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Timeless Growth Principles from the Movement of Hans Nielsen Hauge: A Case Study in Pietism

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David Stein and Frederick Thoni

abstract

As existing churches continually face the challenge of staying relevant, and new churches face the challenge of establishing traction in the first place, a fresh look at the dynamics of movements will help both. While large, existing churches can often operate from an institutional focus, new and growing churches have to operate from a movement focus. Declining churches need to recapture the dynamism that helped them come into being in the first place. In order to break free from the status quo a new catalyst must be inserted into the equation in order to move forward to the next level. This article explores one such catalyst from a historical case study and reflects on its timeless church growth principles.

introduction

Movements have become a new starting point in thinking about church growth. George Hunter III, for example, has written a book encouraging the Methodist Church to recapture its fervor as a movement.¹ This often involves a shift from a

¹ George Hunter III, *The Recovery of a Contagious Methodist Movement* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2012).

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focus of institutionalization back to the dynamics of what causes a movement to
take root initially. Movements form in all areas of society as people work together
to affect change. Something unique happens, however, when God is the direct
initiator of the movement.²

the movement of hans nielsen hauge

Hans Nielsen Hauge was the founder of a movement later known as the Hauge
movement.³ People said of him that someone always came to Jesus whenever he
gave his message.⁴ The story of his conversion and call to ministry is quite
powerful. On April 5, 1796, he had a spiritual experience while plowing in his
father's field and was unable to speak for a few days afterward. He later brought
spiritual awakening to southern Norway and eventually to much of Norway as a
whole. Reportedly, even today in Norway, sections where Hauge preached and had
influence are more open to the gospel today, in contrast to areas where Hauge did
not go.⁵ In other words, a contrast is evident in the "soil" of where he did and did
not go.⁶ A famous painting commemorating his preaching, *Haugianerne* by
Adolph Tidemand, is on display in the national gallery at Oslo.⁷ The fervor of his
movement grew to denomination size in the United States, becoming known as the
Hauge Synod.⁸ The Hauge Synod eventually became a part of the American
Lutheran Church.⁹ The American Lutheran Church worked closely with the
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod until around 1962.¹⁰ A separate group known as
the Hauge Lutheran Innermission Federation continues today, as well.¹¹

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understanding movement dynamics

Understanding movement dynamics is important. Taking a look at movement
dynamics helps in understanding what it is that gives birth and impetus to *the*

² David Stein, *Defining Characteristics of Churches that Thrive* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 2013), 1.

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Nielsen_Hauge, accessed 11/29/2013.

⁴ The statement is not likely literally accurate but does emphasize the impact of his work.

⁵ A movie about Hans Nielsen Hauge was made in 1961. See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0150819/> for more information.

⁶ On the one hand, this leaves part of the work unfinished for someone to complete what Hauge had begun. On the other
hand, it stresses the importance of the lasting effect of those who influence others for Christ.

⁷ <http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/>, <http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E2%80%9EHaugianerne>, and
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_Tidemand-Haugianerne.jpg, accessed 11/30/2013.

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hauge_Synod and <http://www.luthersem.edu/archives/collections/4-hauge.aspx>, accessed
11/30/2013.

⁹ The America Lutheran Church subsequently merged into the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, which actually
reflects the name of the Hauge denomination. Prior to 1876, the Hauge denomination was called the Evangelical
Lutheran Church of North America while still a part of the Eielsen Synod. For more information, see
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hauge_Synod, accessed 12/5/2013.

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Lutheran_Church, accessed 11/30/2013,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheran_Church_in_America

¹¹ <http://www.haugeinnermission.com> and <http://www.haugean.com>, accessed 12/5/2013.

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*spontaneous expansion of the church.*¹² Kenyon Callahan, a church consultant who designed an approach to strategic planning centering around twelve keys of an effective church, spoke to this need of refocusing away from institutionalism when he wrote, “The day of the local church is over. The day of the mission outpost has come.”¹³ By this he does not mean that the local church will cease, but rather that churches must shift from a maintenance mode centered around the institution, to an outward mode centered on the world around them. Movements that are church plants may involve pre-church, where believers simply gather in homes until the attendance is large enough to form a new local church.

Movements almost seem to be custom made by God to fit the time and the circumstances in which they live. However, some constants may be at work, as well, showing how God works in similar ways among different movements.¹⁴ Churches of an existing movement, conversely, often need to update their practices in order to remain relevant in the face of an ever-changing culture around them.

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Movements often catch people by surprise because the next movement often does not look like the previous movement; therefore, the believers from the last movement often do not recognize the next. As a movement ages over time, it can tend to look backward instead of forward and inward instead of outward.

characteristics of hauge movement churches

Hans Nielsen Hauge held revivals in farmers’ homes. He preached to the peasants of the land. In the early 1800s, thousands of people were coming to a saving faith, a believing faith, a living faith in Jesus. A number of characteristics distinguished the Hauge movement.

A first characteristic was that the Hauge movement emphasized what they called a “Living Faith.” The term has pietistic roots that go back as far as 1600 to the Waldensians. Tennant twenty of the Waldensian confession states, “As God promised us regeneration in Jesus Christ, so those who are united to him by a living faith ought to apply, and do really apply themselves, unto good works.”¹⁵ This was their way to describe that a person should be born again and regenerated. A person should have a direct encounter with the Holy Spirit. This is often what separated the high church minded from the low church minded, from the Hauge point of view. Today, many may use the term “cultural Christian” to describe the

¹² Alan Roland, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997).

¹³ Kennon L. Callahan, *Effective Church Leadership: Building on the Twelve Keys* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), 22.

¹⁴ John 3:8.

¹⁵ <http://carm.org/waldensian-confession>, accessed 12/5/2013.

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same phenomena—people who consider themselves Christian, because they were born in a Christian country. On the other hand, they may call themselves Christian because they automatically became a member of a church system and have no other identified religion. However, a born again experience is needed for a person to become a member of Christ's church in the record God keeps in heaven. The Holy Spirit accomplishes the transaction of new birth in the heart and mind of each human individual that comes to faith in Christ. The thought is similar to the phrase, "God has no spiritual grandchildren, only children." Each person must have a close relationship with God as his father.

Hans Nielsen Hauge grew up in a pietistic home. Hauge's parents grew up reading literature¹⁶ of the old pietists, such as Philipp Jakob Spener,¹⁷ Gerhard Tersteegen,¹⁸ Johann Arndt,¹⁹ and Paul Gerhardt.²⁰ These were classic writers who influenced Germany. Their influence ultimately extended to Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, spreading a movement where people experienced renewal, revival, and new birth. It is out of this seedbed that Hans Nielsen Hauge came to found his movement.

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A second characteristic of Hauge movement churches was an emphasis on lay ministry (the ability of the average person to conduct a home meeting, to minister, and to preach). This stems back to the roots of the founder where Hans Nielsen Hauge was actually arrested for preaching and conducting home meetings.²¹ A law was passed in Norway and in Denmark when Norway was still under Danish rule,²² that religious meetings could not be conducted unless the parish minister was present to oversee.²³ A fierce independence developed in the heart of the Hauge movement as a result, and this even became a root factor in the Norwegian independence movement of 1814–1817. This independence likely found

¹⁶ Reading (and education) is one method by which one influences another for Christ (sociologically speaking).

¹⁷ <http://www.intrepidlutherans.com/2010/08/lay-ministry-continuing-legacy-of.html>, accessed 12/5/2013.

¹⁸ <http://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1701-1800/pietist-preacher-gerhard-tersteegen-11630279.html>, accessed 12/5/2013.

¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Arndt, accessed 12/5/2013.

²⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Gerhardt, accessed 12/5/2013.

²¹ The context in Norway was a state church. The first amendment to the Constitution of the United States, by contrast, emphasizes freedom of religion and the right to assemble when it states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html, accessed 12/2/2013.

²² For a contemporary understanding of what is Danish and Scandinavian culture in general, see the popular series, *Borgen*, on PBS, which has been called the Danish *West Wing*. The opening sequence visuals that accompany the theme song are distinctively Scandinavian. <http://www.kcet.org/shows/borgen/>, accessed 12/5/2013.

²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Norway; <http://fleetwood.unc.org.uk/?tag=coventical-act>. This is known as the conventical act, and England had a similar law. Monarchs could not always distinguish religious from revolutionary movements, and this led to a preference for state certification of what was happening in the church. The United States was formed in direct response to this with its emphasis on freedom of religion, and, in turn, much of the world subsequently adopted more open policies for freedom of religion and democratization, as well. Accessed 12/5/2013.

Stein and Thoni: Timeless Growth Principles from the Movement of Hans Nielsen Haug compatibility when carried to the United States, where there was no state church, and the Hauge movement followers could practice their religion freely.

A third characteristic of Hauge movement churches was an emphasis on hard work. A good Christian works hard and does not just lie around and loaf. That would be considered socially unacceptable. It would be disgraceful not to be a good farmer, a good shopkeeper, or a good blacksmith. It is an idea similar to “cleanliness is next to godliness,” wherein the belief system of a person has a direct effect upon the actions of their life. This emphasis is also seen in the latter part of tenant twenty of the Waldensian confession wherein a person, based on their living faith stemming from their regeneration in Jesus Christ, “Ought to apply, and do really apply themselves, unto good works.”²⁴ It is from this core value²⁵ that Midwesterners around the nation and the world are known for their emphasis on a strong work ethic. Georges “General” Doriot, recently featured in a PBS series entitled, *Something Ventured: Risk, Reward, and the Original Venture Capitalists*,²⁶ displays this core value of hard work stemming from faith. The series tells the story of how Georges Doriot nurtured a number of students at Harvard Business School as well as through his organization of American Research and Development. Doriot was a role model and mentor for Tom Perkins of Hewlett Packard, who also went on to fund Genetech. Genetech is at the forefront of genetic engineering in the pharmaceutical industry—finding new cures, founding new medicines, and in general making the world a better place in the forefront of research and development.

Doriot’s parents were both Lutherans.²⁷ The Holy Spirit shaped Hauge, Hauge shaped two nations and a number of denominations (both Lutheran and otherwise), and those people in turn shaped the world for the better. The old time Lutherans were very fond of the phrase “a little hard work never hurt anyone.”

unpacking immigration patterns and the bridges of God

Donald McGavran advocated discovering the bridges of God—opportunities in which people are moving from one place to another.²⁸ He observed that when

²⁴ <http://carm.org/waldensian-conversion>, accessed 12/5/2013.

²⁵ See also James 2:17.

²⁶ See <http://www.kpbs.org/news/2013/jan/30/something-ventured-risk-reward-and-original-venture/> and <http://www.scu.edu/business/cie/programs/speakers/ciewinter12ss.cfm>, accessed 12/5/2013.

²⁷ Not all Lutherans were Hauge, and Hauge does not represent all Lutherans. However, if his message did not introduce the concept of hard work to all Lutherans, it certainly reinforced it. Another admirable quality of Georges Doriot was that he would stick with his students through failure and help them find success, whereas other venture capitalists, eager to get a return on their dollar, would pull out if the breakthroughs did not come quickly enough. Doriot would work with his students until their inventions began to thrive. He did this both in his work in the military and in private industry. [Gene Bylinsky, “General Doriot’s Dream Factory,” *Fortune* (August 1967): 106.]

²⁸ Donald McGavran, *Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005).

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people are making one kind of change in their lives, they are often more open to making other changes at the same time. This translates into an openness to the gospel, as well.²⁹ Immigration is movement in a literal sense. In the case of the Hauge movement, the Norwegian immigrants brought their “living faith” with them as they emigrated from Norway to America.³⁰ God possibly may have used the movement as somewhat of a going away present, which would also help to preserve the salt and light of the gospel in the new world. A push/pull paradigm can help explain the immigration patterns today.³¹ People leave a place because of push factors, and they come to a new place because of pull factors.³² Immigration happens when the pull factor is stronger than the push factor of what immigrants are leaving behind. Conversely, immigration often decreases when either the pull or the push factor decreases. For example, immigration to the United States (especially undocumented immigration) seems to have decreased for 2008 to 2011, explainable by a reduction in the pull factor. When fewer jobs were available in the United States economy, there was less reason for someone to come.³³ North Dakota is experiencing population growth as oil industry activity increases, centering on a new technique called fracking.³⁴ This affects not only the economy, but also hotels are full. Churches, too, experience an opportunity for growth. In following McGavran’s advice to watch for the bridges of God, mission-driven churches can be in the right place at the right time, ready to reach those God and circumstances are bringing to them, as well as to know where to focus new church development resources.

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An estimated three percent of the world’s population is migrating from one place to another at any given time.³⁵ The top five sending countries in 2012 for

²⁹ It may be similar to the idea of “a friend in need is a friend indeed.”

³⁰ Norwegian immigration patterns may parallel Korean immigration patterns in that both groups bring their faith with them and tend to concentrate in clusters in a new place. Many more recent Korean immigrants to the United States also come from strong Christian roots in Korea when they move to the United States. Both cultures may carry a “salt and light” aspect as they move to the new area with their faith in Christ already established. Groups can take four generations to assimilate fully to a new culture around them while maintaining both language and cultural distinctives in the meantime. However, the imprint of a culture can continue even longer.

³¹ M. Daniel Carroll R., *Christians at the Border* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 30.

³² <http://canarygeog.canaryzoo.com/Population%20Population.htm>, accessed 12/4/2013. Push factors can include lack of jobs, low wages, lack of services, poor education, lack of safety, high crime, crop failure, drought and famine, flooding, poverty, and war. Pull factors can include higher employment, more wealth, better services, better health care, better education, good climate, safer/less crime, political stability, more fertile land, and lower risk from natural hazards.

³³ Figure 2: Estimate of U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Population, 2000–11 at http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ib_18.htm#.Up1QB91U04Q shows numbers on the rise from 2000 to 2007, but then a decline in 2008–2011. This is presumably because as the U.S. economy had fewer jobs, this caused a decrease in the pull factor. Accessed 12/2/2013.

³⁴ <http://www.startribune.com/local/184433891.html>, accessed 12/2/2013.

³⁵ UN estimates based on data from 2005 available in 2007 (191 million people) according to <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2007/623Migration.aspx>, accessed 12/4/2013. See also <http://www.unfpa.org/pds/migration.html> and http://publications.worldbank.org/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=23876 where the figure indicates three percent of the world’s population lives outside of its country of origin, accessed 12/4/2013.

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United States immigration were Mexico, China, India, the Philippines, and the Dominican Republic.³⁶ The top migrant destination countries, according to *the Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, are the United States, the Russian Federation, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and Canada. The top immigration countries, relative to population, are Qatar (87 percent), the United Arab Emirates (70 percent), Kuwait (69 percent),³⁷ Andorra (64 percent), Cayman Islands (63 percent), and Northern Mariana Islands (62 percent).^{38,39}

Push factors in Norway at the time of Hans Nielsen Hauge included a number of aspects. An economic depression in Norway was one. The fact that family farms were being divided and they were running out of room was another. The presence of a famine deeply affecting families was a third. One word finally came like an electric shock to the situation—“America”—the land that they could long for, a land they could come to, and a land of dreams.

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the story of a people movement

In 1825, the first shipload of Norwegians set sail for America.⁴⁰ Close to one-third of the population of Norway immigrated to the United States between 1825 and 1925. Most of these 800,000 Norwegians came to the north central part of the United States—to Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and Iowa. Approximately 16.5 percent of Minnesota claims Norwegian heritage, and 4.5 million Americans say they are from Norwegian ancestry.

The first Norwegians in St. Paul, Minnesota, came in the 1840s and early 50s as the state was being born. They soon began to meet in homes, one-room schoolhouses, and the old capital building. One of the first Norwegian Lutheran churches was located on a hill. Apparently, after a rainstorm, the parishioners had to gather dirt from uphill on the north side to place under the church in order to prop it up so that the building did not fall over or slide down the hill. It was similar

³⁶ See the Migration Policy Institute at <http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/countrydata/data.cfm> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_to_the_United_States, accessed 12/2/2013.

³⁷ Also noteworthy is that a number of these countries fall within the 10/40 window. <http://www.joshuaproject.net/10-40-window.php>, accessed 12/5/2013.

³⁸ Dilip Ratha, Sanket Mohapatra, Ani Silwal, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2010). A summary of key points is online at http://publications.worldbank.org/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=23876, accessed 12/4/2013.

³⁹ For more information about the spread of the gospel from the perspective of migration patterns, see chapter four of Gary McIntosh and Alan McMahan, *Being the Church in a Multi-Ethnic Community: Why It Matters and How It Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 2012).

⁴⁰ James E. Kiefer cites an excerpt from the Lutheran Calendar, 29 March at <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bio/122.html>, accessed 12/2/2013. A Norwegian Law at the time stated that the parish pastor must supervise all preaching. Kiefer also writes that because Hauge's preaching coincided with the years during which many Norwegians were immigrating to America, the Haugean influence on Lutheranism in America was considerable.

Norwegians were members in 1875 when the church moved to its new location. They referred to the building as the “framed church.” In 1880, the original building was sold to the newly founded Immanuel Lutheran Church for one hundred dollars.

People ate together on that day but in a rather formal style. They used tablecloths and dishes, not paper plates. They did not use electrical appliances or dishwashers, and they had to haul in everything. When John Wimber founded the Vineyard movement building on Quaker foundations, he identified four timeless principles out of Acts 2:42 that should be a basic part of a biblical church’s DNA: 1) listening to the apostles’ doctrine, 2) fellowship, 3) breaking of bread, and 4) prayers.⁴² These early Norwegians followed a similar pattern.

movements and their dna

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The influence of the Hauge movement is visible all over the Midwest. One aspect of this influence is evident in the large number of church buildings that were at one time full or otherwise representing an active congregation where Christians once assembled.⁴³ People have said that in St. Paul, one can almost find a Lutheran church, a Catholic church, and a bar on every corner. In Southern California, on the other hand, one can drive miles in between Lutheran churches. Finke and Starke paint a bigger picture of how other churches cluster in different areas of the United States, and this has a lot to do with which church group was predominant at the time in which people were settling that area. In looking at it this way, one can see how custom-designed movements become established churches and shape their world. The East Coast has a high concentration of Congregationalists. The Midwest has a lot of Lutherans. The South has several Baptist churches, and there are many Methodist churches in that region, as well. California has a higher number of Calvary Chapel, Foursquare, and Vineyard churches.

Douglas E. Cowan⁴⁴ and Gordon Melton⁴⁵ have begun to map movements and have organized them by groupings. Some of the groupings proposed include

⁴¹ <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/massive-calif-mudslide-damages-homes/>, accessed 12/2/2013.

⁴² John Wimber, *Expanding the Kingdom Now* (Placentia, CA: Vineyard Ministries International, 1984), sound recording.

⁴³ Although not all Lutheran churches were Hauge, and the gene splicing of Lutheran denominational mergers can be complex, the fervor of this movement was nonetheless an impetus that fueled the shaping of the Midwest as it came to be in its present form.

⁴⁴ For further information see “Religious Movements Homepage Project,” Douglas E. Cowan, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Sociology at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/>, accessed 5/10/12.

⁴⁵ J. Gordon Melton, *Melton’s Encyclopedia of American Religions* (Toronto, ON, Canada: Gale, 2009). He has also developed a methodology of organizing religious bodies according to family groupings.

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Western and Eastern Liturgical, Lutheran, Reformed-Presbyterian, Pietist-
Methodist, Holiness, Pentecostal, European Free-Church, Baptist Independent,
Fundamentalist, as well as other group classifications. Each group may need to
look to the fervor of its founders to discover how God the Holy Spirit was at work
at the time, instilling in His people a fire by which one would influence another for
Christ. Differing DNAs may resonate with various key ideas in terms of the
language used to describe and codify their movement. Saying “book of discipline”
in a Methodist church means something. Saying “book of concord” to a Lutheran
is a test for the orthodoxy or the correctness of their faith content. Each movement
contains some unique elements that carry a distinct meaning and significance to
those who are in that group. While each movement of God differs in time and
place, all movements born of God are, in the end, God’s work of reaching men and
women to Himself through Jesus Christ. Among this collection of regenerated
believers, the style, the context, and the culture may change, but Christ is the
constant whose influence will remain.⁴⁶

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how do churches shift to a focus of spreading movement fervor today?

Churches today can shift gears in a number of ways in order to recapture a
movement’s fervor. First, the Holy Spirit has to be involved in the life of the
church. A number of church growth writers have identified spiritual fervor as a
factor that must be present in the life of the church.⁴⁷ C. Peter Wagner talks about
Hypopneumia as a church disease.⁴⁸ Christian Schwartz discusses passionate
spirituality.⁴⁹ Kennon Callahan shares about corporate dynamic worship.⁵⁰ In a
recent study of twenty-five church growth authors, it was surprising to find
spiritual dynamics the most mentioned factor as a cause behind church growth.
The survey tallied that out of twenty-five authors, twenty-four of them mention
that factor.⁵¹ Reflecting on that, it does make sense that one has to “have it” before
he or she can “share it” (“it” meaning a strong faith in Jesus Christ empowered by
the Holy Spirit).

A second way for a church to recapture movement fervor is to look around to
people God is bringing to the area. Trace the migration patterns of those displaced

⁴⁶ Revelation 7:9.

⁴⁷ Fervor is behind two or more factors that appear on many lists of what makes for growing churches—corporate dynamic
worship and regenerated membership. See also Holy Spirit empowered and avoids hyponumia. [David Stein, *Defining
Characteristics of Churches that Thrive* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 2013), 154–155.]

⁴⁸ C. Peter Wagner, *The Healthy Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), 149.

⁴⁹ Christian Schwartz, *Natural Church Development* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2000), 26.

⁵⁰ Kennon Callahan, *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1983).

⁵¹ Stein, 75. Note: it may not be one per author. One author may have had two points that boiled down to spiritual
dynamics, and another author may not have mentioned it. When all the factors were tallied up, that was the result.

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or emigrating from one place to another. Look for the bridges of God. It is
important for a church to be outward focused on the world around it and not only
centered on the institution of the church itself. In that same recent survey, church
growth authors mention evangelism twenty-three out of twenty-five times.⁵²

A church was once encouraged to improve the quality of its Sunday morning
worship service in order to better retain visitors who were coming a first time to
explore, but then not coming back.⁵³ The response was to send out a survey to the
existing church members to ask if they thought the quality of the worship service
was satisfactory. This data was then used to slow, or block, the improvement effort.
What really matters in the mission-driven church is discovering why people who do
not come, do not come, and getting to the root cause behind why some people
come once, but subsequently do not return a second time. An established church
consultant once said in a seminar, “We get whatever we measure.”⁵⁴ If we measure
the preferences of the existing membership, the church will still focus the majority
of its time and energy on the existing membership. If we measure how many new
lost people we are reaching, the membership can focus on programs and activities
that create bridges to the world around them.

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A second church was having difficulty reaching new people for Christ,
although it was emphasizing evangelism. It seemed that all the contacts of the
existing members were exhausted, and everyone they knew already either went to
church or were not interested in coming. A shift was then made to increase
advertising in order to find some new people and some new sociological streams.
As was the case in the previous example, the people who came, did not come back.
What this pointed to is that people did not like what they saw when they came.
Therefore, a church has to discover what its community is seeking, and find ways to
create bridges.

In a third situation that was experiencing some revival, several visitors came.
What they saw did not appeal to them, though, because it confused them. The
missing ingredient in this case may have been explanation. On the day of
Pentecost, Peter took the time to explain to the puzzled faces in the audience what
was happening.⁵⁵ What is missing in some church situations is the explanation of
what is happening for the newcomer and the first time visitor. In a church that is
experiencing revival, it may be necessary to explain to newcomers about everyone's

⁵² Stein, 75.

⁵³ An implication when people come, but then do not come back, is that advertising and marketing efforts are working.
However, people do not like what they see when they come, so further steps need to be taken to correct that aspect.

⁵⁴ By this, it meant that measuring attendance is more important than measuring membership, in situations where some
churches have membership rolls larger than their attendance. This reflects that some listed do not actually come any
more. Movement dynamics focus on what is happening right now.

⁵⁵ Acts 2:14.

why the existing members engage in a reading and response, recite a creed together, or sing a song out of an old-fashioned book called a hymnal. The newcomer does not necessarily understand what everything is all about and why the church does what it does, although the members are used to it. It is the explanation that can often bridge the gap. One church makes a point every service to say something like, “If you’re just checking out faith and don’t really know what it is all about, and may be a little unsure if you’re really on board or not, we’re glad you are here with us today exploring faith—welcome!” Some churches may need to explain certain elements of the worship service, such as saying something like, “We recite the Apostles’ Creed together, because it embodies core ideas about who God is and how He wants to help us live a life of victory during our time on earth.” Another explanation could be, “People like to sing out loud in our church and go on for song after song, because they are excited about Jesus, because He has worked in their lives to help change things for the better.” Other prompts to help the newcomer could include the following: “We sing this song because . . .” “We use this responsive reading because . . .” “We say this confession of faith because . . .” “People smile and sing loud because . . .” Tailoring a public service for the newcomer, or at least including an element of explanation for the newcomer to help find his way, is a way a church can help shift back to a movement dynamic. If a church speaks to the newcomer, it helps bridge the gap.

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The third way a church can recapture movement fervor is to realize that God may be at work outside of existing church structures in order to bring people to Himself. Any given church may appeal to a certain audience based on its cultural atmosphere, the age of the congregation, or the style in worship and music. What reaches new people today, though, may involve something else, where God needs to work more directly person-to-person to make the initial case for why someone should even come to Christ and join a local church.

In the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20, the phrase *μαθητευσατε παντα τα εθνη* (*disciple the nations*) is the main clause, and *διδασκοντες αυτους τηρειν παντα οσα ενετειλαμην υμιν* (*teaching them to observe/keep everything I have commanded you*) is one of the subordinate clauses.⁵⁶ In some situations, however, the emphasis can too easily become *παντα διδαχη* (*all teaching*, to only the existing members) instead of *παντα τα εθνη* (*all the nations or people*). The Great Commission contains both clauses. Movements shift the emphasis around.

⁵⁶ <http://unbound.biola.edu>, accessed 12/6/2013.

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