MOBILIZING MOVEMENTS

MURRAY MOERMAN

LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS FOR DISCIPLING WHOLE NATIONS

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Mobilizing Movements: *Leadership Insights for Discipling Whole Nations*

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CHAPTER 1

The Big Idea: Discipling Your Nation

"A goal should scare you a little, and excite you a lot."

—Joe Vitale

WHEN I WAS in my late teens I began reading the New Testament for the first time. Before I'd even finished the Gospels, I said to my brother Jack, "If this is true, then the gospel is the most important thing on earth, and I have to give my whole life to it." Soon after that I became convinced that Christ is not only the truth for me personally, but that he is also the hope of the nations. Soon afterwards I committed my life to the Lordship of Christ and knew the joy of the assurance of his salvation and eternal presence. Several years into a church plant in western Canada, during a routine morning "quiet time," I sensed the Lord direct my thoughts to means of mobilizing others to a higher priority for church planting, the embryo of a national church planting strategy. A few years later Carol and I joined a mission, Outreach Canada, to pursue national church planting strategies full time, first in Canada, then Europe, then through the Global Church Planting Network.

Today I'm just as caught up with the truth and visionary aspects of the gospel as I have ever been, reveling in how the Lord revealed his heart and mission purpose from the earliest passages of Scripture. In Genesis 3:15, the *protoevangelium* ("first good news"), the Lord foretold, almost immediately after the Fall, his promise and plan for redemption through the coming Savior. The *missio Dei*,

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mission of God, was introduced to Abraham in his call out of Ur of the Chaldeans to form a new nation for God's redemptive purpose, through whom "all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3 NASB). God's purposes from this point on were to prepare Israel to obey its calling to reflect God's holy character and make known his redemptive covenant to all the nations (Ps 66:1–4).

The New Testament celebrates not only Jesus the Messiah, who opened the way and invited every person into the kingdom of God, but also the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, which enables the church to fulfill its mandate to make disciples of all *ethne*, peoples, or families, of the earth.

Ultimately our mission is rooted in the Trinity who is the source of all that is, was and will be. The God the Father who loved us from before the foundation of the world, God the Son who gave himself as perfect sacrifice for people utterly lost and unable to redeem themselves, and God the Holy Spirit who empowers the redeemed for the mission of the Kingdom of God into all the world, is glorious community. God's *ekkelesia* reflects that community, holiness and mission.[7] Mission therefore is done in community, holiness and with the purpose of God's comprehensive goal always in view. Further, the Trinity is social within itself, concerned for relationship, just, loving and righteous. Our God is a sending God who desires the very glory of heaven to transform human experience and culture on earth. In all these ways the church is shaped and called to reflect the Trinity in the world.[8]

The post-Constantinian church, like Israel in the Old Testament, was slow to grasp its central call to disciple the nations.[9] The short version is that while by end of the sixth century 21 percent of the world population had identified with Christ by the end of the sixth century, global mission did not sustain advance beyond 21 percent for an agonizingly long twelve centuries.[10]

We would rather not remember that during these centuries the church not only suffered seasons of loss of internal focus, but also extensive, long-term external setbacks at the hands of Islamic and Mongolian expansion. Mongolian expansion ended as the devastating bubonic plague entered Europe from the east, decimating the Christian population by a hard-to-fathom one third. The following century, Muslim expansion took the lives of an estimated five million Christians.

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7 Ed Silvoso, *Ekklesia: Rediscovering God's Instrument for Global Transformation* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2017).

8 For a more complete missiology of church planting see Charles Van Engen, "Why Multiply Healthy Churches? Biblical and Missiological Foundations," in *Planting Healthy Churches*, eds. Gary Teja and John Wagenveld (Sauk Village, IL: Multiplication Network Ministries, 2015)

9 See "Constantinian" in the glossary.

10 For details drawn from Patrick Johnstone's *Future of the Global Church* see my blog entry of January 5, 2017 at www.murraymoerman.com/blog/2017.asp.

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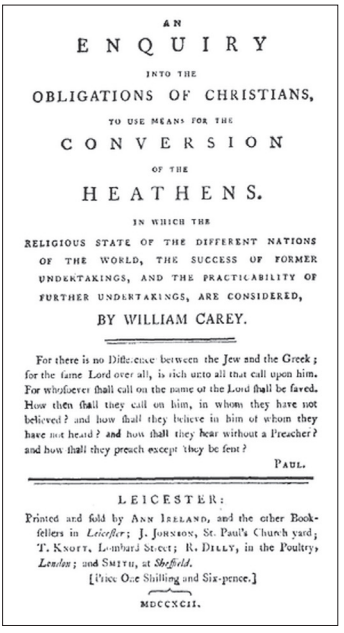
The global church "holding its own" under such circumstances may rightly, at least in part, ameliorate our disappointment. Yet it must also be noted that a critique of the Reformation reveals disappointment as well. The most commonly accepted year of the birth of the Reformation is 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the Castle Church door. Preoccupied as the Roman Catholic Church was with doctrinal correction, and as later Protestants were embroiled in controversy, only about two hundred Protestant missionaries were sent out during the two hundred years after 1517.

The reawakening of earlier mission impulse didn't take place until the last part of the 1700s. The reawakening of God's global purpose was heralded by the Moravian refugee prayer movement, initiated in 1727, which sent out, in its first sixty-five years, three hundred missionaries. On average, one out of every twelve of their small number became cross-cultural missionaries.

Inspirational among them were the young men who sold themselves into slavery to reach three thousand Africans sequestered by an atheist slaveholder in the Caribbean. Their cry from the ship carrying them away, "May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering," helped propel the community to send three thousand missionaries during its round-the-clock "prayer watch" which continued for one hundred years.

The ripple effect has not yet ended. John Wesley (1703–91) was greatly affected by encounters he had with those he called "the Germans."[11] William Carey likewise drew from their fire, challenging the English: "See what the Moravians have done! Can we not follow their example, and in obedience to our heavenly Master go out into the world and preach the Gospel?"

Carey's *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians,*[12] published in 1792, proposed that the world be broken into continents and nations, estimating the size, population, and b religious majority of each, and where workers of which he was aware, from Europe, had been.



AN

ENQUIRY

INTO THE

OBLIGATIONS OF CHRISTIANS,

TO USE MEANS FOR THE

CONVERSION

OF THE

HEATHENS.

IN WHICH THE

RELIGIOUS STATE OF THE DIFFERENT NATIONS OF THE WORLD, THE SUCCESS OF FORMER UNDERTAKINGS, AND THE PRACTICABILITY OF FURTHER UNDERTAKINGS, ARE CONSIDERED,

BY WILLIAM CAREY.

For there is no Difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?

PAUL.

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Figure 2: William Carey's *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians*

11 John Wesley's encounter with Moravians is reported in *The Guardian* and in *Christian History* magazine. See Appendix 7 for links.

12 Full title: *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen, in which the Religious State of the Different Nations of the World, the Success of Former Undertakings, and the Practicability of Further Undertakings, are Considered*. Available from www.gcpn.info/home/regions/national-initiatives.

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William Carey called for Christians to go to each nation—near or far, hostile or friendly—arguing that all nations were now within reach of committed believers. He challenged Christians to put the plight of those without Christ before their own comfort and ease. He argued that the risk of dying was limited, local food was available, and languages could be learned. For the support of qualified workers, Carey suggested the formation of societies, such as his Baptist Missionary Society that sent him to India.

Many such societies were subsequently formed, and thousands of gospel workers were sent, largely from Northern and Western Europe. Initially mission efforts went to the coastlands accessible by ship (1800–1910). The next era focused on more difficult to reach inland areas (1885–1980). The bewildering array of languages and people groups within nations sparked a third era, leading to growing specialization in mission strategy from 1935 through today.[13]

However, it was not until 1975 that the big idea of placing primary responsibility for discipling a nation fell not on *missionaries* from *outside* a nation, but on the *church*, unified in strategic mission purpose, *within* the nation. This "big idea"—linked with a systematic approach for doing so—emerged in the heart of James Montgomery while he was serving in the Philippines.

The story of the development of the "whole church, whole nation" vision and strategy is told in Montgomery's *DAWN 2000* and related writings.[14] The goal, unprecedented in mission history, of planting a church in every *barangay* (the smallest governmental administrative unit, generally home to about one thousand people) was put to church leaders of every denomination, and prayerfully accepted. In 1975, with five thousand Bible-oriented churches in the Philippines, fifty thousand *barangay* were anticipated by the year 2000. Therefore, forty-five thousand churches would need to be planted in twenty-five years to provide a church for every one thousand people/*barangay*.

When researchers reported finding just over fifty thousand churches in 2000, some might have concluded the mission of the church was complete. Some *barangays* were now served by more than one church, while others, particularly in the Muslim south, remained without Christian witness. Further, the population of the Philippines continued to grow, so the number of churches needed to disciple the country continued to grow also. Finally, as Jim Montgomery suggested early on, disciple-making and church planting is both necessary and *penultimate*, which is to say "a step before" the completion of the Great Commission. The leaven of

13 Ralph Winter, "Three Mission Eras," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed., eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 263; and www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/four-men-three-eras.

14 Many of Jim Montgomery's writings are available at www.gcpn.info/home/regions/national-initiatives.

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the gospel has yet to further penetrate structures and institutions to a depth that brings social and cultural betterment.

Readers may be familiar with the subsequent development of Dawn Ministries as a support organization for "whole nation" projects initiated in various parts of the world. A major review of this story has been undertaken by Raphaël Anzenberger, an NC2P leader based in France.[15] Each national experience has brought the thoughtful observer additional learnings, many of them about partnership and movement leadership. Many focused disciple-making movements are needed to engage thousands in each social segment and cultural space who don't know Christ.

But the "big idea" remains and provides the foundation for this book—the vision of mobilizing the "whole church" to disciple the "whole nation" by placing a transformative church inhabited by the risen Christ within reach of every person. "Within reach" does not mean that every person outside of Christ can reach a given church, but that a disciple-making community can and is seeking to reach every lost person.

This book is not for the faint-hearted. Rather it is for those willing to "put their shoulder to the wheel" to mobilize the whole church for a national church-planting process, or disciple-making movements contributing to that end. The book's focus is to provide practitioners a learning community and timeless resource in their long obedience in the same direction of bringing transformation to a nation.

Next Steps

- Have you ever considered a "whole church" to "whole nation" approach before?
- What might this approach look like in your context?
- What would the challenges be to implement this big idea?
- Which of these items do you need to lift up to the Lord in prayer?
- What will your next steps be?
- Are there teammates or others you need to talk to about these action steps?

15 See Raphael Anzenberger, "Whole-Nation Saturation Church Planting Towards A New Dawn?, PhD Dissertation, 2020.

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