Vol. 19 No. 3 (2022): Missiological Iron Sharpening

This issue's contributions offer challenges to think, study, serve, and equip others carefully about approaches to Christian missions—to sharpen each other, just as "iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17).

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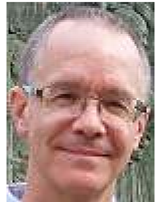

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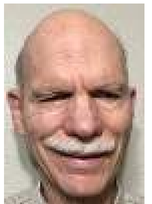

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Editorial

"Missiological Iron Sharpening"

J. Nelson Jennings

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The familiar phrase "iron sharpens iron" gets cited in all sorts of collaborative settings (religious or not), be they performing arts troupes, athletic teams, political parties, or myriad other groups. Those familiar with the Judeo-Christian tradition will recognize the phrase as a biblical one; some will pinpoint its source as the Book of Proverbs, specifically 27:17: "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." Actually, several of the individual proverbs in that chapter speak of the profundity of particular human interactions, e.g., "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips" (27:2); "Better is open rebuke than hidden love" (27:5); "Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away" (27:10b). People's actions and words—painful as they might come across—can shape others into better human beings, just as an iron sharpener grinds and scrapes against an iron axe and shapes it into a more effective instrument.

Those of us involved in the wider Christian mission movement can similarly contribute to each other's growth by exhorting, challenging, encouraging, befriending, and otherwise constructively collaborating in gospel ministry. In one way or another, the contributions in this July issue of *Global Missiology – English* (GME) exhibit that kind of constructive interaction. Some articles seek to persuade others to change; some educate through history; others point out shortcomings that need correction. The missiological iron sharpening in this collection of articles is multifaceted and filled with soul-searching reflection.

Two of this issue's articles, one by Matt Rhodes and one co-authored by Pam Arlund and Warrick Farah, explore further the January issue's theme of "Kingdom Movements." That theme continued in the April issue's contrasting book reviews of Rhodes's recent book *No Shortcut for Success*. In our pursuit of constructive discussions on what has become an important and sometimes charged topic, the GME editorial team approached Rhodes as well as Arlund and Farah about contributing articles that, while approaching the "movements" and movements-methodologies discussion from contrasting points of view, would seek to engage each other respectfully and meaningfully. I can personally attest that Matt, Pam, and Warrick have composed their articles with integrity, respectfully interacting with each other with cordiality and all the while aiming toward a frank discussion that would help everyone who might be interested to learn, grow, and flourish in gospel ministry.

Of basic importance for the two articles' interaction was the building of the authors' interpersonal familiarity and trust. It was a privilege to watch Matt, together with Pam and Warrick, progress from only knowing each other's names (if that much) as authors to becoming acquainted and moving toward friendship. The building of relational capital helped in dealing with perceived misrepresentations and with offering clarifications of each other's meanings and intentions. Clearing away that kind of intervening, thorny underbrush is difficult, but essential, work in the effort actually to meet and engage discussion partners.

My perception is that the authors were able to clear away at least most of those initial barriers of having no interpersonal relationships, several misperceptions, and inherent suspicions. The

resulting articles thus exhibit genuine engagement on various issues—albeit to limited degrees and perhaps only in halting fashion. Especially given their different starting points, the authors would have needed more time together, including informal relationship-building occasions, in order to refine their respective articles toward even deeper interaction. Further engagement, including with many other people, will be needed to sharpen the differences and particular topics to be explored.

Part of that engagement will be how you as readers understand the authors' emphases, reasoning, conclusions, and manner of interacting with the other author(s). As you assess each article, I expect that one type of resource upon which you will draw will be other authors' missiological works that you have found instructive. One example that may come to mind, particularly when working through the articles' discussions of missionary "professionalism" and the specific matter of language proficiency, is Ralph Winter's (and others') comments on missionary "amateurism" (Datema 2010; Lambert 2015). Winter characteristically articulated several helpful and nuanced distinctions that are pertinent to the articles' "professionalism" discussion. More generally, just as the authors have cited other works relative to their articles, no doubt you will do so as well—both consciously and unconsciously—as you read, reflect, and study.

From my vantage point, I perceive three interrelated spectrums along which the authors have operated in attempting to engage each other regarding important topics related to movement discussions. One spectrum involves authority or responsibility for determining what is "true," "valid," "right," or "biblical." Everyone agrees that God and his Word are the ultimate authority—but who should decide the truth, validity, rightness, or biblical character of particular practices, beliefs, methods, structures, or anything else? Wider Church leaders or local believers? Etic "experts" or emic believers? Theologians or practitioners? Does the question of who might be responsible even matter? Whoever the particular options might include, the spectrum of who bears authority or responsibility for deciding seems operative in these articles' respective analyses.

A second spectrum runs from closed to open notions of sets within which sensibilities of what is "true," "valid," "right," and "biblical" lie. Stated differently by way of just two examples, are there limited or expansive numbers of valid approaches to leadership training, and who qualify as "missionaries"? A more closed-set approach would see more limited options for both examples, whereas an open-set notion would accept wider ranges of possibilities.

Yet a third spectrum at work involves placing emphasis on teachings or translations of God's communication to people being "faithful," "appropriate," or "relevant." All three emphases or values are in fact necessary in biblical communication and gospel ministry (Shaw and Van Engen 2003). Even so, different mission thinkers tend to lean toward one end of the spectrum (faithfulness) or the other (relevance). I suggest that each of the two articles—while valuing all three emphases of "faithfulness," "appropriateness," and "relevance" of gospel ministry—places distinctive emphasis in the direction of particular sections on a faithful-appropriate-relevant spectrum.

Again, I see all three spectrums just sketched—responsibility for determining what is "valid" or "biblical," closed to open (limited to unlimited) options, and faithful-appropriate-relevant ministry—simultaneously operative in the Rhodes and Arlund-Warrick articles. Analyzing where on each spectrum each article might place particular emphasis could help understand more clearly the articles' points of genuine engagement or lack thereof.

In the end, the hopes of the authors and the GME editorial team are that these two carefully crafted articles related to discussing movements and movements-methodologies will contribute to ongoing, constructive interactions within the wider missions community. Reader feedback will of course be welcome.

J. N. Manokaran's moving personal tribute to Dr. K. Rajendran, who was recently gathered to other saints who have gone before us and groan with anticipation for the final resurrection, testifies to the deep sharpening that Rajendran contributed to Manokaran himself and to many others. Manokaran's piece joins other tributes to a devoted and widely effective gospel servant (WEA 2022), thus encouraging all of us to learn much from Rajendran's life that was well lived. Using the example of Christian-Muslim relations in Chicago, Mike Urton encourages Christians everywhere to face whatever fears we might have regarding Muslim acquaintances and move toward actually engaging them as fellow human beings who, like all other people, need the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Contributions by Jim Harries and Christopher Sadowitz discuss aspects of "Vulnerable Mission," a theme addressed several times before in GME. Harries challenges Christian missionaries aligned with economic power—specifically Westerners working in Africa—to try and disentangle their ministries (and their African acquaintances) from such associations by operating within indigenous languages and resources. Sadowitz draws on his years of service in Japan to make comparisons between how the New Testament Corinthian Christians and today's Christian mission organizations and missionaries (including himself) unconsciously exhibit an alignment with societal values at the expense of Christian distinctives of humility and service.

This issue's challenges from mission history come from Steven Estes and from Derek Seipp and Jeff Kwon. Estes, now a retired long-term U.S. Protestant missionary in Argentina, passes along the challenges he has received from studying Jesuit history—a long and colorful tradition of which Estes earlier had been blissfully ignorant. Estes hopes his article offers an exhortation that "stimulates respect for mission societies and attracts courageous recruits for missionary service" (64). Seipp and Kwon trace the development and implementation of the much-discussed Nevius-Ross strategy in Korean Protestant history, coincidentally pointing to one approach to reconciling today's so-called traditional and movement methodologies, as discussed by the Arlund-Farah and Rhodes articles.

This issue's three book reviews have their own sharpening effects. The books discussed cover a wide range of topics: claims of scientific proofs and paths toward religious belief, Christian conversions of Chinese students in Korea, and implementing Christian management principles in complex contemporary societies. Readers should find both the reviews and the books examined stimulating, fresh, and constructive for equipping others.

When "iron sharpens iron," discomfort and even pain are inevitable. Constructive growth should occur as well. May this issue provide helpful stimulation, challenge, and encouragement to you the readers and those whom you serve.

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Discussing and Catalyzing Movements:
An Invitation to Research, Sacrifice, and Commitment

Pam Arlund and Warrick Farah

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Abstract

As a global discussion and a significantly large phenomenon in the world today, church planting movements (CPM) or disciple making movements (DMM) have attracted much attention and enthusiasm in the missions community. They are widely accepted, and many different agencies have adopted movemental approaches to ministry in the past two decades. However, there is also a minority view of detractors who disagree with the voluminous case studies and published literature on movements. This article responds to some of those critics—represented here by the recently published *No Shortcut to Success*—by engaging that book's important critiques but also what this article's authors believe to be misinformation and ambiguous logic inherent in the book's arguments. The authors hope that this approach will foster a helpful, constructive, and ongoing dialogue on movements missiology for the missions community.

Key Words: Church Planting Movements, Communal Intelligence, Constructive Missiology, Disciple Making Movements, Motus Dei, networks

Introduction

Earlier this year, *No Shortcut to Success: A Manifesto for Modern Missions* (Rhodes 2022a) was published. Dave Coles contributed a critical review of the book that represented the perspectives of many who are engaging church planting movements (Coles 2022). Coles had also previously published a chapter entitled, "Addressing Theological and Missiological Objections to CPM/DMM" (Coles 2021) that anticipated many of the objections in *No Shortcut*. We need not repeat those responses and analyses here. Instead, we—this article's co-authors who write as part of the facilitation team of the Motus Dei Network, described below—would like to take a step back and engage the approach of *No Shortcut* in a way that will facilitate the wider discussion about church planting movements and disciple making movements, particularly in the Western missions conversation.

Movemental approaches to disciple making and church planting perhaps represent the majority of approaches in evangelical missions today. In addressing this issue, *No Shortcut* makes assertions about movements that might appear reasonable at first reading but, we believe, are not based in real world movements' theology and practice. Furthermore, the evaluative logic inherent in *No Shortcut* attempts to paint church planting movements in a black/white, valid/invalid framework. Because we desire that the work of God not be hindered by such misunderstandings, we are dialoguing as fellow workers and partners. We long for the whole Church to be part of the joy and honor of making disciples and transforming communities for the glory of God among the least, the last, and the lost.

The Motus Dei Network

Because we are both facilitators of Motus Dei, an introduction to our network should explain the context for this article. The Motus Dei Network (Farah 2020) exists for discussions such as the ones this article, together with this issue's corresponding article by the author of *No Shortcut*, Matt

Rhodes (Rhodes 2022b), seeks to encourage. Motus Dei is an informal, trust-based network of movement catalysts, missionaries, pastors, theologians, and mission leaders. Participants include men and women, from the Global North and the Global South, who engage in conversation and research on the current movement phenomenon. The first comprehensive book put out by our network was *Motus Dei: The Movement of God to Disciple the Nations* (Farah 2021a). Most of us who participate in Motus Dei do so because we want to improve the nature of the discourse about movements and learn from what God is doing in movements today. As a result, we have undertaken both biblical and field research rooted in theology, sociology, linguistics, anthropology, statistics, and experience. Throughout this process, from beginning to end, Motus Dei seeks to place the resulting analysis and missiology under the guidance and authority of Scripture.

Some Motus Dei members have a natural and healthy skepticism about what they read in movements literature. As is true in any social occurrence, some of us have heard poor presentations of movements that left us wondering about the legitimacy of the claims made. At other times and from different audiences, we have witnessed unnecessary hyperbole and polarizing attack. Some of these discussions in the missions community, both pro-movement and anti-movement, incorrectly imply that there are only two binary choices in this discussion: movements or traditional missions. Our contention is that there are not simply two polar opposites of ministry. In reality, there is an entire array of potential missions approaches available to practitioners. Motus Dei members vary in their principled approaches to mission and strive to have significant, productive interaction with others also seeking to learn, grow, and disciple the nations with the love of Jesus.

There is much nuance and space in the Motus Dei conversation about missions practice today. This discussion is not an “either-or” space, and we hope that others will join in this collegial and growing dialogue. We pool together the “communal intelligence” (Farah 2021b) and maturity of a wide range of practitioners willing to ask hard questions, research, and grow together. Instead of criticizing, we endeavor to be curious, to seek to understand first. We do not advocate for our approaches by diminishing others. We still have much more to learn, and we discourage both sensationalism and condemnation.

Ambiguous Arguments in Popular Critiques of Movements

Having explained the context from which we write, we now return to the discussion of *No Shortcut*. Those not involved in movements might not realize what many missiologists and movement-engaging missionaries immediately recognize when reading *No Shortcut*: the book conflates ideas that are not necessarily compatible. In particular, ambiguous critical assessments about church planting movements and disciple making movements are levied that could be made of poor missions work done by *any* missionary, even if that missionary were not operating in an ethos of multiplication.

It seems to us that *No Shortcut* makes ambiguous arguments because the book does not include phenomenological research into movements. The best mission analysis includes critiques based on real-world phenomena. A concern for the truth presupposes that we are talking about actual reality, not simply abstract concepts or opinions that people have (pro or con) about movements. In other words, faithful theological critique of movements better involves the actual lived experiences of those in movements. We understand that engaging real-life experiences makes an overarching evaluation of movements difficult—but that is precisely the point. Without empirical observation, one can easily create a straw man for critique. Such a straw man is what *No Shortcut* feels like to

many who are actually involved in movements. Although *No Shortcut* does cite a few research reports related to movements (such as the Bhojpuri movement; see Rhodes 2022a, 59ff), it does not adequately describe the vast diversity of movement approaches in practice today. It is unwise to make broad assertions about movements based on a limited bibliography and data set (and the same could be said for movement proponents).

Furthermore, *No Shortcut* aims to promote Western missionary "professionalism" and makes a number of appropriate and uncontroversial assertions about missions done poorly. However, to imply, as *No Shortcut* does, that these poor practices are carried out primarily by movement practitioners is misleading.

Language Proficiency

The first example of an ambiguous argument in *No Shortcut* that says nothing about the inherent value of movements is the argument that missionaries ought to learn language and do Bible translation work (Rhodes 2022a, 35ff). We agree with this value. I (Pam) as a movements practitioner earned a PhD in Linguistics and began the process of Bible translation, alongside learning three local languages. In our experience, the overwhelming majority of movements trainings emphasize the need for language proficiency. Furthermore, many effective expatriate catalysts that I (Warrick) have observed have been highly proficient in the language they have learned for service.

For expatriate catalysts who have started movements, language proficiency has been a given, and this topic is not germane to the conversation. The author of *No Shortcut* claims that he will continue to critique "movement methodologies" until "language mastery" is a major concern (Rhodes 2022b, 24). But this critique is no more relevant to movements than it is to other missions conversations. Rhodes argues that much movements literature is silent on the topic of language learning (Rhodes 2022b, 24). Yet this is because language learning to a high proficiency level is an *a priori* assumption among the vast majority of movements practitioners.

No Shortcut also attempts to connect a lack of an emphasis on language learning to the concept of the "non-residential missionary" (Rhodes 2022a, 67, 143-144). Some CPM ideas were birthed in a model in which language learning was unimportant because the Western expatriate missionary was not the center of the work (more on this later). However, the non-residential missionary concept is not inherent to movement thinking nor even exclusive to it. Additionally, most movements are started by other movements: in other words, they were started by near-cultural indigenous movement catalysts who already spoke the local language, not Western expatriate missionaries!

Some missionaries do try to bypass the role of language learning (and of course mission is a team effort, and some roles in the broader work require less language fluency than others). However, avoiding language learning can be just as true of workers doing traditional church planting as of those committed to movements. Many missionaries have failed to learn language through lack of effort, a weak theology of contextualization that led them not to prioritize it, or a feeling that it was not necessary because some people spoke an international language such as English. In this last instance, some have even gathered English-speaking new believers into an expatriate congregation in order for them to be exposed to expository preaching. This approach could also be easily labeled as a type of "shortcut" to ministry success. In any case, we agree that

language proficiency is an essential aspect of cross-cultural ministry, movement-focused or otherwise.

Missionary Professionalism

The second ambiguous argument made by *No Shortcut* is the need for professionalism in missions (Rhodes 2022a, 35ff). We entirely agree that being a missionary is difficult and highly skilled work that requires much training and dedication. However, many people *not* committed to movements also bypass training and engage in mission work with little to no regard for professionalism.

In addition, the Majority World churches that are being equipped and sent out through movements is significant. Their training is often not through accredited Bible colleges or seminaries. While *No Shortcut* states that "a degree in missions" is not required for missionaries (Rhodes 2022a, 176), North American churches in particular need to be extremely careful not to promote a universality of "professional" standards formed in highly affluent and educated Western contexts, elevated standards that *No Shortcut* implies.

Jesus trained unlearned fishermen: this astonished some (Acts 4:13). He equipped them as they walked on the road, as they sat and ate, and as he taught crowds. Sometimes Jesus also taught in the synagogues and in the Temple, but that was not the only way he equipped his disciples. Movement practitioners seek to equip fellow workers by emulating a wide variety of the training methods Jesus used. Working with someone in a shepherd-disciple or guide-apprentice role is a tried-and-true method of achieving spiritual depth and competency for ministry. Such life-on-life equipping is clearly not the only way, but it has both biblical and historical precedent.

Obviously neither Jesus nor any of the original Apostles established anything like a modern Bible college or seminary. That does not mean those models from Western societies are wrong, but those models of theological education are shaped by a specific history and are just some among many possible models of theologically equipping church leaders. (Missiologists have approached the need for higher level theological training for movements in various ways. See for example the accredited *Master of Arts in a Missiology of Movements* (Ephesiology Master Classes 2021).)

Discipleship Pace

The third ambiguous argument is *No Shortcut's* focus on the pace of ministry. We wholeheartedly agree that it is correct not to emphasize rapidity and judge success based on numbers. The standard for ministry should be the exaltation of Jesus Christ and never an obsession with speed or statistics. While *No Shortcut* acknowledges that quick growth occurred in the early church (Rhodes 2022a, 72), the book's overwhelming conviction emphasizes a "slow, thorough path" (Rhodes 2022a, 48) of ministry. By contrast, we do not consider the pace of ministry an appropriate focus. Debating "slow" vs "fast" does not seem particularly beneficial. We should not sacrifice quality for quantity: God cares about both. He loves an abundance of fruitfulness (Ott 2019, 103–117).

However, *No Shortcut* quotes verses from Scripture pointing out the painstaking work needed for laying foundations—but fails even to acknowledge 2 Thessalonians 3:1: "Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you…." Paul seems to be saying that he has experienced rapid growth and longs for more rapid growth. Furthermore, Luke does not hesitate to use the words "grow," "multiply," and "increase" to describe the spread of the gospel (Acts 6:1, 7; 9:31; 12:24; 13:49; 16:5; 19:20). He also uses modifiers such as "greatly" (6:7), "daily" (16:5), and "mightily" (19:20) to describe the

multiplying nature of the early Jesus movement. Given these various examples from Scripture, movement leaders do not aim for speed, but they do embrace speed when it happens. The biblical difference is crucial.

The argument about pace ultimately says nothing about church planting movements *per se*. We entirely agree that Jesus spent time investing in a few, there should be careful instruction, seasoned leaders ought to be raised up, and all believers should have access to spiritually gifted teachers. Mature movement practitioners show high concern and regard for healthy churches that reflect New Testament life and practice. It is true that not all movements are healthy, but then neither were all New Testament churches, and neither are all "slow, thorough" churches today. Paul comments in Galatians 1:6 that the church there actually shocked him by how quickly it had turned away from what he had taught them. This sad falling away sometimes happens in church planting of any kind, whether movement churches or "legacy" churches (a previously established church that meets in a building). To pretend otherwise would be disingenuous.

In our experience, movement practitioners practice deep life-on-life teaching, spending long periods of time with those they teach both formally and informally, helping them to follow Jesus deeply. In fact, most movement practitioners often quote some version of the phrase, "Go slow first to go fast later." This approach emphasizes the need for long-term shepherding relationships and the absence of any shortcut to spiritual maturity.

Statistical Reporting

The fourth ambiguous argument relates to statistics. *No Shortcut* offers this uncontroversial claim: "Scriptural principles are more important than numbers" (Rhodes 2022a, 55). Amen. We agree about the need for scrutiny of numbers and greater reliability. Accuracy in reporting should be a high priority. Yet again, however, *No Shortcut's* argument about statistics presents another example of ambiguity: the amplification of impact tempts *all* ministries. Just as denominations count churches and individual churches count their members (which some do better than others), movement practitioners count their churches and disciples. Inaccuracies should be adjusted, and ministries should be held accountable.

No Shortcut devotes nine pages of anecdotal observations that question a very small amount of the data about movements (Rhodes 2022a, 57–65). Personally, I (Warrick) have heard of movement numbers that have been revised, both numbers over-reported and numbers *under-reported*. Some rumors of movements have been hearsay and thus never entered the 24:14 Coalition movements database (24:14 2022) to begin with. I also have questions concerning one report of a current movement (and am thus waiting for more information). In any case, the use of statistics and metrics in ministry is not wrong *per se*, as Luke would remind us. We agree with *No Shortcut* that no one should boast as if numerical growth easily measures success or that greater numbers clearly evidence God's blessing on a ministry. We should all strive for accuracy in reporting and avoid the triumphalism that sometimes accompanies great works of God (in both legacy churches and in movements). Movement advocates should not promote their missiology primarily because it leads to greater numerical success, but because they consider it biblical and see it faithfully extending the transformative ministry of Jesus to the nations.

Missiological Values Geared Towards Multiplication

Although these ambiguous arguments in *No Shortcut* do not actually evaluate movements, some values of movement-focused missionaries do seem to be in tension with the values in *No Shortcut*.

De-centering the Expatriate Missionary

The first of these concerns the role of the Western expatriate missionary. We agree that the Western missionary still has a role to play. This is because *every people group* has a role to play in the global mission of God to redeem the nations for himself. However, *No Shortcut* hardly mentions the role of the indigenous disciple-maker (Rhodes 2022a, 198–99). This lack is striking because mission professionals today (whether traditional, movement-oriented, in-between, or otherwise) all seem to acknowledge the importance of non-Western workers, especially those indigenous or near-culture to their contexts. In this new era of missions (Steffen 2011), ministers from outside the West play a larger role in shaping the mission agenda than do Western missionaries. The colonial construct of mission, "from the West to the rest," has been replaced by "from everywhere to everywhere."

In movements, the Western expatriate missionary is de-centered from the story. We cannot assume that every Western church planter can, will, or even should play an apostolic role similar to the Apostle Paul. Most movements today are started by other movements and led entirely by catalysts from the Global South. Western church planters may play the role of coaching and mentoring, a catalytic role that empowers and shepherds indigenous harvest laborers (Miller 2015; 2022). They may also listen, serve, and learn from Majority World movement catalysts (cf. Hatley 2015). A bedrock understanding of the current era of missions states that partnership with local and near-culture believers around the world is more important than ever. Any present-day Western missionary needs the ability to work in an increasingly complex, globalized, and empowered post-colonial world.

Biblical Missiology for Twenty-First Century Realities

Related to this post-colonial reality is a second movemental value that seems in conflict with *No Shortcut*, namely the latter's championing of missions examples from the nineteenth century. We feel that the present reality of twenty-first-century life makes old Western missionary examples, such as those offered in *No Shortcut*, misapplied. We respect and honor the pioneers in missions and acknowledge we have much to learn from them. However, the time in which we live differs drastically from that of William Carey (1782-1834), Adoniram Judson (1788-1850), and Hudson Taylor (1832-1905). It is actually quite telling that *No Shortcut* offers no contemporary examples of successful missionaries of the last few decades to offer as models or case studies for multiplying churches among the unreached today.

We acknowledge that Rhodes visited false rumors movements that he obviously did not find (Rhodes 2022a, 65). Nevertheless, the fact remains that he has never visited a movement and made appreciative inquiry firsthand. Despite his attempts to discredit much of the movements discourse, he claims to be "pro-multiplication" (Rhodes 2022b, 24) but never offers a theological rationale or a recent case study to explain how to get to movement. We refer readers to *Motus Dei* for both biblical models and contemporary examples of multiplication that lead to movements (Farah 2021a).

Disciples and Churches Are Multiplicative by Nature

Movement practitioners tend not to think in terms of linear patterns. However, *No Shortcut* demonstrates linear thinking in statements like this: “We must focus first on planting healthy churches and only secondly on each church’s capacity to multiply” (Rhodes 2022a, 104). Actually, following a methodology like *No Shortcut* might strip the multiplication potential out of disciples and churches. Part of being a healthy disciple and a healthy church is reproduction and multiplication (Mt. 4:18; Jn. 12:24; 2 Tim. 2:22). Therefore, such reproduction and multiplication should be inherent in the nature of discipleship, not only when an entire church reaches a particular healthy status. Disciples and churches are by nature part of the *motus Dei* and geared towards movement.

In church planting, focusing on a “finished product” has limitations that forces a static practice and ecclesiology (see important conversations on adaptive ecclesiology in *Motus Dei* (Farah 2021a)). In contrast, a more inductive mode to disciple-making seen in movement approaches honors the process and context. In many instances in Scripture, new believers and churches are released for ministry (Jn. 4:39; Lk. 10:1). The demoniac in Mark 5 had at most a few hours of instruction before being told to go share his story with others. Paul sometimes spent years with churches, but other times he only spent weeks or even days with churches before he left and those churches needed to function without his physical presence (cf. Ott 2021, 93–112).

No Shortcut’s linear mentality is challenged by the holistic, dynamic approach of Jesus and the record of apostolic work seen in the early churches. The New Testament never gives any indication that churches or believers were to be “mature” prior to engaging in ministry. Instead, we see new disciples serving and multiplying immediately as they grew towards maturity in their head, hearts, and hands—all at the same time.

“Obedient-Faith-and-No-Maturity-without-Ministry” Discipleship

No Shortcut criticizes the concept of “obedience-based discipleship” and argues that faith should be the foundation of spiritual growth (Rhodes 2022a, 97). Much of this pseudo disagreement is rooted in semantics. The phrase “obedience-based discipleship” seems to generate misunderstandings as evidenced by *No Shortcut*. I (Pam) use the term “obedience *focused*” discipleship and explain elsewhere how I feel it can lead to great maturity in disciple making (Arlund and Njagi 2022).

We might also suggest the less-catchy “*obedient-faith-and-no-maturity-without-ministry*” kind of disciple-making orientation for spiritual growth—where faith in Christ is the foundation. In other words, one of the many strengths of movement approaches involves opportunity and accountability for early experience in ministry. This movemental approach lays the necessary groundwork for a Spirit-guided process of growth that produces much more ministry activity (and maturity!) than approaches that delay ministry activity until some arbitrary threshold of maturity has been crossed. Bill Hull writes: “The most common mistake made by well-intentioned leaders, particularly in the Global North, is turning discipleship into a curriculum that a serious disciple completes and graduates from” (Hull 2006, 36). A key feature of movements is early and consistent ministry activity that helps the disciple and church both multiply and grow in maturity.

Promoting a Wider and Deeper Engagement in Movements

Those curious about movements would do well first to enter the wider discussion and engage movements in the midst of real-world field realities if possible. No two movements are the same.

If visiting a movement is not possible, we advise exploring other case studies of movements and important books on the topic. Unfortunately, *No Shortcut* omits incredibly valuable works that add much critical thinking to the movements conversation and counter the arguments of *No Shortcut* in significant ways. A very small sample of these omissions, published *prior* to *No Shortcut*, include:

- *Ephesiology: The Study of the Ephesian Movement* (Cooper 2020),
- *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements* (Hirsch 2016),
- *The Wheel Model: Catalyzing Sustainable Church Multiplication Movements* (Schattner 2014),
- *The Leadership Factor in Church Planting Movements* (Prinz 2016),
- *Focus on Fruit!: Movement Case Studies and Fruitful Practices* (Larsen 2018),
- *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Ott and Wilson 2011),
- *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Payne 2009), and
- studies on the importance of theological education in movements (Lafferty 2020).

This handful of resources make many of *No Shortcut's* critiques appear outdated and misplaced (Cooper 2022). For instance, *No Shortcut* makes the claim that movements have an "aversion to teaching" (Rhodes 2022a, 78). Some early descriptions of movements noted by *No Shortcut* emphasized inductive Bible study alongside proclamational evangelism and may appear to convey this alleged "aversion." In reality, many CPMs/DMMs could be considered "teaching movements" because of all the training events for leaders and new disciples. Perhaps the movements conversation needs to do a better job highlighting this emphasis, and we should not fault *No Shortcut* for this shortcoming.

However, much healthy conversation about movement approaches is already occurring, not only on this "teaching" issue but on other issues as well. See for instance, "Continuing the Conversation on 'Proclamational' DBS: Four Reflections from the Motus Dei Network" (Antonio 2022). In light of this accessible conversation and others like it, we wish *No Shortcut to Success: A Manifesto for Modern Missions* would have been less "manifesto" and more dialogical and constructive in nature, especially considering the shortcomings we have highlighted.

We believe there are many valid theological models of church planting (Steffen 2011; Payne 2009). We do respect *No Shortcut's* approach. But movements also offer a number of theologically robust approaches that might be better described as *complementary* compared to *No Shortcut's* approach and not simply *wrong* (assuming they are described correctly—which we do not think *No Shortcut* does). Many perspectives and approaches are needed to faithfully disciple the nations because God's world is beautifully complex. This interaction about movements is not a debate we are trying to "win," and we plead for more nuance and charity as the conversation matures.

Towards Constructive Dialogue on Movements

At this point it seems appropriate to "zoom out" and look at this wider discussion in the field of not just Western missions but of World Christianity. Movements are a huge phenomenon in missions history, but most Western missionaries will probably never start a movement (although that does not mean they should not try and support those who are). We are glad, however, that so

many missionaries and Christians from all over the world are recognizing biblically that our faith is by nature movemental. In any case, the straw man arguments discussed so far have shown that constructive dialogue on movements can be elusive. We would like to propose some simple guidelines for discussion that would be productive, honoring, and kind, with the goal to improve approaches to discipleship and church planting among the least-reached. These guidelines may build collegiality within the global missions community while making space for honest disagreements among brothers and sisters in Christ.

Represent Fairly and Graciously

Earlier this year Tim Keller tweeted, "Never describe the view of an opponent in a way he or she will not own. Rather describe their view so they say, 'I couldn't have put it better myself.' Only then should you proceed to refute the view. If instead you caricature your opponent—you persuade no one" (Keller 2022). As we hope to have demonstrated, it is not too difficult to find or create caricatures of movements today. It is, however, difficult to describe them, especially since they are so diverse and complex, grounded in complex real-world phenomena as they are. We thus do not believe that missiological discussions about movements are simply debates about theology, as if people are either wrong or right. Differences matter, but they should be represented fairly and not exaggerated.

For example, there has sometimes been theological hyperbole and misrepresentation of others' viewpoints in movement discussions. Mark Dever, president of 9Marks (9Marks 2022), published and also penned the forward to *No Shortcut*. In an interview available on Youtube, Dever responded to the following question:

> Interviewer: [What are] your thoughts on church planting movements? Because that is the overwhelming, head-of-the-pack missions methodology out there today.
>
> Dever: …I don't trust it as far as I can throw it… because when you are sloppy in defining what a church is, then you will be sloppy defining what a Christian is, and people will go to hell because of your errors. So I take their motives as good; I take their work as sinister… because… Satan likes to appear as an angel of light (Radius International 2019).

Unfortunately, movements practitioners have also demonized other approaches. Paul and David Watson have claimed that "Satan is at work in these extraction methodologies" (Watson and Watson 2014, 108). While obviously ungracious and insulting, these examples represent a needlessly antagonistic way to speak of others who are involved in mission. We are wise to turn down the heat and to heed these words, "If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other" (Gal. 5:15).

Make Space for Diverse Approaches

Due to their diversity and complexity, it is inappropriate to speak of movements in the binary term of "validity" (Rhodes 2022b, 18), as if they are either valid or invalid. Such a framework eventually turns the conversation into a case of missiological policing. It is more constructive to say that there is space for diverse approaches in mission. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2). We urge a collaboration of all workers in the harvest, whether their approaches agree or not. The reality is that missionaries are all along a variety of methodologies including "traditional" and "movement"—and God is working through many of them. Among this diversity,

movement and traditional approaches add their own strengths, complementing each other as well as other approaches. Rather than seeking to create a binary valid/invalid framework which eventually polarizes the discourse between movement and traditional methodologies, we encourage curiosity and celebration wherever there is genuine fruit for the Kingdom. We can all testify to God's work in our midst because he works in many ways to save the lost, build his Church, and transform communities for his glory.

Honor the Global Church

The CPM/DMM missiological discourse is only tangentially related to Western missions and is better understood as a conversation in the field of World Christianity. We need to make sure that our discussions honor the global Church. Separating our discourse from the growing worldwide body of Christ impoverishes the body and denies it of the beauty of diverse viewpoints. Right now, movement catalysts from the Global South are laboring tirelessly and suffering many hardships to birth new movements to Christ. Their voices need to be highlighted.

Practice Deep Theological Reflection in Light of the Work of God

The recent movements phenomenon has created an age of rediscovery, similar to Acts 15 when Jewish church leaders reflected on the Holy Spirit's work among the Gentiles, which challenged their hermeneutics, theology, and practice of mission. In this sense, movements may be thought of as an opportunity to recalibrate ministry in today's new era back to the person of Jesus Christ and the disciple-making principles taught by the Bible. It is an exciting time, but there is still much to learn—and undoubtedly movement missiology will continue to evolve and grow. Like with any discourse, we recognize there will always be detractors. Perhaps inadvertently, books like *No Shortcut* reveal just how significant and important the movements conversation has become in the missions community. To that end, Motus Dei will continue to coordinate scholarly research on global movements in order to play its part in promoting quality missiology and effective missional praxis for the Church among all nations.

Conclusion

Movement approaches have great diversity. Those implementing movements believe movement principles to be closer to the New Testament than traditional church planting methodologies. They also believe that movements better reflect the missions agenda in the Global South and the posture of Western missionaries in today's post-colonial world. Perhaps it is not inappropriate to look at church planting movements as a more "normal" approach to mission rather than as something new or innovative.

Earlier this year, before the editor of *Global Missiology* asked us to contribute this article about improving today's discussions about movements, I (Warrick) interviewed a movement catalyst. This South Asian worker has labored many years with his colleagues to start a movement that has planted many churches. They have also transformed many communities and suffered much persecution. I asked him what he would like the Church in the Global North to know about catalyzing church planting movements. He replied:

> Movement is not cheap; it is costly. Movement is not a machine. I think the problem happens in the West that people try to understand mechanically, and they think they can set apart the parts of it, and how everything works together. It's not a machine, there are no technical issues involved. It's the work of the Holy Spirit and it requires a lot of sacrifice

and lots of commitment. [*Warrick: So would you say there is no shortcut to success?*] There is no shortcut to success. Yes. But I mean, movement is not 'a success'. It is what the Great Commission is. The Great Commission itself is a movement. I think the movement is hidden in the Great Commission when Jesus said, 'go and make disciples'. As long as you do, you end up starting a movement.

At the end of the day, there truly is no shortcut to starting movements or to any Jesus-centered ministry that bears the approval of God (1 Cor. 3:13). Dear Lord, grant us the research, sacrifice, and commitment needed to multiply transformational churches for your glory among all the nations. In Jesus's name, *Amen*.

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Advancing Conversations about Proclamational and Movements Methodologies

Matt Rhodes

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Abstract

Movements methodologies have spread throughout much of today's missions world. The prevalence of these methods necessitates conversation about their validity. This article provides constructive critique of movements methodologies, addresses responses to previous critique, and suggests paths for conversation going forward.

Key Words: Church Planting Movements, Disciple Making Movements, language acquisition, Proclamational Missions

Introduction

Missionaries speak about missiology because missiology matters and because we have much to learn from each other. So it caught my attention when movements-advocate Michael Cooper claimed in a review of my book, *No Shortcut to Success* (Rhodes 2022), that "9Marks [(9Marks 2022)] adherents and CPM/DMM advocates are talking past each other" (Cooper 2022). Could discussions that analyze movements have devolved into opposing echo chambers, talking past each other without hearing?

Certainly, heated debate has erupted over movements methodologies. I have seen large missions organizations dissolve partnerships over the issue. The kind of constructive conversation about movements methodologies that this article and the corresponding one in this issue of *Global Missiology* (Arlund and Farah 2022) are trying to facilitate is sorely needed.

Two starkly different reviews of *No Shortcut* were published in the April issue of *Global Missiology*. They are relevant to this discussion because *No Shortcut* critiques certain aspects of movements methodologies, and it is primarily its critique of movements methodologies which was controversial. Jackson Wu praised *No Shortcut* as "humble," a "tour de force" that "leaves few stones unturned" (Wu 2022). David Coles criticized it as making "groundless insinuations," "insulting" other points of view, and "desperately attempt[ing] to undermine *actual* reports of significant 'success'" (emphasis original; Coles 2022a). My task here is to respond and simultaneously to try to advance the conversation. So which review was correct?

Proclamational Missions

No Shortcut was not written primarily to critique movements methodologies (indeed, I attempt to honor their strengths) but to encourage professionalism in the missionary community. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to missions, I do believe best practices—and pitfalls—exist in parts of the missionary vocation. For the purposes of this article, I will summarize a *professional* approach as one which (1) embraces the necessity of "human" responsibilities including language-and-culture mastery, (2) focuses on long-term engagement and discipleship of unreached peoples, and (3) recognizes extensive, direct teaching by mature believers as part of the road to spiritual maturity. This last emphasis on direct teaching is often described as a *proclamational missiology* (Esler 2013).

No Shortcut argues that many types of missionary efforts today are unintentionally shortcutting the type of professionalism I have described above and offers constructive suggestions for how to return to healthier practices. Two chapters are devoted to addressing movements methodologies in particular, since they are more widespread than other methodologies today, and any weaknesses they have may have wider impact.

Coles on *No Shortcut*

If the purpose of a book review is to portray the book's essential character, Coles fails at a number of points. Here is a sampling:

- Coles claims I "cast doubt (without evidence)" on reported movements successes (Coles 2022a, 35). In fact, however, I spend nine pages providing extensive evidence for my concern that some reported movements numbers may be unreliable (Rhodes 2022, 57-65).

- Coles ends a separate, longer review of *No Shortcut* by warning:

> When Jesus healed a crippled woman on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10-17), the synagogue leader was indignant, and told the people, 'There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.' He believed his interpretation of Scripture to be so much better than others' that he refused to appreciate the mighty work of God in his day. May we not fall into the same error (Coles 2022b).

Clearly, Coles is likening my attitude in *No Shortcut* to the response of the synagogue leader. Is such a dark comparison accurate? I have many flaws, but I have never been indignant about anyone's healing or any other work of God. Additionally, I do not try to stop anyone ministering—rather, I hope to help people minister:

> I'm also writing for the missionaries who have given up so much for the cause of Christ. I want their efforts to succeed… I've been consistently humbled by the quality of the men, women, and even children I've had the privilege to work alongside, many of whose shoes I am not worthy to untie. If these insights contain some grain of truth—if they're not simply my own personal missions fad, of which I too will repent in another ten years—then I hope to bless these great men and women (Rhodes 2022, 21).

- Coles claims I assume a "paradigm that Western missionaries function as the primary proclaimers and gatekeepers of the gospel" (Coles 2022a, 36). In his longer review he adds, "... with statements like 'we must grow to trust their character and gifting before sending them out' (p. 198), [Rhodes] betrays that he still envisions Westerners being in paternalistic control. This ethnocentric assumption violates Jesus' teaching…" (Coles 2022b).

Do Coles's allegations of un-Christlike ethnocentrism and visions of paternalistic Western control portray me accurately? Here is the section in *No Shortcut* to which he is referring:

> Some national churches are already sending out qualified missionaries on their own. We should absolutely rejoice in this… A mature and gifted national missionary will almost certainly be more effective than you. But if [expatriate missionaries'] help is needed in mobilizing and sending him… [those expatriate missionaries will likely face] the same pragmatic hurdles they would face in planting churches among the unreached: *they must build relationships across enormous geographical, linguistic, and cultural divides.* When

> we go ourselves as church planters, we invest years in language and culture acquisition. Then we patiently teach, disciple, and observe leaders before we leave churches to stand on their own with their own indigenous leadership. If we invest this much care in raising up church leaders, should we not take a great deal of care in sending out *church planters*? We must know their language and culture well enough to build close relationships, and in these relationships—over time—we must grow to trust their character and gifting before sending them out… (emphases original; Rhodes 2022, 198–199).

There is no paternalistic Western control in these words. I prefer national missionaries, and I prefer nationals to control the sending of those missionaries. But when expatriates (Western *or* non-Western) are involved, they should exercise the same cautions they would when appointing *anyone* to ministry.

- Coles claims I see slow ministry as "inherently more biblical than rapid ministry" (Coles 2022a, 36)—but such a claim is untrue: "I love CPM-style practitioners' desire for lots of people to come to Christ—and quickly... the church *did* grow quickly in the book of Acts" (emphasis original; Rhodes 2022, 72). My clear concern is not to promote slow growth but to avoid *overemphasis* on rapid growth and to avoid growth timelines that become so rapid that teaching and discipleship are short-changed.

- Coles writes, "In ironic contrast, [Rhodes] acknowledges that the church planting models he labels as 'shortcuts' (CPM and DMM) have in fact resulted in a proliferation of success stories that fill bookstores" (Coles 2022a, 35). But he takes the quote badly out of context. Neither this quote nor the nearby text is specifically discussing CPM or DMM—other methods also concern me—and my quote clearly *does not* endorse the reliability of the success stories in question, as he implies. I actually say, "Despite the proliferation of success stories that fill bookstores and various organizations' fundraising letters, our increasing acceptance of amateurism has significantly reduced our effectiveness" (Rhodes 2022, 41).

- Coles claims I am advocating a primarily "apologetic approach," that "for centuries… has borne *very little* fruit" in unreached settings (emphasis original; Coles 2022a, 36). I am less pessimistic than Coles is about the role of apologetics, but I *never* imply it is more than one part of holistic approach to evangelism. I spend pages discussing the importance of relationships in evangelism (Rhodes 2022, 126, 169-171). I acknowledge that the ideas that drive us most profoundly are not apologetics arguments—they are *stories* we believe about God and ourselves (Rhodes 2022, 163)—and that the most important ideas are simple ("God loves you"), not complex (Rhodes 2022, 40).

Clearly, conversation is not yet taking place, at least regarding what *No Shortcut* seeks to address. Coles's objections take issue with assertions and ideas I neither say nor believe. My concern is not just that Coles has misunderstood me but that such mischaracterizations may interfere with the wider conversation. People are less likely to hear me after I have been described as having ethnocentric assumptions, positioning Westerners in paternalistic control, and believing slow ministry is inherently more biblical. But I am none of those things, so I advise those who are interested in conversation to read carefully what I have written. Whether or not one agrees, reading what I have actually written will give a wise way to engage in the conversation that follows.

Where does the conversation go from here? I offer my thoughts below.

Interacting with Critique

A part of Coles's concern seems to be a feeling that critiques of movements methodologies are too negative. This concern is not merely theoretical: suggesting someone is raising the "heat" is often enough to cut off missiological conversation altogether, and as noted earlier missions organizations have stopped working together after feeling conversations about movements methodologies had grown too negative. Any charges of negativity can quickly become the primary focus of conversation.

In this case, I am confused about Coles's criteria for evaluating negativity. He has claimed my "ethnocentric assumptions violate Jesus's teaching" and that I want to put Westerners in "paternalistic control" (Coles 2022b). He has compared me to someone who tried to stop Jesus healing on the Sabbath. These are personal character critiques. Yet he objects to my use of softer language to critique systems of ideas as "consistently [using] insulting descriptors." It seems inconsistent for Coles to issue strong, personal critiques while characterizing my straightforward interaction with people's ideas as insulting. Still, Coles's charges must be evaluated carefully. If I am insulting people, however softly, healthy discussions are unlikely to occur. They are also unlikely to occur if people take offense when no insult—only critique—is offered.

So, have I insulted anyone? I *never* question anyone's character, intelligence, or value. I always assume the best about the motives of people I disagree with and even enjoin others to do the same (Rhodes 2022, 28, 51, 64). I certainly do not insult individuals. But do I, perhaps, insult people's ideas? Do I describe their ideas as stupid, or ill-motivated? The Gospel Coalition's review of *No Shortcut* notes, "While Rhodes names sources directly and identifies problems clearly, he does so without demonizing those he critiques. Identifying and critiquing problems is one thing; proposing solutions is another. But Rhodes doesn't disappoint. The bulk of *No Shortcut to Success* is a positive, biblical vision…" (Coleman 2022). Moreover, in *multiple* places (e.g., Rhodes 2022, 70, 72, 76, 82, 92, 95) I go out of my way to affirm aspects of movements methodologies. I critique practices I disagree with, but negative descriptors can be sincere warnings—rather than insults—if they are not used flippantly but in the context of a larger argument which gives evidence for their use. For example, Coles says it is insulting to describe movements methods as "silver-bullet" strategies. In fact, though, proponents of these methods have described them as "the most effective means in the world" (Garrison 2007, 195) to bring people to Christ, as "what God is doing... today" (Trousdale 2012, 17), and as so extraordinary that some "believe another 'Reformation' is underway" (Brown 2015). It is not "insulting" to warn about the "silver-bullet" nature of such claims. It is a warning to help young missionaries evaluate them soberly. If you think the warning unnecessary, our difference is only a difference of opinion. No insult has been offered.

Indeed, any full-length book will provide adequate material to cite single words or phrases which could seem insulting when pulled from their context. In a single article by Coles, he warns against "scoffers," "refusing to believe," "skepticism," and "[missing] out on the astonishing work of God" (Coles and Parks, 2019a). But Coles is not being insulting: he is presenting his concerns. I am glad he shared those concerns; now, if I disagree, I can explain why.

Missiological conversations can get far more intense than the current debate over movements methodologies. Recently, people on *both* sides of Insider-Movement conversations thought their detractors had altered the gospel itself. Regardless of how one evaluates such claims, controversies like these will inevitably arise, precisely because missiologists believe in the gospel's importance. Rather than viewing strong opinions as overly polemical—and essentially assuming serious errors

could not occur in missions today—we must labor to include such strong opinions in conversation and evaluate their substance. Interacting with critique can be painful and requires a thick skin. But conversations become sterile, and echo chambers form, when we only interact with our softest detractors. If missiology matters, we cannot afford to let that happen. Constructive conversation must include room for constructive critique; only through friction does iron sharpen iron.

So let's have these conversations with thick-skinned charity. I hope this article, together with the corresponding piece by Pam Arlund and Warrick Farah (Arlund and Farah 2022), can offer a constructive example of discussing movements missiologies. Arlund and Farah review *No Shortcut* from a movements methodologist's perspective while promoting the Motus Dei network and its self-titled book on movements methodologies (Farah, ed. 2021). They have been good conversation partners. I have enjoyed our discussion and will continue by interacting with their review. Its overall message is that I mischaracterize movements methodologies and issue outdated critiques.

Back to the Sources

Arlund and Farah provide a list of eight "incredibly valuable works" (Arlund and Farah 2022, 12). I do not cite. This list is produced as evidence that I have not adequately understood movements methodologies. Somewhat awkwardly, seven of these eight works never once cite any of the others, and the vast majority of contributions to the book *Motus Dei* (Farah, ed. 2021) never cite them either. Similarly, then, if my contribution fails to explicitly cite these works, I hope that will not be counted too heavily against it! Given the "voluminous… published literature on movements" which Arlund and Farah note (Arlund and Farah 2022, 5), it is not possible—in a book like *No Shortcut* that already quotes over 100 external sources—to explicitly cite each work each reviewer finds significant, and reviewers may raise the bar too high by assembling such lists after the fact. Public discussions of ideologies necessarily focus on the most influential contributions. Thus, I primarily cite "resources written by the known leaders and principal designers of these methods" (Rhodes 2022, 59). Arlund and Farah's list includes works that only exist as online PDFs (Prinz 2016) or are written for U.S.-American church settings (Hirsh 2016). In contrast, other sources that I quote extensively (e.g., Watson and Watson 2014) each have far more customer reviews (on Amazon and Goodreads) than all the works they cite put together and have been the foundation for movements trainings across the missions world.

Arlund and Farah also take issue with the missionary success stories I cite, arguing I draw extensively from "Western missionary examples" from "the nineteenth century" while offering "no contemporary examples" of success (Arlund and Farah 2022, 10). Is my missiology stuck in the 1800s? Perhaps I can ease their concerns: I know of many, many contemporary success stories. *No Shortcut* argues from older examples for two reasons. First, contemporary successes I point to will strike readers as unfamiliar and anecdotal, while even Arlund and Farah recognize and honor the old "pioneers" (Arlund and Farah 2022, 10). Second, I want to show how modern missiologies differ from past missiologies. If I differ with Arlund and Farah, it is only in my belief that older examples remain as relevant as recent ones. The world has changed, but human spiritual needs have not.

Speed and Sequentialism

Arlund and Farah disagree with my view that movements models place too much emphasis on speed (Arlund and Farah 2022, 8-9). Of course, no one *intentionally* bypasses scriptural patterns

for the sake of speed. But movements methodologies' first designers idealized streamlining church structures wherever scripturally possible (Rhodes 2022, 77–78). To the extent we follow their methodologies, we will inherit their emphasis on speed *whether we intend to or not*. Arlund, for example, warns against "violating the principle of speed," and her missiological decisions take into account "… a pragmatic question: How can the most number of people hear about Jesus in the shortest amount of time? Church-Planting Movements are the fastest-growing expression of Jesus on the planet today" (Arlund 2013, 17).

Here is where movements methodologies' emphasis on speed gets dangerous: if the early designers exegeted Scripture poorly—if they unintentionally jettisoned scriptural practices in their pursuit of speed—then we may inherit their errors.

No Shortcut describes in detail where I think these errors lie (Rhodes 2022, 67–107). I will summarize here by saying I believe Scripture shows that spiritual maturity and healthy ministry growth, like all maturity and healthy growth, largely come through processes we cannot bypass. *First* we learn language, *then* we can minister effectively. *First* we mature in Scripture, *then* we can lead. Movements methodologies tend to reject this belief as unhealthy "sequentialism" (Garrison 2007, 243; Arlund and Farah 2022, 11).

Statements like "go slow first to go fast later" (Arlund and Farah 2022, 9) are too vague to reassure me when movements literature is filled with statements extolling speed. Indeed, Kebreab's recent research of 129 movements primarily among unreached groups shows the average time between initial engagement of a people and reported arrival at "the movement stage" ("more than a hundred churches planted, four or more generations deep") is 42 months, with some movements only needing three months (Kebreab 2021, 31-32). If movements were to begin the day missionaries arrived, four generations in 42 months would require churches to grow and duplicate every ten months—far faster than the growth rate of the apostles' church in Acts (Rhodes 2022, 71–72). Four generations in three months would require duplication *every three weeks*.

Given these concerns, here is a clearer statement that might reassure me:

- New believers need significant time to mature before assuming any significant leadership responsibilities (1 Tim. 3:6; Tit. 1:9).

Movements proponents still argue the opposite (Farah 2022; Coles 2021, 44–45).

Here nuance is required. Arlund and Farah are correct to insist we can minister in a "shepherd-disciple or guide-apprentice role" (Arlund and Farah 2022, 8) and that spiritual maturation is not *linear*. They fail, however, to appreciate the ways in which it still is *progressive*. In scriptural shepherd-disciple relationships, new disciples had not progressed enough to have responsibility for several additional generations of disciples who were each simultaneously discipling several other generations of disciples. The hierarchy between Paul, Timothy, and the Ephesians was one of *gifting* and *office*:

- *Not*: mature shepherd → new disciple → new disciple → new disciple;
- *Instead*: mature apostle → mature evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5) → mature elder (1 Tim. 3:6) → mixed congregation.

Because growth is a process, proclamational missionaries believe both slowness and speed are dangerous at their extremes. Build too slow and growth will not happen (note that I am pro-multiplication). Build too fast and you might short-circuit essential growth processes. What is "too fast?" Scriptural practices are the only meaningful yardstick. To the extent I emphasize "a slow, thorough path" (Arlund and Farah 2022, 8), I do so because I am responding to missiologies that seem to bypass scriptural practices to achieve faster growth.

Perhaps the lens of "growth-as-a-process" can ease Arlund and Farah's (and Coles's) worry that I am placing Western missionaries at the center of missions. Since John Nevius, the wider missions community has prioritized indigenous church leadership. I have no interest in *Westerners* leading. I simply believe people should be discipled by *mature believers* before becoming leaders. And in most unengaged contexts—where mature indigenous believers do not yet exist—the task of raising up leaders will fall to outside missionaries. Of course, this paradigm is time-bound and I never imply that those missionaries must be *Westerners*. Thus *ecclesiological constructs* are at stake here, not the "colonial construct[s] of mission, 'From the West to the rest'" that Arlund and Farah warn against (Arlund and Farah 2022, 10). Similarly, I am confused by warnings that "North American churches in particular need to be extremely careful not to promote a universality of 'professional' standards formed in highly affluent and educated Western contexts, elevated standards that *No Shortcut* implies" (Arlund and Farah, 2022, 8). Most likely they have misunderstood me—otherwise, I would worry they might be underestimating our non-Western brothers and sisters. Every culture has people who can attain the standards I am advocating: long-term commitment, language-and-culture mastery, and scriptural depth. Academic orientation may help some, but many non-Western cultures are highly academic, and those that are not may bring other strengths to the table. Happily, more and more successful missionaries are non-Western!

Straw-man Portrayals?

Next, Arlund and Farah feel I mischaracterize movements methodologies' practices. Yet the ideas that concern me remain prevalent in movements literature.

For example, Arlund and Farah claim my concern about movement methodologies' limited emphasis on language acquisition is a mischaracterization (Arlund and Farah 2022, 7). Their acknowledgement of language acquisition as essential is a welcome step in the right direction, and I appreciate Arlund's own linguistic background. However, Arlund and Farah seem to feel language is adequately emphasized in the movements community. I see underemphasis of language in nearly all segments of the missions world, and the movements community is no exception. Movements literature as a whole is almost completely silent on the importance of language acquisition (*Motus Dei* continues this tradition); it also contains multiple denials of its importance and endorsements of working through translators (Rhodes 2022, 145–147). Perhaps Arlund and Farah define *proficiency* differently: the level of proficiency I am advocating *must* be strongly encouraged or it will not happen. It is safe to assume that most missionaries describe themselves as proficient—but most missionaries (movements proponents or not) are only able to follow simple conversations between mother-tongue speakers. Real mastery takes painstaking, nose-to-grindstone years. This standard contrasts with *Motus Dei's* report that the average movement begins experiencing explosive growth long before missionaries have a chance to reach meaningful levels of proficiency (Kebreab 2021, 31–32). What would reassure me more is for movement practitioners to affirm what they have historically denied (see Rhodes 2002, 145–147): "Missionaries are severely limited in ministry until achieving language-mastery and should usually

devote their first years on the field to full-time language acquisition." Arlund and Farah's article declines to do so. Until movements leaders begin to assert this kind of commitment, it will not be clear to me that my concerns about language mastery being shortchanged are mischaracterizations. Rather, Arlund and Farah's feeling that this is the case may only underscore our differences regarding the nature and importance of language mastery.

Similarly, Arlund and Farah suggest my concerns about movements methodologies' aversion to direct teaching are outdated (Arlund and Farah 2022, 12). Yet the essay they endorse in *Motus Dei* as having addressed my concerns repeats caricatures of direct teaching as "one-way lecture; one person talks and everyone else listens quietly" (Coles 2021, 43). That essay appreciatively quotes the Watsons' comment that "outsiders facilitate rather than teach" and endorses only the "non-directive biblical teaching" that Bible-study facilitators offer by asking questions (Coles 2021, 43). Other quotes from *Motus Dei* even portray direct teaching as overbearing: "Discovery style study encourages the group to ask questions… rather than having them rely on an expert to tell them what to believe" (Adams and Adams 2021, 320). Other recent sources repeat the point, advising that "Outsiders facilitate, rather than teach" (Watson 2019, 71, 73), and promoting discovery groups that are "facilitated (*not* taught)" (emphasis original; Coles and Parks 2019b, 318).

Facilitated "discovery" methods certainly have value, but the point of my critique was that movements methodologies' over-emphasis on simple, rapidly-reproducible methods leads them to promote "discovery" and undervalue direct teaching. For example, Arlund writes about a "9-year-old Bible storyteller [who] is the best preacher out of fifty house churches in that area." This nine-year-old's stories—and her mother's facilitative questions—help "seekers and new believers" to feed a network of churches spiritually (Arlund 2013, 16–17). Doubtless there is more to the story than Arlund's article reveals, but her unqualified appreciation of this story—and omission of further details—clearly shows that she places less value on direct teaching than I would. Naturally, then, Arlund and Farah will see my concerns as straw men, but that may only underscore where we actually differ. If my concerns truly mischaracterize movements methodologies, practitioners need only advocate the following statement (Arlund and Farah again decline to do so): "Churches remain immature and in danger until mature leaders are established who can teach deeply and directly through the 'whole counsel of God'" (Acts 20:27).

I would welcome clear statements like these. I do not question that *movements* happen (Korea in the twentieth century, for example). My concern is that *movements methodologies* seem to lose sight of certain biblical emphases in pursuing them. I would welcome clear commitments to these emphases. Movements methodologies have other healthy aspects to offer, and I have no desire to paint them "in a black/white, valid/invalid framework" (Arlund and Farah 2022, 1) as Arlund and Farah fear.

Arlund and Farah are correct that diversity of ideas exists within the movements community. Yet this is true of all ideological communities—evangelical, postmodern, LGBTQ+, etc. Nevertheless, public discourse requires appropriate generalization in order to discuss common emphases of each ideological community. Multiple leading movements methodologists have affirmed, and many continue to affirm, the practices I critique. Healthy conversation must address these leaders' clear, frequent statements. If Arlund and Farah disagree with the practices these leaders promote, they might serve readers better by echoing my concerns about parts of their community than by dismissing my concerns as mischaracterizations. Doing so would not cede the

debate over movements methodologies, and it might lead to healthier movements practices! Alternatively, if Arlund and Farah see the practices I critique as acceptable, then at least in their case, my characterizations are correct.

What Is Really Happening?

Last, Arlund and Farah believe my missiology does not take real-world phenomena adequately into account, critiquing my primarily Scripture-based approach as one of "abstract concepts" not "based on real-world phenomena" (Arlund and Farah, 2022, 6). Missiology should be primarily Scripture-driven, and I would not demand observable confirmation of missions strategies without first establishing that their scriptural basis was weak. While I do engage with real-world events (e.g. Rhodes 2022, 56–66), I place less emphasis on them. Below, I offer three reasons why.

First, different "real-world" experiences provide people with different perspectives. Arlund and Farah suggest I would understand better if I had more real-life experiences with movements. In fact, I have spent years working under movements practitioners. I have visited reported movement locations. Near where I live, two people groups were reported as "reached," with several hundred churches planted in each. Those of us on the ground know that one group does not have *a single believer*; the other does not have *a single church*. Reports like these could dissuade new missionaries from going to groups that remain unengaged. Do Arlund and Farah's experiences convince them of movements methodologies? Mine leave me concerned! Whose experiences should guide us?

Second, our ability to assess real-world phenomena is limited. We will only know the quality of each person's work when "the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done" (1 Cor 3:13). The collapse of Mars Hill Church (Welch 2014) showed how vibrant a fast-growing movement can appear—even to those who share that church's culture—before the cracks become clear. Caution is needed, then, in letting our assessments of contemporary movements or churches inform our missiologies. Scripture provides a more reliable assessment of what is truly happening than our observations can.

Third and finally, movement methodologists' interpretation of real-world events could lead to overly results-driven missiologies. Farah writes, "God has quietly brought 1% of the world into his Kingdom through church planting movements in the past 25 years, mostly among Hindus and Muslims. We have much to learn from these remarkable movements..." (Farah and Hirsch 2021). If we have "much to learn" because many people came to faith quickly, then numbers *are* influencing missiology. These numerical claims exert powerful influence on young missionaries (Rhodes 2022, 51–52). To one extent this is appropriate: those numbers count *people*, and people are important. However, when extraordinary numbers are used in trainings and literature to press for large-scale missiological changes which affect thousands of missionaries and untold numbers of unreached people, these numerical claims bear a substantial burden of evidence.

Unfortunately, Farah neglects to mention that the numbers he cites are highly controversial. I have explained my related concerns in detail (Rhodes 2022, 57-65) and cannot find any corresponding explanation that seems to justify the confidence with which numbers are often reported. We are simply informed that nearly 1,500 movements exist in the world, comprising 1% of the world's population (see Coles 2022a; Coles 2022c; Farah and Hirsch 2021). No evidence is given except the affirmation of Justin Long—who heads the team that compiled the numbers—that they come from "trusted movement practitioners" (Coles 2022c). I was an epidemiologist for

years, so measuring the spread of fast-moving phenomena through populations is precisely my wheelhouse. During the COVID pandemic, tiny differences estimating the speed of transmission had led to massively different projections of the virus's spread. The world's best statisticians gave projections that were massively wrong. In the United States, for example, it was initially supposed that a two-week partial economic shutdown might be sufficient to flatten the curve of the pandemic. Insofar as Long's numbers are projections not counts, they also are inherently unstable. Doubtless, Long is doing his best as he compiles these numbers! But if the numbers *matter*, his claim to trust the hundreds of people who provided data—many in countries he has never visited—is not enough. In his chapter in *Motus Dei*, Long provides little clarity about how numbers are generated, except in the smallest movements, where the data collector knows everyone (Long 2021, 70). With larger movements, Long speaks of using "estimates," "averages," and "surveys" (Long 2021, 71). He does not explain what is estimated (or how), what averages are measured (or how), what surveys are taken (or how), or how he uses the results to size movements in the millions. With the largest of all movements, Long is even more vague: "most leaders" are visited "to gather both quantitative and qualitative data" and generate estimates—we are not told how—that are "accurate and very precise" (Long 2021, 72). Far more transparency into Long's methods could be offered without compromising believers' safety.

Indeed, no other discipline would accept numbers with so little justification. In business, if we were counting millions of dollars, rather than millions of people, we would demand far more careful accounting—because business people know that money matters. And if colleagues voiced concerns about the numbers, we would immediately investigate, because money matters. But people matter, too, and where accounting is so vague, the movements community should view concerns about numbers more seriously than it has. It is no longer adequate to respond, "*Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you*... How many of us are… refusing to believe the report that our answer is knocking at the door?*"* (emphasis original; Coles and Parks, 2019a). Numbers are not an article of faith, and those of us who desire more justification are not "scoffers… refusing to believe." Rather, *we are concerned about the people these numbers represent.*

To the extent movement proponents are concerned with real-world phenomena, they might join me in calling for real investigation into what is really happening! For a fraction of the cost that has gone into collecting and promoting such numbers, nonpartisan Christian experts with credentials recognized by the outside world could research their validity. Until that happens, let's admit how much we do not know rather than presenting confident numbers—which seem to carry the certainty and science of hard fact—to churches and impressionable young missionaries.

Back to Scripture

Numbers are interesting but often unclear. Experiences are powerful but not definitive. The heat of conversation is worth watching but not the main point. All these topics are worth discussing, but none is a substitute for careful, scriptural examination of our missiology. Discussions about missions methodologies rarely get as far as examining the Scriptures. Until they do, conversation is likely to get stuck. For example, there is no point discussing whether or not people should teach more directly if we disagree over what the Scriptures say about direct teaching. Discussion participants will only feel mischaracterized, rendering real discussion impossible.

I have already described my scriptural concerns with movement methodologies at length (Rhodes 2022, 67–107). I will not repeat them here in full, but by way of a one-sentence list they include movement methodologies' over-emphasis on rapid growth, minimizing of direct teaching, frequent emphasis on external obedience over against the knowledge of God in discipleship, the outsized role given to "persons-of-peace" and the *oikos*, and the promotion of new believers to leadership. Arlund and Farah suggest Coles's essay in *Motus Dei* (which was published before *No Shortcut*) substantially anticipated my concerns (Arlund and Farah 2022, 5), but Coles was not prescient enough to anticipate or respond to the scriptural substance of my critique. Coles seems to recognize this, noting that each of my concerns would still "require its own essay" in response (Coles 2022b). Very well, if missiology matters—and if we still have much to learn from each other—let's write the essays!

Thousands of missionaries are sent out every year. Their training will profoundly affect their lives and those of lost people around them. It is our responsibility as Christians and professionals to investigate how to train them most effectively, even if it takes a few essays.

Let's spill some ink.

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A Tribute to Dr. Rajendran

Former General Secretary, India Missions Association and Missions Secretary, World Evangelical Association

(Promoted to glory on 22 May 2022)

J. N. Manokaran

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Life is a journey. In this journey we meet many people. Some journey with you for a long distance, some do not. Dr. K. Rajendran is one of those with whom I had the privilege to share a substantial portion of my life spanning a quarter century.

First Meeting

We met each other in an unusual place. The board meeting of an organization (India Missions Association—IMA) was taking place in December 1997. I was supposed to be interviewed for a position but was not invited inside. Another person was also waiting for another position in that same organization. In fact, I was in low spirits as our family had shifted from Chandigarh to Chennai, without knowing our future. Dr. Rajendran was chosen and appointed later.

Teacher in Hindustan Bible Institute

I was doing my master's in theology (Missiology) in the Hindustan Bible Institute, starting in September 1998. He came to teach one modular course in early 1999. He found me to be asking several questions and giving new perspectives. Then he asked me to come and meet him in his India Missions Association office in May 1999.

Life-changing Conversations

What is your vision?

In his office Dr. Rajendran and I had a wonderful conversation. He asked me to explain about my vision for missions. I talked a lot about Urban Missions. I said something like this: "In the pursuit of reaching villages, the Indian Church has lost the cities. Now cities are more unreached than villages, and in many places people are becoming resistant to the gospel."

Write your vision.

Then Rajendran asked me to write my vision in a paper and meet him next week. I typed my vision sitting in an Internet Café, got a printout, and went to meet him. He read it for few minutes. As an encourager, he appreciated and approved my vision.

Implement the vision.

Rajendran said, "Implement the vision. India Missions Association (IMA) is your platform." I joined IMA as part-time staff, as my M.Th. was not yet complete. Mornings would be classes in Hindustan Bible Institute, and afternoons would be in the IMA office.

Paradigm Shift in Missions

It was wonderful to work with Rajendran as he trusted people, delegated authority, and gave freedom to innovate, experiment, and fail. That is exactly what I needed.

- Over the next three years (1999-2001), IMA facilitated over 50 urban consultations in over 50 cities across India. Awareness grew for prioritizing Urban Missions.
- The *India Missions* magazine was transformed to a journal, in which I had the privilege to write and sometimes edit articles.
- Initiated research in 100 cities in India, which was later published as a book in 2003.
- Developed tools (posters, PowerPoint presentations, Over Head Projector transparencies) to present mission challenges that were used for more than two decades.
- Initiated several e-groups to connect leaders who were interested in such specialized ministries as Urban Missions, Children At Risk, and Reaching the Middle Class.
- Information should be used as tool for intercession. I was entrusted with the task of organizing half-a-day prayer for an IMA conference in 2002 at Pune. The prayer time set new standards for prayer, and the PowerPoint used became a booklet for prayer.

More Open Doors

Rajendran created platforms for others. In many places where he was supposed to speak, he had sent me instead. Each time it was a baptism of fire. I had to step in the pulpit addressing stalwarts, seniors, and experts. Once, Rajendran quietly asked me to speak in his place in a conference in Singapore in 2001.

First Trip to the USA

I received an invitation to go for Haggai International training in Maui, USA. I informed Rajendran but deliberately forgot about the invitation. Our children were moving to higher education, and I was unable to think about registration fees and visa fees. One afternoon he called me and asked about what happened to my Haggai training. I replied that I might not go because of family needs. He gave me office advance (IOU or cash advance from salary) and asked me to go for a visa the next day. Standing in queue from early morning to midday, I procured my visa. When I informed Rajendran, he took me in his car. We stopped in a shop and bought me a trolley bag with wheels. “From now on you will have to use this bag for your air travel,” he told me. Until that time, I had never travelled in flight. I used to travel in trains using a sturdy suitcase and a sleeping bag.

Later he sent me to other conferences overseas.

Sending Hosanna as a “Student Missionary”

When our daughter Hosanna got an opportunity to go to Russia (later to Belarus) for doing medicine in 2002, we were perplexed about paying her fees and sending her. Rajendran said to us: “You have done great work. People know you. But you have never asked for funds from friends. Write to a few people, asking them to gift you some money for sending your daughter as student missionary.” He gave the first donation. We his advice, and God met our needs. That became a great model. From then on, hundreds of missionary kids went to Russia and other countries for their education. Like us, he grieved when Hosanna went to be with the Lord in 2011.

Speak, Write, Connect

If I sum up my experience with Rajendran, there are three words: Speak, write, and connect. He encouraged me to speak as voice of the voiceless, truth, and new ideas for missions. But not just

speak: he encouraged me to keep on writing. After several years (in 2019) he said: “Mano, whatever you write I read. Keep writing.” That was one of the reasons for writing over a dozen books. Connect was his third advice. He was a great networker and was always willing to connect people with his friends. It was a great learning experience to network using his model.

Challenge

One more legendary figure fades away from the horizon. He has gone ahead of us as a great model, inspirer, hand-holder, and a ladder to climb great heights. I am deeply grateful to God for blessing my life and our country with such leaders.

Facing Our Fears of Engaging Muslims and Strategies for Navigating Them

Mike Urton

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Abstract

In a recent study of U.S. evangelical churches engaging Muslim communities, four primary fears were expressed as obstacles to Christians reaching out to their Muslim neighbors. These included Muslims being dangerous, offending a Muslim person, jeopardizing relationships when a Muslim chooses to follow Christ, and the internal struggles that Muslims and Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face over rejection by their families. This article unpacks root causes for these fears as well as some ways to navigate them.

Key Words: Evangelicals, Islamophobia, Muslim Background Believer, Muslims

Introduction

In a recent study of evangelical churches engaging Muslim communities in Chicago, four primary fears were expressed as obstacles to Christians reaching out to their Muslim neighbors (Urton 2021). These included Muslims being dangerous, offending a Muslim person, jeopardizing relationships when a Muslim chooses to follow Christ, and the internal struggles that Muslims and Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face over rejection by their families. This article first details the four fears and then offers some ways to navigate them.

The first section starts with exploring the use of the term *Islamophobia*, highlighting a constructive use of this term over against ones that can be detrimental to genuine Muslim-Christian relationships. Regarding the second fear of offending a Muslim person, the perception of cultural mistakes and apprehension over sharing the gospel are discussed. A specific example from a church with a long-standing relationship with a mosque is unpacked for the third fear of jeopardizing the relationship. The internal struggles of Muslims and MBBs are then considered from the perspective of those working with them.

The second section offers ways to circumnavigate these fears. It looks at studies of U.S. Muslim attitudes, as well as the similarities between U.S. Muslims and U.S. Evangelicals. The central roles of training and the local church engaging Muslims are also discussed. The need for developing partnerships with other ministries is explored to alleviate the dilemma of jeopardizing relationships. Finally, suggestions are offered for helping Muslims, when they are wrestling with trusting in Christ, and MBBs as they face challenges as Jesus's followers.

Four Fears

Fear #1: "Muslims are Dangerous"

The term *Islamophobia* is often used when describing the fear that Muslims are dangerous. While oft employed, this term usually suffers from being ill defined. John Azumah offers this helpful definition: "the fear and demonization of Islam and the stereotyping of Muslims" (Azumah 2013, 113). The 2019 American Muslim Poll outlines a five-point *Islamophobia* Index that gives flesh to Azumah's definition. These five points are:

1. Muslims are prone to violence.

2. Muslims discriminate against women.
3. Muslims are hostile to the United States.
4. Muslims are less civilized than other people.
5. Muslims “living in the United States are partially responsible for acts of violence carried out by other Muslims” (Mogahed and Mahmood 2019, 19).

These five points, along with Azumah’s definition, offer guidelines ~~to~~ apply accurately the term Islamophobia in a way that avoids extremes. For example, Christians raising apologetic objections to Islamic doctrine, such as the prophethood of Muhammad or the divine revelation of the Qur’an, do not run afoul of the above definitions. However, when Muslims are physically assaulted or verbally harassed for being Muslims, then the term Islamophobia can be rightly applied.

Sadly, Evangelicals were the religious group that scored the highest on the Islamophobia Index. According to the American Muslim Poll, 44 percent of Evangelicals held unfavorable opinions about Muslims, while only 20 percent expressed favorable views (Mogahed and Mahmood 2019, 6). A 2015 study by LifeWay found that “two-thirds of Protestant pastors agree Christianity and Islam should seek to coexist in America.” But it also discovered that evangelical pastors viewed Islam as “a violent and dangerous faith” (Green 2015). Moreover, a set of interviews of four pastors in the Chicago suburbs, along with 40 congregants, showed some conflicted and contradictory results. These included, “Muslims are neighborly, but they want to get on the school board so that they can maneuver into political power; Muslims are nice, but behind that they have an agenda to convert people; etc.” (Bhatia 2017, 153).

While some of these attitudes are based on stereotypes and irrational fears, Azumah concedes that is not the whole story. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the United States and 7/7 in London by those who called themselves Muslims have contributed to the fears and mistrust that many Westerners experience (Azumah 2013, 121).

Furthermore, evangelical Christians are concerned about the persecuted church. According to “The World Watch List 2022,” a list of countries around the world where Christians are the most persecuted published by Open Doors, 33 of the top 50 countries where Christians are persecuted are Muslim majority countries (Open Doors 2022).

Another concern stems from the fact that Muslims have freedom to spread their faith and seek converts in the United States and other Western countries, but the favor is not returned in Muslim majority countries. Many times, Christians are not free in Muslim lands to do evangelism and plant churches. Often Muslims who convert, even in Western countries, are threatened with death for leaving Islam to become a Christian (Redman 2010, 141-42).

Fear #2: Offending a Muslim Person

There were two primary ways that Evangelicals in the Chicago study expressed this fear. First, they were afraid to make cultural mistakes. One woman interviewed in this study recounted when she was asked to pray at an Easter Tea for Muslim and Christian women, “When we got to the Easter Tea, she [the Christian leader] asked if I could open in prayer and I thought well, but sure is it okay to pray in Jesus name? What am I supposed to say? Are there things I shouldn’t say? I want to know how to be sensitive to our guests and I want to be appropriate” (Urton 2021, 119). A church leader described some conversations with people in his congregation about interacting with Muslims which went like this: “There is this Muslim family that lives on our street. I’d like

to reach out to them, but I'm kind of unsure of how to do that, or I thought about inviting them to our house, but I was afraid I might offend them" (Urton 2021, 171-172).

The second way this fear was expressed involved hesitations about sharing the gospel. One volunteer involved in his church's ESL program described his hesitation this way: "That is honestly something that I wrestle with a lot, how, and this is where I need some training. I don't think that I have a good sense of how can I present the gospel. At what point is it appropriate? … At some point there needs to be a way for us to share our faith in an appropriate way" (Urton 2021, 129).

While this volunteer had a hesitation about when it was proper to share his faith, he still showed a desire to do so. As he suggested, his dilemma could be resolved with adequate training. Another attitude toward evangelism discovered in the Chicago study was more concerning. A leader at a church where the main demographic were people in their thirties and forties said that there were some in his congregation who expressed concern about reaching out to Muslims in the community. He said there was an "aspect of why do you want to do this and are you going to, sort of, evangelize and push religious crusade on them in some degrees?" (Urton 2021, 140).

Unfortunately, this sentiment was found in two other studies looking at a similar age demographic. The first one, conducted by the Barna group, discovered that 47 percent of Christian millennials in the U.S. "agree at least somewhat that it is wrong to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith" (Barna Group 2019). The second study reported that some self-described progressive evangelical Christians believed, "if a conservative Christian is spending time with a Muslim with the hopes of telling them about their faith, they are failing to care for them authentically and are not fully listening to the marginalized. Instead, they have alternative goals and an immoral desire to dominate with their more culturally pervasive form of religious beliefs" (Yancey and Quosigk 2021, 182). In short, there is a growing number of U.S. Christians in the 30-40 age demographic that view evangelism among Muslims, along with people of other religions, as immoral.

Fear #3: Losing the Relationship

One church in the Chicago study had had a 12-year relationship with a local mosque. During that time, the church had done some amazing things. They had collaborated on some work projects with the mosque, such as PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) and soup kitchens. The church and mosque had an ongoing small group dialogue and Bible study on the prophets, the mosque hosted the church specially every year for an Iftar dinner, and the church reciprocated with an annual Advent dinner for the mosque where they would sing Christmas Carols and have a devotional that presented the gospel. The Muslims thought so highly of this relationship that at one of the Advent dinners the Imam shared about a civil war that broke out in his country among different religious and ethnic groups, then he said, "If we had had a group like this one, the war would not have happened" (Urton 2021, 157).

While this church had a long-standing relationship with the mosque with these positive aspects, the possibility of jeopardizing the relationship over Muslims who became more interested in the gospel was a major challenge. One leader commented, "If people have deeper questions about Jesus it doesn't feel like this is the right safe place to do it" (Urton 2021, 153). Another leader at that same church said, "We want the Holy Spirit to drive that person to wherever they go and in their good timing make their decision.… We've been a little hesitant in terms of what effect that

would have on our overall program." He continued to explain that in their relationship they were combating hatred and presenting the gospel, but he had this question about a Muslim who was interested in becoming a follower of Christ: "If you're a Muslim in America, where do I go now? I'm starting to fall in love with the Lord. What's my next move?" (Urton 2021, 153-154).

Fear #4: Internal Struggles among both Muslims and Muslim Background Believers (MBBs)

The fourth fear shifts the focus from Christians involved with Muslim ministry to those that they are trying to reach and serve. Both Muslims and MBBs have internal struggles in relation to following Christ. One leader in the Chicago study, whose church had baptized ten MBBs, described how he had witnessed this struggle among Muslims who were drawn to Christ:

> I'm drawn to this, even, I wish this were the truth and that I could come home to God through Jesus. But also, I've been told things, I've been taught things. It's been impressed upon me you have to be loyal to your religion. And you have to be loyal to your family. So, if I say yes to this and follow this, does that mean that, am I saying that my family is wrong, and they're lost? Can I say that? Can I do that? (Urton 2021, 173).

This leader also gave the example of a MBB who had come to Christ through the fellowship. This man said, "My daughters are still in Syria and if I tell them I've become a Christ-follower, I'm afraid that they will cut me off, or the rest of the family will cut me off and I'll lose my relationship with my daughters" (Urton 2021, 173).

Ways to Navigate

Having detailed the four primary fears discovered in the Chicago study, the discussion now turns to ways to circumnavigate these fears. The fears are addressed in the order that they were laid out above.

Navigating "Muslims are Dangerous"

This fear can be addressed by providing adequate training to Christians. Such training should include elements like understanding American Muslim attitudes, examining the similarities between American Muslims and Evangelicals, the necessity of interpersonal interactions, and an emphasis on Jesus's teachings to love our enemies.

Regarding the attitudes of American Muslims, a 2017 Pew Forum study found that many American Muslims (55 percent) believed that other Americans are friendly towards them in general. Also, most of them were "proud to be Americans (92%), believe that hard work generally brings success in this country (70%) and are satisfied with the way things are going in their own lives (80%)" (Lipka 2017).

Surveying mosque leaders, The American Mosque Study 2020 found that "the vast majority of mosque leaders do not feel that American society is hostile to Islam or that American society is immoral: only 18% agree that American society is hostile, and only 19% agree that American society is immoral. These results point to a low level of negativity toward American society" (Bagby 2021). Overall, it appears that American Muslims have positive feelings about living in the United States, thus the fear that most Muslims are dangerous has little or no basis.

Another reality which can help to resolve this fear consists of the similarities between American Muslims and American Evangelicals. Among the key findings in a 2019 study, entitled

Evangelical Christian and Muslim Relations in the U.S., was how both Muslims and Evangelicals place a high importance on issues like prayer, family, making the world a better place, and attending religious services (Foundation for Ethnic Understanding 2019, 4). Also, the 2019 American Muslim Poll highlights how these "two groups stand out as the most devoted to their faith amidst a sea of growing secularism" (Mogahed and Mahmood 2019, 13).

A conclusion of the just-cited study *Evangelical Christian and Muslim Relations in the U.S.* is that the more frequently Muslims and Evangelicals interact the more positively they will view the others' faith (Foundation for Ethnic Understanding 2019, 11). This finding is corroborated by interviews from the Chicago study. One volunteer shared about a Thanksgiving dinner that her church hosted for a local mosque. She remarked,

> The Thanksgiving gathering was the first time I've ever actually had a conversation with a Muslim.… The table conversations, the questions that were established I thought were excellent. It really got people talking.… We all had things to say and at least at my table was a very talkative group, so in terms of building trust it's like we just got to talk about life and normal things and what we were thankful for, you know, family, children, those commonalities. So, I guess it built trust in that particular way (Urton 2021, 120).

Another volunteer shared about how his involvement with a church's ESL program helped to change his attitude towards Muslims:

> I can tell you for those who are directly involved it's absolutely been transformative for us.… For myself, for my wife … we get out of there … and we're just like, we're fired up. Like this is the best thing we did all week. We feel like we've made such a difference, we've made new friendships, these folks are so grateful to have us there… No longer is it this mistrust of Muslims.… These are people I pray for now with names and faces and histories (Urton 2021, 131).

A final and perhaps the most important consideration when resolving the fear of Muslims being dangerous is Christ's command for Christians to love their enemies (Matt 5:44-45). As we saw above, one reason that American Evangelicals fear Muslims is the reported persecution of Christians in Muslim-majority countries. The Lord Jesus encourages his followers in Matthew 5 to extend neighbor love to those who persecute them by praying for them. Thus, American Evangelicals can practice neighbor love for Muslims persecuting Christians in other countries by praying for them. Praying in that way may in turn help Christians gain a heart of love for Muslims living in the United States and lessen their fears and suspicions of them.

Navigating Offending a Muslim

Like the fear addressed above, this fear of offending a Muslim can also be addressed through adequate training and opportunities for Muslims and Christians to interact. The motivation for these interactions is firmly grounded in the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) to make disciples of people from all nations and the Great Commandment to love God and love our neighbor (Matt 22:37-40). These passages should be emphasized in any training that is offered.

A lack of training was noted as a hindrance in the Chicago study for Christians who were reaching out to Muslim neighbors. In these relationships some Christians felt hesitant in sharing the gospel, praying before an event, and leading Bible study. Thus, training plays a vital role not only as a tool for getting people over their initial fears but also in assisting those who are already

interacting with Muslims. It may also help those who express a moral objection to evangelism see the necessity for sharing their faith and inviting Muslims to believe the gospel.

The significant role that the local church can play in reaching out to Muslims is another reason Christians should move past their fears and hesitancies. A study released in 2017, entitled *Fruitful Practices in Ministry to the North American Muslim Diaspora,* interviewed 18 former Muslims who became Christians while living in North America. The study suggests that the two top reasons for Muslims coming to Christ were an experience with a local evangelical church and a relationship with a Christian friend. Furthermore, three-quarters of the 173 participants in this study who work with converts from Islam did so in "the context of a 'western', non-Muslim background convert church." Thus, the authors of this study encourage local churches in North America to "prepare themselves for what it means to provide an adequate welcome and orientation to the Christian faith for Muslims who may attend as part of their faith journey" (Kronk, Daniels, Chapman, and Watson 2017, 9).

Navigating Losing the Relationship

One leader in the Chicago study, whose church had a long-standing relationship with a local mosque, suggested that churches who are interacting with local Muslims should form partnerships with other churches, ministries, or individuals that are outside of their relationship with the mosque. Doing so would enable a Muslim person who becomes interested in following Christ to be connected to Christians who are independent of the church/mosque relationship (Urton 2021, 154). Such a connection might have the effect of keeping the church/mosque connection intact, while at the same time a Muslim person can explore following Christ more deeply with another church, ministry, or individual Christian.

A study of Muslims converting to Christianity in French Evangelical Protestant Churches (FEPC) seems to align with this suggestion. It found that a relationship with a church, Christian friend, or family member provided "the potential convert with opportunity to explore the new religious option and observe its impact on real world circumstances" (Kronk 2016, v). Hence, a church developing partnerships with other local churches or individual Christians might be a way to help Muslim seekers whom the church is serving continue to have Christian connections without jeopardizing the church's relationship with the mosque or Muslim community center.

Navigating the Internal Struggles Experienced by Muslims and MBBs

This final issue of a Muslim's struggle over trusting Christ or a MBB's struggles in following Christ is probably the most complicated of the fears mentioned. Even so, advice from two Muslim ministry practitioners may prove helpful. Phil Parshall suggests, "If a Muslim becomes a believer, he should be urged to witness quietly and carefully to his friends and family. If necessary, he may have to share his faith more by deed than by word" (Parshall 2003, 199). Roland Muller highlights the importance of a supportive Christian community: "New believers from Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist backgrounds need support, friendship-discipleship, a place of refuge, and much more. If it is not apparent that these things are available in the body of Christ he or she may turn away from the Gospel" (Muller 2015, 145). Therefore, looking for subtle ways that a MBB can share his newfound faith with his Muslim family and friends, and the support of a loving Christian community, may help to navigate these internal struggles.

Conclusion

Most Christians who interact with Muslims will deal with some combination of the fears detailed above. Identifying one's fears will help a Christian to deal with them, move past those fears, and reach out to Muslim neighbors with the gospel in both word and deed. In doing so Christians can demonstrate the perfect love that both casts out fear from their own hearts (1 Jn 4:18) and perhaps create a curiosity in their Muslim friends to know the one who inspires such love.

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Vulnerable Mission in Africa: Why Some of Today's Intercultural Missionaries Should Restrict Themselves to Local Languages and Resources

Jim Harries

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Abstract

Intentionally rooting this article in a church visit by the author connects to African contextual reality. Interpretation by the author may be unlike indigenous African interpretation, that will be affected by financial and other dependencies, and arise from contextual presuppositions unfamiliar to the West. Practice of vulnerable mission (use local languages and resources), implemented with determined conviction, is proposed for a Westerner to acquire eyes and ears in indigenous contexts. For Westerners to communicate good sense in the light of indigenous realities is difficult. God's love is universal, but how his love is understood is not.

Key Words: Africa, donors, language, mission, Vulnerable Mission

Introduction

A typical statement by a short-term mission team member on a trip to Africa might be, "Isn't it wonderful, the mission work we can do in Africa these days. A small amount of money can help so many people. So many Africans now understand English. It is really easy to make a difference!" How do we make sense of this?

On recently visiting a small Pentecostal church, about 23 miles from my home near Lake Victoria in Kenya, I discovered that the pastor either did not know me, or about me, or at least did not recognise me. On that basis, I assume that, when I walked in late and sat down, he treated me like "just another white man" (i.e., someone from Europe or America who has little local cultural or linguistic knowledge, who may well be searching for a way to invest foreign funding into helping Africans).

The pastor chose to use English, and have his daughter translate into Luo, rather than the other way around. There are many reasons for this common choice. (I assume, although I might be wrong, that had I not been there only the Luo language would have been used.) Despite the fact that his using the indigenous language would undoubtedly help him to connect more effectively with members of the congregation, use of English adds to pastors' prestige. Because in sub-Saharan Africa the orthodoxy of what someone says is formally assessed in a European language (Harries 2019), the process of translation into English may introduce "error," that tarnishes the pastor's reputation. Foreign visitors, who may well be generous donors, typically relate closely to English speakers. For a visitor to relate to a translator, rather than the pastor, is embarrassing and may lead to financial loss.

The pastor reminisced with his congregation, how they once "had white people" and how at that time the church (i.e., denomination) possessed a Toyota and two motorbikes. Moreover, they often gave out rice or *Brufen* to people. Thus they acquired the name of being "the church of rice" or "the church of *Brufen*." Those days were gone, he told us. But they were better off as they are now, he emphasised: supporting themselves. To draw on foreign donors is desirable. But it is also feared, due to its likely divisiveness and other negative outcomes.

I assume the above helps to explain the pastor's uncertain tone as he asked me to share. In my understanding, he had little choice but to give me opportunity to speak; surely everyone in the church (perhaps 30 people) would be wanting to hear me say something, to know who I am, and for me to explain why I was there. Had he only asked me to tell my name and where I am from, he may later have been accused of closing a door on a gift, had I come with the intention of offering financial support.

To avoid misunderstandings, it is good for a visitor to concentrate on the "spiritual." Even then, the expectation that a white person will want to help financially is deeply rooted. (Locals may see euphemisms where they do not exist.) The holistic ways of life in Africa makes church experience very different from that in Europe. Many African people are reputedly searching for churches where they can make money. By contrast, Westerners (when at home) tend to search for finance and material things outside the church, but when in Africa they see churches as channels for funding the poor. Hence the popularity of holistic mission (shown by the success of organisations like Micah Global) (Micah Global 2022). A visitor should be encouraged to speak about finances to the whole congregation instead of only with the pastor, to avoid accusations of corruption.

It was against that backdrop, then, that the pastor, evidently warily, invited me to stand and share whatever message I had. The tension that had been building up in the church turned into a kind of elated relief when I spoke the indigenous language (Luo), and shared a message from the Bible, with no mention of wanting to initiate any project. (I take this as having been "elated relief," because people were being saved a headache, although it is hard to know. Some people present may have been disappointed that I was not offering any money.) Later I learned that some members of the congregation did in fact know me, or at least of me, and of the fact that I relate closely to a nearby family, the late man-of-the-home having lived with me for three years or so when he was still a schoolboy over 20 years before.

The Context We Are Entering

The above account is my subjective interpretation of a visit I made to a church congregation one Sunday. Historians know that how we interpret the past is always a set of choices. If someone tells you "It was like this and like that," then unless that interpretation comes directly from the Holy Spirit we should know that that person has a "human" agenda. My interpretation of the above events is not based only on what happened on that day. It is based on my upbringing as a Brit, followed by my 33 years of living in Africa in a vulnerable way. It is definitely my interpretation. I did not ask an African to interpret what went on on that day. Had I done so, his interpretation would quite likely have been presented in a way that drew attention to the need for foreign money.

If there is an objective way of recalling or telling anything, philosophers and historians have been unable to find it. We who are not African should not expect African people to do what we cannot. Presentations, interactions, answers to questions, in fact any communication by an African person to a Westerner (even if the Westerner is only an anticipated possible over-hearer) will reflect local dependency, or anticipated relationship with, foreign donors. The way to reduce bias from those seeking either to benefit from western financial and linguistic largesse is for Westerners not to offer such things (i.e., consistently not to offer either help with a European language or resources originating abroad).

When entering an African context, there is much we should bear in mind. Most of the things we should bear in mind cannot, I suggest, easily be acquired from formal training, but only through

long habituated experience. Here is a shortfall of "formal" education: "knowing" things because you have read of them is different from engaging a context in which those things are live. Reading—about Africa, or anything or anywhere else—cannot substitute for extended living under indigenous circumstances. Living in one context while being educated about another invariably results in the "foreign" being domesticated as we learn it. The next foreign thing we learn will be received into what remains largely the same familiar context, and so on. In an exam, we may be able to recall ten peculiarities of "another culture," but we will not be able to know what it is like to live in a place where those ten peculiarities are all live unless we live there. Hence ~~a~~ potential missionaries' time could be better spent living and learning language in the context in which they hope to minister rather than in preparatory training "back home."

The need to be aware of the absence of notions of objectivity in people's thinking is acute in trying to get to grips with a foreign-to-you way of life. Time is only a particularly visible example of how communication can create confusion; African cultures may be renowned for late-coming, i.e., not reading time "objectively," e.g., a meeting to begin at noon may be understood by all concerned as starting a few hours later. This interpretational flexibility extends to other realms of communication beyond time – quantifiable or otherwise.

The contextual particularity of human thinking and communication, as just sketched, largely delegitimises foreign-designed or foreign-language-based education in Africa. Acquiring such education becomes primarily, if not almost entirely, useful only for an African wanting to take a subordinate position in a foreign initiative (i.e., to imitate the foreign). The mass of local contextual difference renders trying to apply formal education to indigenous ways of life in Africa fatally flawed.

A fundamental feature of African life is African Traditional Religion. One basic aspect of African Traditional Religion, unknown to inexperienced outsiders (no matter how thoroughly trained or educated), is that of evasion: When evil spirits out to "get you" are all around, then expressing what we in the West call "truth" can be the practice of a dangerous naivete, similar to a soldier operating undercover in enemy territory telling the truth when addressed. Hence what African people say may not align with how we Westerners describe or recount things in our orientation to "objectivity." To get the correspondence between what happened and what is said requires repeated personal observation of something that happened, followed by hearing how what you would have explained in your way, is articulated by "them." In the absence of this ability of translating their talk into your versions of reality, your grasp of what is being articulated by indigenous people will be limited.

The truth of the above unfortunately negates supposed advantages gained by allowing people to articulate themselves, in preference to taking your own people to be the experts on who they are and what they are like. For a Westerner to inform themselves of, say, an African context through what they are told by an African is faulty.

A simple example might illustrate these interactions inherently fraught with misunderstanding. Western English works on notions of "objective truth" interpreted dualistically—whereby the impact of spiritual realms is shelved. (See Paul Hiebert and the "excluded middle" (Hiebert 1982).) This Western blind spot arises especially from the long impact of positivism on the West, on the basis of which people endeavour to reason as if "spiritual" forces are non-existent, a philosophy that continues to have a very deep effect on Western thinking (Feigl 2020). After prayer for healing, if the sick person is asked, "Are you better?" Westerners expect an answer that reflects

the "real" and not the "spiritual" side of life; stated negatively, Westerners do not expect the sick to say they are better because they feel that they ought to, but only if their malady is resolved. Hence there is often much consternation among Westerners over the question of whether prayer brings healing. But while in the West those who are sick will often answer "No" if asked if they are better after prayer, in Africa the answer always seems to be "Yes." As one African pastor explained to his congregation one day in my hearing, "If you have been prayed for, then say you are healed." Thus he explained this dilemma! "If you say there is no change, or that you still feel sick, that shows a lack of faith in Christ, so no hope for healing," he clarified.

One outcome of Africa's holistic ways is that, although this may sound ironic stated in English, "spiritual healing must be real": Only a dualistic spiritual-versus-physical distinction can enable someone who is healed spiritually not also to be healed physically. In practice Westerners, not realising Africans' holistic universe, wrongly question African claims for physical healing or acquisition of wealth as a result of prayer. In Africa a "spiritual" impact must have a physical manifestation—and a physical manifestation must have had a spiritual source.

Two Principles

My above explanations have, I hope, begun to elucidate the need for some Western missionaries to Africa to confine themselves in their key ministries to local languages and to the use of local resources. (The use of local resources does not mean that the missionaries concerned are not supported from the outside, but that they not use that support to acquire advantage in local contexts. In other words, missionaries must in key ministry areas seek for local people not to relate to them as a foreign donor, potential donor, or European-language-speaker.) Only thus can they begin to understand and to share in a way that makes home-grown sense, rather than encountering the indigenous like a bull in a china shop. These are the two principles underlying what we call *Vulnerable Mission*:

> Vulnerable Mission = Some Western missionaries use only local languages and resources in key ministry in the majority world (Vulnerable Mission 2022).

The above:

- Is your (the missionary's) choice. In my experience, if you were to ask local people, "Should I be vulnerable" ("Should I use only local languages and resources"), they would answer "No." Some reasons for their disapproval of your decision may be obvious, particularly the likelihood that they will lose out on foreign donations.
- Needs to be practiced consistently. Use of English in one church, or in one context, but not in another, will easily cause envy that will bite you, whether you know it or not. Generous English-speaking Westerners in Africa often do not seem to realise how their movements, activities, and communication easily set African communities into a destructive spin. In sensitive contexts dominated by what the West knows as poverty and witchcraft (the root of which is envy; Harries 2012), all eyes and ears turn to the potential donor. When a potential donor shows up, all other plans may well be shelved, postponed, or put on hold. People hang on to foreigners' words. They discuss, argue, and fight over what was intended. Hence I suggest that someone practising Vulnerable Mission needs to be consistent. If it is not using English with nationals, then that should always be so. If it is not being "generous" financially, that should always be so. Only thus can locals begin to

trust a Westerner. So then, essentially, Vulnerable Mission is *always* local languages, and *always* indigenous resources.

- May well preclude you from "important positions." Most formal roles in today's Africa use European languages. A vulnerable missionary may well not be perceived as influential or as a key player.

A Western missionary may be able to "be generous" in a carefully defined context, for example in looking after needy people, in a way that does not overly skew key ministry relationships. (In my case, I do take care of orphan children, which requires me to eat African food, live in a local way, use a local language with them, and so on.) A missionary living amongst the poor who is not giving handouts to his neighbours is not ungenerous if, even if unbeknown to then, he is contributing to other causes. Leaking finances to one's friends and colleagues is, I suggest, inseparable from becoming "the boss," or at least acquiring power. Unlike pioneer missionaries who found African people without the gospel, clothes or money, and so on, today almost all over Africa complex engagements with modernity are happening. Yet those engagements are different from those in the West and are impossible for Westerners to understand (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004). Because Westerners' grasp of what is going on is very limited, they should avoid taking authority. Because donors acquire authority, Westerners' generosity should be directed to recipients who are other than friends and colleagues in the local context.

Indigenous Language

I often remain baffled by the basis from which my African colleagues are talking. As a result, I cannot participate in serious conversations without appearing to be a dimwit. (By way of example, I realise that local people speak with an awareness that they are being overheard, basically by their departed ancestors. How exactly that overhearing impacts ways people share is hard to tell.)

I thus must ask myself about the basis on which I converse. Then I realise that in my talking I as a Westerner presuppose a great deal, for example:

- The spiritual is largely distinct from the material, and the latter is dominant.
- I feel guilt more strongly than shame (or fear).
- I see blessing as coming from correct implementation of principles underlying capitalism, not from ancestors.
- I carry a deep understanding that people should side with victims.
- I consider truth to be in some important ways "objective."

We Westerners can begin to get an idea as to how weird ("Western, educated, industralized, rich, democratic") we are, by reading a book like *The WEIRDest People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous* (Heinrich 2020) in reverse, i.e., to realise something of the normality (not a Western normality) that is extant in the majority world.

I can only assume that African people are likely to be as baffled by me as I am by them. I have reached the point whereby, in public contexts, I prefer only to share God's Word. (I am sure that doing so on the basis of Western presuppositions still baffles local people, but at least I am on track!) My message is of the love and grace of God.

Christians' faith in the Bible should have them realise that God's grace and love are necessarily universal. That is not to say, however, that English-language ways of using the terms grace and love are universal. What *is* universal is that God reaches all people with something like "grace" and "love." Christians believe, in other words, the Bible to be unique literature. This is an important foundation to the universality of the church. It is therefore helpful, so as to communicate clearly and Christianly, to base all one's communications on the Bible and on the life of Jesus, while minimising one's own people's peculiar interpretations of the same.

Notice that if I use English in Africa, a language African people are learning from "us," I am "number one." If I use their language, they are automatically number one and I am "number last." Getting to a position where I can use their language itself speaks volumes about my commitment to them. (Africans who learn English may be wise, as it is the language of money. But for me to learn the Luo language?) Frequent use of their language helps me to begin to grasp some areas they have content where English is blank, and to realise that in many places where English has content, they are blank.

"Efficiency" is an example of a concept in English that dictates a great deal of Western behaviour but is absent in Luo thinking. An example where English is blank is *chira,* a key word in Luo. *Chira* is a kind of curse that results in people who disregard commands given by the ancestors becoming thin, and weak, then dying. The need to avoid *chira* dictates much of what Luo people do. The conceptual or linguistic equivalent of *chira* is absent from English.

Indigenous Resources

The church I visited, as described earlier, had evidently in the past been manipulated by Westerners providing food and medicine. This history presumably contributed to the pastor's telling us that in his view the church was in a better position without foreign donors. He seemed to be in favour of a missionary moratorium.

I have learned not to assume that I understand such statements by Africans. Pastors who have said things like that, that they no longer want to be dependent on foreign donors, have subsequently pressed me for money. It seems to be very difficult for African churches to stand up to foreign donors, be they current or potential. Outside generosity is an almost unstoppable force as far as local churches are concerned—or at least so it seems. Hence my suggestion that the foreign missionary has to be the one to make the decision *not* to be a generous donor. This is an instance in which one cannot rely for one's wisdom on "listening to the African."

I do not take the above as being contrary to any Biblical injunction to be generous. One can be generous in ways that are not self-glorifying! Today's Western thinking about Africa seems to be that the generosity that is required by Westerners is to donate financial resources to their African friends, colleagues, and neighbours. Such patronage lifts up the Westerners, makes them powerful, and has people praise them. It may also resolve them of the guilt of living on the upper side of inequalities. One alternative I suggest is to give to one or more of the many charitable organisations looking for your money. A Westerner can be generous to them in a way not known locally (Matthew 6:3).

I am suggesting that there ought to be some, preferably more, Western missionaries who operate without "buying" their colleagues, neighbours, and people they relate to with the gospel. That way, people can be enabled to be more honest. Then a Westerner is better enabled to listen

to what they are saying. The Westerner can begin to be a role model who can be imitated. A Westerner can become a part of a community other than as a benevolent but ignorant patron. Westerners can avoid wielding power while culturally very ignorant (a practice that easily acquires enemies as well as friends, sometimes more enemies than friends). Thus they can begin to grasp what is going on at depth and how to interact without causing upsets. I believe that Westerners have much to offer to Africa. Our money and language usually get in the way, however, becoming the screen through which we are seen. Leaving money aside can enable Westerners to witness about what Jesus has done for them and how he has transformed them into the kinds of people that local African folk might also realistically aspire to be, in a way that can begin to be locally understood.

There is these days a widespread, and in many ways helpful, understanding that Western mission efforts in Africa and elsewhere should be under the authority of local churches and be led or guided by local church leaders. At the same time, many of the reasons a majority world church may be very enthusiastic to have a Westerner work with them—get money, Western education, sponsors, English, etc.—are cancelled by Vulnerable Mission. For this and many other related reasons, a Western missionary should not expect Christian nationals amongst the people they are reaching to support their orientation to vulnerability. The foreign missionary must decide to adopt such an orientation and then to stick to it despite locals encouraging him/her to the contrary.

Conclusion

While Western missionaries in the majority world need to be guided by locals and to work "under" local churches, thinking they understand what they are told when they arrive and when people talk to them in English will easily make them into a burden rather than an asset to an indigenous church. Comprehending what someone is saying requires a grasp of the context(s) from which they are speaking, as well as the categories they are assuming as they communicate. Such categories include the pressure they are under to "speak for money." Only then can a Westerner respond wisely and remain vulnerable to ongoing open communication.

If you are the one called to reach a people, then you must also be the one to decide how you are going to do it. You need to continue to do so while listening, all the while appreciating that many of your assumptions are not being understood and that you are missing much that underlies what is being communicated to you. If the message you want to communicate is to be about God, then I suggest it should not at the same time be advocating for foreign money or for English.

Our history has made us (Westerners) into a singular, perhaps WEIRD people (Heinrich 2020). Awareness of that background can help us to put it aside when relating to majority world cultures. Sharing about Jesus with majority world people requires as far as possible getting to where the people we are attempting to reach actually are, so that we can begin to share an unknown, that originally was unknown to us, from a grasp of what is known to them (Harries 2020).

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Vulnerability vs. Corinthian Values: Modern Ministry Thought and Practice at Home and Abroad

Chris Sadowitz

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Abstract

In seeking to address ministry models and underlying value structures in the Corinthian Church, Paul reminds people in all times and settings of the hegemonic role that world cultures play—even as he paradigmatically uses both Jewish and Greek cultures as foils for the seeming weakness and foolishness of God's gospel. While cultures change, underlying values of humanity in rebellion against God continue. Hence while Paul practiced a form of enculturation by "being all things to all men," there was a caveat to his acculturation that was defined by the "Christ crucified." Unfortunately, Christian ministry is all too often driven by human beings' cultural values. These values must be evaluated by the gospel standard set by Jesus and the Cross upon which he hung.

Key Words: Christoformity, cruciform, *Theologia Crucis*, vulnerability, weakness

Introduction

Popular ministry and mission methods are often weighed pragmatically, but what is harder to evaluate are the underlying values upon which methodologies in ministry are constructed; Such values, at least in contemporary Western cultures, include strength over weakness, wealth over poverty, and visible over less-visible results. Instead of these culturally varied polarities, however, the Apostle Paul insists that the values and methodologies of gospel ministry mirror vulnerability, something which is initially unnatural to current ministry thinking and practice. As one Pauline scholar has noted, "God would flood Paul's life and ministry with resurrection power the more he lived and ministered from weakness and embraced the social shame that inevitably came his way" and that the weakness of a crucified Christ "determined Paul's mode of ministry," and was "the counterintuitive way that God triumphed in Christ" (Gombis 2021, 61-62).

To accomplish both valuing weakness and evaluating cultural values' intrusion into ministry models, Paul's teaching, and lifestyle while in Corinth first substantiate the principle that love expressed in the crucified one (the exemplar of God's values of weakness and foolishness) embodies *divine values* that must underlie healthy ministry/mission thinking and practice, the fruit of a *Theologia Crucis.* Second, Paul's argument with the Corinthian Church was that they had not *critically analyzed their culture* and had let it pollute thinking and action in their church. Paul suggests that a weighing of cultural thinking and action be carried out through a c*ruciform* lens and that such cultural values and models be crucified with Christ. Third, Paul's admonitions suggest a cairn-like way forward which involves developing *Christo-form values* in people which then become a standard or evaluative tool for ministry/mission thinking and practice—for the sender, the sent, and the receiver. The goal of all vulnerable mission and ministry then is to *cultivate a culture of Christoformity* in our ministry/mission contexts.

What is Vulnerability?

One salient fact gleaned from the emergence of COVID 2020-202? is that humanity is frail. To truly grasp what it means to be human, we must retrieve an understanding of vulnerability in

every aspect of life, especially as it pertains to world discipleship thought and methodology. To be vulnerable is to "be exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally" (Oxford Languages 2022). The Bible expresses vulnerability in a more positive light by properly situating humanity in relation to God: he is the *ex nihilo* Creator, and we are created creatures; we need him, and he does not need us; he is uncreated and independent of us, and we are created dependent on him. Learning to appreciate our vulnerability is an affirmation not only of our purposeful created humanity but more importantly an affirmation of God's unique divinity.

"For He Himself knows our form; He is mindful that we are nothing but dust." (Psalm 103:14).[1] Vulnerable mission/ministry situated in created order demonstrates four pillars of the humanity/deity relationship: oneness, existence, dependence, and sustenance. Vulnerability and its relationship to humanity as dependent on God was also expressed positively by our Savior—from his temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:4) to his trial in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39).

Understanding vulnerability according to the above-mentioned pillars helps us engage in ministry depending more on God and less on some other culturally driven value or method. In Japan, for example, I experienced vulnerability in at least two different ways. First, most missionaries to Japan are de facto vulnerable in ministry simply because the gospel has many barriers to overcome, including history, language, and people's fear of religion. The second kind of vulnerable ministry is taking on the mantle of a learner and incarnating into the new culture. As unsettling, unfamiliar, and weak as that might seem, opportunity to develop dependence on God abounded.

Failure to understand the importance of vulnerability as a path toward more dependence on God can lead to both a rejection of hearer values and needs, and attempting ministry from a familiar cultural position of strength, whether it be one's own language or other resources. In this case rather than taking the subservient role of a learner, one may default back to a role of teacher despite being woefully ignorant of the host culture in which they now reside.

Those who minister are sometimes unaware that they think about ministry and engage in it with values adopted unwittingly from their culture. In the case of my home culture, it was values like independence, self-reliance, safety, wealth, unlimited freedoms, and success. While in Japan these values undermined my understanding of "vulnerable ministry" and colored it negatively, a process I fear to which Christians are not readily immune. A culture shaped theology of ministry then, tends to see vulnerability because of the Fall rather than being situated in the created order.

Vulnerability in Paul's Gospel Ministry: The Church at Corinth

Paul verbalizes vulnerability in ministry as "positive" weakness, demonstrating how God favors it and adorns it in the shape of the Cross. Paul not only adopted a weakness ministry model but also genuinely saw himself as weak (1 Corinthians 4:9-13; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12). As one self-aware Bible student has said, "Except for the Holy Trinity, every character in the Bible is a failure—a loser…. yet God's choice is perfect *[and]* those he has chosen to do the kingdom work are the perfect ones to do it. And yet they are always flawed individuals, losers" (Hochhalter 2014, 31).

Accordingly, in his Corinthian letters Paul describes and demonstrates his ministry as *cross shaped* among the Corinthians and how ministry needs to continue to be accomplished through cross-shaped weakness, both in attitude and methodology. As Carson has rightly observed, "If we view the cross as the means of our salvation only… we shall fail to see how the cross stands

as the test and the standard of all vital Christian ministry," and that "the cross not only establishes what we are to preach but how we are to preach" (Carson 1993, 9). Paul undoubtedly had both a theology and application of ministry in mind for the Corinthians when he wrote, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2). As one New Testament scholar has asserted, "In this one sentence from I Corinthians we have an indication not only of Pauline Christology, but also of Pauline theology proper, pneumatology, ministry, ecclesiology, spirituality, epistemology, and morality—at least" (Gorman 2013, 64).

Paul begins his first letter to Corinth explaining God's choice of a paradoxical and ironic weakness metaphor for gospel and mission ministry by setting up two cultures as foils. Greeks valued wisdom (gleaned by human experience and thinking), while Jews valued signs or powerful demonstration of divine endorsement. For both, veracity came by proof. Instead, God's wisdom message cuts across the ways which seem right to a man within his culture (I Corinthians 1:21) and offers them Christ, who is both the power and wisdom of God. Paul acknowledges the cross as what makes God's wisdom and Paul's gospel preaching a foolish story to the Gentiles and a stumbling block to the Jews (I Corinthians 1:23).

Cultural Values at Odds with Paul's Ministry Values: Then and Now

Jews demanded a sign. In one sense their expectation was reasonable. Their whole history, from the calling of Abraham, had been one of visible manifestations of God, painstakingly repeated and recorded. Yet demanding a sign for proof before they would believe is a far cry from having your faith tested and strengthened by God—who may or may not provide a visible experience. As Carson has commented, "As long as people are assessing him (Christ), they are in a superior position. This demand for signs becomes a prototype of every condition human beings raise as a barrier to being open to God" (Carson 1993, 21). This same tendency is prevalent today both in cultures and religious denominations. One way this is seen on the mission field is to measure numbers or crowd size at events and see greater numbers as proof of God's blessing (presence). In places like Japan where the percentage of Christianity has not changed much in almost 500 years, Jesus's suffering alone in the garden, and his abandonment at his trial, are more representative of the presence of Christ than huge cathedrals.

Gentiles, especially Greeks, valued wisdom which Carson defined as different from "proverbial wisdom" or "personal intuition and street smarts." The Greeks had "created entire structures of thought so as to maintain the delusion that they can explain everything." Whether they were Sophists or Platonists, Stoics or Epicureans, they all boasted in a well-articulated world view including choices and priorities which they claimed made sense of the world (Carson 1993, 21).

To understand something was to be able to control it. That notion was, and still is, a powerful cultural model. Watching the actions, responses, and thinking of many of today's economically, politically, and militarily dominant cultures during the pandemic of 2020 effectively promoted science and technology as the saviors of humanity apart from the need for divine assistance. Others have also noticed the lies perpetuated by dominant cultures: "Mesopotamian power and Egyptian wisdom were strength and intelligence divorced from God, put to the wrong ends, and producing all the wrong results" (Peterson 1980, 27).

The problem of humankind's cultural values when it comes to power and wisdom is that those values leave little room for the opposite. Hence Paul's rhetorical questions in I Corinthians 1:20 ("Where is the wise person? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world?") indicate that the wisdom of world systems does not include the cross. When it comes to mission methodology, missionaries too

often look for what works, something measurable, something we can control and understand. Not so for Paul, as he saw life and ministry faithfulness measured by how closely it resembled Jesus dying on a cross: "Paul ministered from a posture of vulnerability… if that resulted in social shame, he embraced it, …. If he attempted to minister from some other posture or approach, he would not be drawing upon God's resurrection power" (Gombis 2021, 61). Perhaps a good present practice for ministry method evaluation would be to use Paul's question or similar questions before borrowing yet another "successful" ministry method from another cultural context.

Necessary Divine Values: *Theologia Crucis*

The Roman cross was a tool and a symbol of suffering, weakness, and death. In *Theologica Crucis* we are reminded that we are called to imitate Christ. Imitating Christ takes place not only in power moments and victorious parades but—chiefly—in suffering, vulnerability, and weakness. Why? "For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Theologia Crucis informs us of God's plan to use weakness to accomplish his goals. This was clearly demonstrated by the life of Christ. As the epistle to the Hebrews puts it, "it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the originator of their salvation *through suffering*" (Hebrews 2:10; emphasis mine). Therefore, Paul longs for sharing in the sufferings of Christ (Philippians 3:10). "For Paul…. being weak entails entrance into a new, particular kind of weakness, namely the weakness of the crucified Messiah, a weakness that in 2 Cor. 8:9 the Messiah voluntarily or freely determined to enter into on behalf of others" (Heavins 2019, 258).

"*Crucis* in British English is a Latin genitive of noun of the word, *Crux*," from which four meanings emerge: "a vital or decisive stage, a difficulty or problem, a decisive part, and cross" (Collins English Dictionary 2021). All four of these meanings are to be seen as part of *Theologica Crucis*. The cross of Christ is the vital crux to God's plan and signifies his Lordship over time which "means therefore that in the action of Christ the entire line [eternity] is influenced in a decisive manner, and that in the central event of Christ the Incarnate One, an event that constitutes the mid-point of that line, not only is all that goes before fulfilled but also all the future that is decided" (Cullmann 1962, 72). The pivotal character of the cross of Christ thus transforms suffering from a mere result or affect into a medium in which the will of God is mediated to the world. Furthermore, the cross symbolizes a life and ministry model that demonstrates "participation with the crucified and risen Messiah," and can reframe the "liability of Paul's [*and our*] weakness as an asset that authenticates his apostleship [*and our ministry*]" (Heavins 2019, 256). Paul can thus wholeheartedly assert, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (Colossians 1:24).

What is this "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions"? Taken in context with verse 25 ("I was made a minister of this *church* according to the commission from God granted to me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out *the preaching of* the word of God") and Paul's emphasis on "the Word of God" being made "fully known" explains the "fills up" in verse 24:

> The connection (between 24 and 25) is mission. Paul is saying he's carrying out his God-given Gentile mission…. the lack is the gap of sufferings between the present reach of the gospel and the suffering necessary to establish a gospel presence among all the Gentiles, paralleling Jesus's own mission to bring the gospel to the Jewish people. See the same language of 'minister' and 'filling/fulfilling' in Rom. 15:8, 16, 19 (Thompson 2020).

Furthermore, "The afflictions of Christ represent more than the typical suffering of history. According to Paul they mark the denouement of history. The dying of Jesus is archetypal. Henceforth all righteous suffering will bear a specifically Christological imprint" (Savage 1996, 174).

Theologia Crucis emphasizes weakness and strength based on participation with the crucified and now living Christ (2 Corinthians 13:3-4). Not only is weakness a divinely appointed value in which Paul relished, but Paul also used weakness to subvert his detractors who disdained it. For Paul, "opposition to weakness per se effectively and necessarily is opposition to the Messiah himself. Weakness in itself cannot invalidate a person's credibility because the Messiah himself entered into the weakest of all possible social, cultural, physical and/or existential conditions: the cross" (Heavins 2019, 257-258; See also Pickett 1997, 192-193).

Theologia Crucis invites us into the arena of ministry weakness, including suffering *with*, not suffering *for*. Suffering *for*, implies a mediatorial or sacrificial role that Christ accomplished once for all. Suffering *with* describes a way in which we relate to God, his people, and the world. Suffering with God's people produces what Alan Hirsch calls "communitas," a deeper form of community forged in the fires of liminal experiences shared (Hirsch 2007, 162-163). For those of us who are from Western and economically wealthy societies, being vulnerable with the majority world reminds us of who we are and from what we have been rescued (Titus 3:1-5), and such remembrance should help us become more sensitive to those who we minster. On a personal level, unfortunately my years of ministry training in the West coincided with the rise of church growth principles (valuing, size, speed and planning, but not vulnerability), which set me up to fail in valuing, accepting, and truly understanding the difficulties Japanese Christians face in a land where the average church size in the early 1990's was seven people.

Thinking Culturally through the Lens of Cruciformity

In chapters one through four of I Corinthians, Paul zeroes in on two cultural patterns coming from two different cultures: the desire for power from the Jews and the love of wisdom for the Greeks. Both, Paul says, when analyzed by the paradoxical cross, are not strength and wisdom but weakness and foolishness. Do Christians still fall prey to substituting God's ministry values with culturally favorable ones today? I believe that it does. Notice, for example, the following excerpt (with names and other specifics changed for anonymity) from an email announcing a new staff member for a mission organization:

> XYZ Mission organization has been blessed with outstanding leaders to serve in our global family of ministries. Please join me in welcoming John and Jane and their # children. John comes to us from the business world and has a wealth of ministry experience serving in his home church in ABC City. He has worked in senior management at both Well-Known Corporation #1 and Well-Known Corporation #2, spending close to xx years in the PQR industry... (XYZ Mission, 2021).

The emphasized portions above embody what current world cultures value. Leadership over servanthood seems prevalent—even though Paul never referenced himself as a leader but instead confessed that Christ was his head and that he was a bond servant. Having a business background is valued because wealth is valued. Nothing is wrong with earning a comfortable living but, why would a mission organization identity to the wider Christian mission community the company names of a new staff member's previous employees? If John had previously worked for minimum wage at a fast-food restaurant, would that information have been included in the introduction above?

> Paul intentionally avoided carrying out his ministry among the [Corinthians] with an impressive rhetorical display and a powerful personal presence [even while] it was counterintuitive to do so. Had he persuaded them to follow Jesus through such means their faith would have been founded on human wisdom, the logic of the present evil age, and not the power of God (Gombis 2021, 62).

In small but innumerable ways the values of the culture work their way into ministry thinking and methodology, a theme to which Paul returns to time and time again in the Corinthian letters. Thankfully Paul does not just bemoan this anomaly: he also introduces to his readers *cruciformity* as a litmus test for Christ exalting ministry.

Paul writes, "For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you" (2 Corinthians 13:4). Because the living Christ remains the crucified one, cruciformity is Spirit-enabled conformity to the indwelling crucified and resurrected Christ. Like *Theologia Crucis,* cruciformity involves God's inclusion of suffering and weakness—but cruciformity gives an embodiment to suffering and weakness. Furthermore, at its heart cross-like conformity is about faithfulness and love.

Cruciformity is crucial to our understanding of what God values:

> Hence, to those boasting in power and dismissing Paul's weakness, and to those who have not yet heeded Paul's exhortations to repent (cf. 12:21), this language creates a necessary obligation for Paul's listeners to likewise give up their prior valuations of worth or honor or privilege, and to reframe even their own selves in a new symbolic universe: their participation in a crucified Messiah, crucified in weakness (Heavins 2019, 259).

Practically speaking, *Theologia Crucis* and cruciformity teach us that we cannot tap into God's strength when our hearts and hands are full of human strength and wisdom. "He [Paul] understands the power of God is magnified if servants of Jesus Christ are in social positions of weakness and vulnerability" (Gombis 2021, 68). Moreover, we cannot operate in a stance of "pretend weakness," what one scholar has termed "power dissolved in weakness" (Heavins 2019, 251): we must conclude that we are anything but strong, able, and independent of God.

To apply conforming to the cross in our modern ministry settings means that we can face the fear of failure by not copying various "successful" looking cultural models for ministry. For example, we can truly embrace "God's upside-down theology," namely that already we are all small, weak, and foolish—yet God uses us (Hochhalter 2014, 12). Also, conforming to the cross means we can treat as insignificant what our cultures value in terms of conducting gospel ministry.

Thirty years ago (per my training noted earlier), one would have been considered a fool for attempting what the above paragraph advocates. Even so, McKnight in hindsight concurs:

> Homogeneous church principles—where we focus on one type of person in one kind of community—and the church-growth movement are not found in the New Testament and are but another version of Corinthianizing the church. These principles are worldly. Measuring success by numbers—butts or budgets—is also worldly. What mattered to Paul was presenting his churches complete in Christ. Maturity for Paul was Christoformity, so the only metric Paul knew for pastoral ministry was this question: 'How Christoform is she or he? How Christoform is the church of Ephesus?' (McKnight 2019, 194).

In the end any ministry model we employ must be cross-shaped. Any value we embrace must be viewed through the lens of the cross.

One further evaluative tool for ministry remains, and that is the lens of Christoformity.

Christoformity

Christoformity is similar to cruciformity but different in a significant way. As Heavins (2019) has expressed, "Any coherent account of Paul's theology of the cross must account for Paul's claim in 2 Cor. 13:3-4 that the Messiah is not weak who was crucified in weakness because he lives by the power of God" (Heaving 2019, 256). That is, Christoformity stresses the risen Christ, looking forward with an emphasis on "community reform." That reform takes place "on the basis of [the community's] shared participation in the Messiah's cruciform weakness, and Messiah's present irreducible life by the power of God" (Heavins 2019, 255).

Today this reform continues in the body of Christ, and like Paul "The pastor is called to nurture a culture of Christoformity" in the sense that "we are formed by his life, by his death, and by his resurrection and ascension" (McKnight 2019, 3). Christoformity means that we who follow him are to conform to Jesus Christ. Jesus himself taught that the disciple should think, do, and be exactly like the master (Matthew 10:24-25; Mark 10:45).

Christoformity is embodied ministry as participation in what God is doing in Christ through the Spirit. "Only Christ is able to make God known to us.… Our response is a willing participation in God's self-revelation. That is our privilege and our calling as coworkers with Christ in God's ongoing ministry in the world" (Buxton 2016, 19). Paul expresses ministry as what Christ has accomplished through him and others. "It is not Paul's ministry or mission so much as it is Christ's ministry and mission through the Spirit (I Thess. 1:5-6; 2:13; 4:3-9, 19-21).… Thus, Paul is only participating in what God—Father, Son, Spirit—is doing (Gal. 4:19)" (McKnight 2019, 5).

This realization of participation in the mission of God brought about by Christoformity, before any ministry action, helps us avoid focusing on the methodology that too often gets bogged down in pragmatism. Instead, we learn to think, move, and operate in a "narrative way of life" (Rowe 2016, 215), in a "culture" (Willimon 2016, 203), as we enter the flow of what God has been doing previously. Christoformity is this culture or way of life, in which we are to be nurtured and into which we nurture others, especially in the context of ministry and mission.

Learning Christoformity as an Evaluative Tool for Ministry/Mission in Cultures

"God did not create *cultures*… but he has created humans with a fundamental need and capacity to be innovative within a cultural framework" (Nehrbass 2016, loc. 1409). Culture is amoral, but when manipulated by sinful humanity it runs contrary to the will of God, and ministry thought and practice can become tarnished. A clear example is found in 1 Samuel 6, where the Philistines moved the Ark, together with 2 Samuel 6, where Uzzah is struck dead for touching the Ark. The problem was in following the Philistine way rather than the Mosaic way of moving the Ark. For 20 years the Ark had remained in Kiriath-jearim, yet this "new cultural way" of moving the Ark seems to have remained.

Cultural values' intrusion into ministry thinking and methodology continues today in churches and on mission fields. Yet another example is a recent Tokyo Olympic gospel tract that advertised the testimony of various Christian athletes. While the desire to evangelize certainly is commendable, "such ministry conceptions and their attending postures and strategies" (a methodology of using a very select group of famous people) "for Paul are fraught

with peril" (Gombis, 2021, 68). This peril in Japan is that people aspire not to become the hero (athlete or YouTuber) per se but to get the power, fame, and riches that accompany their success. It seems natural to trumpet our heroes because we all like heroes over losers: "According to the world's way of accomplishing things, God should choose someone with impressive credentials and lofty social status" (Gombis 2021, 68).

Fortunately, Christoformity as an evaluative paradigm can help ascertain what is driving our ministry/missional thinking and methodology. McKnight rightly suggests that pastors *and all in ministry including missionaries* (italics mine) should work to create a Christoform culture in their ministry spheres (McKnight 2019, 6). What is noticeable for most of Paul's epistles is the lists of people. For Paul, "Christ in me and in his fellow workers" was his ministry goal, so developing a culture of formation was paramount. To do so, Paul developed a culture of people and measured his apostolic authentication in terms of Corinthians/Gentiles who had responded by faith and served vulnerably in weakness. For us to do likewise involves developing the cultures of listening, presence, and servanthood.

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[1] Psalm 103:14. Unless otherwise noted, English Bible quotations are from the New American Standard Bible 1995.

Jesuit Missionary Outreach during the 19th and 20th Centuries

Steven L. Estes

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Abstract

This article focuses on the international outreach of the Jesuits during the 19th and 20th centuries. The impressive breadth of Jesuit missionary work is discussed. Some about the origin and early years of the Jesuits during the 16th century is included. The Jesuits started as a missionary order and that thrust has carried through today. The article gives a brief look at 21st century developments and proposes applications to Protestant mission work.

Key Words: Jesuits, Roman Catholic missions, missions history, mission societies, Catholic geographical expansion.

Introduction

One day during my seminary years I overheard a conversation between the missions professor and another student as I walked by a classroom. The professor asserted that the early Protestant Reformers were not much involved in fulfilling the Great Commission. Rather it was the Roman Catholics who were sending missionaries to the far reaches of the world. Those statements surprised me. Interestingly, Philip Jenkins says about the same thing, noting that Protestants did not do widespread missionary outreach until the end of the 18th century. Up to that time Roman Catholics were the ones spreading their faith worldwide. In fact, Catholic apologists asked how the Protestants could be true Christians if they ignored the Great Commission? (Jenkins 2002, 33). That state of affairs sparked my interest in Roman Catholic missions.

While a number of Catholic orders have sent missionaries over the centuries, the focus here will be on the international outreach of the Jesuits during the 19th and 20th centuries. Some information about the origin and early years of the Jesuits is included to lay a foundation for what occurred later. There is a brief look at twenty-first century developments, followed by some suggested practical applications.

The Beginning and Early Years of the Jesuits

The outstanding leader who sparked the formation of the Jesuits was Ignatius Loyola. He was born around 1491 and lived to 1556. Ignatius was Basque and Spain was the land of his birth. As a young man he was a soldier and experienced a spiritual conversion while recovering from injuries sustained during a battle with the French. Later he enrolled in the University of Paris. Ignatius recruited six of his classmates to form what at that time was an informal group. One of the original six was Francisco Xavier, who became an outstanding missionary to the Far East (Foss 1969, 66-69; Geisler and McKenzie 1995, 444). They added three more to their number before leaving Paris (O'Malley 2014, 2).

The original ten met in Rome for three months in 1539. Early in the deliberations they decided to form a new order. They put together the *Formula vivendi,* which contained the basic guidelines for the proposed society, and submitted it to the Holy See. Pope Paul III formally recognized the new order establishing the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits as they are popularly known, on September 27, 1540. The *Formula* clearly described the order as an organization for missionaries.

Its purpose was to propagate the faith (Foss 1969, 122; Geisler and McKenzie 1995, 444; Livingstone 2006, 308-309; Neil 1986, 127; O'Malley 2014, 2-3, 17). From their inception Jesuits committed themselves to serving anywhere at any time under the direction of the Pope. They were always a missionary order (Geisler and McKenzie 1995, 445; Livingstone 2006, 309; O'Malley 2014, 4).

The Jesuits did not take long to make good on their missionary commitment. Ignatius chose Jerónimo Nadal to be his traveling representative. Nadal moved across Europe exhorting the Jesuits to be journeying evangelists who sought to impact the world at large (O'Malley 2014, 22). Soon after their founding in 1540 members traveled to Lima, Havana, and Manila, making Roman Catholicism the first global religious faith (McGreevy 2016, 4). By the time of Ignatius' death in 1556 the Jesuits had moved into Brazil, India, and Japan. Furthermore, they were established in the Congo and moving toward a presence in Ethiopia (Foss 1969, 133; Livingstone 2006, 309; O'Malley 2014, 43). Also, by 1556 the original ten Jesuits had grown to 1,000 (Foss 1969, 133; O'Malley 2014, 3). Fifty-five of them were in Goa, India. Twenty-five were in Brazil, which they entered in 1547. Francisco Xavier arrived in Japan in 1549. By 1549 the Jesuits were stationed in 22 cities (O'Malley 2014, 3,19).

Brazil was the most successful mission field during the early years. Manuel da Nobrega, who was of the Portuguese nobility, arrived in 1549. Catechism classes for the children of colonists and of indigenous people were established soon after he arrived. José de Anchieta, a crippled Basque young man 19 years of age, arrived in 1553. Anchieta was a gifted linguist who soon wrote a grammar of the Tupi language. He also composed many songs that taught Catholic beliefs in that language. The Tupi were characterized by giftedness in music and this ministry proved very effective (O'Malley 2014, 22-23).

One ministry, though not included in the *Formula* that established the Society of Jesus as a missionary order, early on became characteristic of the Jesuits. That ministry was schools, which began in 1548 (Livingstone 2006, 309). When Ignatius passed away there were 30 schools, most of them in Italy. The schools for young laymen became a source of new recruits for the order. Jesuit schools were also a point of contact with unbelievers, like the students' parents (O'Malley 2014, 12).

The 19th Century

An event in 1773 set the tone for the Jesuits' ministry during the 19th century. That event has been variously described as the "suppression" (Livingstone 2006, 309; McGreevy 2016, 1; O'Malley 2014, 27), "liquidation" (Neill 1986, 335), and "dissolution" (Neill 1986, 336; Latourette 1945, 444) of the Society of Jesus. This action was decreed by Pope Clement XIV and had far reaching effects (Livingstone 2006, 309; McGreevy 2016, 1; O'Malley 2014, 27). Twenty-three thousand were forced to leave the Society. Ministries, such as churches and schools, all over the world were abandoned. The Jesuit organization in many places was almost instantly put out of existence (McGreevy 2016, 12).

The question naturally arises as to why the Pope would issue such a decree. John T. McGreevy believes that the suppression of 1773 was the result of differences between Jesuits and their theological opponents earlier in the century. But there were other explanations put forth by the Jesuits themselves (McGreevy 2016, 9-10). As McGreevy points out, "Nineteenth century Jesuits

came to blame the suppression on an alliance of corrupt monarchs and anti-Catholic Enlightenment intellectuals, who together forced the hand of a reluctant Pope Clement" (McGreevy 2016, 12).

The Jesuits continued to face opposition even after they were restored in 1814 by Pope Pius VII (Livingstone 2006, 309; McGreevy 2016, 1, 12; O'Malley 2014, 88). They were expelled from a number of places during the 1840s. McGreevy believes the expulsions of Jesuits during the 19th century were fomented by the order running afoul of the nationalist spirit of the age. There was fear that the Society of Jesus was not conducive to nation states because Jesuits were loyal to an international fellowship rather than a particular country (McGreevy 2016, 10-11). John W. O'Malley holds that the Jesuits, along with Roman Catholic leadership, identified with older power structures, like monarchies, during the rise of nationalism in the 19th century. He believes, similar to McGreevy, that this led to their expulsions (O'Malley 2014, 88, 92).

The expulsions continued after the 1840s and thus freed Jesuits to serve in other places (O'Malley 2014, 92-93). For example, in 1868 they were driven from Spain and relocated in Colombia and the Philippine Islands. Jesuits were kicked out of Germany in 1871 and went to Ecuador and Great Britain (McGreevy 2016, 184).

The number of Society members in the Philippines thus rose markedly after the 1868 Spanish expulsion. Jesuits had first arrived in the Philippines in 1581. In Spain the Society was suppressed in 1767, but Spanish Jesuits were back in the Philippines in 1859. Spanish Jesuit missionaries had been very successful winning Filipinos to the faith. In 1898 they sent still more missionaries to Mindanao and other places in the Philippines (McGreevy 2016, 184, 197).

The restoration of 1814 spurred a great increase in missionary activity and the Jesuits made great progress toward the global extension of Roman Catholicism (McGreevy 2016, 223). New Jesuit missions were established in Syria (1831), Calcutta (1834), Argentina (1836), Madurai (1837), Nanking (1841), Canada (1842), Madagascar (1844), Algeria (1848), and Australia (1848) (McGreevy 2016, 4). It was the French Jesuits that went to Madagascar and in 1893 the Belgians entered the Congo (O'Malley 2014, 94). Often half the German Jesuits were serving beyond German borders and one-third of the French were stationed outside of France. Other Catholic clergy contributed to the increased missionary outreach of the nineteenth century, but the breadth of Jesuit international endeavor was unmatched by anyone else (McGreevy 2016, 2, 4). Certainly it was expulsions that ironically facilitated the geographical extension of the Jesuits and multitudes left Europe as missionaries. At the same time, the desire to spread the faith also contributed to this mobilization (O'Malley 2014, 92-93). Father General Jan Roothan, who led the Society 1829-1853, put a strong emphasis on sending Jesuit missionaries to the ends of the earth (McGreevy 2016, 14-15; O'Malley 2014, 91).

Cultural issues, both good and bad, were part of the missionary landscape during the 19th century. Jesuits worked tirelessly to become fluent in indigenous languages (McGreevy 2016, 33). However, they tended to see themselves as promoting the culture of their home countries, as well as the gospel (O'Malley 2014, 94-95). Paternalism was a great problem for Protestant and Roman Catholic missionary work during the 19th century. The goal was an indigenous church that could function without missionary help, but that was considered a distant goal, so not much was done to bring it about (Neill 1986, 362).

While there were many places to which the Jesuits were sent, the greatest geographical movement of Society members was to the United States. The expulsions of 1840 and afterwards

markedly increased their number in the U.S.A. Jesuits did dedicated work with Native Americans from the North Atlantic coast to the Pacific Northwest. The percentage of American Jesuits involved in foreign missions had always been quite small in comparison with their counterparts from Spain, Italy, and Germany. However, the Spanish American War in 1898 was a wake up call for the North Americans because of the expanding U.S.A. empire (McGreevy 2016, 4, 30-32, 186).

The 20th Century

Though missions sending did not take off immediately, the North American Jesuits gradually increased their involvement in foreign missions. Early in the twentieth century two percent of the members in the Maryland-New York Province (a province is a regional administrative unit) were foreign missionaries, while nearly 40 percent from the Aragón Provence in Spain served overseas. However, World War I brought significant changes. After the war the overall number of Jesuit missionaries was half of what it had been before the war. At the same time, the number of American missionaries increased. Jesuits stationed in the United States sent missionaries to places such as China, Jamaica, Chile, and India in the early part of the 20th century. Not surprisingly, given the U.S. involvement in the Philippines following the Spanish-American War, their largest contingent of overseas workers was in the Philippines (McGreevy 2016, 179, 217-218, 285 n. 36).

The Society of Jesus continued to progress during the 20th century. In 1900 there were about 1,500 Jesuits serving in Latin America. A good percentage of them were Europeans (O'Malley 2014, 94). By 1902 a little over a quarter of the members worldwide served outside their country of origin (McGreevy 2016, 5). O'Malley reports, "In 1914 … there were 217 in Armenia and Syria, 22 in Egypt, 78 in Indonesia, 102 in Australia, and 42 in Albania" (O'Malley 2014, 95). During the early years of the 20th century 75 percent of new Jesuit recruits came from missionary receiving countries (O'Malley 2014, 112). In 1930 the Jesuits had more missionaries than any other Catholic order (Latourette 1945, 40). Jesuit intellectual and writer John Courtney Murray said in 1946 that the burden of the order is to reach all people (McGreevy 2016, 210-211). Between 1945 and 2000 Jesuits from all economically advantaged counties served as foreign missionaries in many places across the globe. Society of Jesus missionaries from the U.S.A. arrived in Korea in 1960. By 2014 nearly all of the approximately 200 members were Koreans. The peak year for membership was 1965 when the Society numbered about 36,000. Half of the members in Indonesia and the Philippines were native born, which reflected a growing trend in missionary receiving lands (O'Malley 2014, 110, 111, 98).

The Jesuits sent many new missionaries to India during the twentieth century. As O'Malley states,

> The Belgians went to Bengal and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the French to Malabar and Madurai, the Germans to Bombay (Mumbai), the Italians to Mangalore. The Americans and Canadians arrived much later in Darjeeling, Jamshedpur, and Patna. As before, the Jesuits established schools, seminaries, printing presses, and churches wherever they went. These institutions soon flourished and continue to do so today in a country that now boasts eighteen Jesuit provinces, the largest number in a single country in the whole history of the Society (O'Malley 2014, 93).

In the decades following 1914 Catholic schools in the south of India had a student population that was two-thirds non-Christians. Also during those years a training center was established near Darjeeling that gave a thorough and prolonged orientation to new members. Both Christian and

Indian areas of study were included, as well as active service in a mission station (Latourette 1945, 284-285). By 1960 the Jesuits in India had developed to the point that they sent missionaries to Tanzania and not much later to Sudan (O'Malley 2014, 111) . At mid- century the United States was the country of origin for the largest group of Jesuits. By the 1980s, however, the largest group was from South Asia (Jenkins 2002, 196; McGreevy 2016, 221).

Probably the most spectacular results of Roman Catholic mission work have been realized in Africa. In that continent baptized Roman Catholics went from 7 million in 1914 to 14 million in 1938 (Jenkins 2002, 37). Orders established in the 19th century made a great impact on the extension of Catholicism in Africa. Especially notable were the White Fathers, founded in 1868. By 1967 they numbered 3,621 in the continent (Neill 1986, 357-358, 420). Jesuits also made a significant contribution to the extension of the faith. As O'Malley reports, "In 1946 . . . French Jesuits arrived in Chad and Cameroon, the seed from which the Province of West Africa was formed in 1983. The province today has about 255 members. The first Jesuits arrived in 1947 for the beginning of what developed into the Province of East Africa, which now numbers about 190 members" (O'Malley 2014, 110-111).

Father General Pedro Arrupe, who was elected in 1964, urged more local control over ministries so that African nationals would make more of the important decisions. That was a significant advance for Jesuit work in the continent. The order came to be located located in 36 African countries (Mkenda 2016, 17-18). In 1955 the number of Catholics in Africa was calculated at 16 million. The increased availability of air transportation enabled missionaries to arrive at difficult to reach places and by 2002 the number was 120 million. Former French colonies, like Chad and Cameroon, were partly responsible for this monumental increase and French Jesuits served in those countries (Jenkins 2002, 58).

The African country with the most pronounced Jesuit growth has been the Congo. The story really begins during the 1800s. After the 1814 restoration Belgian Jesuits went to serve overseas in great numbers and many went to the Congo (McGreevy 2016, 67). In the Congo during the 19th century Jesuit Father Van Hencxthoven, who was Flemish, decided on the strategy of sending believers, under the supervision of a catechist, from a mission station to live near a non-Christian village. Among other activities the settlers would care for abandoned children. By 1902 there were 250 such settlements with 5,000 children in their care. The Belgian Jesuits took responsibility of the Kwango area in the Congo in 1891 and have remained there ever since. The greatest growth in numbers occurred after the First World War. This resulted in perhaps one-fourth of the population becoming Catholic (Neill 1986, 362). As the 20th century progressed the number of Jesuit missionaries in the Congo increased markedly, probably more than in any other African country. They were active in evangelism and that helps explain how Catholicism continued to expand in that country (Mkenda 2016, 18). Jenkins notes that former Belgian colonies registered great growth, and many Belgian Jesuits were sent to the Congo (Jenkins 2002, 58).

Sensitivity to local cultures developed into a characteristic of Jesuit missionary work, especially after World War 2 (O'Malley 2014, 94-95). More missionaries studying cultural anthropology may have fomented this change. A greater desire to understand and interact with the culture, history, and religion of people groups in different settings became a concern of the Society. The goal changed to winning people to Christianity rather than to Western culture. The Second Vatican Council, held 1962-1965, determined that the liturgy would be translated into indigenous languages worldwide (McGreevy 2016, 218, 219, 221; O'Malley 2014, 99). Father General Arrupe

was stationed near Hiroshima when the atomic bomb fell and did much to aid victims of the blast. Arrupe visited the Philippines in the 1970s and exhorted the Jesuit missionaries to express theology in a way that that was Filipino rather than Western/European (McGreevy 2016, 220-221; O'Malley 2014, 100).

Entering the 21st Century

In 2013 an Argentinian Jesuit was elected pope. Pope Francis is the first member of the Society of Jesus to be named to that position (O'Malley 2014, 112). He shares the concern to understand the cultures where missionaries serve and encouraged research in that area many years prior to assuming the pontificate. At the bicentennial celebration of the Jesuits in 2014 Pope Francis charged the members to continue with a missionary outreach orientation (McGreevy 2016, 222-223).

The 21st Century, however, has brought new challenges. Adolfo Nicolás was elected Father General in 2008 and, like Pope Francis, has charged the Jesuits to continue with a missionary passion (McGreevy 2016, 222; O'Malley 2014, 108). Yet the number of members in 2010 was half that of 1965, when the order had its highest membership in history. But new recruits are increasing in Africa and Asia, especially India. In the 21st century the majority of the 1,600 Jesuits serving in Africa are Africans (Mkenda 2016, 18). Perhaps the biggest challenge is the diminished prospect of winning converts in secular Europe, as well as North and South America. Catholic leaders are hoping to penetrate Africa, India, and China more effectively (O'Malley 2014, 111).

Application

As a lifelong Protestant, and a longtime missionary, I stand in awe of the mission work of the Society of Jesus. The rapid pace at which they have been able to expand their outreach worldwide is most impressive. The Jesuits illustrate the advantages of a mission society, with its own structure and leadership, dedicated to world evangelization. Though other structural arrangements have worked well through the centuries (Smither 2017, 25, 42-44), Ralph Winter argues that Catholic orders and Protestant mission societies have been very effective in extending the Christian Faith. An organization of trained specialists is very useful when the goal is to penetrate another culture with the gospel (Winter 1999, 4, 7, 8).

The Jesuits also demonstrate that oppression/persecution is inevitable. The suppression and the expulsions of the 19th century are evidence of that. No one should be surprised by opposition (Lk. 10:3; Ac. 9:15-16; 2 Co. 11:23-26; 2 Ti. 3:12). I never heard much about that during my missionary career. Giving a warning about potential suffering may dissuade some potential recruits from considering mission work. Other sturdy souls, however, may be motivated to take up the challenge and persist when the going gets tough.

Composing this article will have been worth the effort if it stimulates respect for mission societies and attracts courageous recruits for missionary service.

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Early Korean Mission Strategy and Structure 1880-1940: Bridging the Gap Between Traditional Mission Methods and Church Movements

Derek Seipp and Jeff Kwon

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Abstract

The early Korean Protestant church experienced growth and expansion to such a degree that one of its cities, Pyongyang, became known as "The Jerusalem of the East." Many missiologists look to the Korean Revival of 1907 as the spark of the rapid increase, when in fact the church had already been growing exponentially before that point. This article explores the underlying strategies and methods used by the missionaries and indigenous believers which allowed the church to grow quickly. The amount of evangelism and Bible distribution performed by untrained believers was exceptional and undoubtedly connected to the rapid expansion.

Key Words: church planting, discipleship, evangelism, indigenous, multiplication, movement

The Beginning of the Protestant Church in Korea

The early Protestant church in Korea experienced a revival of deep significance with widespread impact. Christianity was growing so fast in Pyongyang, now the capital of North Korea, that it became known as "The Jerusalem of the East." Many people look to the Revival of 1907 as the spark that fueled church growth, when in fact the Korean church had already been growing exponentially by that point. In 1889, Presbyterian missionary Horace Underwood stated, "A revival is now in progress in the native church" (Underwood 1889, 289). In another letter that same year he wrote, "In the past year alone, the church in Korea has multiplied over fivefold" (Missionary Review of the World 1889, 457). So when the revival of 1907 came, the effect was like throwing gas on an already blazing fire. The foundation of the Korean Protestant church was laid in a way which launched it onto an arc for growth.

During his time in Manchuria in the late 1800's, missionary John Ross developed a cohesive overarching mission strategy. That strategy was later improved upon by John Nevius. Ross and Nevius were contemporaries, and they often corresponded with each other about mission strategy.

It should be noted that mission strategists Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson are the fathers of the theory used by Ross and Nevius. Venn and Anderson independently but simultaneously developed the strategy, despite serving in different areas of the world in the 1800's. Their work became known as "Indigenous Church Theory," which became the guiding principle of Protestant missions for the next 100 years.

The core of "Indigenous Church Theory" states that the indigenous church should, from the start, be capable of, and have a vision for, growing and expanding to reach their entire population and bring them under the Lordship of Christ. In order to do this, the indigenous church must be self-propagating (Anderson 1869, 109).

Venn and Anderson believed that the church must be structured to expand without outside finance, thus making it sustainable, scalable, and self-supporting. Underwood noted that self-support instilled a deep sense of "sacrificial dedication" within the indigenous believers

(Underwood 1889, 289). Local workers were also expected to pay for their own personal books, transportation, and shared costs of education.

And finally, to be healthy, the indigenous church must be empowered to find solutions to local issues as it grows and reaches its entire population. Outside answers to indigenous issues usually do not address the true core issues through which local churches are struggling. Therefore, the church must be able to make its own theological interpretations as it pertains to orthopraxy. Thus, the indigenous church must be self-governing as well.

Put together, the "Indigenous Church Theory" has been summarized as establishing indigenous churches which are self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. The main point, however, was to develop "a scriptural, self-propagating Christianity" (Anderson 1994, 549).

Other principles of the "Indigenous Church Theory" upon which Ross and Nevius built their methods were:

- Systematic Reproducible Bible Studies: Efforts were focused on learning from the Word and doing so in simple reproducible ways. Whether individually or in a group, study of the Bible was seen as the central pathway to spiritual maturity.
- Evangelism of Families and Groups: Decisions within Korean society were made communally, within groups. Therefore, the focus was primarily on evangelizing groups rather than individuals. Ross and Nevius paid special attention to the heads of these groups, often the leaders of families and villages.
- Lay Leadership and Volunteerism: First believers and new believers were immediately tasked with bringing others to Christ and helping them grow. Training was ongoing, but believers were sent into the fields with very little training. Every member of the church was regarded as an evangelist for the gospel. A commonly used phrase was, "Everyone is a learner, and everyone is a teacher."
- Mobilization of the Whole Body of Christ into All the Work of Christ: In the early years of the church in Korea, prospective church members who had never tried to lead others to Christ were refused baptism and membership into the church. When this requirement was removed, the rate of growth slowed significantly.
- Just-in-Time Learning: Local lay volunteers and lay leaders were given training throughout the year. Each training focused on simple, specific tasks for obedience. They were not given complicated, comprehensive training, all at once, at one time.

In order to fulfill the ideals of Indigenous Church Theory, Ross and Nevius structured the mission engagement in Korea with a developmental approach to church growth (Clark 1937). The ideal was to start simple and gradually build towards maturity. Each training built upon the previous training and focused on simple tasks for obedience. Over several years, new leaders would be brought to maturity. Mistakes made by volunteers and lay leaders along the way were seen as opportunities for learning and growth.

Ross and Nevius's developmental approach was for new believers, house churches, and new leaders. Roland Allen wrote about how these methods followed the methods used by the Apostle Paul. Paul would enter a new area, convert new believers, and then give these new believers the task of reaching their villages and towns for Christ. Within a very short time, Paul would have

shown them how to meet together, then Paul would leave and move on to the next location. Paul would continue to develop both the local leaders, as well as the local groups, by writing letters and the sending back of mature disciples like Timothy and Priscilla and Aquila (Allen 1912).

Over time, these simple Bible study groups would add tithing, worship, care for needs, and eventually elders. These elements of church, however, were not added all at once. There was a tolerant attitude toward indigenous culture and religions. Ross and Nevius advocated for adapting methods to meet local circumstances and did not impose completely organized local churches when entering new villages and areas.

When church buildings were eventually constructed (most groups met in homes), the missionaries insisted that any buildings be financed by the local village and that the house of worship be constructed in the same style as those of the houses in that village. Self-support became the "cornerstone of indigenization" per missionary Horace Underwood (Underwood 1889, 289).

In February 1891, the Korean Mission of the PCUSA adopted the "Nevius Method" as their "Standing Rules and By-Laws" (Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Korean Mission 1891). There was an emphasis on local leaders, un-ordained ministers, and Bible Women, all of whom were empowered to lead Bible studies—which grew in number. These methods fueled the Presbyterian church into becoming the overwhelmingly dominant Christian tradition on the peninsula.

The Korean Mission officially declared that Presbyterian missionaries should follow the Nevius Method with a primary aim to win souls and disciple them, believing that individual change would bring about social change (Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Korean Mission 1891). This decision is noteworthy in that the Nevius Method was very different from other denominational mission societies operating in Asia at the time. Nevius lamented that much of the work in China "left the impression that foreigners have money in abundance, and are ready to give it to those in need" (Nevius 1885, 11). Nevius watched as the effective indigenous workers he raised up "were hired away, one by one mission, another by another, and the interest in Christianity in and about their homes ceased" (Nevius 1885, 12). He continues, "The religious interest which passed like a wave over the neighborhood, gives place to another wave of excitement, and the topics of conversation are now place and pay" (Nevius 1885, 13).

Other missionaries in China had become outspoken skeptics of the Nevius Method being employed in Korea, critical of the resulting rapid growth of the church. One missionary in Korea, Dr. Alfred Sharrocks, invited those skeptics to come and evaluate a growing church in Sonchon, north of Pyongyang. The critics claimed the growth was a "bubble" of "reckless mass conversion." Sharrocks responded by showing how "from the first, the Koreans were made to believe that the spread of the Gospel and growth of the church was their work rather than ours" (Oak 2013, 10). He then showed how 15 locally supported evangelists diligently worked with local congregations who collectively donated 8000 days for evangelism per year. The results of local empowerment and ownership of the task grew the body of Christ in one small town, from 75 people to over 1400, in just five years. Believers in another town grew from just 50 in 1899 to 2500 in 1909.

Developing Churches

The various other components of the Nevius-Ross method, explained below, can be described in terms of non-formal, informal, and formal training of local leaders. The overriding question guiding the training was, "What are the means calculated most quickly and effectively to bring the

message of the gospel within reach of every individual of the race?" All mission activity took place within a cohesive mission strategy. Most of this activity was completed by minimally trained laity who were taught to follow simple, reproducible actions. Even so, due to the cohesive strategy and on the job training, their collective work was robust and comprehensive.

Preparing the Fields for Harvest: Bible Readers

Even before setting out to evangelize Koreans, the missionaries knew that two matters were of the utmost importance. First was *prayer*. Early missionaries mobilized countless Korean Christians into prayer. Early morning prayer meetings were started in 1898, and these gatherings became a movement that spread across the country well before the revival of 1907.

The second essential element was that of the *Word of God*. The Bible was seen as the most important tool for evangelism and the spiritual development of individuals. As such, the missionaries believed that making the Word of God available to all people within each and every community was essential.

Ross and Nevius made use of men and women whose sole role was to find a way into existing relational groups within a community and read to them stories from the Scriptures. These men and women were often called "Bible Readers." They would go wherever people would gather: beside a busy intersection, under a spreading tree, or in homes. Women often made it their priority to get into the *anbang*, the women's quarters, where women often gathered for gossip and story-telling. Once these Bible Readers entered a location, they simply started reading stories from the Bible. After a story was done, they would discuss the story informally. Finally, they would tell everyone about the book from which they were reading, explaining that this book contained many more fascinating stories. Their goal was to encourage as many people as possible to purchase a Bible for themselves and continue reading it within the group (Strawn 2012).

Early on, the Bible Readers did not have the complete Scriptures translated into Korean, so they would sell whatever portions of the Bible they had. If the people in the group were not interested in a Bible, the Bible Readers would leave pamphlets which explained the essentials of the gospel.

The express two-fold goal was for massive numbers of people to begin reading the Bible in their existing community and to make Bibles accessible to the entire Korean population. The thought was that this would prepare people's hearts for evangelism. It is important to note that these Bible Readers were unordained individuals sent out simply to read Bible stories with people and sell copies of the Scriptures.

A few of the very first Bible Readers were unsaved individuals—but quite often they did not stay "unsaved" for long. Many became believers as they read the Scriptures daily to others. By 1910, after Christianity in Korea had significantly grown and there were more Christians from which to mobilize Bible Readers, it was determined that all Bible readers must be saved individuals (Bae 2001, 134-140).

It is important to note as well that the Bible Readers were sent out by themselves. Even with only minimal training, they sought to mobilize as many people as possible. Therefore, the methods they used had to be simple.

Because many Bible Readers were new believers, they often made mistakes, lost their tempers, or caused other problems. Some quit and left in the middle of a journey. These issues, however, did not diminish the profound impact these Bible Readers made in countless un-evangelized towns and villages, particularly across the northern part of Korea (Clark 1921).

Bible Readers reportedly sold "enormous numbers" of Bibles and Christian literature. Perhaps most notable were the women. From 1888 to 1945 there were a recorded 1200 women who became renown in Korean church history as the "Bible women." Most of the women's names were carefully recorded, while most of the men remained nameless. In the beginning, they were simply seen as Bible salesmen. The strategic importance of the role those men played was not realized until much later (Strawn 2012, 121, 161, 175).

During the year 1909, one team of 19 Bible Women read the Bible to over 5900 people, selling 4280 copies of the Scriptures while also teaching 127 people to read. On average, over the course of a year one Bible Woman would read the Bible to 310 different people, selling Bibles to about 225 of them. Their collective action was tremendous in sowing the seeds of the gospel. In 1913, for instance, all Bible Women were recorded as having read the Bible to over 43,000 individuals (Strawn 2012).

Bible Women are described as going from "house to house" as the weather permitted. As with the original Bible sellers, they were particularly good at either finding gatherings of people or drawing a small crowd of people as they read from the Scriptures. They were noted as not caring what other people thought of them. They had a way of entering into other people's community and simply begin to read Bible stories. The astounding result was the massive numbers of people and communities in which they were able to do this (Strawn 2012).

As they went, these Bible Readers also spread other kinds of help to communities, training them in proper hygiene and other basic health needs. If individuals could not read, the Bible Readers would take some time to teach them the Korean script, *Hangul*, and how to start reading. In these and other ways, Bible Readers had a tremendous impact on society. The number of Bible Women grew as stories of their deeds were passed on to others. Stories of their courage and devotion motivated countless others to follow the same path.

The early missionaries were equally committed to getting "massive amounts" of the gospel into the hands of ordinary Koreans. Many missionaries were recorded as regularly having 100 or more Koreans come through their own house. Some were reported as being in contact with as many as 1500 Koreans over the course of a year.

With the Korean churches putting such a large amount of energy into getting the Word of God into the hands of so many individuals, it is not surprising that revival broke out. Moreover, because a process had been modeled whereby the Bible was to be read in community, communities of Christians reading the Bible together emerged wherever these "Bible Readers" went.

Stories of the exploits of these Bible Readers passed orally from church to church across the countryside and through the many early morning prayer meetings. The tales inspired others to go and do the same. Because their actions were simple and reproducible, it was easy for others to get involved.

Gathering the Harvest: Evangelists

When the Bible Readers returned from their excursions, they handed in the names of individuals who had purchased Bibles, as well as those to whom they given pamphlets, to an Evangelist. Evangelists would then travel from town to town to meet those who had purchased or expressed interest in the Scriptures. Evangelists often sought to meet with heads of families or heads of villages. As already noted, Evangelists often found small groups of new believers already gathering together, a direct result of the work of the Bible Readers (Clark 1921).

As soon as people were converted, the Evangelist would explain how these new believers' names were written in the Book of Life, as well as about the security of their decision to follow Christ. "This is a wonderful thing," they were told (Clark 1921).

Next, the new believers were shown, in the Scriptures, how it was their responsibility to bring the gospel to everyone else in their household as well as the village. "Tomorrow," they were told, "you will bring everyone from your family and your village here, to your house. You will tell the story of what God has done for you. I will help you. Then I will explain to them, the story of Jesus and what God has done and why everyone must believe." These new believers were then sent out to invite everyone from their village to their home (Clark 1921).

The next day, during the meeting the entire village was told that a new Bible study would be held in the house of this new believer, and all were welcome to attend. Over a couple of days, the Evangelist would teach this new believer how to hold a simple Bible study (although many were already doing this, following the example of the Bible Readers). They would simply read a Scripture passage, then discuss what they had read. It was a very simple format with a specific set of stories to help these new believers become grounded in their faith. The Evangelist would give the new believer a list of passages or Bible stories to study in his home with the group (Clark 1921).

Evangelists also told these new believers that they were obligated to send monthly letters, reporting on their progress with the study happening in their home. They were to report any problems and ask any questions that might come up. The Evangelist would keep in touch with them through letters as well. Notice how this correspondence pattern resembles Paul's methods, as he quickly moved from place to place, while sending letters back to the churches of the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippines, Colossians.

The Evangelist promised to cycle back through the villages, when he had time, just like Paul did. What was more important, however, was that the new believer make preparations to attend the quarterly (or semi-annual) training to be held in the provincial capital. They were told to ask for traveling money from this new Bible study, enough to also cover meals and lodging during the training.

Until the training, the new converts were to diligently search the Scriptures themselves and to devote themselves to the new Bible study, to prayer, and to sharing their faith with others in the village.

By the time the Evangelist left, there was an "unorganized church" established in the village. They did not yet have elders, nor did they do everything an "organized church" was expected to do. In time, they would grow into organized churches and do everything a church needed to do. Some missionaries referred to these groups as "infant churches"—what today many would simply call "Bible studies." Initially these focused on Bible study and prayer, perhaps with some simple

worship. Knowing the ultimate goal for each of these groups, the early missionaries had no problem calling them "unorganized churches."

Maturing the Fruit: Regional Trainings

Regional trainings were utilized to strengthen these new Bible study leaders ("unorganized church" leaders) and help them develop their Bible study into an "organized church," while they continued to evangelize their village as well as the nearby villages. These regional training sessions were normally ten days in length.

Each Bible study leader would report on the status of the work, including how many people were attending Bible Study and how many people in the village/neighborhood had accepted Christ. Quite understandably, some of the leaders often felt peer pressure to continue to evangelize when they heard the successes of others bringing their villages to Christ.

Furthermore, Bible study leaders were given more Bible studies to use until the next regional training. All the studies were systematic, enabling learning directly from Scripture. Also, the Bible study leaders were taught basic doctrines of the faith as well as introductions to the Old Testament and the New Testament. They would also be taught to memorize Scripture, as well as the Apostles Creed and a few other similar items.

It should be noted that Nevius and others did not focus on developing leaders who would focus on preaching (Nevius 1885, 36). It took too long, they felt, to produce preachers who could speak correctly and clearly for long periods of time. Also, Korean culture at that time did not include listening to long speeches. Therefore, it was nearly impossible for a preacher to hold listeners' attention for any significant length of time (Nevius 1885, 37). Instead, the missionaries focused on reproducing systematic Bible studies and mobilizing lay leaders to multiply these Bible studies everywhere.

The Bible study leaders were also taught a few of the basic functions of the church. They were not taught everything all at once so as not to overwhelm them. During each successive training, the leaders would learn a few aspects of church life, with a focus on implement those aspects well. Matters that the Bible study leaders would learn included evangelizing neighbors, tithing, care, baptism, and election of elders.

Missions and reaching the surrounding villages were also taught. These Bible Study leaders were taught to do the same things they had been shown: bring new Bibles to a new village and read it in community, establish a new Bible Study, and invite the first believers to come with them to the future regional trainings. Each leader would pledge to give a certain number of days and weeks to evangelize neighboring unsaved villages. The motto of the Nevius Method was "maximum natives and minimum missionaries" (Oak 2013, 8). The missionaries aimed for all church members to be trained in and participate in evangelism.

The goal of this regional training is to mature these Bible studies into house churches and to train up the Bible study leaders into house church leaders. The missionaries did not desire to impose a completely organized church, all at once. Through time and training these infant churches were gradually developed to fulfill all the functions of "organized" churches, including having elected elders.

Over time, some of these house churches would decide to build their own church building, but they knew there were no centralized funds available for them to do so. All funds for the church building must come from their own community. Samuel Moffett stated that the "two seed thoughts" of their work, was their "Bible Training" system, and principle of "self-support" (Rhodes 1909, 19).

Maturing Established Leaders: Seminary Education

If an individual had been active in Christian life and ministry for seven years, shown that they were an accomplished soul winner, started and led many Bible Studies, and helped these develop into organized churches, that person was then considered a candidate for seminary education. In order to be accepted, candidates had to be recommended and provide a statement that soul-winning was their main purpose in life and ministry. Each year they had to recommit to soul-winning as their primary objective. If their main focus ever shifted away from soul-winning, they would lose their certification to continue in seminary studies.

The early seminary education was five years long. Three months per year involved residential study, with nine months of actual field work required. The students would take charge of several churches as helpers and local leaders. Their focus was to aid the local churches under their care to continue to develop and expand (Clark 1937).

Effectiveness of the Nevius-Ross Method

The Nevius-Ross method served as the guiding principle for the Korean Protestant church from the 1890s to the 1940s. Although many later applauded Nevius in hindsight, *Nevius was marked as a dangerous radical in his day*. He had spent almost 30 years of missionary work trying to get others to apply his methods, and he was frustrated. Nevius found his ideas were difficult to implement in China, something he attributed to the fact that traditional methods (the "Old System" as he called it) were commonplace among the many missionaries and churches already planted all over China. Once churches had begun in traditional ways, they found it difficult to change, especially when there was foreign assistance involved (Nevius 1885).

However, when Nevius's plan was implemented in Korea there was no problem of resistance to change, since missions work in Korea was still in its infancy. There were no traditional church structures to compete against the methods. The "Nevius-Ross Method" was simply seen as the way to do ministry.

Compared to the work in Korea, the "Old System" used in China was painstakingly slow. Some 46 years after the first missionaries came there were only about 350 converts. In 1927 (after about 120 years of missionary presence), missionary Robert Speer lamented that the Presbyterians had only 32 self-supporting Presbyterian churches in all of China (Speer and Kerr 1927). After 100 years of ministry, Christians of all Protestant denominations in China numbered about 178,000. This might seem like a significant number, but it pales in comparison to what happened in Korea.

The Nevius-Ross plan was put into practice from the very beginning of the Korean Protestant church. By about 1930 (after just 46 years of Protestant missionary work), Korea already had over 200,000 Christian converts (as compared to only 350 in China after 46 years). *In fact,* by that time, *the number of Protestant Korean Christians already exceeded the number of Protestant Christians in all of China,* even though the mission effort in China had begun much earlier (Brown 1962, 82, Belke 1999, 12, 13, 14). While the first 100 years of missionary work in China had produced

178,000 Christians, the first 100 years of missionary work in Korea (beginning in 1984) yielded *6,000,000 Christians*! (Belke 1999, 13).

Of course, the church in China later exploded. Yet this happened largely after 1945, when foreign missionaries had left China. This expulsion of missionaries forced Chinese churches to adopt many of the same strategies of self-support, self-propagation and self-governance, simply because there was no longer any other option.

Points for Further Evaluation

Both missionary letters and Presbyterian mission reports from Korea often record how hospitals, schools and other projects gradually took individuals and resources away from evangelism (Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Korean Mission 1909). As schools and hospitals grew, evangelists and church leaders were often targeted as primary candidates to manage such projects. As evangelists and effective leaders were taken out of the harvest fields and into these positions, growth slowed. More discussion and research are needed to explore how pioneering church movements can continue to expand—and specifically if those movements in Korea could have continued to expand—while concurrently building the infrastructure of hospitals and educational institutions.

Throughout the early history of the Korean Protestant church movement, it was only foreign missionaries who held the right to baptize new converts. When missionaries were away on furlough, or when missionaries had to fulfill other duties such as teach in local seminaries or schools, they were not able to administer baptism. This unwillingness to confer the authority to baptize seems to have been a significant hindrance to the expansion of the indigenous Korean church. More discussion is needed on the topic of indigenization of local empowerment through the lay priesthood of the believer. Could some of these early practices have influenced the later high power distance between today's church leadership and laity?

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Book Reviews

John S. Carpenter, *Be Not Afraid to Follow the Footprints from Heaven* (2016) and *He is Alive: Science Finds Jesus* (2018)

Reviewed by Aftab Yunis Hakim

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Carpenter, John S. (2016). *Be Not Afraid to Follow the Footprints from Heaven*. New York, NY: Page Publishing, Inc., 476 pp., £38.95 paperback/e-book, ISBN: 9781683482017; and, Carpenter, John S. (2018). *He is Alive: Science Finds Jesus*. New York, NY: Page Publishing, Inc., 434 pp., £27.95 paperback/e-book, ISBN: 9781644240335.

John S. Carpenter's contribution investigating mystical beliefs through scientific and biological evidence is exceptional in his two recent books, *Be Not Afraid to Follow the Footprints from Heaven* (2016) and *He is Alive: Science Finds Jesus* (2018). In this regard, no one can devalue the work that science and the biological world have played in exploring mysterious things on earth.

Carpenter, a psychiatric therapist, testifies in these books about how his life changed and how he began observing mystical beliefs in Catholic settings. Despite the fact that Carpenter's father was a Methodist minister, he had not been convinced by Protestant theology. Thus, to delve deeply into the mystery of religious faith Carpenter first located Jesus in the medical and scientific world—which also created a medium to reach out to atheists and people of other faiths (2018, 16). The whole prospect of doing this critical research is based on proving Christ is alive. Second, Carpenter's faith in Mary, the blessed mother of Jesus Christ, is another important shift that took place in his life. This turn to Mary reshaped his theology, and his faith became more alive in an intriguing way through Marian's apparitions (2016, 120). Carpenter's faith in Mother Mary encouraged him to invite more believers and non-believers to believe in her visits.

According to Carpenter, mystical and supernatural experiences can only be recognized as such by receiving Mother Mary’s assistance, who prays to Jesus Christ on our behalf. Carpenter further affirms that the reality of Marian visits has extensive historical support, with over 2,500 cases in the last 2,000 years, some even to non-believers. For instance, Carpenter describes an event that occurred in Portugal on October 13, 1917, in which over 70,000 people, including skeptics, investigators, journalists, atheists, and people of other religions, were astonished by her visit that left no explanations (2016, 20). He believes that Mary who paid this real visit is herself real, as well as that the people who experienced her real visit were medically sound, indicating that there was nothing psychologically wrong with them. Indeed, thousands of people have seen her and been touched by her miraculous nature (2018, 359). Furthermore, Carpenter believes that, regardless of whether someone is religious or not, Mary's visionary experience brings everyone to their knees, and many cases support this claim.

Aside from such beliefs, Carpenter's research on the Shroud of Turin, Sudarium Domini, and the Eucharist to support Christ's presence is brilliant. As a Catholic, Carpenter believes that mystical objects are unique witnesses to Christ, while as a scientist he demonstrates that scientific and biological evidence are also important to consider. In addition, the stories and witnesses of other saints among Catholic believers are also of utmost importance (2018). Carpenter's collection of 80 photos of Marian apparitions is quite impressive (2016).

There is no question that Carpenter's pieces of evidence for Marian apparitions are absolutely incredible. He has expended a significant amount of time in gathering all of the related photos and testimonies. Even so, Carpenter's claims would have been strengthened if he had also supported them with the Bible. On the one hand, Carpenter's amazing reasoning about Mary's apparitions understandably seeks to persuade unbelievers and people of other faiths to have such paranormal experiences as well. However, Carpenter could have protected his arguments better if he had included biblical and theological support.

In this regard, Marlene C. Crouch, a strident critic of Roman Catholicism, declares that the testified apparitions are undoubtedly real. Nonetheless, she contends that these are satanic appearances rather than those of Mary, the blessed mother of Jesus Christ. Crouch further argues that the biblical Mary would never contradict God's Word, and the focus of the testified apparitions is on something other than Jesus's glory (Crouch 2009, 40). In other words, Crouch believes that these visitations are taking people away from Christ rather than bringing them to him.

Carpenter has provided scientific and biological evidence to prove the existence of Christ. He has presented numerous pictures of the Eucharist and of allegedly incorrupt bodies, such as those of Padre Pio and St. Veronica, to strengthen his claims. However, Carpenter does not address the objection that the Bible supports no claim over such beliefs. He has left himself open to the criticism that these historical, scientific, and medical methodologies have misshaped his thinking, insofar as he believes that Catholic bodies are preserved under any circumstance (2018, 401). Carpenter's argument ignores the fact that man is a mortal being and, after death, this body turns into dust (Genesis 3:19).

Moreover, though Carpenter's investigations about the Shroud of Turin, for example, seem authentic, the Bible nowhere provides associated claims in its accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus. The Apostles never used the Shroud as proof to claim that Jesus is alive to either the Jews or the Gentiles. Furthermore, while Carpenter uses several passages from the books of Luke and Acts to try and prove that the Shroud was the linen cloth used to bury Jesus, many scholars are unconvinced that the Bible supports such a claim. For example, Christopher J. E. Johnson points out that the Shroud of Turin was discovered in the fourteenth century and was preserved only after the spending of millions of dollars. Johnson, like many others, goes on to conclude that the Shroud of Turin has no connection to the biblical prophecy about Jesus in the Old Testament, since the Shroud's image depicts Jesus with long hair and a beard, which according to Johnson is contrary to scriptural beliefs (Johnson 2012).

Sadly, like Carpenter, many people today disregard the biblical and theological aspects of witnessing about Christ by merely focusing on scientific or biological claims. Unfortunately, some people of the scientific and biological world—Carpenter in this case—use only their own tools to prove Jesus's Resurrection instead of using scientific and biological claims as a tool *if required* to witness about Christ. While appreciative of his brilliance and sincere attempts at using scientific and biological means of witness, this review has emphasized the importance of taking a more biblical and theological approach—not to criticize Carpenter's views per se, but rather respectfully and gently to have him and his readers include biblical input as well.

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Book Review

Chang Seop Kang, *Conversion of Chinese Students in Korea To Evangelical Christianity: Factors, Process, and Types*

Reviewed by J. Nelson Jennings

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Kang, Chang Seop (2022). *Conversion of Chinese Students in Korea to Evangelical Christianity: Factors, Process, and Types*. Evangelical Missiological Society Monograph Series, eds., Anthony Casey et al. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 242 pp., $29 paperback/e-book, $44 hardcover, ISBN: 9781666703528/42/35.

This study by Chang Seop Kang stands out for two reasons. First is the clearly focused subject matter: characteristics of conversions to evangelical Christianity of Chinese students in South Korea. I dare say that most if not all readers of this review will not have run across an English-language analysis devoted to that specific subject. Second is the research method used, namely that of grounded theory. This field-centric, qualitative, and inductive approach freed Kang from limiting his research results to comparisons with any preconceived notion or thesis about how or why the conversions occurred. Kang notes that his "preconceptions were shattered" by the data-driven message "that most students had undergone conversion by personally experiencing God" rather than primarily through intellectual struggles related to "atheism and evolutionism" (xii).

The book is Kang's published PhD dissertation completed at Torch Trinity Graduate University in Seoul. Among the book's five sections (which include an introduction and conclusion, both concise) are one each on research methodology and literature review—both of which thankfully shed light on the study's importance and uniqueness. Also thankfully, the study's longest section is on the actual research findings, a readable presentation and analysis that concludes with a 14-page explanation of the "selective coding" (or "theoretical coding") that yielded the theory or paradigm of conversion for Chinese Christian students in Korea (192-205). An impressive six-page bibliography covers a wide range of disciplines and topics for further reference (221-226).

The conclusion carefully summarizes the study's process, ten key findings, and aforementioned conversion theory, namely that experiencing God was central. An enlightening sub-section on comparisons with previous studies on Chinese conversions in North America (as well as in China) follows. Practical implications for others ministering to Chinese international students are also offered, as well as suggested further research on conversion.

Kang's three decades of mission service among Chinese diasporas around the world has served him well in compiling this focused study on Chinese students who have come to faith in Christ while in Korea. His intercultural makeup, as well as his trilingual (Chinese, Korean, and English) capabilities, undergird the research and inductive approach he has taken. The North American Evangelical Missiological Society Monograph Series editors have served the mission studies community well in choosing Kang's study for publication. Churches around the world can be better equipped through Kang's study to serve nearby Chinese diaspora communities. Everyone exposed to *Conversion of Chinese Students in Korea to Evangelical Christianity* should gain a deeper appreciation for the significance within the Christian movement of the worldwide Chinese diaspora.

Book Review

Aby Alexander, Prasad Phillips, and Reji Samuel, *Christian Management in a VUCA World: Reflections from a Global Pandemic Context*

Reviewed by J. N. Manokaran

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The acronym VUCA stands for "Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous" world. In the 1980s this phrase was coined by the U.S.-American military and introduced in the business world in the 2000s. This book is an attempt to explore Christian Management in the post-pandemic VUCA world. The book has been compiled as chapters contributed by different authors. It has four major sections: Demystifying Christian Management; Changing Environment: Challenges and Opportunities for Organisational Management; Management of Change during VUCA Times; and Approaches to Christian Management in a VUCA World.

The book emphasizes the need for change, as time-tested management principles may not work at this time of history. Dr. Ebe Sunder Raj writes, "We have two options before us: to enter the first boat and have rest, or to leave the second boat and speak to our nation" (7). According to Aby Alexander, "Seeing management from a Christian point of view enables us to respect, review, reflect, redefine, redeem, and restore management principles and practices; this augments the value and worth of management as a practice" (11-12). He writes that Christian management should be studied by exploring biblical concepts of management and examining management concepts in light of Christian values. He summarizes Christian management as Stewardship, Accountability, and Excellence (19-21).

Prasad Phillips writes about missional engagement in the Global South. He lists challenges of harsh realities: 1) Limited resources; 2) Christian mission caught between naïve particularity and vicious universality; 3) Christian management is considered as Western, unchristian, and profit-making; 4) the pandemic has destabilized traditional structures, know-hows, principles, and projects (31-32). He also provides four reasons to maintain the Christian identity of management: first, Christian principles and witness pervades every aspect; second, conflicting ethical environment in our secular world; third, Christian organizations should be witnesses; and four, the need to bring the human and faith dimension in management (34). Phillips also discusses briefly about indigenous managements: *guanzi* in China, *jugaad* in India, *ubuntu* in South Africa, and *blat* in Russia. He suggests that Christian management should focus on 1) non-profit with sustainability; 2) Christian in being and becoming; and 3) indigenous (37).

Gary Hoag writes from the gospels and how the Lord commissioned his disciples. He writes about, first, standards of practicing and spreading the Good News; second, models of ministering; third, the pathway Jesus intended for the first disciples. Hoag elaborates, stating that the disciples were also sent to VUCA contexts: Volatile: Like lambs in the midst of wolves; Uncertain: No purse, no bag—relying on God's provision; Complexity: Working in pairs, praying fervently, healing, being men of peace; Ambiguity: Will have no idea who will reject or accept their message. Paul also followed the Lord Jesus Christ and provides a case study. Hoag concludes: Christian managers should multiply good and faithful stewards; following right standards; the missions and churches will flourish. Stewards follow standards, which will result in sustainability (50-51).

Anand Samuel writes in today's context as God demands: "Let my people live." Generally, 80 percent of tasks are performed by machines, while only 20 percent are done by humans. Samuel reasons: "Introducing digital technology will result in job reduction only when tasks such thinking, strategizing, innovating, collaborating, motivating, counselling are not all needed in an organization" (62).

James Daniel Paul focuses on investments. He writes about debt, equity, and charity (73-74).

Anand Samuel suggests that lifelong learning culture in virtual mode, flexible working hours with a 24/7 option, proper planning, and prioritizing should all be adapted in Christian organizations. There is a challenge of balancing the degree of change and pace of change and the quantum (extent) of technology; humanizing technology is an important value (63).

Hendrik Storm asserts that the pandemic has caused fear, anxiety, uncertainty and, possibly opportunity (but also greed.) Trust is in short supply (88).

Anita Priya Raja encourages readers to counter volatility with vision, values, and vitality; meet uncertainty with understanding; react to complexity with clarity; and fight ambiguity with agility (105).

Paul Swamidass examines technological innovation and disruptive technology. He notes, "Individual innovators are often the engines of disruptive innovations" (117). He suggests to re-read the Acts of Apostles to overcome today's VUCA world.

Paul Prathap Jayaraj and Deepa Christina Jayaraj forecast that there will be a disruptive change in the kind of skills that will be required for gainful employment in India. Individuals are "pandicapped" (pandemic + handicapped). Their survey with 587 respondents reveals: lack of preparedness of educational institutions; top management team not aware of the competence required for their organizations in next five years. Few valuable suggestions are given.

David Kinnon addresses ethics: "A few with a strategic approach converted the crisis into an opportunity. Extreme opportunity may breed greed. Greed breeds ethical and moral dilemmas. Robust ethical measures must be in place for the sake of the public interest" (144). Kinnon lists principles for a code of ethics: integrity, transparency, objectivity, justice, compassion.

Marina Marwein writes about governance, based on research:

> Governance is the supreme managing body of an organisation framing policies and laws defining its vision, mission, the principles, structures, enabling factors and interfaces through which the organization will attain its objectives by delegating appropriate levels of authority and responsibility to managers and other entities, and ensuring accountability (156).

Christian governance should help meet physical, physiological, social, and spiritual needs, all the while addressing socio-economic, technological, and environmental issues, thereby bringing glory to God. Boards should have minimum standards of size, diversity, inclusiveness, and acceptable codes of conduct in functioning, relationships, and attitudes.

Marwein describes four kinds of governing boards: Good Shepherd governing boards; salt and light governing boards; vine and branches governing boards; narrow way governing boards.

Johnson Thomaskutty contributes an interesting chapter about Theo-management, Christo-management, Ecclesio-management, and Pneumato-management.

This book is a valiant and valid attempt in the field of management, especially for today's VUCA world. This is more a descriptive presentation, without incisive analysis and potential solutions. The book is just an initial attempt and leaves many areas yet to be covered, discussed, analysed, and expressed.

In the post-pandemic context, the world is indeed a VUCA world. Hence, this book gives Christians tools to view situations with a missional perspective, to engage, to positively impact, and to bring transformation for the glory of God.