it makes understanding the sweep of Scripture not only natural, but necessary. And the mystery found in narrative, not only survives, but thrives, pulling its readers in through surprised identification! The individual clothes now have a proper place on the clothesline.

1. *Perceive the Bible as a Sacred Storybook.* Thomas Boomer-shine (1991) perceptively points out that,

The Church now tends to think of the gospel as a set of abstract ideas based on the study of the canonical documents but divorced from story. The gospel has lost its original character as a living storytelling tradition of messengers who told the good news of the victory of Jesus. (17)

I too had divorced the gospel from story. Who had time for all those OT stories? I never had a deep appreciation for poetry, especially when one could focus on the heart of theology, the Epistles.

For some reason I began thinking of the multiple genres within Scripture, and which predominates. To try to get some percentages I identified three major genres, recognizing that numerous variants exist. If there were only three, what percentage of the Bible is given to propositions? To narrative? To poetry? The answers to these questions challenged my preference for propositions. Coming in at only around 10%, it was dead last! Poetry beat it at 25-35% while narrative dominated with some 55-65% (Steffen 2005b, 36).⁹ Eugene Peterson (1997) correctly posits that, "The Holy Spirit's literary genre of choice is story" (3). And so is the postmoderns.

2. *Perceive the gospel as a story rather than a set of propositions.* What would happen in evangelism for postmoderns if we would begin to think of the gospel as a story rather than a set of laws or propositions? How would the presentation differ if we asked these questions?

- Who is the major protagonist? Antagonist?

- What is the plot of the cosmic drama (always driven by conflict)?
- How is the plot resolved?
- What are the choices and consequences?

Such a change would mean that,

We no longer have to be God's lawyers, proving to people the truth of the gospel. We can be bold witnesses to what we have experienced and know. The gospel we bring is not abstract propositional truth; it is a living relationship with Jesus the Christ that involves our whole being: cognitive, affective, and moral. We no longer come with a sense of arrogance and superiority, as those who have found the whole truth. We invite people to follow Christ and the church and to let him transform their cultures. (Hiebert 2008, 22)

We must never forget that "Jesus' birth came in the midst of a story with a beginning, a problem, and a lengthy history....To preach the gospel and to believe the gospel is to offer and to enter a story" (McKnight 2008:38). Postmoderns prefer to hear stories and chose the ones they wish to enter.

3. *Identify the bridges and barriers to evangelism.* One of the easiest and most helpful ways I found to do this is to take each component of the gospel: God, Satan, sin, gift-giving, substitution, forgiveness, heaven, hell, and so forth, and compare the Ifugao understanding of each with that of the Bible. Some will provide bridges while others will prove to be barriers. Still others will prove both. For example, God (Meknengan) created everything but is distant and should an Ifugao sin, which is a big "should," Meknengan causes them to do so. Major sins, such as anger, stinginess, laziness, are against others, not Meknengan. They have no equivalent for Satan in their spirit world. How do postmoderns define God? Satan? Sin? Substitution? Heaven and hell? Other components? Taking time to do this exercise will make evangelism much more focused for postmoderns, but few will do this because it does take some time and can be expensive.

4. *Determine the minimal number of Bible stories that should be covered in the evangelism model.* Of the approximately 550 Bible stories, which could be broken down into hundreds of sub-stories, what is the minimal number of Bible stories that should be incorporated into the western evangelism model?

5. *Determine the minimal number of Bible stories that new believers should know within the first year.* Of the approximately 550 Bible stories, what is the minimal number of Bible stories that should comprise the new western believer's "Story Collection?"

Has a "Who's Who List" for each book and letter of the Bible been started?"

Ifugao Preference: Eventline Over Timeline

After perusing a back translation of the first Ifugao evangelism curriculum ready for publication, Trevor McIlwain, just returning from a year of home assignment in Australia, unceremoniously informed me that there was a much better way to do it than this story-proposition approach. Not a little shocked, I asked him what he meant. In the next hour, McIlwain introduced me to what he had been developing over a number of years among the Palawanos living in Palawan, Philippines. It would later be called Chronological Bible Teaching (CBT) (McIlwain 1987; 1993). Within two decades it would be used around the world (sometimes contextualized, all too often transplanted) by numerous agencies in both urban and rural contexts (see Hesselgrave 1994). CBT emphasized the need for

...the panoramic story of God to convey a comprehensive Christianity built on a strong Old Testament foundation...God's message for long-term, cross-cultural church planting is best understood when told as it was delivered, i.e., a progressive, unfolding, panoramic story. (Steffen and Terry 2007, 315)

This multi-phased model covers Genesis through Revelation¹⁰ in a relatively short time, with the first phase, Genesis through the ascension, designed primarily for evangelism.

Each lesson was followed by a series of questions to ascertain feedback. Some of the questions were designed to stimulate thinking, e.g., What do you think God will do now? The majority of the questions were designed to illicit specific lesson content.

By now I was ready to set aside propositional evangelism and go straight story. I based the story selection for evangelism (Phase 1) on Bible stories that highlighted issues pertaining to salvation, and when possible, tied to Ifugao cultural themes (Steffen 1997b, 260, 263). While shorter than McIlwain's 68 lessons (42 Old Testament (OT) and 26 New Testament (NT)), the Ifugao evangelism phase included 52 lessons, 28 OT stories plus 24 from the NT, which would take several months to get through. Review questions were modified so that answers would focus more on themes covered in the stories rather than minutia.

One hundred and five, two-dimensional pictures accompanied the stories. The pictures (symbolic images) reminded teachers and listeners not only of story content, but also sequence. A

pedagogical compromise evolved—the metanarrative served as a straight line setting direction from start to finish while the individual Bible stories spiraled around the metanarrative, offering choices and consequences through concrete characters as it advanced towards a vaguely telegraphed conclusion (mystery).

Possible Implications for Western Evangelism

1. *Take the time to transform evangelism models rather than transplant them.* Once Phase 1 was taught, one significant finding rose to the surface. The Ifugao preferred "seeing-things-together" (themes) rather than "one-thing-after-another" (chronology). Historicity trumped chronology, e.g., Gumangan's recommendation for an evangelism startpoint was, the flood (where Ifugao history begins as they have no creation story), backtrack through the genealogies to Adam (which lends credibility to Ifugao), and then cover the creation story. The Ifugao favored an eventline over a timeline. This, of course, challenged CBT with over 50 lessons in the evangelism phase. It also raised a central question, Did God present his Word in chronological fashion or through thematic events, or some combination of the two?

One thing that helped to add the synchronic perspective to the diachronic was the metanarrative presented in the first lesson (whole to part). The big story would become the rival narrative that would eventually challenge deep-level worldview allegiances. Each single story found its sequence and meaning in the big story. In relation to sequence, I learned what Jacob Loewen (1964) had discovered decades earlier, "...sequence was as important as the truths contained in the stories" (373). Startpoints matter, and they should vary according to the postmodern context.

2. *Determine the minimal number of images to include in the evangelism model.* Pictures (symbolic images) have been used through time to aid understanding of the Bible stories. From European cathedral art that served the unlettered as "Bibles in stone and glass" to contemporary art that serves the post-literates today, multiple images should play a significant role in communicating the gospel.

3. *Determine the minimal number of Bible symbols that new believers should know within the first year.* In Act 7, Stephen mentions 11 characters (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Hamor's sons, Shechem, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Jesus) and two symbols (tabernacle and temple) as he surveys the history of Israel. The author of Heb 11 mentions 9 characters (Abel, Cain, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, Jesus Christ)

and 10 symbols (offerings, ark, promised land, tents, city, strangers, Passover, Red Sea, dry land, wanderings) when he does the same. A "Symbol Collection" is as necessary as a "Character Collection" in that one informs the other (Steffen 1998). Postmoderns are into symbols, including tattoos.

Ifugao Preference: Adequate Sort Out Time for Decision-Making

Since the Ifugao make decisions through consensus, whether on the family level or the community level, it takes time. The pros and cons of any idea must be discussed and argued until a consensus is reached. All can participate in the process, males, females, young, old, and in between.

On the family level, once children reach the age of 10-12 they no longer sleep in their parent's one room home, but sleep with their peers of the same sex in an empty house in the village. Decision-making now includes not only the family, but also their peer group. Most Ifugao would think it highly ludicrous to make a decision by oneself.

After hearing about Christianity for a year Gumangan decided it was time to follow Christ and turn his back on the sacrificial system. He discussed the possibilities of baptism with church leaders but there would be no baptism for over a year. He did not want to be baptized until Lucia, his wife, would do it with him. That eventually happened and they were baptized as a couple, demonstrating solidarity to the extended family and the community.

It should also be noted that animists attempt to control the ancestors and/or the spirits through participation in various rituals and ceremonies. Having them pray a certain prayer for salvation usually has a very different meaning than that understood by the evangelist. The evangelist thinks one more added to the Kingdom; the person praying thinks that he or she has appeased God, at least for the present.

In a culture of courtesy, or shame-oriented societies, asking people to raise their hands if they would like to receive Christ will usually receive a hundred percent positive response. But once again, the response for doing so probably differs greatly between the person who made the request and those who responded to the request. Shame cultures do not like to shame their guests.

Another ritual used by westerners is an invitation to walk the isle, first introduced by Charles Finney (1792-1875) under the rubric of the "anxious bench." Steve Saint shows where this can lead.

A friend of mine opened my eyes to the reality of this

when he described what happens in the area where he works in Mexico. 'Short-term mission trips from the U.S. have been coming here for years,' he pointed out, 'and the result have been amazing! Entire neighborhoods have gone forward to accept Christ at evangelistic events.' There is obviously nothing wrong with that, but my friend continued, "one day I happened to be with several of the local people when they had a special meeting to decide who would go forward at the next foreign missionary's altar call. I couldn't believe my ears! They wanted the gifts (often a bag with pencils and Bible literature) and wanted the missionaries to come back again. I asked one of the leaders how many times he had gone forward to receive Christ, and he said, 'About a dozen times.' Then he added, 'If we all go up, the missionaries won't believe it. We have learned that half or two-thirds is a good number to keep them coming back.' (2001:43-44)

Possible Implications for Western Evangelism

1. *Allow adequate time for decision-making.* Most contemporary evangelism models ask for an immediate, personal decision following the presentation. But moving from one religion, whether secularism, Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity to another is not something most people take lightly or do in a hurry. They must not only be able to explain the move to themselves, but also to their family and friends, particularly in relational-oriented societies.

As noted in the YFC 3-Story model above, it should take as long as it takes, and the witness is with the individual until it happens, and continues the relationship after it happens. Post-moderns may prefer to come to Christ with their friends as well.

2. *Think of decision-making as a process, point, process.* The journey on the road to Christianity, spurred by the Holy Spirit, not only can take time (process), there will also be a time when one crosses the line (point) from the Kingdom of Satan and enters the Kingdom of God. That crossing begins a new, but interconnected, lifelong journey (process) (Col 2:6).

Drawing from mathematical theory, Paul Hiebert (1978) popularized "bounded sets" and "centered sets" in relation to conversion. Some users of the model, however, seem to think that no boundaries actually exist within the centered set. I agree with Thomas Oden when he claims that,

There is a fantasy abroad that the Christian community

can have a center without a circumference. Since we gather around Jesus, it is argued, it is our center, not our boundaries, that matter. But this is the persistent illusion of compulsive hypertolerance. A community with no boundaries can neither have a center nor be a community. (1996:13)

We should not fear the necessity of identifying and communicating the factual core of the gospel (see Abraham 1989:110-111; Steffen 1997a:133-147). These will include lamb facts (contextualization) and lion facts (criticism). Some will provide bridges for understanding the gospel while others will create barriers, but both are necessary to maintain message purity. These core facts concerning the gospel should then be packaged in Bible (and secular) stories so that God's story connects to their story.

3. *Look for evidence of faith through reordered beliefs and behaviors.* Only God knows the heart, and hence if a person has truly exchanged the King of Kings for inferior kings. We can only observe what the individual says and does (James 2:14). Does the individual challenge former beliefs? Does the individual reorder relationships and resources? This approach puts the onus on cross-based transformation rather than some evangelistic ritual such as praying a certain prayer, raising a hand, or walking an aisle. What will such reordering look like for a postmodern?

4. *Analyze your postmodern evangelism model for comprehensiveness and effectiveness* (Steffen 2005b:116-117). Comprehensiveness considers how much of the Bible is covered, if God's potential to reign includes power encounters as well as truth encounters. It also evaluates the holism of the model, and if it moves towards follow-up and incorporation seamlessly.

Effectiveness considers the depth and duration of relationships gained by the evangelist, and how contextual the presentation. It also reviews emphasis, whether guilt oriented or shame oriented, and if decision-making follows community expectations.

Points, 10 being highest, could be assigned for all categories in both the Comprehensiveness (60 point potential) and Effectiveness (60 point potential) categories. From the total points earned, evangelists can determine how well their evangelistic model works among postmoderns, and identify areas of weakness to improve. While subjective, it improves the "spray and pray" method.

Message: Comprehensiveness

Scripture	Power Encounter	Truth Encounter	Felt Needs	Incorporation	Follow-up
OT NT	<i>Confronts spirit world</i> God rules: miracles, healings, exorcisms, weather, freedom from fear, death, etc.	Confronts ideas & activities Key message Components articulated Evangelism establishes foundation for follow-up	Internal: physical, psychological, spiritual, & mental External: political, economical, religious, etc.	Private activities Public activities Expectations delineated	Private activities Public activities Expectations delineated

Method: Effectiveness

Relationships	Style	Technology	Pedagogy	Orientation	Decision-making
Duration Depth Works through gate keepers	<i>Indigenous</i> terms, art, illustrations, tunes, musical instruments, etc.	Indigenous delivery systems: Videos, radio, chalk, cassettes, DVD PowerPoint etc.	Indigenous learning styles for formal, nonformal, & informal settings.	Guilt Shame	Individual Corporate Who can make which decisions? Children? Youth? Adults? Speed: Quick moderate slow

Message _____
Method _____
TOTAL _____

Summary

This article has provided opportunity for international missiology to meet domestic missiology. While I do not like these separatistic terms, it is time for the two to come out of their re-

spective silos and interact with each other. Both will be the wiser from the outings, and less wheels will be reinvented, which means greater impact for the Kingdom of God at home and abroad, monoculturally and crossculturally.

Like radio commentator Paul Harvey, 21st century Christian workers must provide postmodern listeners the "Rest of the Story" so that propositions and the individual Bible stories and characters find their broader meaning in the metanarrative of Sacred Storybook. Evidential apologetics has its place to surprise through identification, and provide a credible rival story to skeptics who deny the possibility that one superior story can exist.

But we must go further. The rest of the story must also include symbols in that symbol-based stories provide the foundation of worldview and identity, not only of one's culture, but also of one's faith. But more importantly, postmoderns require in-depth, long-term relationships—for as long as takes. When relationships, deeds, and the gospel story intersect, postmoderns take notice.

I will be forever grateful to the Ifugao for reintroducing me to the power of story told and sung. Their strength in this area assured that the stars would remain brilliant, the sun would shine bright, the seas would remain strong, and that the wind would remain warm, making a church-planting movement not only plausible, but possible.

But this sustainable church-planting movement has gone even further—proving instructive for western postmodern evangelism, and follow-up. May the stars remain brilliant, the sun shine brightly, the seas remain strong, and the wind remain warm for this audience as well.

Writer

Tom Steffen: Professor of Intercultural Studies, Biola University.

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NOTES:

1. The Antipolo / Amduntug Ifugao, numbering around 3500, make their home in the Kiangan municipality of Ifugao Province, Central Luzon, Philippines. The Antipolo Ifugao speak the Keley-i Kallahan dialect while the Amduntug Ifugao speak Yattuka, both of which are

included in Kallahan, a subfamily of Ifugao, a branch of the Malay-polynesian languages (McFarland 1980:76).

2. The first stanza reads: Hi gayun a-ammed mi ey dingel yu is-tolyah

My respected friends, listen to my story
mi meippanggep nan Meknengan e nanlintun emin.
About God, who created everything.

3. Interestingly, Theology of Mission is one of the few (only?) classes at Biola that covers the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. This 400 level course provides students closing out their required 30 semester units of Bible an opportunity to see how it all fits together. To help the students capture the sweep of Scripture, the first assignment asks them to write the theme of the Bible in a couple of sentences. After getting over the initial shock of trying to distill 66 books into a few sentences, they start their journey. Each weekly assignment provides opportunity to adjust the theme. At the end of the semester each student submits his or her first and final attempts which is then posted on Blackboard.

4. See Kevin Vanhooser's *The Drama of Doctrine*, 2005.

5. For an excellent example of the contextualization of local proverbs see Len Bartlotti 2008.

6. In *Jesus According to Scripture*, 2002, Darrell Bock of Dallas Theological Seminary, notes that Matthew, Mark, and Luke begin the story of Jesus from the earth before moving to heaven. This "earth up" model is instructive for evangelism. John, on the other hand, begins in heaven before moving to earth, demonstrating that multiple startpoints may be necessary. But either way, we must make Jesus earthy so that people can identify with his love and justice.

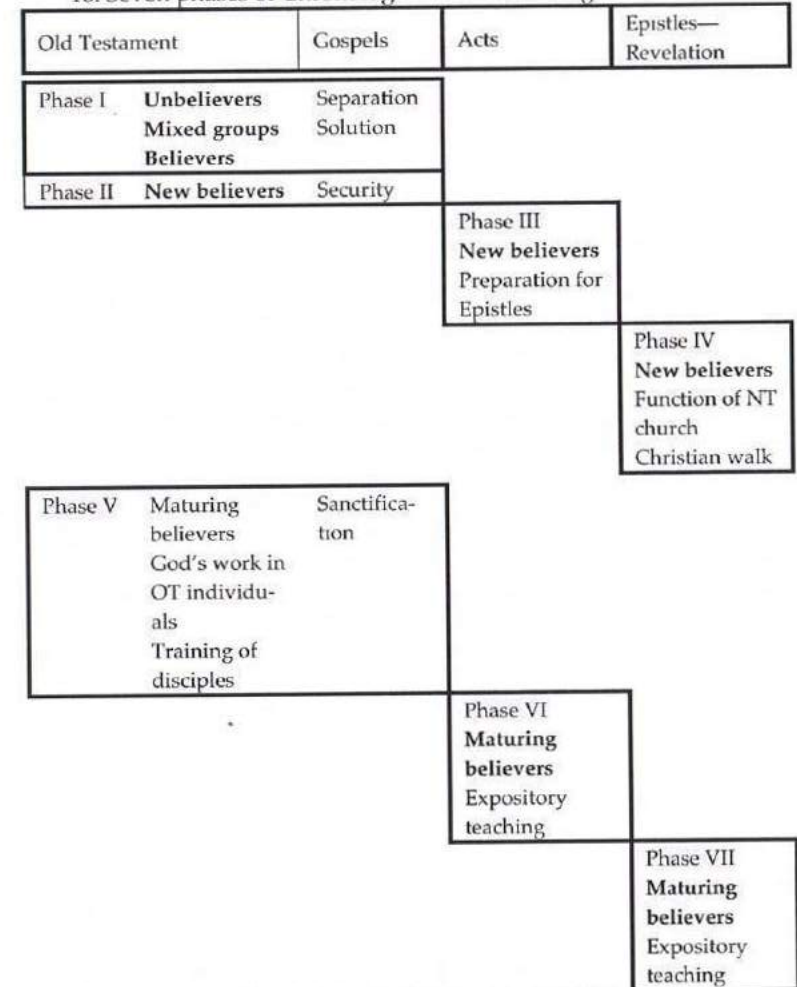
7. I was so disappointed with the Easter service this year as many unsaved visitors who show up in church only a few times a year heard propositions about Jesus' resurrection rather than powerful story itself. What did they remember when they walked out of the building?

8. Bernard Ramm (1954) captures the thinking of that era: "Training in logic and science forms excellent background for exegesis" (153). This leads automatically to the next step, "Systematic teaching of Scripture is the Scriptures final intention" (155). And I would add, a systematic evangelism schema.

9. While these figures are approximate, it can be stated categorically that the narrative genre reigns in God's Sacred Storybook. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart (1981) state it this way: "The Bible contains more of the type of literature called 'narrative' than it does of any other literary type. For example, over 40 percent of the Old Testament is narrative. Since the Old Testament itself constitutes three-quarters of the bulk of the Bible, it is not surprising that the single most common type of literature in the entire Bible is narrative" (78). Millard Erickson (1997) gives

these percentages, "Indeed if one does a comparative analysis of the content of the Bible, the New Testament books that seem to deal most explicitly with narrative constitute only 56 to 62 percent of the content, depending upon whether one treats Revelation as narrative. In the Old Testament, the narrative books (Genesis-Job) constitute 57 percent of the material. It can, of course, be argued that the prophetic books contain considerable narrative, which they surely do, or even that they represent interpretation of the narrative and that the narrative is an interpreted narrative" (58).

10. Seven phases of Chronological Bible Teaching:



(Source: Adapted from McIlwain, 1981:12a-12c, 1987:131)

Book Reviews

The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church

Reviewed by Kenneth E. Bickel

Hirsch, Alan. The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church. Brazos Press, 2006. ISBN 10:1-58743-164-5. 295pp.

Alan Hirsch asserts that "there are primal forces that lie latent in every Jesus Community and in every true believer," forces that have "energized history's most outstanding Jesus movements...." (15) This belief impels him to call for those who yearn to be part of an outstanding Jesus movement to recognize that the contemporary model of Christianity (especially in western societies) faces a daunting challenge. The challenge exists because of "the dramatic changes in worldview that have been taking place in general culture over the last 50 years or so." (16)

The author firmly believes that these dramatic changes ought to drive missional Christians to the conclusion that institutionalized churches (including those that are dedicated to the attractional model of evangelism) will not do well in penetrating the hostile culture for Christ in a meaningful way. He joins a chorus of other authors (Kimball and Kinnaman to name two) by claiming that in the post-Christian west, the non-Christian population, generally speaking, holds a favorable interest in God, spirituality, Jesus, and prayer but reports "a high degree of alienation" toward the church. (34)

Hirsch would describe the institutional church as an entity that arose early in the 4th century after Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. He favorably quotes Rodney Stark (a respected sociologist of religion) who maintains that this so-called triumph of Christianity destroyed its most attractive and dynamic aspects, turning a high-intensity, grassroots movement into an arrogant institution controlled by an elite body of self-serving men. (60) On page 64 of the book, Hirsch provides a table showing the differences

between the Christian movement prior to 313 AD and the Christendom model following that date. In the table he describes the institutional church as characterized by an importance given to buildings; a leadership that is professional in nature; authority that is hierarchical and top-down; and a leadership that operates primarily in the pastor-teacher mode.

Hirsch does not dismiss the institutional church completely but believes that an organization like he describes is not well suited to penetrate a culture such as exists in western societies of the 21st century. His appeal is that we re-discover "the forgotten ways," by which he speaks of the Apostolic Genius along with the elements of this Apostolic Genius, which he collectively refers to as mDNA (short for *missional* DNA). He describes the Apostolic Genius as, "that life force that pulsed through the New Testament church and in other expressions of apostolic Jesus movements throughout history." (77) He delineates the components of mDNA as: (1) disciple making; (2) missional-incarnational impulse; (3) apostolic environment; (4) organic systems; and (5) *communitas*, not community. All of these components form a constellation that surround the central theology of this kind of movement, namely, "Jesus is Lord". The components not only link vitally to that central theology but each sheds light on the others. (78-79)

Hirsch devotes the next six chapters of the book (which, along with the conclusion and a glossary of key terms, completes the book) to this central theology and the 5 essential components of mDNA. A very brief representation of these 6 themes follows:

- "Jesus is Lord" expresses a Christocentric monotheism and a distillation of the essential message to be preached. Hirsch asserts that this simple Christology is essential for a Jesus movement that will spread rapidly and organically. He says: "Freed from the philosophical density of the academy and from dependence on the professional cleric, the gospel becomes profoundly 'sneezable.'" He goes on to explain: "We know from the study of ideas that they spread in patterns very similar to that of viral epidemics. We also know that in order to really take hold and become an 'epidemic,' they have to be easily transferred." (86)

It would be incomplete to claim that this theology is thus spotlighted simply for the sake of rapid transmission. It is intended as well to carry the very understandable message that Christians are His servants and "the task of our lives is to bring *every* aspect of our lives, communal and individual, under this One God...." (90,

emphasis his) That emphasizes the falseness of any separation professing Christians establish between the sacred and the secular. That Jesus is Lord of all proclaims a non-dualistic spirituality. (96)

- The author asserts that the ability to generate authentic followers of Jesus (i.e. disciple-making, his first essential component of mDNA) is the "single most crucial factor that will in the end determine the quality of the whole...." (102) He also contends that, as a whole, Christianity has "lowered the bar for participation in the Christian community to the lowest common denominator" (104) with its emphasis to welcome as many seekers as possible. By contrast, he favorably quotes Neil Cole of Church Multiplication Associates (which Hirsch cites often as a good example of a movement which embodies mDNA): "We want to lower the bar of how church is done and raise the bar of what it means to be a disciple." (104)

The author would contend that choosing to be involved in a movement dedicated to living out mDNA is tantamount to choosing to be a serious follower of Jesus Christ. People who seek to be more or less passive (or at least comfortable) Christians will not desire to live with the missional responsibilities expected by the culture of such a movement. Add to those responsibilities a healthy instruction in biblical truth and about the disciplines that lead to personal growth, and genuine disciples will surely be the result.

- The second essential component of mDNA is a missional-incarnational impulse. This combination of words is intended to describe "the practical outworking of the mission of God (the *mission Dei*) and the Incarnation." (128, emphasis is his) It refers to a commitment "to seed and embed the gospel in different groups' cultures and societies and to thus sow the seeds of rapid multiplication." It is a *sending* model of being missional, not an *attractional* one.

Hirsch asserts that the attractional model is generally unable to reach lost people beyond any significant cultural barriers (131), whereas the spontaneous energy of a mDNA movement is better equipped to do that. This would be so because there is less institutional centrality with a movement not attached to a building, or holding to a commitment to draw large groups together for common experiences in that building. It is also be-

cause the incarnational aspect of this impulse would result in greater degrees of proximity and presence related to the people among whom the mini-church's (reviewer's label) of the movement are seeking to reach. (133-134)

- The third essential component of mDNA describes an apostolic environment. This is the term Hirsch assigns to the "powerful form of catalytic influence that weaves its way through the seemingly chaotic network of churches and believers" that describes a mDNA movement. (150) He is quick to assert that such an environment will not occur apart from "a certain category of leadership, namely, that of the apostolic person." (151) He further clarifies his belief that such leadership "is going to take more than the traditional pastor-teacher mode of leadership..." (153) and that a mDNA movement will have "all the hallmarks of an emergent people movement with little or no centralized structures, no 'ordained' or professional ministry class, and on official 'church' buildings."

Thus, the apostolic environment must have leadership that is gifted in and passionate about evangelism, and must be comfortable with casting off the restraints of the typical institutionalized local church. Hirsch suggests that there are three primary functions of apostolic ministry: (1) to embed mDNA through pioneering new ground for the gospel and the church (i.e., to advance the gospel into new missional contexts while embedding mDNA into the new churches that emerge in those places); (2) to guard mDNA through the application and integration of apostolic theology (i.e., assuming the responsibility of ensuring that the churches remain true to the gospel and its ethos); and (3) to create the environment in which the other ministries emerge (i.e., any ministries started by the movement flow out of the apostolic energy). (154-158)

- The fourth essential component of mDNA addresses the need for organic systems. Hirsch explains that a mDNA movement must organize itself "as a living organism that reflects more how God has structured life itself...;" one where "the inner structures and systems...enable metabolic growth (growth that takes place exponentially and organically)." (180) He wisely acknowledges that "all living systems require some form of structure in order to maintain and perpetuate their existence," but insists that they must be simple, reproducible and internal

rather than external. (186)

To accomplish this, the movement must form itself around a network structure. (196) He favorably draws from Dee Hock in presenting keys to developing networked organization. These keys provide a more concrete description of what is meant by an organic system:

- The organization must be adaptable and responsive to changing conditions while preserving overall cohesion and unity of purpose.
 - The trick is to find the delicate balance that allows the system to avoid turf fights and backstabbing on the one hand, and authoritarian micromanagement on the other.
 - The organization must cultivate equity, autonomy, and individual opportunity.
 - The organization's governing structure must distribute power and function to the lowest level possible.
 - The governing structure must not be a chain of command, but rather a framework for dialogue, deliberation, and coordination among equals. (203)
- The last essential component of mDNA represents a call for *communitas*, not community. To gain a full understanding of *communitas* Hirsch begins by introducing and defining another term, *liminality*. He explains that *liminality* "applies to that situation where people find themselves in an in-between, marginal state in relation to the surrounding society, a place that could involve significant danger and disorientation, but not necessarily so." (220) Then, *communitas* "describes that unique experience of *togetherness* that only really happens among a group of people inspired by the vision of a better world who actually attempt to do something about it." (221)

Thus, when a group of Christians are inspired to stretch outside their comfort zones for the cause of taking Christ to a world that is not seeking Him, there is disequilibrium created by their efforts. When the group experiences that disequilibrium and willingly continues in it because of their vision and commitment to mission, they will experience a closer bonding and mutual support than what would be realized by mere community. Community represents "the settled experience of a group of people that exists for its own benefit and for the 'insiders'." *Communitas* represents "the journey of a

group of people that find each other only in a common pursuit of a vision and of a mission that lies beyond itself." (236) When an incarnational church engages in missional effort, *communitas* will be the result.

Reviewer's Observations

- Hirsch demonstrates a superb concern for a coming (and already here) generation of people who, even if they have favorable views toward Jesus Christ, are not impressed with the Christian church. His concern for lost people, and especially for those people who might lie significantly outside of many local church's cultural spectrums, is admirable and compelling.
- Readers will appreciate Hirsch's commitment to keeping "Jesus is Lord" (but see my fear related to this below) at the heart of any endeavor that would seek to demonstrate mDNA. Likewise, his emphasis on disciple-making as the single most crucial factor that will in the end determine the quality of the whole is commendable. Further, his call for a missional-incarnation impulse stands on good theological ground and expresses the kind of commitment that churches should exude. His concept—*communitas*, not community—is appealing and engaging.
- Hirsch's dissatisfaction with the institutionalization of the church is fair since that phenomenon often works against missionality and flexibility. Where power in the church is vested simply by institutional position and is not gained by godly influence, lethargy toward the unsaved is probable.
- I personally agree with Hirsch's observations that the typical church of western society is too caught up in building projects. I suspect that contemporary, outside-the-box thinking could result in more funds being devoted to actual ministry than to the creation of splendid edifices.
- While paying lip-service to the need for some institutional structure within churches and also the need for established churches to exist, it seems that the true essence of his passion is that the great majority of typically organized churches of today are ineffective and should be replaced with movements that better reflect fit the model he is proposing. I suspect that his analysis of the present cultural scene in western societies is too narrow and does not take into consideration what the scene might

look like in 20 years.

- Hirsch's assertions and implications that the "forgotten ways" of the first 3 centuries of Christianity represent God's timeless methodology for how the church should expand its influence stands on weak revelatory ground. What has been described in the New Testament and in church history regarding the spread of Christianity during that time should stir us and please us, but should not be construed as establishing a prescribed methodology for all cultures and all eras.
- Likewise, his pointing to the spread of Christianity via house churches in China and the dynamic growth of the Methodist movement in Great Britain as examples that should define how we do church today in our own locations ignores too many variables that constituted the shaping of the special environments where those movements occurred. To present these extraordinary movements that took place in specific contexts as norms for how Christianity should spread in 21st century western societies is not compelling. Something special that is described does not constitute an adequate model to be prescribed universally.
- With some of the provided examples of an effective mDNA movement, Hirsch's references to multiplied churches are, in my estimation, not references to churches but to something like discipleship groups. I suspect that these groups don't regularly try to carry through with the full range of responsibilities that can be identified in the New Testament. These discipleship groups are undoubtedly attractive to some, but the limited range of age-graded ministries they can provide would not be attractive to many, and with good reason.
- These small organic groups might well have initial energy, but I suspect that he idealizes the long-term energetic, missional participation of those involved with the group, especially with no practical accountability to others outside of the group. I have personally received testimony of such reality from individuals who were seeking to be objective and fair about their experience with a cell-based model of church.
- Likewise, the small organic groups that arise from a mDNA movement might thrive for a time, but the flexible nature of their structures (or lack of structure) does not bode well for the endurance of the group. To be sure, with an organic movement the endurance of a group

might not be a high value, but I think consistency of a religious experience is important within an age of frenetic change, especially when that group carries the name "church".

- I find myself a bit concerned about having a central theology stated as briefly as "Jesus in Lord". While I don't believe that an extensive systematic theology is appropriate for an organic movement, I am a bit wary of uniting around that simple statement. My most concrete reason for that wariness is because I have personally had both Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses tell me that they are in full agreement with that sentiment. I find those experiences telling.
- One small but I think meaningful observation: I doubt that those advocating an organic movement of church life have grappled adequately with all the pitfalls of a highly litigious society.
- Finally, I would like to believe that a healthy organized church, under the right leadership, could incorporate enough of the ideals expressed in *The Forgotten Ways* to sponsor a missional movement that would benefit from the financial stability, leadership and accountability of a more enduring central organization.

All that being said, I feel I have been enriched by many of the concepts and exhortations found in this book. I would recommend this book for those who wish to grapple seriously with the full range of the responsibilities a local church should assume. I believe that such grappling would yield the most fruit when carried out in a context where a group of diverse but open-minded individuals could discuss Hirsch's ideas at length. His thoughts are too good to be ignored but innovative church strategy is too important to be settled quickly.

The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating The Missional Church

Reviewed By Darren Cronshaw

Hirsch, Alan. The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating The Missional Church. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006

The Forgotten Ways explores what Alan Hirsch maintains are the basic elements of what makes a missional movement. He starts with an analysis of the early church and the church in China—groups without legality, buildings, professional leadership, seeker-sensitive services or much in the way of Scripture—and asks how did they foster their phenomenal growth? The answer, he says, lies not in anything that can be packaged as a new program. Rather it stems from what he terms Apostolic Genius which is latent within the people of God and made up of six inter-relating elements of missional-DNA (mDNA):

1. Jesus is Lord—The early church and believers in China distilled the message down to this simple confession (or sneezable virus) that recognized the claims of the one God over all of life. To counter the sacred/secular dichotomy, Hirsch contends: 'Following the impulses of biblical monotheism rather than setting up some sacred spaces, our task is to make all aspects and dimensions of life sacred—family, work, play, conflict, etc.—and not to limit the presence of God to spooky religious zones' (p.95).
2. Disciple Making—Contrary to consumeristic patterns of faith, Hirsch reminds us that the lifelong task of a disciple is becoming like Jesus and embodying his message (like little Jesus in our communities). Rather than expecting to think our way into new ways of acting as if we only need to know the right things, Hirsch calls believers to action and obedience, quoting, among others, TS

- Eliot: The greatest proof of Christianity for others is not how far a man can logically analyze his reasons for believing, but how far in practice he will stake his life on his belief (p.101).
3. Missional-Incarnational Impulse—Rather than relying on an evangelistic-attractational mode to bring people into church, the missional-incarnational impulse seeks to seed and embed the gospel in the midst of cultures. This takes discipline to practice what he explores as presence, proximity, powerlessness and proclamation. Grassroots groups such as Upstream Communities in Perth and Third Place Communities in Hobart are test cases of communities of Jesus followers seeking to live life and do church in ways consistent with the rhythms and needs of their local communities.
 4. Apostolic Environment—Hirsch describes apostolic leaders as custodians of the mDNA. They are the servant-inspirers who cultivate an environment for other leaders and ministries to emerge. An important part of this is APEPT leadership drawing on Ephesians 4:7-13—including those gifted in Apostolic, Prophetic and Evangelistic ministry (who are sometimes sidelined in the church) as well as Pastoral and Teaching ministries (which a lot of training and expectations are about in the church today).
 5. Organic Systems—Rather than an institutional approach to organization where CEO-styled leaders direct with a command and control CEO-approach to leadership, missional movements spread more organically. When groups network as organic systems they can unleash their members to flexibly interact with one another and their environment. Rather than retreating from the chaos of change, they can embrace it and flow with the rhythms of life: Planting a new church, or remissionalizing an existing one, in this approach isn't primarily about buildings, worship services, size of congregations, and pastoral care, but rather about gearing the whole community around natural discipling friendships, worship as lifestyle, and mission in the context of everyday life. As a living network in Christ it can meet anywhere, anytime and still be a viable expression of church. This is a much more organic way to plant a church or to revitalize it (p.185). This is a theme, in fact, of the whole book and is explored further in an addendum.
 6. *Communitas*, not community—Rather than seeking

community as an end in itself, Hirsch explores the ideal of having our imagination captured by seemingly impossible mission challenges, out of which *communitas* evolves. He draws on Victor Turner's anthropological analysis of *communitas* (how a group forms together around a dangerous journey or mission) and liminality (a transition process accompanying a fundamental change). In one sense, the context of post-Christendom which has marginalized the place of church in society and the way we face rapid discontinuous changes in the twenty-first century forces us into liminality, but in another sense liminality is where we belong anyway as the pilgrim people of God.

Each of these elements is important in themselves but when they operate together they create the synergy of Apostolic Genius and can foster phenomenal growth. Strengthening any one area can help a local church grow and be more healthy, but fostering all of these elements is how this kind of material in *The Forgotten Ways* can foster missional movements. Other books treat individual elements in themselves, but this book significantly explores them together, not to bolster up the church as institution but to cultivate a movement of organic growth.

Hirsch has led a local church and a denomination through processes to reflect on their missional fitness, planted churches among subcultures, started (and closed down) an innovative missional café project, started Forge Mission Training Network in Australia and consulted with missional groups around the world. He draws on these experiences, and on his reading of history and Scripture, to point towards new imaginative ways of doing mission and church. These ways that he suggests, though often forgotten, echo movements like the early church and China. While we do not face the same persecution as those two groups, we do face the adaptive challenge of dealing with rapid discontinuous change and the thirst for spirituality and community in Western societies. His reflections are worth reading, reading again and most importantly acting upon.

The Forgotten Ways is a welcome and significant addition to the literature on mission to the West written by a leading missiological strategist. It will prove to be a useful tool to help shape new forms of missional church—for church planters, those leading change in existing churches and all mission-hearted followers of Jesus. It is not an academic tome but a handbook for practitioners. I am using it to evaluate missional churches I am visiting and learning from, and as a compass to guide a missional experiment in our neighborhood. A blog and further resources

(including a missional fitness tool and APEPT analysis) is accessible at www.theforgottenways.org.

The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church

Reviewed by J.D. Payne

Alan Hirsch, The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006, pgs. 295.

The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church is Alan Hirsch's second most significant publication. His first work, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* was co-authored with Michael Frost. Hirsch, who also teaches adjunctively for Fuller Theological Seminary, is originally from Australia and is the founding director of Forge Mission Training Network.

The book is divided into two primary sections. Section One is entitled "The Making of a Missionary," and provides a brief account of Hirsch's journey into the world of church planting. It is this section that sets the stage for the second section of the book. By the time the reader completes section one, he or she has a good understanding of the missionary methods that Hirsch found to work well and not so well in his Australian context. This first section is critical to the overall book in that it not only provides a glimpse into Hirsch's church and denominational life, but also is used as illustrative material in the second half of the book.

The second section is entitled, "A Journey to the Heart of Apostolic Genius," and it is here that Hirsch notes that the "rubber hits the road" (24). This latter section is the heart of the book where Hirsch attempts to describe the apostolic nature of the Church and the D.N.A. that causes the church to be a missional body of believers.

Overall, I was very pleased with the contents of this work. Though there are a few matters of concern, which I will address below, I found Hirsch's work to be challenging and inspiring as he seeks to assist the reader in being apostolic in his or her mis-

sionary work in the western world.

The Purpose

Hirsch's main argument is that for the most part, the Church in the western world has forgotten that it has everything necessary to be effectively on mission in the world. He writes, "there are primal forces that lie latent in every Jesus community and in every true believer. Not only does such a thing exist, but it is clearly identifiable phenomenon that has energized history's most outstanding Jesus movements" (15). The "central task" of the book is to examine such movements and to identify the elements that comprise those movements (20). According to Hirsch, "Apostolic Genius" is the "unique energy and force that imbues phenomenal Jesus movements in history" (274) and the object of the book is to examine this genius and "try to interpret it for our own missional context and situation in the West" (20).

Out of a desire to articulate the "absolutely irreducible components" of the Apostolic Genius, the second section of the book primarily revolves around describing what Hirsch believes are six interdependent characteristics that has been observed primarily in the Apostolic Church, the contemporary underground Chinese Church, and have been a part of all significant "Jesus movements" throughout history. These characteristics are to be taken as *prescriptive* matter rather than simply a description of common historical threads found in such movements (26). This Apostolic Genius consists of a theological center surrounded by five elements that he describes as "missional DNA." or mDNA for short:

Theological Center:

- Jesus is Lord – "At the center and circumference of every significant Jesus movement there exists a very simple confession" (24).

Missional DNA:

- Disciple Making – "Disciple making is an irreplaceable core task of the church and needs to be structured into every church's basic formula (24).
- Missional-Incarnational Impulse – Just as the church is called to scatter the gospel seed, it is also to relate to and influence the host group "from within its cultural forms and expressions" (285).
- Apostolic Environment – The need to have an atmosphere that encourages and supports the functioning of the apostolic role. Apostolic ministry describes the function, not an

office (153). According to Hirsch, "the apostolic person's calling is essentially the extension of Christianity. As such, he or she calls the church to its essential calling and helps guide it into its destiny as a missionary people with a transformative message for the world" (152).

- Organic Systems – The need for the church to define itself primarily in organic terms as found in the scriptures, rather than "mechanistic and institutional conceptions" (181) that become difficult to reproduce over time.
- *Communitas*, not Community – A way of life that describes the "unique experience of *togetherness*" that comes from a mission that "calls the church to shake off its collective securities and to plunge into the world of action" (277).

Strengths

I greatly appreciate Hirsch's work on a variety of levels. The strengths of this work far outweigh the limitations. Though the strengths are numerous, for the sake of space, I have chosen to comment on the following nine. First, the author is making an attempt to address the challenges of being on mission in the post-Christianized situations whereby the Church in the West is primarily finding Herself in the early twenty-first century. He recognizes that being a missional church is not primarily defined by using an attractional form of evangelism, but requires the local church to take the gospel into the highways and hedges and marketplaces of the world.

Second, Hirsch challenges the status quo and the philosophy that all the Church needs to do to reach the peoples living in the West is simply more of what she is presently doing (37). He makes the statement that possibly "in America the current 'market appeal' of the contemporary church growth model *might* be up to 35 percent (as opposed to 12 percent in Australia) (37). Though clearly stating that he is "not trying to be anarchic and anti-institutional for the sake of it" (185), he rightly raises some significant concerns with many of the present cultural expectations revolving around consumerism and marketing approaches to church growth, and contemporary approaches to leadership training which isolates people in classroom and removes them from the field for several years.

Third, Hirsch clearly recognizes that there is a functional difference between apostolic leaders and pastoral leaders. While encouraging and affirming the latter, he does a good job calling the Church to make certain that She is making room for those who will be on the front lines of church multiplication in the West.

Fourth, though this work is well written, well organized, and easy to read, Hirsch manages to make several profound statements while keeping his argument simple because he shows that the "Apostolic Genius" is a simple paradigm. He does a noble task reminding us that in a day and age when the western Church has become in many locations extremely rigid, too bureaucratic, and resistant to healthy change, that the biblical requirements for being on mission are very simple and highly reproducible from people group to people group.

Fifth, Hirsch challenges the western Church to consider looking outside of Her geographical locations to the missionary practices across the globe, considering what can be learned from others and contextualized to the West.

Sixth, though this book is a scholarly work, Hirsch writes not from the perspective of an academic but rather that of a practitioner. He is to be commended for keeping his feet in the field and sharing about his journey. Closely tied to this strength is the fact that he is quick to discuss his failures and struggles. His model is a good challenge to us all that we must stay in the trenches while we train others. His writing style is very honest and transparent.

Seventh, though I believe his wording is too extreme, he makes the excellent point that "all great missionary movements begin at the fringes of the church, among the poor and the marginalized, and seldom, if ever, at the center" (30). With the majority Church of the West being heavily influenced by materialism and consumerism, Hirsch calls the Church out of Her comfort zone to a place of risk and significant dependency on the Lord.

Eighth, Hirsch strongly advocates that the heart of renewal in the Church is "the primitive, unencumbered Christology of the NT church" (99). He reminds his readers "In order to recover Apostolic Genius we must learn what it means to *recalibrate*, to go back to the basic "formula" of the church—we need to constantly go back to our Founder and reset our faith and communal life on him" (99).

Finally, though Hirsch is an advocate for church multiplication, he correctly recognizes the need for healthy leadership and discipleship. He writes:

If this is not already obvious by now, let me say it more explicitly: the quality of the church's leadership is directly proportional to the quality of discipleship. If we fail in the area of making disciples, we should not be surprised if we fail in the area of leadership development. I think many of the problems that the church faces

in trying to cultivate missional leadership for the challenges of the twenty-first century would be resourced if we were to focus the solution to the problem on something prior to leadership development per se, namely, that of discipleship first. Discipleship is primary; leadership is always secondary. And leadership, to be genuinely Christian, must always reflect Christlikeness and therefore. . . discipleship (119).

Limitations

Though the strengths of this work far outweigh the limitations, nevertheless, there are a few matters that I believe need to be addressed. First, I am not comfortable with the language the author uses when he discusses the fact that the Church only needs to look within Herself to rediscover the Apostolic Genius. Though I am not saying that Hirsch is attempting to be theologically deviant, such language conjures up thoughts of a quasi-New Age, self-help paradigm, or that there is a secondary force empowering believers apart from the Holy Spirit and the gospel, and needs to be simply rediscovered, rather than the need for biblical repentance and re-structuring our institutions. For example, he writes:

This story highlights the central assumption in this book and gives a hint to why it has been called *The Forgotten Ways*: namely, that all God's people carry within themselves the same potencies that energized the early Christian movement and that are currently manifest in the underground Chinese church. Apostolic Genius (the primal missional potencies of the gospel and of God's people) lies dormant in you, me, and every local church that seeks to follow Jesus faithfully in any time. We have quite simply forgotten how to access and trigger it. This book is written to help us identify its constituent elements and to help us to (re)activate it so that we might once again truly be a truly transformative Jesus movement in the West" (22).

So I come to believe that every church, indeed every Christian, if truly birthed in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, has the full coding of mDNA and therefore has direct access to the power of Apostolic Genius. It is *there*, only the more institutional forms have simply forgotten or suppressed it, because its primal and uncontrollable nature represents danger to the institution it-

self—it is so different and uncontainable (77).

My great hope for the church is that in actual fact Apostolic Genius is not something that we have to impose on the church, as if it were something alien to us, but rather is something that already exists in us. It *is* us! It is our truest expression as Jesus's [sic] people. And because this is so, we simply need to awaken and cultivate it. I am completely convinced that Apostolic Genius is as available to us today as it is for our remarkable Chinese brothers and sisters. It is the common heritage of the whole people of God, and it is a direct link to our own destiny as we face the daunting challenges of the twenty-first century. (244)

Second, even though I realize that Hirsch is attempting to be provocative with his work, he appears to polarize the church between those in the "attractional-evangelism" camp and those in the missional camp. For example, statements such as "it is the evangelistic-attractional mode that is keeping us from experiencing that authentic impulse that reverberates through authentic apostolic movements" (129), lead the reader to believe that a church must be either attractional or missional, but not both. In developing a missiology, especially for western cultures that have had a gospel and local church presence for centuries, one must show the necessity of both while emphasizing the apostolic mode. Even the Apostle Paul recognized the presence of unbelievers in a worship gathering of the church (1 Cor 14).

Third, Hirsch does not address how the necessary incarnational lifestyle as represented by Jesus (133) is reconciled to the fact that the Apostle Paul many times spent only a short period of time planting some churches (e.g., Thessalonica). Though I am a strong advocate of an incarnational model and an apostolic model (and agree with Hirsch on the necessity of these approaches), I wished Hirsch had attempted to explain these two seemingly different approaches to being missional.

Fourth, Hirsch makes a significant theological statement that he believes is a formula for "engaging in mission in a post-Christian culture." He writes, "*Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology* (142). Though I agree with this statement to a point, it is a dangerous hermeneutic to follow if taken at face value. Hirsch should have provided more explanation here. I recognize that Hirsch is writing in contradistinction to a church context that has redefined biblical ecclesiology to include many cultural preferences as "necessities" for the local church to exist as a local church, and thereby hindering the rapid

dissemination of the gospel and church multiplication. However, a reaction to cultural abuses of the biblical texts is a poor reason to advocate a hermeneutic that also potentially leads to a distortion of the biblical prescriptions for a local church.

I agree with Hirsch that the Scriptures do give an ecclesiology that is fluid and easily contextualized to all peoples, at all times, in all locations (143). A healthier way to understand ecclesiology, however, is to allow the biblical parameters to establish the boundaries for both our missiology and our ecclesiology (and of course, our Christology). Instead of allowing our missiology to "inform" (143) (a word which Hirsch does not explain) the nature, functions, and forms of the church, as missionaries we must have a biblical ecclesiology *first* and then allow the context to guide us in making disciples and teaching them to obey all that Christ commanded. Yes, the flavor (e.g., forms) of the church must come from the context, but that flavor is only to exist within the proper biblical parameters. Following Hirsch's hermeneutic as written can easily lead the biblically uninformed to a post-modern understanding of the local church whereby the local context defines the local church for the sake of being missional.

Fifth, as already noted, I greatly commend Hirsch on calling us back to the necessity of Apostolic Genius. However, I wish he had provided some exegetical support for his discussion of the apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching/didactic ministries in the local church. Rather, than simply providing reference to Ephesians 4:11-12 and some good diagrams explaining his point (158, 171), it would have been helpful to address these ministries from the biblical texts. Since his argument for the apostolic is a radical argument to some readers, a thoroughly biblical foundation is necessary.

Finally, I believe his argument against the limitations of contemporary church growth theory in the western world would have been stronger had he challenged us to return to our roots by reminding us that the Church Growth Movement was birthed in India, with McGavran who argued until his death that the paramount task of the Church is the multiplication of churches among the receptive peoples of the world. Hirsch unfairly lumps all contemporary church growth approaches into a single attractional model for western churches. Though I agree the dominant paradigm has been attractional and consumeristic to the exclusion of the apostolic, not all churches have followed this path. Granted, there is a great deal of truth to Hirsch's point, but it is not the whole truth, even among church growth supporters in the United States.

Conclusion

I strongly encourage the reader of this review, especially those concerned about reaching the West, to read Hirsch's book. He makes numerous outstanding points and clearly articulates in written format what many of us have been thinking over the past decade. The book is well written and has several excellent diagrams and charts to assist in understanding the concepts. This excellent work is challenging yet encouraging, critical yet gracious, and informative yet practical. Hirsch is a voice we need to listen to and learn from when it comes to missions in America.

Trouble in River City: A Review of The Forgotten Ways

Reviewed by Bob Wenz

Alan Hirsch, The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006, pgs. 295.

When Professor Harold Hill in *The Music Man* questioned the citizenry of a turn-of-the-century town if they "got trouble right here in River City," he was looking for telltale signs of trouble among their wayward sons: Do they hide copies of *Captain Billy's Wiz-Bang* in the corn crib? Do they re-button their knickerbockers below their knees? Have certain words crept into their vocabulary – words like "swell" and "so's your old man."?

In slightly different versions, those question came into this professor's mind as I read Alan Hirsch's *The Forgotten Ways*. Do we have trouble in our River City? Are we reading and quoting from strange new wiz-bang books? Are we dressing differently to relate to our gang or our fit in with our culture?

Bill Easum is quite right in noting that it is a "fascinating and unique examination of two the greatest apostolic movements in history [the early church and China] and their potential impact upon the Western church at the dawn of the twenty-first century." Hirsh has done more than that, of course. The remarkable history of church in China in the sixty years since Mao's long march, together with the apostolic age, serve as the backdrop for Hirsh's semi-auto biographical exploration of apostolic genius. In his forward, Leonard Sweet made the sweeping statement that in his examination of the apostolic age and the China miracle, Hirsh had discovered the "formula that unlocks the secrets of the ecclesial universe like Einstein's simple formula $E=mc^2$ unlocked the secrets of the physical universe." Together with that over-the-top endorsement came the statement that this is a book that is "good enough to read to the end of time." I had images of Professor Hill hyping his marching band of 76 trombones

as the key to solving every problem in River City.

Hirsh begins with his own journey as a frustrated missionary who turned to a new paradigm for a church plant in Australia where he perceived that 95% of the churches were competing to reach the small segment of the population that was NOT alienated from traditional church. The Elevation Café experiment only reinforced the conviction that the church needed and Hirsh wanted to move away from "being a vendor of religious goods and services"—but found it difficult to do so because he was encumbered by "forty years of church growth principles and practice." At the heart of that frustration was the inability to make disciples out of consumers, and that the "attraction" model of the church growth culture was unwilling or unable to move beyond the attraction/consumer paradigm: "Most efforts to change the church fail to deal with very assumptions on which Christendom is built and maintains itself. The change of thinking need in our day as far as the church and its mission are concerned must be radical indeed; that is, it must go the roots of the problem" [Pg 51]. Nearly one hundred and fifty pages of charts, diagrams, equations, and formulas later, Hirsh would reiterate that the "attractional church" [or at least the overwhelming majority of the 485,000 such churches in the United States] is suffering from "the guilt of failure" because only a few "remarkable churches" have succeed in making that model work. The rest limp along as failures for not having what it takes to compete with the Big Boys. Paradoxically, as he nears the end of the book he tips his hat to Saddleback and Willow Creek and suggests that he doesn't "wish to be heard as being unnecessarily critical of church growth or question the sincerity of those who operate by its lights." [Pg 215]

In the intervening pages, however, Hirsh pleads for a new model of the church that will embody [literally] the church of the first century and the church of China of the last sixty years.

Copies of Captain Billy's Wiz Bang

The market is flooded today with wiz-bang books about the "missional," "emergent" church and the post-modern world in which we find ourselves. After years of reading, these I am not certain anyone can be any more definitive about what is happening in the culture and the church than in 1989 when the world became officially post-modern. Hirsh is committed to a cluster of defining ideas: Jesus is Lord, making disciples, missional living, apostolic environment, organic systems, and real community [communitas] as the essential and intrinsically linked aspects of apostolic genius. Hirsh has his favorites among the

church/culture pundits and emergent leaders [oops, emergent doesn't have leaders, only facilitators and conveners], certainly. I was surprised by what I didn't see in the bibliography. *Shaped By God's Heart: the Passion and Practices of Missional Churches* by Milfred Minatrea, that pleads the same case, that the church must move from being mission minded to once again being missional, but does so without much of the convolution that detracts from Hirsh. The call of being missional is the clarion that Hirsh sounds as he points to the apostolic era and new apostolic era in China [and other totalitarian states of the 20th century].

Swell and So's Your Old Man

Perhaps the most off-putting aspect of this significant volume is that he contains its own fourteen page glossary. Indeed, new words have crept into our vocabulary – missional, emergent, etc. But Hirsh includes terms many terms that really should not need a definition to any person who is awake in the 21st century. Others are terms that Hirsh has coined or familiar terms that he has given his own definition. His term "apostolic genius," "liminality," "communitas" [to be distinguished from that inferior grade of community that infects most attraction/consumer churches, by implication], and mDNA [again, his term for missional DNA, presuming that the reader might mistake organizational DNA in a church for actual deoxyribonucleic acid.] for example, only serve to make the book more difficult to read and decipher. Most surprising was the inclusion of Memes and Memplex in light how these Richard Dawkin's explanations for culture have been totally discredited in the scientific community since they made their initial splash.

Does he Re-button His Knickerbockers Below the Knee?

Of course, what Professor Hill in *The Music Man* was exposing was a trend on the part of young men to do whatever it takes to fit in with the prevailing culture when they leave the house. Perhaps no trend in the church of the 20th century, and especially the last half of it, has been more disturbing than the "I found the keys to the Kingdom" culture. Peter, it seems, has dropped the keys – and every few years we have a new success story of a church that seemingly has found the keys. In the 60's it was about "returning to the 1st century church." Later, the church growth movement had its share of success stories and champions who held up the keys and jingled them. The purpose-driven church keeps finding more and more keys each year. These inevitably launch a rash of imitations and wannabes complete with the books, videos, study guide and celebrity driven tell all con-

ferences. And, even as Willow Creek has released REVEAL to the world with its first REVEAL conference, we can rightly fear that REVEAL could become yet another key to the kingdom.

One has to ask if the "emergent church" is not just another iteration of "I found the keys" for the 21st century, especially in light of one recent estimation that nearly two thirds of the churches that identify themselves as "emergent" admit that they are dressing themselves to fit in with the 21st century post-modern culture – and that they may not fully grasp all that it means to be missional or emergent. With five clearly identified streams of the emergent movement, we can only wonder what it means even to those who are identified by the label.

In light of that, the middle pages – the core of *Forgotten Ways* – are worthy of commendation and critique. Alan Hirsh earnestly wants the church to be like it was in the first century – apostolic, missional, experiencing true community, and seeing lives transformed. There is very much to commend his book, especially for the serious student who can take the time to decipher the charts, graphs, diagrams; who can translate the book and its own intimidating (rather than inviting) vocabulary and jargon; who can simplify what is at times a ponderous and overwritten middle two thirds of the book. The tone can be off-putting because one can almost hear keys jingling somewhere in the background.

But to his credit, Hirsh offers more than a polemic against the attractional church if we will take the time and effort—and it will take both!—to unpack it. It is at times like reading a whole blackboard of Einstein's calculations leading up to $E=mc^2$ [in that sense Sweet is correct, but his rhetoric is still exaggerated!]. There are profound assessments of traditional church structures buttressed with organizational theory. There is a consistent focus on the mission of the church – transformed lives that engage people and the culture. But it not an easy read. And its time may not yet have come.

What was missing, it seems, is the pastoral heart that can answer the question that four hundred thousand pastors are asking – how can we shepherd the sheep we have and instill in them a passion for Christ, a passion for their own personal mission, and see transformation without having to start all over. For what happened in China – that the church was transformed when it was stripped of everything but Jesus – does not seem to be the path on which the US church will find itself in the same way in the near future.

That prediction may prove to be wrong. We may soon lose the cultural war—even as we have lost several cultural battles –

and be totally marginalized. The same news magazine that declared 1976 to be "The Year of the Evangelical" and help identify evangelicalism at the center of the culture has now launched a wave of attacks on evangelicalism. And, when we realize that we have been marginalized, perhaps we will earnestly seek to return to a church that looks more like the first century church than we have ever seen. We may not take Hirsh seriously enough to read *The Forgotten Ways* until we realize that we have real serious trouble in River City.

The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church

Reviewed by Gordon E. Penfold

Hirsch, Alan, The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church, Grand Rapids, Brazos Press, 2006. 295 pp. \$19.99.

The Forgotten Ways is a monumental work with a threefold thrust. First, Alan Hirsch examines two of the largest Jesus movements in history—the early church movement and the contemporary underground church movement in China. He asks why it is that we see such significant movement in those two contexts and we see so little in the way of Jesus movements in the rest of the world and particularly in the West? Second, the author calls the church to move away from the institutionalized ministry of “Christendom” that began with Constantine’s Edict of Milan in AD 333 (58). Finally, he challenges the church to rediscover its original DNA, which Hirsch calls Apostolic Genius, to become once again an organic, missional movement.

Alan Hirsch brings a unique perspective to this book. While in seminary he served a “fringe” group in downtown Melbourne, Australia. After graduation he became a leader in the South Melbourne Restoration Community (SMRC) where he brought together this fringe group with an established church. God shaped him and sharpened his missional focus during his 15 years at SMRC. Hirsch currently leads FORGE, a transdenominational mission training agency.

The Forgotten Ways is a call to the church of the West to return to their missional roots. This occurs when churches begin to recognize their missional DNA (mDNA) (283) that is embedded in each believer and each church. Chapter 1 begins with the words,

Imagine there was a power that lies hidden at the very heart of God’s people. Suppose this power was built into

the initiating “stem cell” of the church by the Holy Spirit but was somehow buried and lost through centuries of neglect and disuse. Imagine that if rediscovered, this hidden power could unleash remarkable energies that could propel Christianity well into the twenty-second century—a missional equivalent to unlocking the power of the atom. Is this not something that we who love God, his people, and his cause would give just about anything to recover? I now believe that the idea of latent inbuilt missional potencies is not a mere fantasy; in fact there are primal forces that lie latent in every Jesus community and in every true believer. Not only does such a thing exist, but it is a clearly identifiable phenomenon that has energized history’s most outstanding Jesus movements (15).

The book is divided into two sections. Section 1 describes the faith journey of Alan Hirsch. His journey included the work in downtown Melbourne to his ministry at SMRC. SMRC was a church on the cutting edge of mission that grew complacent and content. The reawakening of SMRC to mission was the key that helped form Hirsch’s view of ministry.

In Section 2 Hirsch develops the concept of Apostolic Genius. “Loaded into the term Apostolic Genius is the full aggregation of all the elements of mDNA that together form a constellation, as it were, each shedding light on the other” (78). Hirsch illustrates the concept with a pointed star (79). At the center of Apostolic Genius is recognition that “Jesus is Lord.” That is, the Lord Jesus must be the absolute center of any movement of significance. Connected to the center are five essential elements of mDNA. These elements are briefly described below:

- Disciple Making: “It is the essential task of discipleship to embody the message of Jesus, the Founder (102).
- Missional-Incarnational Impulse: Missional—“It is an essential aspect of Christianity’s capacity to spread itself and cross cultural boundaries The incarnational side of the equation relates to the embedding and deepening of the gospel and church into host cultures. It means that to relate to and influence the host groups, it will need to do it from within its cultural forms and expressions. This is linked directly to the Incarnation of God in Jesus” (285).
- Apostolic Environment: “There is a catalytic influence that weaves its way through the seemingly chaotic network of churches and believers. There is no substantial word for this catalytic social power other than . . . *apostolic*” (151).

- Organic Systems: “The church . . . organizes itself as a living organism that reflects more how God structured life itself, as opposed to a machine, which is the artificial, inorganic alternative to a living system” (180).
- *Communitas*, Not Community: *Communitas* is described a Christian community’s ability “to overcome their instincts to ‘huddle and cuddle’” (277). Churches living like this live on the edge of danger and adventure in order to accomplish the mission of God.

Hirsch’s purpose is quite clear. First, he is challenging the church in the West to recognize that mechanistic structures with “top down” leadership established in Christendom no longer work as we “shift from the modern to the postmodern, or from solid modernity to liquid modernity” (16). His description of stifling denominational structure is riveting:

Without apostolic ministry the church either forgets its high calling or fails to implement it successfully. Sadly, in declining denominational systems, such people are commonly “frozen out” or exiled because they disturb the equilibrium of a system in stasis. This “loss” of the apostolic influencer accounts for one of the major reasons for mainstream denominational decline. If we really want missional church, then we must have a missional leadership system to drive it—it’s that simple (152).

Second, the author argues that the answer to the decline in the West is the recognition of the Apostolic Genius, a missional system that he develops in the book. Hirsch argues that the dynamics of early church and the modern house church movement in China represent this Apostolic Genius. Both are grassroots movements light on structure and heavy on mission. The author’s passion is to see an awakening of the church to its primal missional roots. “This book is written in the hope that the church in the West can, by the power of the Holy Spirit, arouse and reengage that amazing power that lies within us” (17).

Hirsch gives a fair and passionate view of the missional church and has done a brilliant job of calling the Christian church of the 21st Century back to its missionary roots. However, he does demonstrate a bent toward the fringe movements of the church. The penchant and passion for the fringe reflects his own background working with SMRC and at times seem to color his view of the other segments of the church. There have been significant movements among other classes and groups that would not be considered “fringe” by his definition of the word. The

New Testament church focused on many different people groups, both "fringe" and mainstream. For example, Jesus ministered to the lepers while Acts 6:7 tells us that "a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." Both fringe and mainstream! Lydia was a wealthy woman (Acts 16:14) while many slaves also were redeemed. Two contrasts today could be Redeemer Presbyterian Church in wealthy New York City and Duane and Miriam Mansveld to the street people of Montreal. The Moravians, the Student Volunteer Movement and Campus Crusade are missionary movements toward the center. In our fragmented world perhaps we should consider every people group that is outside of Christ a "fringe" group in need of a clear proclamation of the Gospel! We need movements in every stratum of society, not just on the fringes. Unfortunately, churches are often blind to anyone different from those on the "inside" of their particular ministry. The author very clearly and forcefully points out our blind spots!

This volume has numerous strengths. First, the book is a huge contribution to those who wish to see the Church in the West rise after years of decline. Hirsch's call to the church to leave behind mechanical structures of Christendom that inhibit growth is compelling. His missional-incarnational impulse is right on target! I also find it interesting that Hirsch longs to see the same type of people (Jesus) movements that fueled the Missionary movement as well as that of Donald McGavran and the Church Growth Movement.

A second strength of the book is a very perceptive warning. Movements may begin well. However, left to natural processes each will suffer the mediocrity and complacency that developed in South Melbourne Restoration Community. The author's call to the church of the West to recognize its precipitous position and retool its ministry is significant and timely!

I also feel Hirsch's description of Christendom is the most succinct I have read. He describes Constantine's Christendom in four ways:

- It is attractional, not missional.
- A shift from ministry focus to building focus
- An institutionally regulated clergy
- Sacraments administered by the institution (276-77)

Hirsch's call to return the church to the people and for the church to "go" is refreshing. However, I did find it interesting that every ministry the author mentioned uses some sort of building!

Hirsch's description of the Apostolic Genius (supported by mDNA) is quite compelling. However as I examined his descrip-

tion of the structure of his proposed system I found myself struggling to put all the pieces together. The structure he describes is not simple, but extremely complex and cumbersome. I do concur that "top down" leadership is not effective. Denominational leadership can kill a movement (as happened with the Methodist movement in the mid 1800's). I feel that Hirsch's call for organic leadership is overwhelmed by the complexity of his structure.

Another concern is the keystone phrase of Apostolic Genius, "Jesus is Lord." I am not sure that that statement covers enough ground. The early church (I cannot speak for the underground movement in China) understood a great deal more than "Jesus is Lord." The early church grew in "the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:24), "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). The book of Romans is a full exposé of the Gospel. Acts 8:4 states that "those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (emphasis mine). Perhaps a more appropriate centerpiece would be "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). I do appreciate the author's notion of the proclamation of the Gospel in the Emerging Missional Church (EMC). Proclamation was an indispensable facet of the early church. This is a feature often lacking in Emerging Church movements as distinct from the Emerging Missional Church.

Do I recommend *The Forgotten Ways*? Yes . . . but with a warning. If you read it, be prepared to be challenged. Pastors, Christian educators and missiologists will be forced to reexamine their own ecclesiology and missiology. *The Forgotten Ways* is not a simple book to read, but one that is filled with ideas that necessarily challenge the status quo.

I was so challenged by the reading of this book that I am working my way back through the New Testament to examine afresh how the early church functioned. I have been surprised at how much my own thinking has slipped towards status quo.

I believe that Jesus' command in John 4:35 is a fitting way to close. "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!"

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Diana Alfonso
Great Commission Research Network
Biola University
School of Intercultural Studies
13800 Biola Ave
La Mirada, CA 90639
Phone: (562) 903-4844 ext. 5691
www.greatcommissionresearch.net
E-mail: gcrn@biola.edu