

Movements that Change the World

Steve Addison

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MISSIONAL PRESS

Alan Hirsch

Steve and I go a long way back. We were enrolled in seminary together and shared many of the same classes. It became clear early on that we shared a similar passion for the idea of movements and their relevance for the mission of the Church today. And as we met together regularly over the years, we have shared many ideas that we think are vital to recover in our day if we are going to reverse the decline of the Church at the dawn of the 21st Century. The net result has been one of the most theologically fertile friendships that I have ever had. Certainly we argued some, agreed mostly, and refined our thinking all the time, but definitely we mutually enriched each other's views on this vital topic over the last twenty years. Speaking personally, I would have to say that Steve's friendship has also been a kind of mentorship that has left me a much richer person than before and for which I am profoundly thankful. His influence can be found throughout my own writings on this topic.

Steve is a veritable gold mine of useful information. But even more than that, he brings a passionate love for God and his people to the task of writing. In reading *Movements that Change the World* you will discover a thoroughly readable description of the dynamics of missionary movements, as well as how to initiate, maintain, and extend them. Trust me, behind this unencumbered, non-technical portrayal of the examples of history and their ongoing witness to us lies a lifetime of dense research that brings together disparate insights from theology, church history, sociology, business studies, change processes, missiology, leadership studies, spirituality, and anything in between. This book is indeed a labor of love that has taken decades of loving service to prepare.

Instructed as it is by the educative experiences of history, fueled by a missionary's vision of what the world can be, and guided by deep commitment to orthodox, historic Christianity, Steve Addison's book should be read by all who wish to rediscover what it means for Christianity to be a missional movement again in the West.

Alan Hirsch

Founding Director of Forge Mission Training Network and Shapevine.com

Author of *The Forgotten Ways* and co-author of *The Shaping of Things to Come*

www.theforgottenways.org

Bob Roberts

I had the privilege of meeting Steve for the first time in 2008 at a small global gathering of influential pastors who had all planted churches and were planting churches out of their churches. I've followed Steve's blog and writings for years, and I'm delighted he has gathered his insights into book form. Studying church planting movements is challenging because of all the

history, facts, and contexts – it isn't easy work, and sometimes it is not easy work to read! That's where Steve comes in!

Steve has done his homework and has all the academic qualifications necessary to identify the five core characteristics of a church planting movement – maybe any movement. The good news is he does it in a way that enables all of us, not just the academics, to understand it. After all, it's going to be our “everyday disciples” that will make this happen. He then gives both historical and contemporary examples of how it works to illustrate.

The character and experiences of the book's author are huge in terms of how much can you trust what's written. That is another point where Steve really stands out. He lives this stuff. He has planted churches, been involved and is recognized as one of the top global leaders in training church planters, and is also a student and researcher of church planting and movements.

I not only endorse this book but also will require all of our interns, students, and residents to read it. Thanks, Steve, for a great gift to the body of Christ!

Bob Roberts, Jr.

Pastor, NorthWood Church in Keller, Texas

Author of Transformation; Glocalization; The Multiplying Church; and Real-Time Connections

www.glocal.net

Endorsements

Neil Cole

"There are very few who have truly studied, dissected, and understood church multiplication movements at the core. My friend Steve Addison is one who has done his homework. I have anticipated this work for some time and am pleased to report it is better than I ever expected. In a single volume vast amounts of experience, wisdom, research, and testing have been synthesized into an easy-to-read book that all of us should be familiar with. Steve has put in the years of research, and now you and I can benefit from all of his hard work in a few hours of reading. It would be foolish to not take advantage of this resource."

Neil Cole

Founder of Church Multiplication Associates and Awakening Chapels and author of *Organic Church; Organic Leadership; Search & Rescue*; and *Cultivating a Life for God*.

www.cole-slaw.blogspot.com

Floyd McClung

"I love this book! Every so often a book comes along that fuels the flame that was started in my heart years ago when I was a young and very passionate world changer. I love reading this type of book. I'm still a fanatical, passionate, fiercely focused, imbalanced, apostolic type guy. I'm older now, but more passionate than ever. If you're looking for an intelligent and passionate book to stir you to dream big dreams, a dream of how a movement can begin through your life, and give you practical tools to help implement those dreams, then read *Movements that Change the World!*"

Floyd McClung

All Nations

Cape Town, South Africa

Author of *You See Bones, I See an Army: Changing the Way We Do Church*; *The Father Heart of God*; and *Living on the Devil's Doorstep*.

www.floydandsally.org

Martin Robinson

"Steve has been tantalizing me with tales of this book for years. He has talked to me about the content on numerous occasions. The chapters are distilled from years of experience and

thought, and the final product has not disappointed. Practitioners and thinkers with a passion for mission will want to read and re-read this book."

Dr. Martin Robinson

Together in Mission, (UK based interchurch agency encouraging mission and church planting.

Author of *Metavista: Bible Church and Mission in an Age of Imagination* and *Planting Mission Shaped Churches Today*.

www.togetherinmission.org

Bob Logan

An important book for our times— well-researched, well-written, and well thought-out. Steve puts his fingers on the essential qualities that have defined movements of the Spirit throughout the ages. And the stories he tells—biblical, historical, contemporary, and personal— give us hope for fresh movements of God in our day.

Dr. Robert E. Logan

CoachNet International Ministries

Author of *Be Fruitful and Multiply*

David Garrison

“As I read through your manuscript I felt that I had met a long lost brother. I had to read it through in a single sitting because it pulled me through from start to finish. Excellent work, brother! This will be a valuable contribution to our growing understanding of church-planting movements and their history, scope, and nature. I love the way you have woven together insights from sociology, history, Scripture, contemporary case studies, and even personal experience. I will be recommending this to everyone I know. Thank you for vividly reminding us that Jesus did not found a religion, but a movement!”

David Garrison

Global Strategist for Evangelical Advance,

International Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention

Author of *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World*

www.churchplantingmovements.com

Ralph Moore

"Adaptive, innovative and consuming..." Those words characterize the movements Steve Addison describes and prescribes in his book. They also depict the book--pick it up and it won't let go of you. I couldn't put it down till it finished re-arranging my mind. This is a keeper!

Ralph Moore

Pastor: Hope Chapel Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii

Author: How To Multiply Your Church

PATRICK

I, Patrick, a sinner, unlearned, resident in Ireland, declare myself to be a bishop. Most assuredly I believe that what I am I have received from God. And so I live among barbarians, a stranger and exile for the love of God. He is witness that this is so.

Letter To Coroticus¹

Can anything good come out of Ireland?

When Alaric and his army of Visigoths marched into Rome to loot and plunder in 410 AD, it was as though the world had ended. It had been eight hundred years since an enemy last breached Rome's defenses. Rome, the Eternal City, was the heart and soul of the greatest empire in history.

The sack of Rome sent a shock wave throughout the Empire. Yet it was hardly noticed on the fringes of the Empire, except perhaps by the Irish pirates who for years had been taking advantage of the withdrawal of the Roman navy to attack the west coast of Britain.

Patrick was sixteen years old when the Irish raiders stormed his village in Roman Britain.² Until that day he had lived a privileged life. He was born into the British land-owning aristocracy. His grandfather was a priest, and his father was a magistrate and church leader. The life of a Roman magistrate was one of honor and privilege. The position was hereditary; one day Patrick would rule as part of Roman nobility in Britain. The raiders seized him, along with servants from his father's estate, and returned across the sea to the pagan land of Ireland where they sold him into slavery. The year was 405 AD.

For the next six years Patrick lived the lonely and hard life of a slave, working as a shepherd. Isolation, hunger, and cold brought him misery, and misery taught him humility. God worked powerfully in Patrick's suffering to remake him from the inside out. He freed Patrick from dependence on wealth and his place in society. God rescued Patrick from himself and made his heart captive to the love of Christ.

According to Patrick, before his abduction he did not believe in the living God. As a slave, Patrick came to see the hand of God in his troubles. God broke through his defenses, and Patrick faced his unbelief and pride. Later he described how he turned to God who he realized had been watching over him all the time. He became aware of God's protection, and he discovered that God loved him as a father loves his son.

Outwardly nothing changed for Patrick; he was still a captive in a harsh foreign land, but he saw life differently. The land of his captivity had become the land of his freedom in God. The slave of men had become a son of God

The love and fear of God grew in him. Patrick recalled how he learned to pray continually as he worked. At night he stayed out in the forests and on the mountains to pray. He would rise

before dawn to pray in the icy coldness of the Irish winter. This was no burden to him but a delight because the Spirit was burning in him.

One night God spoke to him in a dream and revealed that there was a ship waiting to take him home. There was one problem—two hundred miles of dangerous territory lay between him and the coast. Patrick made his escape and began the long journey home as a runaway slave.

The details are sketchy, but he reached the ship and eventually made it back to his family and resumed the life he once had in Britain. Perhaps he looked forward to inheriting his father's position in society and all the privileges that went with it. But God, who is the initiator in this story, had other plans for Patrick.

Patrick woke one night to the voices of the people he had known in Ireland crying out, "We beg you, come and walk with us again!" Their cry pierced his heart. God was calling him to return—and he did.

In time he was ordained as a priest and bishop despite his limited education and experience. Later Patrick faced opposition from church leaders to his authority, but he believed that it was God who had appointed him, an uneducated sinner, to be a missionary bishop to the Irish.

When Patrick returned to Ireland, it had been four hundred years since Christ commanded his disciples to go to the nations, yet the gospel was largely contained within the borders of the Roman Empire.³ God took the initiative to transform a teenager with an inherited faith into an apostle compelled by the Spirit to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. The shepherd-boy slave had become the slave of Christ and apostle to Ireland.

Patrick's troubles had prepared him well for his mission. Through them he had become devoted to Christ and the gospel. His heart longed to reach the "barbarians" beyond the borders of civilization. His lack of formal training contributed to his openness to new and effective methods.

In contrast, the church of the Roman Empire was not interested in taking the gospel beyond the borders of Greco-Roman civilization. Romans regarded the tribes outside the Empire, such as the Celts, the Goths, and the Huns, as barbarians. The religious world of the Irish Celts was inhabited by a bewildering array of gods, goddesses, and spirits of the sky, earth, and water; the Celts also believed in the magical powers of ancestors and divine animals.⁴ For the church of the Roman Empire, these pagan barbarians were beyond the missionary concern of God.

Patrick, however, saw the need and opportunity to reach these Irish barbarians. Patrick traveled throughout Ireland to remote and dangerous places to preach, baptize converts, and ordain clergy for the new churches. From nobles to slaves, the Irish were ready to hear and obey the gospel. Thousands of them responded to Patrick's preaching and turned from their pagan idols to serve the living God. Many of the converts took up Patrick's challenge to join his missionary band.

Patrick gave the Irish the gift of non-Roman Christianity. Since the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 312 AD, Christianity had been closely identified with Roman culture and power. Yet Patrick liberated Ireland without the backing of imperial power. Instead he lived and

communicated the gospel in ways that connected and resonated deeply with Irish hopes and concerns. He taught the Irish that they could become followers of Christ without having to become like Romans.

Steadily the gospel worked its power through the Irish tribal society. Patrick embraced the best of Celtic culture and redeemed it to serve the gospel. He fought those aspects of Irish culture that did not conform to the gospel. He ended the slave trade, and under the gospel's influence, murder and tribal warfare decreased. In place of a warrior society, Patrick provided a living alternative. He showed the Irish that it was possible to be brave—to expect every day to be murdered, betrayed, enslaved—and yet to be a man of peace with no fear of death because of the promises of an almighty God.⁵

Patrick faced fierce opposition. He had to contend with the magic of the Druids (the powerful priestly caste of Celtic society), and he faced the violence of local chieftains. On one occasion, newly baptized Christians were attacked by British raiders from the west coast of Patrick's homeland. The men were slaughtered, and the women and children were kidnapped, some of them still wearing their baptismal robes.

Just as distressing was the opposition from other church leaders. Patrick's writings make it clear that influential sections of the church disapproved of him, despite his role in the conversion of much of Ireland.⁶ Patrick's worst critics were the bishops in Britain. They were not interested in taking the gospel to the Irish. They may have initially tolerated the appointment of such a poorly educated novice, but as the Christian faith spread throughout Ireland some church leaders questioned whether Patrick was the right person to lead such a successful and potentially lucrative ministry.⁷

Patrick was deeply conscious that his authority to preach the gospel came from God, but he was also painfully aware of his limitations and of his many critics. He was embarrassed by his lack of formal theological training and the poor quality of his Latin. His writings do not reveal the training of scholar, but they do reveal the heart of a man compelled by the love of Christ, led by the Spirit, and guided by the Scriptures.⁸

Patrick made church structures serve his mission to Ireland. The church of the Roman Empire was based around the cities where the local bishop was supreme. The Irish were a rural and tribal people. Unlike the civilized Romans, they had no settled towns, roads, currency, written law, government bureaucracy, or taxation. Irish society was decentralized and organized around tribes led by local "kings."⁹ So Patrick decentralized the church.

The Roman system was based on the diocese and the bishop. The life of the Celtic church revolved around the monastery, which was led by an abbot. The abbots selected the bishops, and the bishops were dependent on them.

Patrick's mobile missionary bands closely followed the example of Jesus and Paul, but the Roman church leaders did not approve. Patrick responded to his critics through his writings as best he could with his limited literary skills, but he did not let them stop him. Not only was his ministry at stake, but also the missionary movement that was about to be unleashed throughout Britain and Europe.

The Celtic missionary movement was not a highly organized or centrally controlled operation. Under Patrick's influence, wave after wave of Irish youth flooded into monastic life. Most monasteries began in remote places when their founders withdrew from the world only to be pursued by throngs of young men who were eager to follow their example.¹⁰ Monastic founders responded to the call of Christ and gathered workers around them. Each founder developed his own Rule for his followers.¹¹

The monasteries were places of spiritual devotion and learning, but they were also sending centers. The Irish church took on the character of a missionary movement. For centuries Ireland became a base from which Christianity spread throughout the British Isles and to much of western and northern Europe as monks followed the call to "go pilgrimage for Christ."¹²

Patrick's followers shared a love for classical literature and the pagan poets, but the Scriptures had first place in their hearts and minds.¹³ They read them with passion rather than detached academic interest. Although few were great theologians, they were known for their spiritual authority and missionary zeal. Young men who once would have given their lives in feuds between the clans now gave their lives to plant the gospel wherever Christ led.

Under the abbot, each missionary outpost made decisions in adapting to local needs and opportunities. They recruited new missionaries from the local people and sent them out to found new monasteries.¹⁴ This made Celtic monasticism highly flexible, adaptable, and transplantable—everything that the church of the Roman Empire was not.

Ireland had no cities. The monasteries grew rapidly and became the first population centers; they were hubs of unprecedented prosperity, art, and learning.¹⁵ A distinct Celtic Christian culture emerged. For hundreds of years missionaries and scholars went out from Ireland, while students from many lands came to Ireland and left inspired to become missionaries. These missionary monks founded the monasteries throughout Europe that would one day become great cities.¹⁶

Patrick's personal achievements were impressive, but his greater legacy was the missionary movement he inspired. The monasteries of the Celtic missionary movement became dynamic centers of spiritual devotion, learning, industry, and evangelism in a chaotic world.

The Irish monk Columba (521-597), whose grandfather had been baptized by Patrick, continued to shape the Celtic missionary movement. He and twelve companions left Ireland for the island of Iona off the coast of Scotland. Columba shared Patrick's commitment to the Bible and love for Christ; these inspired him with the same missionary zeal. At Iona he established a missionary base for the evangelization of the pagan Scots and Picts. Columba trained and sent out missionary monks who established a network of monasteries. For centuries Iona served as a center for training and sending out missionaries and the establishment of other sending centers throughout Ireland, Scotland, and northern England.

As the number of monasteries multiplied throughout Ireland, Britain, and the European continent, converts were won and new missionaries left to "go pilgrimage for Christ" wherever they felt his leading.

What part did the Roman church play in this story? Rome was the center of civil and ecclesiastical power. The Roman church had a distinguished history stretching back to the apostles. It had built efficient organizational systems throughout the empire, and it had money and clout. Yet the Roman church was strangely absent from the frontline of missionary expansion.

As the Roman Empire and civilization collapsed, it was not the Roman church but the church of the barbarian Celts that led the way in missionary endeavor and cultural transformation. The Celts had biblical simplicity and devotion to Christ on their side. They shaped their church structures and methods to fit their culture and missionary purpose. Rome had the resources, but the followers of Patrick had the zeal.

Patrick died in 461. As the western part of the Roman Empire crumbled and darkness spread over much of Europe, the light of the gospel shone brightly from remote Ireland. For the next five hundred years, the youth of Ireland and their disciples fanned out across Europe, winning converts, making disciples, and multiplying missionary outposts. Wherever they went they carried their books and their love of learning. They revitalized European culture and possibly saved civilization following the fall of the Roman Empire.

Characteristics of a Missionary Movement

God takes the initiative and chooses unlikely people, far from the center of ecclesiastical power. He works to remake them from the inside out. He inspires innovative insights regarding his mission and how it is to be carried out. Biblical truths and practices are rediscovered. A growing band of ordinary people emerges who have a heartfelt faith and missionary zeal that knows no bounds. Despite opposition from powerful forces within society and the existing church, the gospel spreads into unreached fields. The existing church is renewed, and society is transformed. Eventually every movement declines as it discovers that its treasure is buried in this world rather than the next. Meanwhile God goes looking for another lonely shepherd boy who is cold, hungry, and a long way from home.

The life-cycle pattern of new life, growth, maturity, and decline is a recurring theme of history. This book deals with the characteristics of missionary movements in their most dynamic expression. From Patrick's story we can identify five key characteristics of movements that change the world.

1. White-hot Faith

This story of a great missionary movement began with a teenage boy who was broken, lonely, and defeated. He lost his home, his family, and his position in society. He had lost everything but found the love of God in Christ and a call to preach the gospel.

Movements that change the world may eventually come to possess resources, learning, and power, but they do not begin with these things. Missionary movements begin with men and women who encounter the living God and surrender in loving obedience to his call.

2. Commitment to a Cause

Nothing was more important to Patrick and his followers than their faith in Christ and his cause. They expected a high degree of commitment from themselves and from one another. They attracted the youth of Ireland who gladly devoted their lives to the spread of the gospel. Their “otherworldly” faith paradoxically enabled them to be fearless and uncompromising agents of transformation in this world.

3. Contagious relationships

When movements spread rapidly, they do so through preexisting networks of relationships. Patrick did not just win isolated individuals. His strategy was to reach whole clans with the gospel. Patrick removed unnecessary barriers to the spread of the gospel and the growth of the movement. The scriptures were supreme, yet the monks had a love for both classical literature and the pagan poets. His missionary movement was at home in the existing culture and yet radically distinct from it. A truly Celtic church missionary movement emerged.

4. Rapid Mobilization

Patrick grew leaders from the people he reached. His missionaries did the same. There was a constant supply of workers moving throughout and beyond Ireland for centuries. They won new converts and recruited fresh workers wherever they traveled. None of this was centrally planned, funded, or controlled. There was the expectation that the same Spirit who had inspired Patrick would inspire others to follow his example. These workers were not known for their polished Latin or abstract theology. They were known for their missionary zeal and devotion to Christ.

5. Adaptive methods

Patrick structured the Celtic church for the spread of the gospel. The missionary order was at the head of church life. Celtic monasticism was supremely adaptable, flexible, and transferable in contrast to the static, rigid, and anchored nature of the Roman church. Patrick communicated the gospel in ways that affirmed the best of Celtic culture, ensuring that the Irish could follow Christ without having to become Romans. The heart of the gospel remained the same. The forms changed to fit the context and to serve the needs of an expanding movement while the unchanging gospel remained at the center of the movement.

Whenever and wherever we find dynamic missionary movements, we will find each of these characteristics in some form. Before we go on to look at each one in depth, we need first to understand what movements are and why they are important.

INTRODUCTION: WHY MOVEMENTS MATTER

Let me tell you why movements matter to me. I walked away from my faith in my late teens and early twenties. It didn't take long for life to unravel. I wasn't happy with God, and I wasn't happy without him. I didn't think living as a Christian was possible. Then along came an Australian guy called Bill Hallam. He'd come to know Christ on the hippie trail between Amsterdam and Delhi through a ministry called *Dilaram* founded by Floyd and Sally McClung.¹

I was impressed with Bill. There were times when I wanted to throw him out of my house because of the hard things he had to say, but I knew he loved me and I knew that Christ had changed his life. I hoped my life could change too.

I gave up running from God. Six months later I'd saved enough money to travel from Australia to Holland and join Dilaram. It was the late 1970s. I ended up on the "Ark" in Amsterdam. The Ark was Dilaram's discipleship community located on two large houseboats on a canal behind the central railway station.

There I learned how to experience the love of God in prayer and worship. I learned how to communicate the gospel to travelers from all over the world. I saw broken lives restored by the power of the Word and the Spirit in the context of a discipleship community.

There was Jean Claude, a deserter from the French Foreign Legion who had come to faith. I was there the day Interpol came to arrest him. I shared a room with two former members of the Irish Republican Army, both new Christians. One eventually turned himself in and went to prison. I remember Dave, a six-foot-five-inch Scotsman and "rage-aholic," waving a hammer in front of my face and threatening to kill me. There were people with backgrounds in homosexuality, prostitution, Eastern religions, and drugs. Every year around forty of them came to faith and began the journey of discipleship.

I didn't know it at the time, but Dilaram was a movement. It began when God called the McClungs. Floyd was in India with Youth With A Mission when he passed a beggar on the street and realized the beggar was a young Westerner who had fallen on hard times. There were thousands of hippies on the road from London to Delhi. Many were searching for truth but instead got dysentery, hepatitis, and addicted to drugs.

Floyd and Sally set up the first Dilaram House in Kabul, Afghanistan. They took in ill and drug-dependent hippies, nursed them, talked to them about Jesus, and saw many come to know him. Soon Dilaram Houses were established in London, Amsterdam, Kathmandu, and Delhi. Many of the workers for these houses had come to faith through Dilaram.

I never forgot the lessons I learned through my time with Dilaram: I discovered the love of God, the call to discipleship, the power of the gospel to change lives, the work of the Holy Spirit, the importance of prayer and Christian community, and God's heart for the nations. These lessons became part of me and have guided me ever since. I also didn't mind meeting Michelle, the Australian girl I would eventually marry, in Amsterdam.

God uses missionary movements like Dilaram to remake people and to make history. That's why they are important to me.

What I would like to do is help you understand the dynamics of missionary movements by telling the stories and reflecting on the lessons they can teach us. I'd like to help you get in touch with the dreams God has given you to make a difference in the lives of lost people living in a broken world. I believe God can use these stories from history, from our contemporaries, and from around the world, to encourage our hearts, strengthen our resolve, and teach us about how he works through his people.

If you want to be a disciple of Jesus and if you want to make disciples, this book is for you.

Movements that change the world

Before we move on we should clarify what a movement is. In a general sense, movements are informal groupings of people and organizations pursuing a common cause. They are people with an agenda for change. Movements don't have members, but they do have participants. The goals of a movement can be furthered by organizations, but organizations are not the totality of a movement. A movement can have leading figures, but no one person or group controls a movement. Movements are made up of people committed to a common cause.

Think of the environmental movement. Where are its headquarters? Where is the organization or leader who controls this movement? The reality is the environmental movement is composed of an array of interconnected leading figures, organizations, and participants. They may not all agree on the precise nature of their goals and methods, but they share a common cause.

For good or for evil, movements make history. So much of history is the result of the clash of movements vying over their conflicting visions of how the world should be.

The twentieth century was shaped by religious, cultural, and political movements. Wars were waged over nationalism, fascism, communism, and Islamic fundamentalism. The social agenda was set by the civil rights movement, feminism, environmentalism, and the gay rights movement. A well-kept secret is that Pentecostalism, broadly defined, was the largest and most expansive movement of the twentieth century.

Movements are characterized by discontent, vision, and action. Discontent unfreezes people from their commitment to the way things are. Movements emerge when people feel something needs to change. If the vacuum created by discontent is filled with a vision of a different future and action to bring change, then a movement is born.

Movements change people, and changed people change the world.

What Jesus started

Jesus was the first missionary. He didn't start an organization, he didn't write a book, and he didn't run for office. What Jesus did was to found a missionary movement that would one day span the globe.

Jesus began his life and ministry far from the center of power. He was a carpenter's son with a basic education. He was not formally trained as a rabbi. He was without social status and wealth. What mattered to Jesus was his relationship with his Father. He spent long hours in prayer. The Hebrew Scriptures permeated his life and his teaching. He won his victory over Satan by surrendering to the Father as an obedient Son.

Jesus went from town to town demonstrating the compassion and power of God as he healed the sick and cast out demons. He was drawn to ordinary people who knew they needed God: fishermen, tax collectors, farmers, prostitutes, soldiers, beggars, and notorious sinners. His mission was to seek and to save them by giving his life as a ransom for them.

Jesus bypassed the religious and community leaders and called ordinary people to join his missionary band. He called them to be with him, and he promised to teach them how to catch people. He taught them as they traveled together by foot and by boat. He taught them as he ministered to thousands and as he ministered to individuals.

Jesus spoke to crowds in the open air. He told stories to groups over a meal. He talked to individuals alone. He communicated with power and with simplicity, trusting the Father for the outcome.

When Jesus' disciples had learned just enough to be dangerous, he sent them out with empty pockets to preach, heal, and cast out demons.

Jesus contended fearlessly with his opponents and never gave ground. He called his hearers to turn from their sin and to turn to God for mercy and forgiveness. He set his face to go to Jerusalem and die a shameful criminal's death. He entrusted his life and the fruit of his ministry to God.

God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, defeating sin and death and Satan. Just when Jesus' disciples thought the job was done and it was time to put their feet up, Jesus commanded them to go and make disciples of every nation. He did not offer them resources or a plan. He just commanded them to go and promised his presence through the Holy Spirit.

That's how the mission of Jesus became a missionary movement.

The church Jesus founded was a missionary church. Its existence and activities were an expression of its missionary calling.² Its members were fearlessly determined to win others to faith in Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah. Their mission field began at home in Jerusalem and Judea, and it extended to the ends of the earth. The goal and purpose of their missionary work was the making of disciples and the creation of communities of disciples. Disciples were people who turned from their old way of life, put their trust in Jesus, and obeyed His teaching (Matt. 12:46-50).³

There is no other foundation for our mission than the good news of Christ crucified for our sins. Paul says the message of the cross is offensive to sinful humanity. It was offensive to Paul

until he met Jesus on the Damascus road. Our mission is to proclaim the good news about Jesus in words and deeds by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament is a missionary document.⁴ The Gospels tell the story of what Jesus *began* to do and teach, and Acts is about what Jesus continued to do through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1). In Acts people were converted and gathered into new churches. The New Testament epistles were written by missionaries concerned with the spiritual growth of Jesus' followers in community and in mission. If the early church had not been a missionary church—sharing the gospel of Jesus and making disciples—there would have been no church.

Our English words “mission,” “missionary,” and “missional” come from the Latin *missio*, meaning “the act of sending.” *Missio* is the equivalent of the New Testament Greek word “apostle” from *apostolos*, meaning “one who is sent.” Jesus told His disciples, “As the Father has *sent* me, I am *sending* you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:21b-22). The church as a missionary or missional movement is sent to carry on the ministry of Jesus in the power of the Spirit. Alan Hirsch reminds us that, “The mission of God flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus.”⁵ The church, in its very essence, is a missionary/missional movement with a mandate to take the good news of Jesus to world.

Today there appears to be some confusion over the terms “missionary” and “missional” when used as descriptors of the church. The words are identical in meaning. They refer to being sent by God into world. Unfortunately when we hear the word “missionary” we tend to think of cross-cultural or overseas mission. When we hear the word “missional” the focus tends to be on mission in a first-world postmodern context. The mission of God knows no such cultural or geographic boundaries. There is only one missionary/missional mandate. There is only one missionary/missional church. There is only one missionary/missional movement that Jesus founded.

Mission has a threefold reality.⁶ First, there is a message: mission assumes a distinct view of truth concerning the nature of God and the nature of salvation. Second, mission involves the communication of both truth and a new way of life. Third, the purpose of mission is conversion. People accept the message, are integrated into the community of faith, and begin to practice a new way of life—a new life committed to following Jesus and sharing the truth about him with others.

As a missionary movement, our message centers on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for our sin and is the only source of salvation for a lost world.

Second, as a missionary movement we have an agenda for change. Jesus calls all who would follow him to a new life of obedience to his will.

Third, mission involves the conversion of individuals and their inclusion into the body of Christ, which is the church, the people of God. There is no mission without the church, and there is no discipleship without the community of faith.

If this is what it means to be the missionary people of God, what do “missionaries” do? Schnabel explains, “Missionaries establish contact with non-Christians, they proclaim the news of

Jesus the Messiah and Savior (proclamation, preaching, teaching, instruction), they lead people to faith in Jesus Christ (conversion, baptism), and they integrate the new believers into the local community of the followers of Jesus (Lord's Supper, transformation of social and moral behavior, charity)."⁷

We have the message of the cross. We have new life in Christ. We have a mandate to make disciples and multiply churches—everywhere. We are a missionary people.

Why we're not all the same

I was corrupted in my first year of theological college. I discovered that church history is not just the history of ideas and events, it is the history of movements. The church through history is in a constant state of upheaval and change, decline and resurgence.

Christianity is a movement of movements—monasticism, evangelicalism, and Pentecostalism, to name a few. These movements can find expression in movement organizations such as mission agencies and denominations. Movements are one of the key means by which God brings renewal and expansion to the church in its mission.

Each new movement has a unique contribution to make to the kingdom—its “founding charism” or gift of grace.⁸ Monasticism modeled a deep devotion to Christ in the face of growing nominalism in the church. The Franciscans' gift to the church and the world was God's heart for the poor. The Reformation upheld the authority of Scripture and restored the truth of salvation by grace through faith. The Anabaptists emphasized the importance of discipleship and the believers' church. The Moravians were an inspiration as the first Protestant missionary order. The Methodists and Salvation Army combined evangelistic zeal and holiness with a heart for the poor. The Pentecostals rediscovered the untamed power of the Holy Spirit.

Where would we be today without the influence of these movements? What would we be left with today if their contributions were erased from history? They all had their shortcomings, yet God was at work through them, renewing his church in faithfulness to Christ and his cause.

The great church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette argued that one of the indications of the vitality of the Christian faith is the emergence of new movements. The periods of the greatest vigor and expansion of the Christian faith are the periods in which new movements arise.⁹ The Christian movement is like a garden. A healthy garden is an ecosystem filled with diversity where new plants are always coming into existence, other plants are flourishing, and still others are dying and decaying. The garden lives on in a continuing state of renewal. It is through the birth and growth of new movements of churches and mission entities that God has renewed the Christian movement down through the ages.

In the renewal and expansion of the church, the breakthroughs *always* occur on the fringe of ecclesiastical power—*never* at the center.¹⁰ In every generation, in some obscure place, God is beginning something new. That's where we need to be.

Is this book for you?

If you're a follower of Jesus, you don't have to start a missionary movement. You're already in one. This book is about helping you to understand what this means and to participate in what God is already doing.

When I wrote this book, I had some people in mind. I thought of Mark and Fiona who have seen eighteen people come to know Christ over the last year and are wondering if these people are the beginning of a church plant.

I thought of Oscar, a pastor in Kenya who has grown a church from a dozen people to thousands. Even more important, the leaders he has grown are now planting churches in the suburbs and the slums of Nairobi, and that's just the beginning.

I thought of "Pauline" in China, a young woman in her twenties who is winning her friends to Christ and baptizing them secretly in a bathtub. She has a vision to multiply small house fellowships in her city.

I thought of Wayne and his team who go visiting door to door in their impoverished community every week, caring for the sick, praying for people in need, helping out in practical ways, and sharing the good news of Jesus. Wayne is wondering what it will take to reach this town and to send out teams into other towns.

I thought of Tim, the pastor of a large church in New York. He has a vision to see his city transformed by the gospel. He is growing leaders and sending them out to plant churches. He is partnering with anyone he can find who is willing to plant gospel-centered churches. He has a heart for the cities of the world.

I thought of Gary, who runs his own business and in his spare time has a ministry to high school students. Forty of them have come to know Christ. Gary can't understand why his local church leaders are not embracing this work of God. He wonders what he should do next.

I'm writing for people like these. They and others like them have also been my teachers. As I've listened to their stories and the stories of countless others down through the ages, they have become my cloud of witnesses to the God revealed in Jesus and his mission in the world.

There is no formula, and there are no ten simple steps. We are workers in God's harvest field. We are utterly dependent on God for our salvation and for the results of our ministries. Nothing can explain the spread of the Christian movement throughout history other than the power of God that is present in the communication of the gospel of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ.¹¹

What follows are the stories and lessons of our contemporaries and of those who have gone before us. They have planted and they have watered, but it is God who gave the growth.

NOTES

Patrick

¹ Patrick, *Letter to Coroticus*, trans. Ludwig Biehler, (1952).

<http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/1166.htm> (accessed 15 March 2009).

² Patrick, *Confessions*, (Catholic Information Network, 1996).

<http://www.cin.org/patrick.html> (accessed 15 March 2009).

³³ Philip Jenkins has written an excellent account of the spread of Christianity in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Christianity did spread beyond the borders of the Roman Empire. Yet this was in spite of the lack of missionary zeal within the empire, not because of it. See Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—And How it Died* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).

⁴ Philip Freeman, *St. Patrick of Ireland: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 75.

⁵ Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role From the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 128.

⁶ Kathleen Hughes questions if Patrick's position as missionary bishop was ever officially sanctioned. He begins his letter to Coroticus, "[I] declare myself to be a bishop. Most assuredly I believe that what I am I have received from God." See Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966), 34-35.

⁷ Freeman, 141.

⁸ See Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, The Pelican History of the Church (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1964), 57

⁹ Freeman, 82.

¹⁰ John T. McNeill, *The Celtic Churches; a History A.D. 200 to 1200* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974). 70, 80.

¹¹ Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity, 371-1386 A.D* (London: Fontana Press, 1997). 91.

¹² See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, vol.I, Beginnings to 1500*, revised ed. Foreword and Supplemental Bibliographies by Ralph D. Winter (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 102.

¹³ See McNeill, 192, 224.

¹⁴ McNeill comments, "Complete freedom from superiors beyond their own communities in the mission field made the adaptable to local needs and opportunities. They rapidly enlisted Frankish and other German youth who, working harmoniously with them, made Christianity indigenous and self-perpetuating." McNeill, *The Celtic Churches*, 175. See also McNeill, 155-56 for autonomy on the mission field.

¹⁵ Cahill, 155.

¹⁶ Cahill, 194-96. See also John T. McNeill, 155; and Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. I, The First Five Centuries (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1938), 38.

Introduction: Why Movements Matter

¹ “Dilaram” is a Farsi/Persian word for “peace.” Floyd tells the story of Dilaram in Floyd McClung, *Living on the Devil's Doorstep: From Kabul to Amsterdam* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 1999).

² See Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 95.

³ Schnabel, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 355-56.

⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2004), 34-37, 709-710.

⁵ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 82.

⁶ Following Schnabel, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 11-12.

⁷ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 29.

⁸ “Founding charism” is a term used by Catholic religious orders to describe the gift given to a person or group to understand and live out, with intensity, an aspect of the gospel.

⁹ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Great Century in Europe and the United States of America A.D. 1800-A.D. 1914*, A History of the Expansion of Christianity, vol. IV (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1941), 22, 26.

¹⁰ Paul E. Pierson, *Historical Development of the Christian Movement: lecture notes* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller School of World Mission, 1988).

¹¹ See 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5 and Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods*, 356-82.

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