CHURCH PLANTING IN NIGER: A PROPOSAL FOR INTEGRATING WESLEYAN THEOLOGY WITH CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS

by

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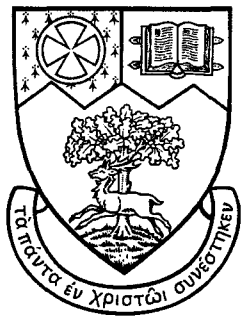

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ABSTRACT

Church Planting in Niger: A Proposal for Integrating Wesleyan Theology with Church Planting Movements

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Despite over eight years of Christian witness, the West African country of Niger is still considered unreached by Christian missiologists. In the face of ongoing ministry challenges in Niger a new perspective is appropriate. Recent trends in missions recommend Church Planting Movements as a model for church-planting ministry in cross-cultural contexts. The church planting movements model may offer some solutions for church planting in Niger but the model tends to suffer from faulty prooftexting and inadequate theology related to the church and mission. Using theological reflection as a guiding model, church-planting-movement theology and practices are compared to John's Wesley's theology and practice. As a practical theologian, Wesley provides an example of how theological reflection can be more adequately integrated into the practice of mission. Through theological reflection and consideration for the Nigerien context, this thesis develops a church-planting ministry plan for the Free Methodist Church in Niger.

I would like to thank my family and friends for their patience and prayers in seeing this through to its completion. I would like also like to recognize some people that have special contributions to this project. Thanks to: my supervisor Prof. Lee Beach for his his encouragement and guidance; my "boss" Dan Sheffield and the Free Methodist Church that supported me and gave me the opportunity to do this work; Lisa "Miriama" Rohrick, a real church planter and editor who saved me from many errors; my Nigerien colleagues and friends with whom I serve; and my wife and partner in ministry, and my children who have put up with a great deal of stress and late nights and still love me.

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Introduction

This thesis develops a strategic plan for church planting in Niger by the Free Methodist Church. After eighty-five years of Protestant missionary work in Niger, the church remains small and statistics suggest that Nigeriens themselves represent less than half of the membership in local churches. Recent materials on church-planting movements provide a new opportunity for reflecting on missionary work in Niger and offer a way forward. The goal of this plan would be to produce an indigenous Free Methodist church led by Nigeriens that was capable of self-sustaining and reproducing.

Since the 19th century, Protestant missionary strategists have wrestled with the principles for establishing indigenous churches that reproduce. Current missionary practice seeks to root permanent and enduring expressions of the Christian faith in local customs and culture. The rapid expansion of the Christian faith occurs when it is propagated by local believers. The challenge for modern cross-cultural missionaries is to empower indigenous leaders who lack theological training and work with limited resources to plant churches that reproduce and multiply.

The "three-self" definition of an indigenous church formulated by Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn has become the starting point for strategists and practitioners.[1] Self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing has become the ultimate goal in missionary church planting. Early in the twentieth century Roland Allen drew on the biblical example of Paul for promoting the early transition of church leadership to indigenous believers.[2] Nevertheless the challenge of avoiding dependency on outside missionary work remains.

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[1] Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 20–24; Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 68–69. Others have added to the list of "self's" for defining indigeneity, see note 6 below.
[2] Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 95–107.

Sociological methods of research were introduced to mission studies by Donald McGavran, who popularized the idea of "people movements."[3] More recently David Garrison has been using this method to study what he identifies as "church planting movements" (CPM).[4] He compares his work with "reverse engineering"—after identifying the common elements of all genuine church planting movements, he then attempt to create a plan that will reproduce those critical elements in their church planting endeavours.[5] Practitioners such Nathan and Kari Shank have attempted to combine the insights of CPM with the earlier materials of George Patterson for creating a plan or process for equipping church planters.[6] Works such as the Shanks's *Four Field's Kingdom Growth*, and their colleague Wilson Geisler's *Rapidly Advancing Disciples* provide a starting point for training church planters but suffer from a reductionist view of church and mission, that makes church planting an end in itself.

The Free Methodist Church views the mission of the church as "our participation in the mission of the triune God." [7] The church is not the goal of God's mission but an agent for that mission. Mission is measured by the incarnational ministry of Jesus and the radical kingdom message he proclaimed. While church planting is an essential element in the growth of the kingdom, the kingdom message and mission of Jesus is more holistic than simply personal conversion.

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[3] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 221–237.
[4] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 16.
[5] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 11–12. Garrison lists ten universal traits 171–2, and another ten common traits 221–2, as well as "seven deadly sins for church planting movements," 239–240, to create a checklist.
[6] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 131–139. This includes an adaptation of Patterson's "Seven Commands of Christ" lessons found in Patterson and Scroggins, *Church Multiplication Guide*, 22. They also adopt his philosophy of simplicity and reproducibility.
[7] "Global Good News," 3.

What CPM advocates are aiming at is not simply church planting but a *movement.* It is this insistence on generating a movement that leads them to a rather minimalist approach to church and its structures. When the burden of church organization is increased and the criteria for leadership expanded beyond the simple lists found in the New Testament, the ministry fails to develop into a movement. For this reason CPM advocates lay leadership in networks of small house churches, eliminating the need for more complex administrative structures.[8]

The Free Methodist Church structure and practices allow for this kind of approach without eliminating the importance of the institutional church. Methodism was birthed as a movement under John Wesley. He never sought to abandon the Anglican Church which had ordained him but rather to create an order for the renewal of the church. He believed that mission should shape structure and thus commissioned lay preachers and formed small groups to nurture the renewal he sought.[9] Free Methodism continues to give local churches the authority to appoint lay ministers and advocates the use of small group structures instituted by Wesley. Free Methodist scholar Howard Snyder asserts that this is part of the conjunctive "both/and" nature of Wesleyan theology to view movement and institution as existing in a symbiotic relationship.[10] Institutions that lose contact with the renewing effects of movement are in decline. Movements that are disconnected from institutions will eventually form their own institutions which suffer from the same defects. Part of the Wesleyan ideal is to form church structures that maintain roles for both the institutional and organic movements.

Despite more than eighty years of missionary work, the largely Muslim

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[8] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 189–193.
[9] Snyder, *Radical Wesley*, 137–140.
[10] Snyder, *Radical Wesley*, 134–140.

population of Niger continues to be resistant to the Christian witness. In 2007 the Free Methodist Church initiated a new work in the country and after four years has established a single congregation.[11] The work was the result of a bi-vocational church planter who developed his contacts through personal evangelism and follow-up to form a congregation. While this work continues to grow and develop, a strategy is required that will not only expand the capacity of this church to grow but also to reproduce and multiply Free Methodist congregations in Niger. This thesis will seek to develop a strategy for training indigenous church planters in Niger by integrating recent research done by David Garrison, Nathan and Kari Shank, Wilson Geisler and others in the area of church planting movements with the holistic theology of church and mission of the Free Methodist Church that includes concerns for social holiness, and the complementarity of institution and movement.

I. Research Methodology

This thesis will adapt a methodology that combines a secondary literature review with theological reflection on the realities of ministry in Niger. This merging of research and theological reflection provides a pathway for developing a church planting ministry plan. Specifically we will practice theological reflection through the method used in Stone and Duke's work, *How to Think Theologically*. Stone and Duke offer three key movements for theological reflection: Interpretation, Correlation, and Assessment.[12]

We are all interpreters. Interpretation is the act of giving meaning to experience. This is a natural impulse that all people possess and it grows as we mature and seek a deeper understanding of the world and ourselves. Stone and Duke say, "Christian

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[11] As the Free Methodist leader in Niger, I oversaw the church and participated in its ministry.
[12] Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically,* 28–39.

theological reflection interprets the meanings of things from the perspective of faith in the Christian message."[13] In this sense interpretation puts words to our thoughts and experiences and brings them into conversation with Christian theology. This thesis will seek to interpret the way in which church planting has been approached in Niger over the last eighty five years and how it can be understood in light of new models of church planting and the potential of a Free Methodist ecclesiology. The goal is to put theological language in place that can provide a way of understanding the way forward in developing leaders for church planting in Niger.

In attempting to bring order to the interpretation and find the connecting points between the needs in Niger and the potential of a model for leadership development this thesis will engage in the process of correlation. Correlation seeks to identify the similarities and differences between theological and other viewpoints that come to light through the process of theological reflection. Correlation compares one's thoughts and experiences within a broad range of contemporary resources. This thesis will seek to correlate the interpretation of the research and missionary experience with input from a variety of theological resources such as Scripture, the tradition of the church, culture, experience and reason. The goal is to integrate the insights of CPM movements, the Wesleyan tradition and theological reflections on Scripture to produce a practical plan that addresses the challenges of ministry in Niger.

Lastly, this thesis will seek to perform the theological task of assessment, which considers the adequacy of a particular view measured against a given criteria. Stone and Duke list four considerations that should be made in the process of assessment as theological reflection: Is it consistent with the gospel? Is it plausibly coherent? Is it

[13]Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, 29.

consistent with the moral integrity of God, and finally is it valid when compared with other [world]views?[14]

The ultimate aim of this thesis is to offer a potential model for mobilizing church planters in Niger, West Africa. Thus, the final movement of the research is to offer theological reflection that takes into consideration Stone and Duke's four categories and assesses the research in a way that provides a biblical, plausible and applicable model for empowering leaders for Niger's fledgling church.

II. Outline of the Thesis

This thesis will be comprised of four chapters. The initial chapter will consider the Nigerien context of ministry and the history of the Christian witness there. The second chapter will present an evaluation of the research on pioneer church planting and church planting movements. Chapter three will consider how Free Methodist theology of church and mission can not only inform and augment CPM thinking but effectively be integrated with CPM methodology. The final chapter will offer a contextualized strategy for training and mobilizing Free Methodist church planters in the country of Niger. The plan developed here addresses not only the concerns of CPM and the Wesleyan tradition but also contextual concerns specific to Niger. In particular, it will address questions regarding ministry among Muslims, and developing leaders and ministries among semi-literate and non-literate populations. The goal is to create indigenous churches that are self-sustaining, self-governing, and self-propagating through holistic mission.

Unlike sub-Saharan Africa, the Nigerien context has not been receptive to the Christian gospel and ministry. This context requires better understanding and reflection on the part of those who seek to serve there, to understand how to more effectively live

[14] Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, 36–37.

and communicate the gospel for the church to take root.

Chapter One: The Niger Ministry Context

This chapter will provide a brief introduction to the Nigerien[1] context. Space does not permit any kind of exhaustive treatment of Niger and the ministry that has happened there throughout its history. It is given to orient the reader in a general way to what Niger and its people are like, and to give a sense of the challenges that Christian ministry faces in this country. Attention will be given first of all to the basic contours of Niger's history, geography and economy, followed by some analyses of its religious context. Finally a review of the Christian presence in Niger will be offered.

The Republic of Niger[2]

The country of Niger, like its southern neighbour Nigeria, takes its name from the River Niger.[3] Its name and boundaries were assigned by the French who claimed the region during the colonial period. Since gaining independence in 1960, it has gone through alternating periods of democratic and military rule. Despite Niger's predominantly Muslim population, the government has resisted the pressure to declare the country an Islamic state. French is still recognized as the official language, though several other indigenous languages are also recognized, most notably Hausa, Zarma, and Tamajeq.

The rugged landscape and harsh climate of Niger has left its imprint on its people. The Sahara desert fills much of the country pushing the bulk of the population to its southern border with Nigeria. The agricultural societies in the south live a precarious existence due to regular droughts and famines. As a result, the country can only sustain a small population.[4] Niger's major export in the last forty years has been uranium, creating an economic boom until the market bottomed out in the eighties. In 2008 the government signed an agreement

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[1] Certain Canadian media outlets such as the CBC, refer to the people and culture of Niger as Nigerois (like Quebecois) probably to distinguish them from Nigerian (i.e. Nigeria). However, this term is unheard of in Niger, where the people refer to themselves as *Nigerien.*

[2] The Republic of Niger should not be confused with Niger State, found in Nigeria.

[3] Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 6, notes that the word Niger is not of Latin origin (i.e. black) but is derived from Tamajeq, *eguerew n'eguerew* meaning "river of rivers"

[4] Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 9.

with Chinese partners to refine oil from the recently discovered oil fields in the east.[5] While this is good news for the country, the UN's human development index for 2011 still placed Niger second last in its ranking.[6]

Before colonialism Niger's indigenous societies were built on subsistence farming and the trans Saharan trade routes. Historian Finn Fuglestad concluded that the southern agricultural communities were most notable as zones of refuge from the major kingdoms to the northwest in present day Mali and to the south in what is now Nigeria. He notes that reasons for taking refuge were not only political and military but also religious: they were "people who were not prepared to accept the religion of the new rulers, Islam."[7] Many of those who took refuge in the region practiced a syncretistic form of Islam that was heavily indebted to traditional animistic religions and possession cults. These expressions of folk Islam continue to exist in Niger despite the efforts of reformist Islamists to eliminate them.

French colonialists entered the region shortly before the beginning of the twentieth century. Colonial control was imposed on the region through military force just as it was elsewhere. The French soon realized that there was little to be gained in Niger other than uniting the larger conglomerate of French colonies in all directions. As a result they did little to invest in the colony. Fuglestad comments particularly on the lack of educational development on the part of the French, leaving Niger with one of the lowest literacy rates in Africa even to this day.[8] Moreover many of their interventions ultimately undermined the economies that did exist, including the trans Saharan trade routes.

Just as many Westerners have developed stereotypes of Africans, so also Africans have created stereotypes of Westerners based on their colonial experiences. Anthropologist Paul Stoller outlines some of the basic elements of the Songhay (Zarma) stereotypes based on

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[5] "Niger Republic," para 1.
[6] Klugmen et al, *Human Development Report*, 130.
[7] Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 37.
[8] Fulgestad, *History of Niger*, 120.

his work among them.[9] He notes first of all that "Europeans conquer," which implies both massacre and governance. Secondly, our relationships are marked by "systematic humiliation." By this he means the way the colonialists systematically dismantled many cultural institutions in order to prove our "civilized superiority" over their "primitive savagery." Lastly, Westerners have unlimited resources, including technology, money and "more meat than he could eat."[10] And so it continues that when there is famine, it is the Europeans who bring grain and create development projects overseen by their technicians and agricultural experts. So it is that the power inequalities of the colonial era continue in contemporary relations between Niger and the world.

Islam

Islam in Niger has followed a course similar to the rest of West Africa and the rest of the world. Gradual infiltration, followed by later aggressive reforms, has created a situation where contemporary Muslims are conflicted over what it means to practice Islam and how this should be reflected at the higher level of the state.

Discussion of Islamic presence is complicated by the fact that those with animistic practices may also consider themselves to be Muslims. While the traditional religions in Niger were animistic, known for sorcery and possession cults, such practices and beliefs did not preclude the acceptance of some basic elements of Islam. In fact, Islamics Professor Rick Love estimates that three quarters of the world's Muslims practice some form of folk Islam.[11] Folk Islam integrates animism and magical practices into an Islamic framework. While orthodox Islam insists on believers' submission to the will of Allah, folk Muslims use magic to manipulate the spirits and Allah himself to accomplish their own interests. Orthodox Islam addresses the high religious questions of intellectuals but fails to address the everyday needs of ordinary believers. As Bill Musk explains:

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[9] Stoller, "Son of Rouch," 119–20.
[10] Stoller, "Son of Rouch," 119.
[11] Love, *Muslims,* 2.

> Without a dynamic of divine involvement, contradictory of its own systematic tenets, official Islam cannot hope to compete for the uncompromising patronisation of most Muslims, for it cannot meet their most fundamental needs. Ideal Islam has few resources for dealing with the everyday concerns and nightly dreads of ordinary Muslims; popular Islam, on the contrary, knows an abundance.[12]

This same conflict exists in Niger between practitioners of orthodox Islam and their animistic neighbours who identify themselves as Muslim.

This conflict over "true" Islam explains, in part, the varying statistics concerning Niger's population. The CIA's *World Factbook* posts a statistic of eighty percent Muslim, while Patrick Johnson's *Operation World* prayer guide lists the Muslim population at ninety-seven percent.[13] Islam has been present in West Africa for over a thousand years and its early manifestations were tolerant. This left behind a population that were favourably disposed to calling themselves Muslims but still devoted to their traditional religions.[14] Niger's population ranges from those who are animists but have appropriated some conceptions of Islam to those who have a radicalized faith and are seeking the full implementation of Shari'a law. Most fall somewhere in between.

In the pre-colonial period, southern Niger was a place of refuge for those fleeing Jihadist reforms. This changed in the colonial period with a shift towards Islamic dominance. Fuglestad asserts that at the time of colonialism, the peoples were "confronted with not one but two alien cultures and value systems, the French and the Muslim."[15] The ruling classes had long been moderately Islamic but the French openly privileged Muslims early on, identifying them as "useful servants of the colonial administration instead of potential

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[12] Musk, *Unseen Face*, 215–16.

[13] "Niger: People and Society," para 4; Johnson and Mandryk, "Niger: Religion," line 5. Cooper *Evangelical Christians*, 37 blames the discrepancy between these figures on the fact that little reliable data is available and the rather vocal presence of Christians in the media "has emboldened some to reduce the estimates of the Muslim population to the suspiciously round figure of 80 percent . . ." The CIA *Factbook* identifies the remaining 20 percent as "Christian and other."

[14] Hill, "Spread of Islam," 1–3, describes Islamic expansion as passing through three phases in West Africa: *Containment*—early traders were valued for the products and business tools they offered including a written script; *Mixing*—many rulers began to syncretisticly adopt Islam and its institutions while permitting religious freedom among their peoples; *Reform*—the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a number of jihads as reformers attempted to purify the faith.

[15] Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 118.

agitators."[16] Though this French attitude became moderated over time, Benjamin Hegeman's reflections on the adjacent regions in North Benin are probably also true of Niger. He asserts that many turned to Islam to spite the French: "Islam is perceived . . . as the social religion that has retained honour, respect and glory in the face of a century of defeat, oppression and change."[17] Adeline Masquelier observes that in Niger, Islam became associated with wealth, good fortune, status, and power and that at independence educated elites turned to Islam to establish a Nigerien identity as it became a unifying factor among the various ethnic groups.[18] Thus the practice of Islam since independence has intensified.

Despite this victory for Islam, the old practices did not simply wither away. Masquelier notes how, in one region at least, the success of Muslims over animism has led ironically to increased accusations of witchcraft. She asserts that attempts to eradicate witchcraft in Hausa communities have had the effect of affirming witchcraft's efficacy and renewing interest in the larger animistic system.[19] Meanwhile many of those who do practice animism do not see any incompatibility with their Muslim identity. Anthropologist Paul Stoller's work among the Zarma-Songhay sorcerers shows that traditional animism is alive and well in Niger.[20]

This reality has, at times brought about conflict between these two religious traditions. In 2000, a fashion show in the capital precipitated riots in the country's two largest cities. Historian Susan Cooper experienced one of them first hand. She asserts that contrary to the media reports that circulated at the time, the primary target of the rioters in the town she lived in were not Christian ministries but rather marginalized women on the edge of town and the

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[16] Masquelier, "Witchcraft," 134. Cf. Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 116, who suggests the reason for this was that the French found Islam easier to understand and relate to than the more prevalent animism.
[17] Hegeman, *Between Glory*, 332. Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 116, notes moreover that subjugation by the French had shamed the old gods who seemed powerless before them.
[18] Masquelier, "Witchcraft," 134.
[19] Masquelier, "Witchcraft," 149.
[20] Stoller and Olkes, *Sorcery's Shadow*, ix. Stoller apprenticed as a sorcerer from 1976 to 1984 until he came under threat from other sorcerers and fled for his life.

local *bori* cult priestess.[21] Single women who had fled the imposition of Shari'a law in Nigeria's northern states had their homes burnt down while others attempted to burn the possession cult leader alive in her home. Cooper considers these riots as not only an expression of male power over women's spirituality but ultimately as a struggle to define what modernity will mean for Niger. [22]

The fashion show itself was a symptom of Islam's struggle with Western interventions and insensitivity in terms of the conservative character of Nigerien culture. The United Nations Development Programme supported the show and thought it was appropriate because it was targeted at women and promoted fashion design as industry.[23] Muslim clerics saw scantily clad women walking the runway as an invitation to Western debauchery. Moreover it served to underline the sense of impotence Nigeriens have over their own economy.[24]

The influence and power of Islam have been growing steadily in Niger over the last century. While Niger still functions as a refuge from more radical expressions of Islam in countries like Nigeria and more recently Mali, the Muslim community in Niger in certain sectors has become more strident. At the same time Islam has become a means of expressing protest against the intrusions of outsiders and a symbol of Nigerien identity and prosperity. Nevertheless, Islamic practice in Niger is conflicted, as traditional religions have become submerged in the religious climate of Islam itself.

Christian Presence

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[21] Cooper, *Evangelical Christians*, 31–32. While two Christian ministries were attacked they were not the first target of the mob, and several churches were untouched by passing rioters.
[22] Cooper, *Evangelical Christians*, 59. Sounaye, "Go Find," 539, in contrast notes how women in contemporary Islam are asserting themselves, providing the example of three female clerics in Niger who each had their own TV show.
[23] Cooper, *Evangelical Christians*, 47.
[24] Cooper, *Evangelical Christians*, 40, 47–48, notes for instance that dependence on foreign donors and loans form the International Monetary Fund and the African development forces them to accept the externally imposed conditions attached to the funds.

The arrival of Christianity in Niger coincided with the colonial period. Despite the presence of a French administration, it was evangelical missionaries, not the Catholic ones who were the first to arrive in Niger.[25] Though the Catholic Church counts roughly twenty thousand adherents according to Cooper, only about five hundred were from indigenous populations, whereas she notes that there were more than five hundred Nigerien evangelicals in the city of Maradi alone.[26] Nevertheless the imported character of Christianity also afflicts evangelicals. In earlier work, Elizabeth Isichei reported ten thousand Protestants in Niger but only four thousand were native Nigerien.[27]

Representatives of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) first came to Niger in 1924 in order to circumvent the British proscription of missionary work in the Muslim regions of Nigeria.[28] Isichei notes that it was the policy of colonialists to divide West Africa into south and north.[29] The Muslim North was forbidden territory for mission work in countries like Togo and Nigeria. Barred from the Muslim Hausa communities to the south, they travelled to south-central Niger where they evangelised without attracting much attention from the French authorities.

In 1927, a Baptist mission followed SIM into south-western Niger, and the Catholic Church arrived in 1931. For many years these were the only missions in Niger, but starting in the eighties a series of other agencies began work there including the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptists, the Assemblies of God, SIL International, YWAM, The Christian and Missionary Alliance, and the Christian Reformed Church, to name just a few. Most of these works remain small, seeing very gradual growth among Nigerien people. In 1998 the *Alliance des Missions et Eglises Evangeliques au Niger* (AMEEN, the Alliance of Evangelical Missions and Churches) was formed to facilitate relations among the churches

[25] "Niger: History of Christianity," para 4.
[26] Cooper, *Evangelical Christians*, 15.
[27] Isichei, *History of Christianity*, 224.
[28] Cooper, *Evangelical Christians*, 9.
[29] Isichei, *History of Christianity*, 272.

and also with the government. There are now over twenty Christian organizations associated with AMEEN.[30]

In addition to these Western-based organizations there has been an influx in recent years of churches led by expatriate Africans from countries such as Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, and Cote D'Ivoire. While some of these are part of larger church bodies such the as the Winners Chapel based out of Lagos, Nigeria, many remain independent. Almost all of them follow the Pentecostal themes noted in Philip Jenkins' *The Next Christendom*.[31] These charismatic ministries are often attractive to those of animistic backgrounds such as existed in the countries of their founders, but devout Muslims find them quite foreign and suspiciously reminiscent of the traditional possession cults and sorcery.

Mission work in Niger has developed along three basic lines: proclamation ministries, social interventions, and training ministries. Early SIM missionaries eschewed the substitution of development work such as education and medical ministries for evangelism that had come to characterize the earlier generation of mission work.[32] In their early pioneering work they sought to focus on proclamation and planting the gospel on new soil. One of the early challenges to proclamation that continues to confront the church is not having the Scriptures in the local vernacular. While the major languages of Hausa and Zarma have at least one translation, many of the lesser languages such as Tamajeq and its several dialects, Eastern and Western Fulani, Manga, Daza, and others , are still works in process. While SIL and SIM have translation teams at work on this, simply producing a translation does not resolve the problem of literacy. While literacy is being addressed, alternative solutions are also being found.

Cassette tapes have become out-dated elsewhere, but missionaries are still able to hand them out with gospel messages in Niger. More recently digital media players such as

[30] "History of the Evangelical Church and Ministry in Niger," 2.
[31] Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 68, 121–31.
[32] Cooper, *Evangelical Christians*, 7, 13.

The Proclaimer and the Megavoice are available that have the Scriptures recorded on them and allow non-literate peoples to listen at their convenience.[33] Likewise the Jesus film and other video productions have been dubbed into local languages. Recently, SIL has begun printing their translations in Arabic script. Vast numbers of people who are officially considered illiterate, have studied enough Arabic to read it phonetically. They can sound out the Qur'an without understanding anything they are reading. But when a text in their mother tongue is transliterated into Arabic script, they can quickly read it with understanding.

Lastly, the orality of West Africans has been rethought. IMB missionary LaNette Thompson has written *Sharing the Message through Storying,* a method of communicating the Scriptures for non-literate peoples.[34] "Storying" is intended to communicate the Scriptures in ways that oral communicators understand and can repeat. The process begins in Genesis and passes chronologically through the scriptures laying the foundations that render the New Testament intelligible to those who have never heard. Though it takes time, Thompson avers that, "Because events are more important than time to an oral communicator, you should not be concerned with the amount of time it takes to teach the whole Bible using the storying method."[35] The real concern is not how long it takes to teach the whole Bible, which is a lengthy process by any method, but how long it takes to finally get to the message of Jesus and the gospel.

While early SIM missionaries desired to focus on proclamation, the exigencies of Niger forced them to respond in other ways. The attitude at the time was that these ministries would be "handmaids to the gospel."[36] Early ventures into vernacular (i. e. Hausa) education

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[33] The Proclaimer (http://www.faithcomesbyhearing.com/proclaimer) and Megavoice (http://megavoice.com/) are two examples of digital media players that come preprogrammed with different language versions of the scriptures suitable for personal and group use.

[34] Steffen and Terry, "Sweeping Story," 1–14, recount how the contemporary rediscovery of the "storying" model through Trevor McIlwain's Chronological Bible Teaching (CBT) actually has a long history in the church and missions.

[35] Thompson, *Sharing the Message*, 8.

[36] Cooper, *Evangelical Christians*, 297.

were cut short by the colonial administration whose policies demanded that French be the language of instruction and that all teachers have French certification.[37] At independence, SIM had built not only a leprosarium but "the best hospital in Niger," a work that created positive regard not only from the communities they served but official recognition from the government.[38] Cooper remarks that the faster the treatment the less effective its medical ministry became as a tool for evangelism. Other missions have since engaged in medical work whether in creating permanent clinics or taking visiting medical teams to run clinics in villages where they minister.

The last main area of social intervention concerns the agricultural realities of Niger. Times of drought and famine have necessitated action by missionaries since the earliest days of the work in Niger. However, missionaries have not been content to only provide crisis aid but have worked to develop better means of cultivation. SIM has also earned an international reputation for their work in introducing Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration and in desert reclamation.[39] Other missions, such Samaritan's Purse, have worked on creating clean drinking water for rural communities.

The last major focus of mission efforts in Niger is church leadership development. There are a limited number of training programs for church leaders and most are tied to a denomination. In 2003 SIM launched ESPriT, an accredited inter-denominational Bible school that serves Niger's churches by graduating students with an equivalent of a bachelor's degree. It is the only school of its kind in the country. The school has had difficulty in garnering enough students to sustain itself partially because of the limited number of

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[37] Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 120; Cooper, *Evangelical Christians*, 255–260, notes that the problem of religious teaching was not limited to protestant missions; the French policy insisted that all instruction be in French and that all teachers have French certification which put serious constraints on Catholic orders in the region as well.

[38] Cooper, *Evangelical Christians*, 295. The leprosarium has recently been expanded to treat fistula.

[39] Rinaudo, "Development of Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration," para. 1; cf. Polgreen, "In Niger," para. 15–23. Rinaudo, a former SIM missionary created the program the results of which were reported in the *New York Times* by Polgreen, though she fails to give him any credit for what has happened.

qualified applicants. Nevertheless there is a need for such an institution as some larger churches are attracting educated professionals, and pastors with only high school level training are inadequate to lead them. The challenge of church leadership training is difficult since Western style academic training is not accessible to many if not most candidates who have never completed the lycée (high school) baccalaureate. Those schools that function at more accessible levels are either vernacular schools that serve only the Hausa community, or are tied to a particular denomination such as the Norwegian Pentecostals, or follow a modular system that takes seven years to complete. Almost all of these schools follow a lecture style format that gives little on-the-job training in the practical skills of ministry.

Despite almost ninety years of Christian ministry in Niger, the church remains small and growth has been plodding. The existence of large congregations in the capital is deceiving; as the demographics show, most of these congregations are composed of expatriate believers from other countries. In the face of Muslim resistance to evangelism, holistic ministries have helped missionaries to earn credibility and respect in the community. Nevertheless the challenge of equipping qualified church leaders remains.

Reflections

The foregoing provides a background for reflecting on needs and challenges for the Free Methodist Church. It also indicates some of the issues that a ministry plan for church planting in Niger will have to address.

One theme that is prevalent throughout this account is the sense of disempowerment Nigeriens encounter in their own country. This has been manifested historically through the colonial period where, as Stoller says, they experienced conquest and systematic humiliation. This experience seems to repeat itself as the continuing cycles of drought and famine force the government to repeatedly turn to the international community for crisis intervention in its domestic affairs. As Cooper noted, the FIMA fashion show brought some of these issues to

the surface where Muslims felt impotent to shape their own social policy, as the government seemed to bow to the pressure and expectations of foreign donors and institutions. One might expect the same feelings to be found in churches when the statistics cited suggest that Nigeriens form less than fifty percent of the Protestant churches they attend. The obvious danger here is that Christianity will continue to be viewed as a foreign entity rather than an indigenous movement. Church planting in this context needs to find away to create a Christian space that is not overwhelmed by other African believers, so that Nigeriens can find appropriate ways to contextualize their faith that will be relevant to their communities.

Similarly church-planting ministries will need to find ways to equip and empower Nigeriens as leaders in the church. Missionaries working in the Nigerien context need to find ways to stand in the background and to encourage Nigeriens to develop their sense of competence, rather than always presenting themselves as the experts or the leaders. The combined reality of the limited resources for formal ministry training and the inaccessibility of these academic programs for many Nigeriens who lack the educational background, means that the church needs to think of other ways to train and form leaders. Strategies and tools such as storying that are better suited to the oral cultures need to be woven into the fabric of ministry.

The role of holistic ministries needs to be carefully considered. The practice of providing aid and resources can either serve to reinforce old stereotypes and inequalities or can draw us into a mutual journey of faith. Social interventions need to reflect the concerns of those being served rather than imposing the vision of outsiders onto their lives. Nigeriens need to discover what it is that they have to offer and we need to be ready to learn and receive from them. Holistic ministries are necessary to incarnate the gospel and Nigeriens need to be given the opportunity to do this for others.

Lastly, church planting needs to consider how it will relate to Islam. This is difficult not simply because Muslims are highly resistant to the gospel but because as was noted earlier, the practice of Islam itself is conflicted. Christian workers need to have a reasonable understanding of Islam in order to relate to their community in positive ways without compromising their witness. They also need to understand the dynamics of power encounters and the needs of folk Muslims.

Islam is not the only religion that has "folk" believers. It is equally possible to see a syncretistic Christianity that incorporates animistic folkways into its faith. Christian leaders need to be able to relate their faith to the everyday concerns and needs of ordinary believers. The gospel affirms that God is not distant but intimately concerned with our lives and walks with us through life's trials.

These are complex issues that evade simple solutions. Nor will they be resolved quickly. Christian ministry in Niger will continue to confront these challenges but thought needs to be given lest our plans further complicate them rather than moving towards healing and resolution.

The following chapter explores the phenomena of church planting movements and ministries to identify useful models and tools for creating a ministry plan in Niger. These ministries work quickly to pass the responsibility for frontlines ministry and leadership to indigenous believers. They do this by building accountable discipleship and personal evangelism into the DNA of the church from the outset. These ministries do not represent a magical solution but may offer some beginning steps forward for thinking about ministry in a resistant mission context.

Chapter Two: Church Planting Movements

This chapter will introduce the concept of church planting movements (CPM) and the key individuals, ideas and practices associated with them. It will also provide a critique of the material in preparation for considering what a Wesleyan perspective on CPM could offer. It will also provide the basic working material for the ministry plan developed in the last chapter.

What is CPM?

Church planting movements is a recent term in mission circles to describe the rapid multiplication of churches through a given region or people group. The origins of the term are uncertain but probably came out of the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention.[1] In the late nineties IMB took the radical step of reshaping their ministry to focus on CPM among unreached people groups.[2]

David Garrison, a key IMB strategist and leader, defines CPM as "a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment."[3] He suggests that the term is a modification on Donald McGavran's idea of "People Movements."[4] McGavran contrasted what he identified as the mission station approach employed in the nineteenth century with what he calls "people movements." The former extracted new converts from the community and housed them in the safety of the mission station colony where they could be discipled and provided with a means of earning a livelihood.[5] In contrast to the older method, McGavran advocated leaving new believers in their natural social networks so that the gospel would pass quickly and easily through them,

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[1] Slack, "How Many," 12. Slack remarks that IMB missionaries began to note these movements in the early 90's but struggled to find adequate terminology, finally arriving at the phrase "church planting movements."
[2] Snodgrass, Review of *Reaching,* 1.
[3] Garrison, *Church Planting*, 21.
[4] Garrison, "10 Church Planting FAQs," 9.
[5] McGavran, "Bridges of God," 278.

creating a people movement.[6] CPM differentiates itself from People Movements in that it envisages *multiplying* or *reproductive* indigenous churches. The gauge often used for identifying a beginning CPM is when fourth generation indigenous churches or groups are consistently produced.[7] This logic appears to derive from practitioners' reading of 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul identifies four generations of disciples emanating from himself. IMB has refined this to movements that have a 50% annual growth rate in new churches and 25% annual growth rate in total churches.[8]

Garrison published his first booklet on CPMs in 2000, listing the key traits exhibited by movements, later supplementing this with a much fuller account in *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*, in 2004. He charts the beginning of IMB's CPM journey to the fall of 1994 when their missionaries filled out their annual reports. David Watson, a missionary in Northern India, delivered statistics that seemed impossible and IMB's administration challenged the truthfulness of the reports. An assessment team was sent to verify his numbers—a hundred new churches and over a thousand new believers in a single year. His supervisor later confessed, "I personally went in very doubtful, but we were wrong. Everywhere we went it was exactly as Watson had reported. God was doing something amazing there."[9]

IMB is the primary source for CPM ministry strategies, though other mission agencies have adopted CPM approaches.[10] Rick Wood, the editor of the US Center for World

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[6] McGavran,"Bridges of God," 274.
[7] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 2573; cf. Garrison, *Church Planting*, 193.
[8] Slack, "How Many," 13.
[9] Garrison, *Church Planting*, 15–16.
[10] A key precursor to the IMB work is George Patterson. He pioneered what is known as obedience-oriented discipleship common among IMB practitioners, as well as the discipleship chains that characterize those movements. cf. Patterson, "Spontaneous Multiplication," 609–12; Patterson and Scoggins, *Church Multiplication Guide*, 20–31. (*Church Multiplication Guide* is *the* text for obedience-oriented discipleship.) He generated a church-planting movement through his work in Honduras in the sixties and seventies but nothing to the scale of some of the IMB movements in Asia. His work also foreshadowed the focus on reproduction and the development of reproducible materials in his work with semi-literate populations, cf. O'Connor, *Reproducible Pastoral Training*, xvii-xviii. Many of the resources he has produced for training leaders are still available online at www.Paul-Timothy.net, www.trainandmultiply.com, and http://mentorandmultiply.com. His

Mission's journal, *Mission Frontiers* writes, "While many organizations have been involved in CPMs, no organization has studied CPMs and what makes them tick as thoroughly as the Southern Baptists."[11] Practitioners within IMB who have produced significant materials on CPM ministry include: Steve Smith and Ying Kai (*T4T*), Nathan and Kari Shank (*The Four Fields*), and Geisler Wilson (*Rapidly Advancing Disciples* or *RAD*). David Watson has left IMB, founding Asian Partners International (API) and finally joining City Team Ministries. He continues to promote CPMs, running training seminars and overseeing the CPM ministries associated with City Team. In the meantime, David F. Hunt, a colleague at City Team, has written a dissertation on a CPM that he facilitated in East Africa. These writers approach the subject from experience as practitioners, sharing their own evolving understanding and methodologies.

In contrast, Garrison's work on CPMs is the result of researching, observing and drawing generalizations from movements across the globe. He develops a list of basic traits that characterize the movements he has studied, with the assumption that these traits are somehow the framework for generating a movement. As Garrison puts it, he is trying to "reverse engineer" church-planting movements by analyzing those he has observed.[12]

Considering both practitioners and researchers will provide a balanced perspective. Individual CPM practitioners may have more insight into their particular ministry but at the same time may exaggerate certain factors over others. The researchers appear to be working more at arms length to the actual ministry but are also able to consult and evaluate multiple CPMs to identify more accurately what are the critical components in the ministry methodology. A consideration of the perspectives of both researchers and practitioners as well as the methodology and phenomena of church-planting movements will provide a base

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influence in CPM is also seen in the work of YWAM practitioners, Brian Hogan and Kevin Sutter, cf. Hogan, *There's a Sheep*, Kindle location 250; Sutter, *Keys to Church Planting*, Kindle location 1010.

[11] Wood, "Rapidly Multiplying Churches," 4.

[12] Garrison, *Church Planting*, 11.

for considering the merits of CPM methodology and ecclesiology.

CPM Methodology according to the Practitioners

Watson, Smith and Kai, the Shanks, and Wilson are practitioners who reflect the basic ideas promoted in CPM. Almost all of them have been associated with IMB at some point in their career, and most of them continue to interact with one another in developing their ideas. They are presented in a chronological progression indicating some of the evolving thought that is happening amongst them.

David Watson[13]

David Watson was an effective church planter in both the United States and overseas before initiating a church-planting movement in India. His initial work in India left him depressed after six of the workers he trained were martyred. This led to a period of soul searching and prayer. Watson says that he told the Lord he wouldn't go back to India unless the Lord told him *how* to do the work. Thereafter, he claims to have discovered a neglected methodology present in the Scriptures for church planting.

Watson's church planting methodology is founded on the "person of peace"[14] found in the commissioning of the Twelve and the Seventy (Matthew 10:5–15; Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–12). Jesus instructed them search for persons or homes of peace as they entered each new village. While these texts refer to the sending of the twelve and the seventy-two during Jesus' ministry, Watson sees here an enduring pattern for church planting. He identifies other New Testament figures such as Cornelius and Lydia as examples of persons of peace. According to Watson the essential goal of the church planter is to identify a person of peace and bring their family into a discipling relationship. That family then becomes the starting point for a new church. The person of peace becomes not only the cornerstone of the new church but becomes responsible for planting the new church.

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[13] This section is based on Watson's four part *CPM Awareness* videos found on line at http://www.cpmtr.org/getting-started/.

[14] Some translations refer to this individual as the "man of peace" but the text literally reads, "son of peace."

Watson compares his CPM plan to the spinning plates circus routine. He outlines twenty-three elements (or plates) that need to be operating for a CPM to happen. These principles fall into three basic categories: kingdom elements, tactical elements, and leadership elements. One person cannot maintain the system alone but a team can.

Watson lists nine kingdom elements that are essential for a CPM. Many such as prayer, making disciples not converts, Scripture as foundation for all teaching, and spiritual warfare are not exceptional and can be commonly found elsewhere. What is significant is his adoption of obedience-oriented teaching. Discipleship is not about teaching doctrines but holding people accountable to be obedient to Christ's commands.[15] Spiritual maturity is not the result of biblical knowledge but obedience to the Bible.

Watson includes nine tactical elements. They range from employing the man of peace strategy for entering a new community, to embracing and redeeming local culture rather than importing a foreign one. Most of the tactical elements address different facets of evangelism. Watson advocates the use of access ministries to legitimize the presence of Christian workers. These often take the form of some kind of business that gives the worker a reason for being in a community other than religious work. It also allows the worker to engage and interact with multiple people in the community as they search for the man of peace. He also asserts the importance of what he calls appropriate evangelism. He prefers indirect methods of evangelism for drawing out the man of peace and avoiding persecution or antagonism in the community. Evangelism is inviting a family to study the Scriptures to not only know God but become obedient disciples. Families or households are the primary focus of evangelism rather than individuals. This enables a further tactical element of groups or communities. Groups remember better, multiply and grow more quickly and are better equipped for protecting against bad leadership. Lastly, there are the elements of reproduction and outreaching.

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[15] This idea does not originate with Watson but can be found in the teachings of George Patterson, a former missionary to Honduras. Cf. Patterson and Scoggins, *Church Multiplication*, 20–31.

Because the local church was initiated by a local "person of peace" who was equipped to reach his community and who trained his new converts in the same process, reproduction becomes set into the church's DNA. Moreover, the transition to a larger mission of reaching out to other communities in church planting naturally flows from the church generating further generations of churches.

The last six "spinning plates" concern leadership. Watson distinguishes between the roles and responsibilities of insiders and outsiders, and the way disciples and leaders are formed. Outside leaders play more of a background role, and are responsible for deculturalizing the message and ministry, and keeping ministry tools and plans reproducible by insiders. They are to follow the common plan of Model, Equip, Watch, and Leave.[16] Inside leaders are to initiate and give leadership and direction to all local ministries and moreover are to be bi-vocational increasing their access to the community. Watson makes a distinction between education (teaching), training and mentoring.[17] While each has its place, he emphasizes that the primary means for developing people is through on-site mentoring. Watson presents a leadership pyramid that represents the growth and progression of leaders from local believers to those overseeing the movement on an international level. According to Watson, people are free to move up the pyramid according to their capacity to accomplish the tasks allocated to each successive level. Training moves gradually from local on-site mentoring to an external discipleship school[18] and then possibly seminary. Seminary training is not appropriate until the top two levels of the pyramid.

Watson reports that the church-planting movement has led to thirty thousand churches in his Indian CPM. He admits that though he initiated the work under the auspices of the IMB only five thousand of the churches joined. When questioned about what a denominational

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[16] More popularly known as MAWL (Model, Assist, Watch, Leave) among Southern Baptists.
[17] Education increases knowledge, training increases skill, and mentoring increases capacity.
[18] Watson describes this as a two year, once a week program that focuses more on skill development than academic questions.

missionary should do, he asserts that if the missionary were to follow his methodology, the missionary would plant more churches for his denomination than otherwise. Nevertheless many if not most of the churches may end up not identifying with your denomination since statistically any given denomination is attractive to only ten percent of the population.[19]

Watson has since left the IMB and joined City Team Ministries. Under his leadership City Team has adopted a CPM orientation. Under Watson's tutelage, Dave Hunt has facilitated a CPM in East Africa.[20] He started the project in 2005 and made it his thesis project for his studies at Bakke Graduate University. Hunt created a coalition of one hundred and thirty-one indigenous organizations and mobilized a thousand local church planters selling a vision of a new paradigm for church and church planting. By 2008 they claim to have planted over four thousand new churches. Hunt attributes the success of his project to God, writing, "It is clearly a movement of God. He chose to 'build his church' in this region at this time."[21] At the same time he attributes the failure of some regions in his target zone to experience explosive growth as the fault of inconsistent implementation and a failure of existing leadership to transition to his model of ministry.[22]

T4T: Training for Trainers

T4T's most important contribution to CPM methodology is a comprehensive ministry tool. It focuses on developing a simple process that will accomplish multiple ministry objectives simultaneously in a weekly meeting. It identifies six basic phases or components that are necessary to achieve a CPM. Its authors insist that T4T is not a magic formula but simply a tool for catching the wind of the Spirit whenever it should happen to blow.

The centre point in the T4T process is the weekly group meeting. Smith and Kai

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[19] Watson admits that denominations may not be happy with this, confessing that he was fired by his denomination over his ministry methodology though he never gives any details.
[20] Hunt, "A Revolution," 18, rejects the term Church Planting Movement because of its overuse and prefers to speak of rapid church multiplication.
[21] Hunt, "A Revolution," 140.
[22] Hunt, "A Revolution," 141.

suggest a two-hour session broken into three forty-minute segments.[23] The first segment contains four elements: a time for worship, member care, vision casting and accountability. Worship can be accomplished in a variety of ways that may or may not include singing, reading a psalm, testimonies of thanksgiving, and other expressions of praise. Member care and accountability include hearing about one another's weekly struggles and victories but then involve very direct questions about how members obey and practiced last week's teaching. It includes questions about who you shared last week's lesson with, who you shared the gospel with, and the progress you are making in discipling them. Lastly, vision casting involves motivating participants to reach people in their *oikos* network and challenging them to think how they can reach people beyond their own community with the gospel.

The second forty minutes is given to studying Scripture. In the first seven to ten weeks of a new group, a short-term discipleship program is given focusing on the basics of faith, e.g. baptism, prayer, the church, evangelism/disciple making, etc. After that the group transitions to inductive Bible studies that can be easily led by a new believer. Scripture study is a group discussion, very simply focused, generally moving through three basic questions: What does the text say? What does it mean? How will I obey this passage? T4T emphasizes an obedience-based discipleship; Smith and Kai assert that nothing should be taught unless you intend to follow up with accountability at the next meeting to find out how members actually practiced (obeyed) the lesson. They denigrate traditional "knowledge-based" discipleship that fills people's heads but fails to change their lives.[24] The goal is to give enough teaching to obey and to share with someone else.[25]

The final third of the session is given to ensuring the participants are able to re-teach the same lesson and/or lead a group through the first third of worship, member care, accountability and vision casting. Members are expected to be sharing the gospel five times a

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[23] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 1887.
[24] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 1184–1202.
[25] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 2054–6.

week, and initiating their own T4T groups with anyone who responds. Any challenges or difficulties that arise in this new group can be discussed in the member care time the following week. The session itself concludes with goal setting, (i.e. who will I share this with or evangelize this week?) and finally prayer. The purpose of this last segment is to create not only competence but confidence to share with others what they have received.[26]

Out of all these elements, the most critical are those likely to be skipped if pressed for time. The top four pieces of these meetings are the vision casting, accountability, practice teaching and goal setting. In fact, Smith and Kai report research that has found vision casting ability to be a more important quality for becoming a fruitful missionary than either evangelistic or church planting skills.[27] The removal of these four elements reduces the session to a traditional Bible study or cell group meeting, stripping it of its transformative and reproductive power.[28] The goal is to set obedience and reproduction into the core DNA of the movement by introducing these elements almost immediately into the experience and practice of the new believer.

This weekly session is designed to move new believers through the six necessary stages for sustaining a CPM. These successive stages include: (1) mobilizing the saved; (2) finding the lost; (3) evangelism; (4) discipleship; (5) church formation; (6) leadership development.[29] The major challenge of a CPM is to move believers through to the final stage of leadership development, for without a growing leadership base, the growing movement will overload the existing leadership and stall out. T4T is sometimes misunderstood to be a series of lessons to get new believers evangelizing and church planting. Smith and Kai assert however that the lesson material is secondary to the process of accountability that nurtures new believers into leadership almost immediately by delegating the task of discipling their

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[26] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 2098–2102.
[27] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 2807–10. Fruitful missionary service was measured by the annual report statistics concerning baptisms, and launching new groups and churches.
[28] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 2253–8.
[29] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 2750–5.

own converts while providing a context for debriefing and troubleshooting their experiences on-the-job as it were.

Beyond the T4T process, the key activity for producing a CPM is mobilizing as many local believers as possible. What that means is finding opportunities to cast vision and train as many people as possible. Smith and Kai recommend having a three-minute vision casting story that can be used anytime a worker encounters a local believer, in order to get them to buy into being trained. Generating a CPM requires the training of "dozens, even hundreds" of believers.[30]

T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution, like Garrison's *Church Planting Movements*, was published by WIGTake Resources, which in IMB circles is short for "What's It Gonna Take?" What this translates into is a numbers calculation of what it will take to reach a region or people group with the gospel. The first chapter of T4T is filled with numbers from the church planting ministries of both Ying Kai and Steve Smith. Smith recounts Kai's phenomenal CPM record of over a million and a half baptisms and a hundred and fifty thousand new church plants over ten years, as well as his own work with a group of church leaders from an unreached people group, asking how their eighty village churches was going to plant churches in the five thousand remaining villages in the next five years. The authors assert that their methodology is driven by their "end vision" of ministry.[31] While this focus on numbers is not all bad there are some troubling features about their basic presentation.

Despite them protesting otherwise, their presentation often feels like a sell job for some kind of multi-level marketing scheme. At various points they confess that *T4T* is only a tool and not a magic formula. Despite these disclaimers, their assertions that if we just "plant the right DNA of the kingdom, kingdom growth is inevitable,"[32] and citations of how *T4T* is

[30] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 2964.
[31] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 181.
[32] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 1036.

working all over the world,[33] leave the reader wondering. Smith and Kai want to distinguish *T4T* from the kingdom principles that it is purportedly based on, but the line between them starts to feel blurry.

T4T also seems to struggle with a distorted view of discipleship. Smith and Kai equate being a disciple with being a "trainer." A rather quirky logic stands behind this equation. Even though *mathetes* essentially means learner, Smith and Kai complain that both the word disciple and contemporary ideas of being discipled, imply more receiving than giving.[34] They argue that Jesus "strengthens the term," citing Matthew 10:24–25, and that trainer more accurately describes what Jesus wished to communicate. While it is true that Jesus says a disciple will emulate his master, "trainer" does not accurately describe the relationship between the followers of Jesus and Jesus himself.[35] They were indeed *his disciples* when following him, even if they took a "trainer" role in relationship to others. The idea of "giving" that Smith and Kai mention (Matthew 10:8) does not refer primarily to all disciples but comes in the context of commissioning the twelve, and more accurately refers to their apostolic role (Matthew 10:2). This is reflective of a general tendency to blur the distinction between apostle and disciples on the part of Smith and Kai.

This blurring of disciple and apostle is illustrated in their interpretation of the parable of the sower and the seed. While acknowledging that the "good soil" Jesus referred to applies to those who experience spiritual transformation, they tend to reduce that to those who not only witness and start a group/church but who are also successful in training people in their

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[33] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle locations 1215–1217, under the heading, "Can T4T Work Where I Am?" they write, "Still lingering in your mind may be this question: 'But can this happen where I am? My situation is different.'" "If T4T were only bearing fruit in a few similar contexts, we might be tempted to say 'no.' But all over the world, CPMs are emerging, and T4T is playing a huge role in many of them. We can no longer use the uniqueness of our situation as an excuse that T4T (adapted to be culturally appropriate) cannot work where we are."

[34] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 558.

[35] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 557. The authors assert that "We should use any English term that that describes the true essence of the original Greek and Hebrew . . ." While this may be true, the word "disciple" describes the way a believer relates *to Jesus* but "trainer" reflects the way CPM believers are supposed to relate *to others*. In this case the authors are not translating or interpreting the text but reading their own agenda into it.

group/church to start another group or church. These are the trainers of trainers that "are the good soil of CPM that lead to multi-generational reproduction."[36] These are the twenty percent with whom a CPM worker needs to invest his or her time. "Therefore an important principle of CPMs is this: *Go with the good fruitful soil!*"[37] This typology of believers tends to denigrate everyone who isn't an apostolic church planter and measures Christians by their pragmatic value to the movement.

This sense of second-class citizens is reinforced by the methodology. Because Smith and Kai insist on training and holding everyone accountable to practice the mission that Jesus gave the twelve in Matthew 10, one wonders how that translates in the hearts of believers. Kai suggests that he came to this conclusion after re-reading the Great Commission and becoming convinced that "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you," included training everyone to plant new churches. Both authors felt this was validated in their ministries as they discovered that those they least expected were their best church planters and often those they considered best candidates were ineffective.[38] Nevertheless, this seems to be more pragmatic justification than biblical warrant, and ignores Jesus own example of selectivity with the twelve.

Further confusing is the handling of 2 Tim 2:22. The authors use this text to support their program of training everyone to become trainers.[39]

> By living out this spiritual principle of training people to be trainers of others who would in turn train others, hundreds and then thousands began to come to faith according to the this biblical pattern:
> "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2, NASB).[40]

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[36] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 1703.
[37] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 1706.
[38] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle location 803–84,1754–55.
[39] The "222 principle" is mentioned by several authors but Garrison seems to attribute it to Bruce Carlton, Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*,72. Carlton understands this text to teach a leadership mentoring principle or what he refers to as "discipleship chains," cf. Carlton, *Project Thessalonica*, 220–21.
[40] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle locations 442–445.

Once again their method has a superficial correspondence to the biblical text but in fact reads their own agenda into it. The authors appear to read this as justifying sending new believers to go out immediately and evangelise, start new churches and begin the process all over again. While the text does not exclude this, it more naturally reads as instructions for identifying responsible leaders (faithful men) who will be able to guarantee the accurate transmission of the apostolic deposit or tradition to future generations of believers in light of Paul's pending execution (cp. 2 Timothy 1:13–14; 4:6–8). This text does not say to train every believer for church planting regardless of their maturity in the faith but rather to select faithful individuals who are capable of teaching others to pass on the essentials of the faith.

Lastly Smith and Kai send mixed messages about what to do with new believers. They clearly state that "New believers must be gathered into churches. This is God's design from the beginning of history."[41] Nevertheless, the whole methodology is built around leaving new believers isolated in a training relationship so that they start their own church. They provide the example of a new Christian who brought his first convert back to his own trainer to teach. In this situation he would encourage the first person *not* to bring his convert back to the original group but to disciple/train the new convert alone at another time.[42] While recognizing that many Christians will never start a multiplying group (only twenty percent succeed), they seem intent on pushing new believers out in hope that this new convert will be the person of peace who ignites a chain of reproduction:

> T4T is NOT grow, then multiply [sic]. The design is not to bring new believers into existing groups. Instead, T4T is launch and repeat: as trainees lead people to faith, empower them to launch new groups and then to repeat the process with their new trainees. Multiply trainers. In T4T you don't wait for a group to grow before launching new groups out of it.[43]

Really what they mean is that new believers are to be trained how to become a church

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[41] Smith and Kai, T4T, Kindle location 3713–3714.
[42] Smith and Kai, T4T, Kindle location 2302–2304.
[43] Smith and Kai, T4T, Kindle Locations 2310–2313. Groups grow into churches of more than two by pulling in family members or as an individual produces more converts to bring to his own group—though individuals are encouraged to branch by starting at least a second group if possible.

planter.

T4T attempts to describe those principles that have created the astonishing growth of Ying Kai and Steve Smith's CPMs. They assert that the principles that they are using are already present in the New Testament for anyone to discover. Nevertheless, the principles that they derive are often based on sloppy or superficial readings of the text. That doesn't necessarily invalidate their practices but it does leave them open to the charge of pragmatism. While it is understandable that *T4T* seeks to bring those with an apostolic gifting to the surface in order to produce a CPM, its tendency to equate discipleship with apostleship seems to create unrealistic expectations for eighty percent of the people in their movement. What needs to be communicated is that it is possible to be a faithful disciple (not "trainer") of Christ without being an apostolic church planter. *T4T* needs to become more open to multiple models of faithfulness ("good soil") rather than trying to squeeze everyone into a church-planting mould. The risk to the system of course is that the energy of the program will become dispersed into multiple activities rather than remaining focused on multiplying church plants.

Four Fields of Kingdom Growth

Nathan and Kari Shank aim to provide a big picture view of what goes into CPM and thereby provide a means for practitioners to evaluate the tools and strategies they are using. They have interacted with the T4T developers and affirm that the T4T process is the "engine of movement."[44] Despite its title, *Four Fields* outlines five components or phases in the CPM process. By identifying these basic parts they hope to enable practitioners to recognize the places in the process where their system is breaking down or could be more effective. They also introduce the idea of generational mapping for tracking the health and development of

[44] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 6. *The Four Fields of Kingdom Growth* was actually published before *T4T: A Discipleship Re-revolution*. Smith and Kai have since refined their presentation and actually include some of the Shanks' material on church mapping in Chapter 16.

successive generations of churches.

Four Fields derives its name from the parable of the growing harvest found in Mark 4:26–29. The Shanks assert that Jesus shared this parable "to give us a living picture of the church planting process."[45] They deduce four stages in the planting process beginning with the "empty field," "the seeded field," "the field of new life," and "the harvest field."[46] In the CPM process these translate into finding a "reproducible entry strategy," and a "reproducible gospel presentation," "reproducible discipleship," and "reproducible church formation." The final component in a CPM is leadership multiplication, wherein the process is started all over again.

The Shanks delineate six principles for evaluating the tools or strategies that CPM practitioners employ.[47] These principles are intended to help practitioners answer the question, "Is it reproducible?" First of all, is it obedience or accountability oriented? Second, does it grant or challenge new believers with responsibilities? Third, does it create multiplication after the manner of 2 Timothy 2:2, (the "222 principle")? The fourth principle is insider facilitation, by which they mean, can it depend on insiders to do the leading and teaching without outside (formal) education? Fifth is "self-discovery," which means that believers are to learn directly from the scriptures and through the instruction of the Holy Spirit, whether in private or in participative Bible studies, rather than lecture or formal teaching. The sixth principle is about church formation, and asks whether the believers are able to move seamlessly through the five elements of a CPM to reproducing autonomous local churches.

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[45] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 14. The application of this parable to the process of church planting is not unique to the Shanks. For a similar interpretation see Carlton, *Project Thessalonica*, 19–22.
[46] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 15–16.
[47] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 19–24.

Four Fields also introduces the idea of generational mapping. They suggest a system of tracking not only the existence of successive chains of churches but also as a way of measuring their health. The Shanks suggest a series of milestones for tracking a church's progress towards being a healthy autonomous local congregation (see figure 1). These

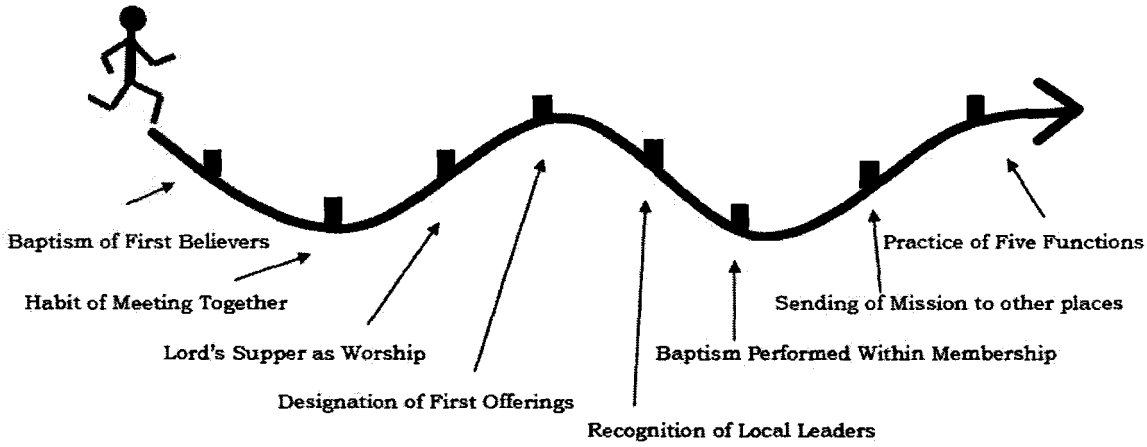

Figure 1

milestones reflect not only the *Four Fields* training process but also two "Handy Guides" designed to aid new church leaders in the process of church formation. Handy Guides are simply lists of five that use finger counting to memorize.

The first Handy Guide is intended for the initial convert (i.e. the man of peace). [48] It addresses the five beginning questions: Who is the church? When, where and why do we meet? What do we do? These are intended to answer simple questions to facilitate the formation of a new church.

The second Handy Guide is intended to assist maturing congregations to organize "around [a] simple reproducible vision."[49] The guide counts five essential elements of maturity:[50]

- One Head: Christ alone is head and chief shepherd. There is to be no hierarchy within the church.

[48] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 63–67.
[49] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 64.
[50] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 68–78. The Shanks credit David Garrison with developing this tool.

- Two Authorities: The scriptures and the Holy Spirit work in harmony in guiding the church in its faith and practice.
- Three Servants: To the traditional offices of pastor (or elder or overseer) and deacon, they add treasurer.[51]
- Four Marks of Maturity: to the traditional marks of indigenous church maturity, i.e. self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating, they add self-correcting.
- Five Functions of the Church: worship, fellowship, service, evangelism, and discipleship.[52]

Like T4T, *Four Fields* adopts a 'WIGTake' orientation to mission that focuses on numbers in the big picture. Each discussion of the five components of a CPM finishes with a section on "end-visioning." This involves calculating how many "lay-sowers," "lay-disciple-makers," churches, and, lastly, church leaders will be necessary to reach a population of one million.[53] These calculations are considered necessary because God desires "that none should perish."[54] This focus on numbers is presented as the "brutal facts" of a given ministry context, and each reader is encouraged to substitute the figure for his own ministry context in order to calculate "what's it gonna take?"[55]

Four Fields also follows T4T in insisting on a biblical methodology but then uses specious interpretations to justify itself. With regards to methodology, the Shanks attempt to "capture the process of kingdom growth through church planting detailed within scripture…"[56] They further affirm that "[Scripture] is relevant in every situation and cannot be improved upon in regard to wisdom or methodology."[57] Nevertheless the Shanks' handling of their paradigmatic text (Mark 4:26–29) is questionable—which they seem to be aware of. They write, "Over our years of training concerning the kingdom of God, some have questioned Jesus' view of the church in this parable."[58] They express awareness that the

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[51] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 71, cites the example of Jesus and Paul's collection in 2 Corinthians 8:19–21 as justification for this.
[52] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 76–77. This is borrowed directly from Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Church*.
[53] The figure one million is arbitrarily assigned to people group "X".
[54] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 5.
[55] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 5.
[56] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 3.
[57] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 6.
[58] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 13.

kingdom and the church are not exactly the same, but "warn… against a seperation [sic] of Jesus description of the kingdom and the unanimous outworking of kingdom expansion, resulting in clearly defined churches throughout the New Testament writings."[59] While it is certainly true that kingdom expansion often if not always translates into the spread and growth of the church, this does not require the conclusion that a parable about kingdom growth was intended as a guide to church-planting methodology. Moreover, it seems dubious to develop our strategy and methodology on a text that seems to teach our ignorance concerning kingdom growth (v. 27).

Lastly, *Four Fields* has a dubious leadership structure, built on a reductionist conception of the church. The Shanks, in accordance with Baptist ecclesiology, assert that "The end goal is always autonomous churches,"[60] and that "Within the body of Christ there is no hierarchy."[61] While there is nothing wrong with these statements in principle it is the inconsistencies they lead to that create problems. What they appear to mean is that "church" always and only refers to local autonomous congregations, and that hierarchy necessarily implies a controlling chain of command. The problem with the former premise can be seen in their handling of Eph 4:11–12. In the response to the end-visioning question, "How many leaders are needed?" they write:

> Ephesians 4:11–12 tells us God supplies leaders for every church. Five types of leaders are mentioned; apostles, prophets . . . Recognizing and equipping these leaders is our task. To determine the number of leaders necessary, let us take God at His word. We will plan for five leaders per church.[62]

They seem to believe that this text refers specifically to the situation of local churches rather than the universal church. Moreover by insisting on autonomous local congregations as the only real unit of measure, the connection between congregations is left unspecified but a leadership structure is nevertheless implied.

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[59] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 13f.
[60] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 23.
[61] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 68.
[62] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 100.

While rejecting hierarchy within churches, the discipleship chains created by CPMs introduce their own leadership pyramid.[63] In this regard the Shanks provide a diagram of Paul's ministry patterned after 2 Tim 2:2 (see figure 2). Their own explanation of this chart is conflicted. On one hand they assert this "'vertical dimension' does not represent authority, rather it is a picture of a multiplied harvest capable of discipling an entire nation," but then go on to add in a footnote that "This diagram represents the flow of authority and responsibility to the edge of a discipleship chain."[64] Despite their claims, it is difficult to see how mentoring relationships that insist on accountability cannot imply some dimension of authority.[65]

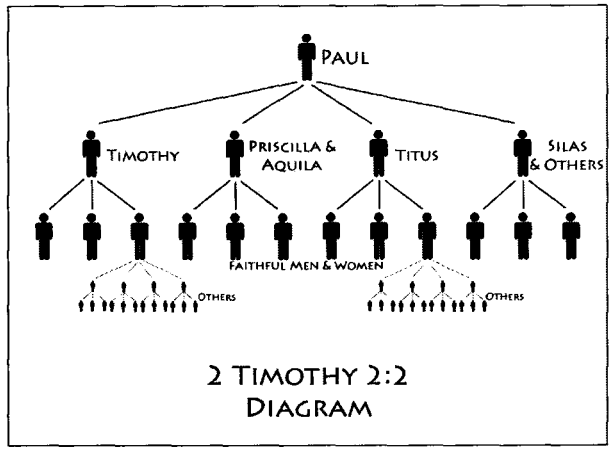

Figure 2

This situation is seen once more in their depiction of leadership development. Individuals rise through a track beginning as level one "Faithful Sower" to potentially becoming a level five Strategy Coordinator (see figure 3).[66] Not only do the obvious questions arise of who confers and recognizes such titles but moreover, what do they say about the nature of the church? It's as though the CPM practitioner and the superstructure he or she is erecting stand outside the church. This is possible when we limit our understanding of the church only to its local (autonomous) expressions but falters the moment we recognize that all of these together form the universal church. To their strictly biblical methodology, the Shanks have now added a series of positions and titles that scarcely have any biblical warrant at all.

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[63] The Shanks would reject the idea of leadership pyramid.
[64] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 86, n. 37.
[65] This certainly seems to be the case for Paul's relationships with Timothy and Titus where clear commands or charges were given in what is most likely a hierarchic situation. Cp. L. T. Johnson *1 Timothy,* 139–142.
[66] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 93.

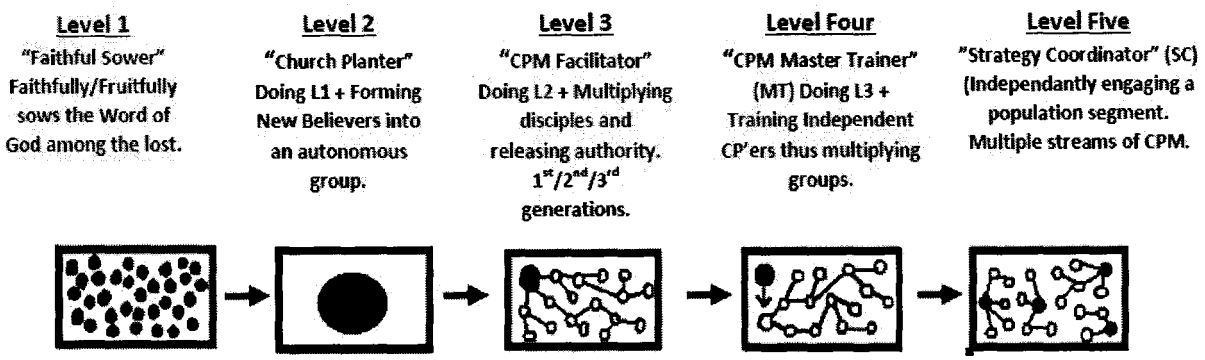

Figure 3

The problem of authority and hierarchy might be better served if they were more carefully understood rather than proscribed. The Shanks appear to assume that hierarchies are controlling and susceptible to abuse and that authority is necessarily coercive. While these may often be the case, they are not necessarily so. The church might be better served if time were taken to explain how authority is to be used in the church and what are its limits.

Like *T4T*, the skewed interpretative process found in *Four Fields* does not necessarily render its methodology invalid. However, removing the biblical aura does render it more open to evaluation and critique. It appears that the Shanks have developed an organic ideal of the church that only works when we conceptualize it in terms of its local autonomous expressions. As a result, the organizational pragmatics are quietly moved outside of local church structure where they don't threaten the organic egalitarian ideal placed on it. When taken all together however, the church they describe does increasingly look like a religious multilevel marketing program, not unlike that proposed by *T4T*. Once again, the church-planting process might be better preserved if we combine the agricultural images developed by the Shanks (i.e. the four fields) with the construction images used for church planting elsewhere in the Scripture.[67]

The five components of the church-planting plan that the Shanks outline are not dependent solely on their interpretation of Mark 4:26–29. As they themselves acknowledge,

[67] See 1 Cor 3:5–17 where Paul describes himself both as a sower or planter and a "wise master builder," and the church as both "God's field" and "God's building."

these same five components or phases are variously developed by other authors, though perhaps not in exactly the same way.[68] Likewise, their evaluation criteria for ministry tools are generally reflective of the exigencies of the pioneer church planting in isolated contexts. Nevertheless the reader is left with the impression that they would like to keep churches isolated rather than exposing them to outside education and training, for fear of introducing methods and ideas that are not reproducible.

Rapidly Advancing Disciples (RAD)

Geisler Wilson adopts both the *T4T* training and the *Four Fields* approach to church-planting phases. However, he critiques the approach promoted by Smith and Kai whereby CPM practitioners endlessly train new people to do the basic introductory lessons and then release them to grow on their own. He suggests a two part program that "filters" those apostolic candidates in whom a longer term investment of eight to twelve months should be provided.

RAD does not eliminate the "saturation training" advocated by other practitioners. Rather, Wilson recommends it be used over short periods of time in order to create a "crowd."[69] When CPM training is limited to the short training sessions provided in *T4T*, a shallow discipleship is the result. He calculates that even if over a three-year period someone were able to train ten thousand people in the basics of CPMs, only a thousand would implement the training but even then their experience shows that the quality of implementation would be uneven and the discipleship would be shallow. However, if intensive training could be given to a dozen workers who reproduced the process with another group of twelve, after three generations of reproduction in this way, a thousand trained workers could be generated in a similar three-year period. By giving more focussed

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[68] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 143–4. They list several other practitioners whose material can be more or less organized along the same lines.

[69] Wilson, *Rapidly*, 4. Wilson explains saturation training as "training CPM materials as many times and to as many people as possible."

training in this way, workers are not only more thoroughly trained but begin to "catch your passion and zeal." [70]

RAD is divided into two sets of training materials that are based primarily on the *Four Fields* material. In the initial "come and see" phase, the CPM practitioner builds contacts with believers in the target region or people group. These are designed to introduce not only the CPM trainer but the "biblical methods of Church planting to begin the paradigm shift..."[71] The basic goal is to set up training cycles that run over a six- to eight-week period. These training sessions are what Wilson refers to as the "come and follow" phase (see figure 4). At this point the trainer begins filtering "for obedient followers of Christ who are willing

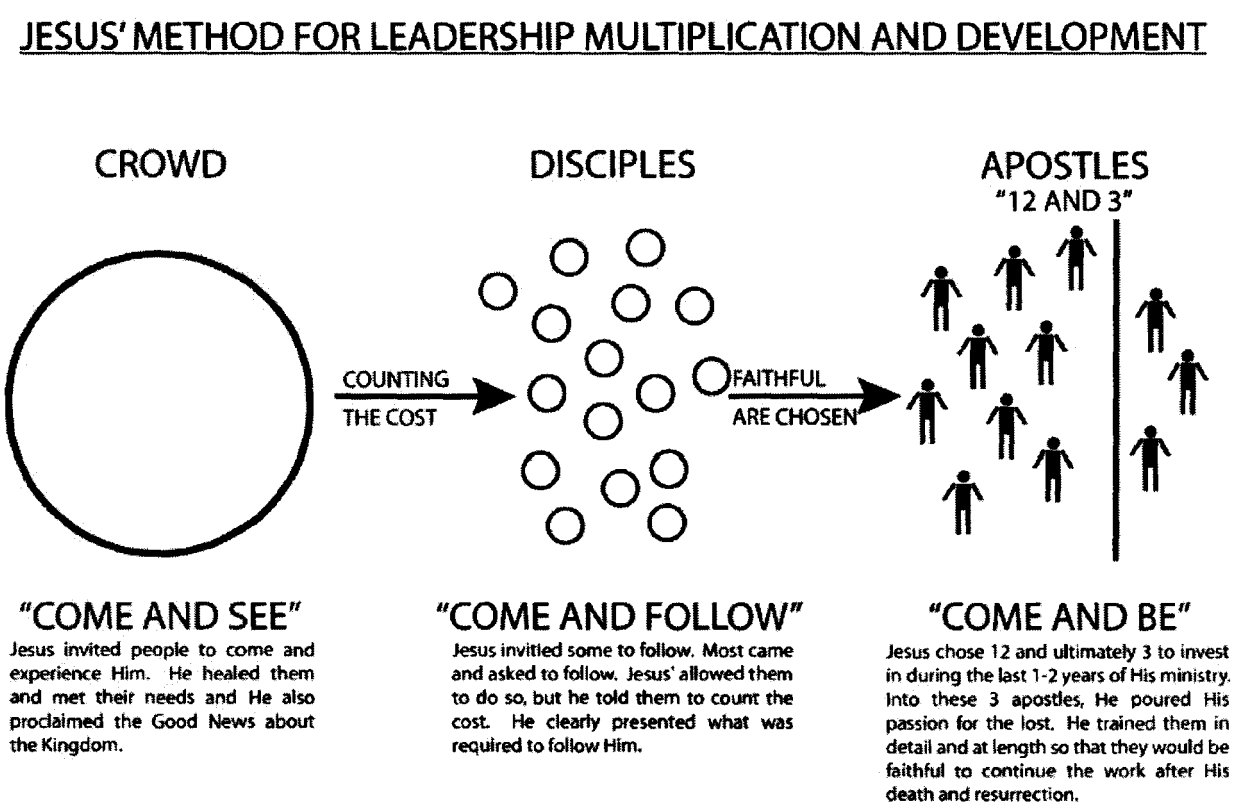

Figure 4

to begin to expand the Kingdom of God."[72] These training seminars are designed to mobilize

[70] Wilson, *Rapidly*, 86–87.
[71] Wilson, *Rapidly*, 87. Wilson suggests a variety of strategies from hosting a Believer's conference to simply grassroots campaigning to invite people come to the "come and follow" training sessions.
[72] Wilson, *Rapidly*, 88.

believers not only to evangelize but to start new churches in homes.[73] From among those who are faithful to plant churches the trainer then filters with a further list of criteria for those who will be invited into the "come and be with me" phase of training.[74] This training repeats all of the training found in the "come and follow me phase" but is then supplemented with six basic theological modules, on the field visits and mentoring. Participants are expected to sign a covenant committing to the eight to twelve months of training. After completion they are expected to filter for their own "come and be with me" leaders and pass on what they have received.

The initial training materials presented in *RAD* combine the *Four Fields'* CPM plan with a short term discipleship program derived from Thom Wolf's document "Universal Disciple."[75] "Come and follow" training begins with motivational lessons regarding God's eternal purpose and goal, followed by a number's exercise showing that current population growth is outstripping ministry efforts in the region. These motivational lessons climax with a lesson on the priesthood of all believers, empowering participants to church plant and then transitioning into the *Four Fields* CPM plan. This plan includes a short-term discipleship program for the new church plant, referred to as "Paul's Pattern," and is essentially ethics focussed, and intended to set an obedience DNA. It concludes with some guidance on healthy church tracking/mapping taken from *Four Fields*.

The apostolic "come and be with me" training essentially repeats the "come and follow" training with on-site mentoring and follow-up. Further to this are six modules covering the doctrines of Scripture, theology proper, anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology and eschatology. These modules consist of a series of Bible references followed by questions

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[73] Wilson, *Rapidly*, 34. He rejects the term "house church" because it "implies that they are something less than a "real" church."
[74] Wilson, *Rapidly*, 89. Wilson suggests six ranging from good character to cultural/ethnic limitations depending on your target group.
[75] Garrison, "RAD," para. 2. Wolf's document can be found online: http://www.scribd.com/doc/6775326/The-Universal-Discipleship-Pattern.

such as, "Who inspired the Bible?" and "How many gods are there?"[76] These theological guides are designed to lead students "to internally own most of the *BFM 2000* [i.e. doctrinal statement produced by the South Baptist Convention]."[77]

Wilson asserts that building intimate relationships are critical to this phase. "Without relational time spent with them, they are simply a fickle crowd coming for a free lunch, who won't take the responsibility and ownership in Jesus' Kingdom plans and goals."[78] The goal is no longer simply to pass vision and methodology but to invest in individuals for the goal of shaping apostolic leaders who will lead the process of transformation.

RAD recognizes that speed is not the only priority in pioneer church planting. Included in the core values of *RAD* is the priority of "Spiritual Depth over Width." Wilson affirms that an "initially slower process of making disciples through transformational growth is ultimately better for the legacy of the church planter when compared to a program focused on numbers . . ."[79] Despite this, another core value states "Operate with 1-Term Urgency."[80] In other words, missionaries should work efficiently to see a movement initiated or established within three to four years. The worker may return for another term but even a career missionary may be relocated to a new region, leaving the work behind.

This concern for relationship and creating spiritual depth is a welcome change from the tendency towards pyramid schemes and multilevel marketing in some of the earlier works. Moreover, Wilson's emphasis on "filtering" introduces an element of selectivity that is absent from *T4T* where Smith and Kai advocate the indiscriminate training of everyone. Nevertheless, the impression that every term may be your last to work with a group of people seems harsh, though perhaps realistic in certain restricted access countries.[81]

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[76] Wilson, *Rapidly*, 100–106.
[77] Wilson, *Rapidly*, 100.
[78] Wilson, *Rapidly*, 90.
[79] Wilson, *Rapidly*, 140.
[80] Wilson, *Rapidly*, 140.
[81] Restricted access countries are those that do not accept missionaries and/or are antagonistic to the gospel.

Lastly the idea of Paul's Pattern seems a little misleading. It is often noted that Paul's letters begin with a theological discussion followed by a practical application, sometimes referred to as indicative and imperative. *RAD*'s program seems to invert this program with theological discussions delayed for the final level of training while the early meetings of a new church are almost entirely given over to commandments to be obeyed. While justification for this obedience based program may be found in the Great Commission and elsewhere, it is a misnomer to call this Paul's Pattern.

CPM Characteristics according to Researchers

David Garrison writes as researcher of movements. He reports on the current global situation regarding church-planting movements, and outlines a series of principles for CPMs. He divides these into two lists, and the first is a list of universal elements among CPMs he has researched. The second list is more tentative including characteristics found among most but not all movements.

Garrison's list of universal elements, includes items that are not notable in themselves but in the way they are practiced. Prayer, evangelism and the authority of scripture are characteristic of most church plants but the practice of prayer and the mobilization of all believers in these movements set them apart. The authority of scripture is seen in the way planters continually answer questions and teach methodology by recourse to the scriptures. Leaders shy away from drawing authority to themselves by making the scripture the authority.

Universal CPM Elements:

1. Extraordinary Prayer
2. Abundant Evangelism
3. Intentional Planting of Reproducing Churches
4. The Authority of God's Word
5. Local Leadership
6. Lay Leadership
7. House Churches
8. Churches Planting Churches
9. Rapid Reproduction
10. Healthy Churches

Garrison notes that a CPM requires a plan on the part of missionaries for reproducing churches. Simply doing ministry or translating the scriptures, though helpful, will not

produce a movement unless missionaries have a plan in place to not only plant churches but churches that reproduce. Rapid reproduction is explained by analogy. Garrison compares rabbits and elephants to show that quickly reproducing small churches is more effective in the long run than building large churches that take much longer to reproduce. Churches planting churches not only require missionaries to model and train people to do the work, but also to fade into the background and leave. Doing so allows new churches to feel the responsibility of taking on the task themselves.

Garrison also underlines the importance of local lay leadership in CPM churches. The easiest way for foreign workers to fade into the background is if they never take the spotlight in the first place. When Garrison asked his CPM taskforce when missionaries should "pass the torch" to local leadership, the response was unanimous: "In a Church Planting Movement you begin with the torch in their hand."[82] Beginning with local leadership helps avoid the perception of being a foreign religion and setting unrealistic leadership standards. The use of lay leaders also opens up a supply of leaders for burgeoning movements. Garrison cites the common axiom among practitioners, "The resources are in the harvest." Using lay leaders guards the relevance of the movement as grassroots people are empowered to serve and keeps financial requirements low in countries that are already impoverished.

In order to make the use of local lay leaders feasible, CPMs plant house churches. Though some churches may in time build a building or move to a more professional ministry, making house churches the norm means that churches remain at a size that is easily managed by a few lay leaders and lifts the economic burden of sustaining property and a salary. Church health is measured not by size but by how a church is practicing the five purposes of a church (i.e. evangelism, worship, discipleship, fellowship and service) laid out in Rick

[82] Garrison, *Church Planting*, 188.

Warren's *Purpose Driven Church.*[83]

To these ten universal traits, Garrison adds ten more factors that are present in most movements.[84] The first three he identifies concern the social context of ministry. Most CPMs occur in societies marked by instability or unrest and that are in isolation from foreign contact and where following Christ is dangerous. These three seem to create an urgency in sharing the gospel, whereas in the opposite circumstances, the pressure on individual believers to engage in mission dissipates. So for instance, where new believers are not isolated but rather have an abundance of evangelical resources at their disposal, they tend to become dependent on the foreigners who provide them.[85]

Ten Factors Found in Most Movements

1. A climate of uncertainty in society
2. Insulation from outsiders
3. A high cost for following Christ
4. Bold fearless faith
5. Family-based conversion patterns
6. Rapid incorporation of new believers
7. Worship in the heart language
8. Divine signs and wonders
9. On-the-job leadership training
10. Missionaries suffered

In this social context, CPM growth tends to be the result of bold believers who throw off the fear of persecution. Their faith, in turn, tends to spread through the web of family relations often through family-oriented evangelism. In their isolation, new believers are soon launched into active service and are trained as they go in the developing church. Garrison believes that worshipping in "heart languages," i.e. mother tongue languages of the people, also facilitates the spread of the gospel, as it makes for easier transmission of the gospel by new believers who can express themselves freely.

Lastly, Garrison notes two phenomena that also seem to accompany CPMs. The first is the manifestation of miraculous power often in the form of healing. In fact, many include healing prayer in their basic evangelism methodology. The other is the suffering of missionaries. Many missionaries who have played key roles in a CPM are no longer on the

[83] Garrison, *Church Planting*, 197; cf. Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 103–7.
[84] Garrison, *Church Planting*, 221–38.
[85] Garrison, *Church Planting*, 224.

field, Garrison notes.[86] Ironically, much of the suffering that he refers to has to do with illness and disease.

Garrison recommends using these lists as a means of measuring a ministry's distance from having a CPM. He suggests asking your ministry leaders to rate the ministry on a scale of one to ten for each point on the list, and then collating the results to identify gaps in your ministry, in order to propose future steps.

Garrison presents CPMs as means of not only identifying what God is doing but also of discerning his will. He tends to makes CPMs the standard measure for ministry. He asserts that we must learn about CPMs in order to know our role in God's plan. "If we want to be on mission with God and not simply pursuing our own agenda, then we *must* turn our attention to how he is using Church Planting Movements…"[87] He elaborates, moreover, saying the difference between a CPM and a church planting ministry that fails to ignite one, "is often the difference between God's people properly aligning themselves with what he is doing or failing to align themselves with what he is doing."[88] Despite admitting that CPMs are not an end in themselves and warning against selling one's soul for the sake of a movement, his aforementioned statements nevertheless show where his priorities lie. Like many of his colleagues at IMB, Garrison ultimately credits CPMs for bringing unprecedented numbers of people to Christ.

IMB research and practice provides a basic framework for understanding CPM ministry. David Watson's adoption of the person of peace strategy, that aims at households as the basic unit of conversion and church planting combined with an obedience-oriented discipleship laid the initial foundation. *T4T* developed obedience-oriented discipleship by creating a multipurpose discipleship tool that focuses on mobilizing rather than teaching as the basic mode of group meetings. *Four Fields* offers a basic framework for evaluating and

[86] Garrison, *Church Planting*, 235.
[87] Garrison, *Church Planting*, 27.
[88] Garrison, *Church Planting*, 27-28.

improving church-planting phases aimed at CPMs. *RAD* views the process from the perspective of a missionary; it views the long-term viability and health of the movement and offers a plan for creating spiritual depth in movements that seem aimed at spiritual width. Finally Garrison's book develops a rubric for evaluating a ministry to bring into alignment with CPM phenomena.

Discipleship Focused Church Planting or Church Planting Focused Discipleship?

Obedience-oriented discipleship is the "engine of movement" in CPM ministries.[89] These ministries are not content with a rigorous discipleship plan but rather front load church planting into their discipleship training, creating a feedback loop of growing disciples and multiplying churches. This "gracious" cycle seems to be an essential factor in generating a CPM.

This focus on obedience and accountability is supplemented by a series of secondary themes and practices. Particularly noticeable is the focus on reproduction and reproducibility. These two factors become the cornerstones of CPM ecclesiology. Churches are living organisms and as such must reproduce as a sign of health. Multiplication or reproduction is to be sought at every level in the movement as a sign of health. Reproducibility calls for simplicity—forms and methods that new believers can use quickly without formal training. J. D. Payne communicates the idea of simplicity in terms of "the irreducible ecclesiological minimum."[90] This simplicity or minimum also promotes the process of indigenization, freeing new mission field churches from foreign cultural baggage.

Another theme to CPM material is pragmatism and speed. Despite the avowed desire to be "biblical" in the methodology, this often appears to be superficial proof-texting. The orienting question is "What's it gonna take?" The focus on speed and numbers reflects this pragmatism. Garrison has noted that speed seems essential to the movement, and when it

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[89] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 6.

[90] Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 32. He elaborates, saying, "Anything less . . . fails to teach . . . the doctrine of the church; and anything in addition . . . possibly hinders the multiplication of indigenous churches.

slows the movement falters.[91] Pragmatism is not a sin but if it is driven for a concern for speed, the irreducible ecclesiological minimum might quickly become reductionist. Moreover, Craig Ott and Gene Wilson argue that the biblical emphasis is on an abundant harvest, not a rapid one, and on healthy churches and fruit that endures.[92] Rather than seeking proof-texts for their methods, CPM practitioners might be better served with a process of theological reflection on their work. An example of what this could look like will be seen in the following chapter concerning the theology and practices of John Wesley.

Lastly is the theme of lay empowerment. 'Every believer holds the potential of being an apostolic church planter' is an underlying message of most of these practitioners. At the very least, every believer ought to be church planting. While this seems an exaggerated view of both lay ministry and church planting, it probably reflects a reaction to the passive and nominal forms of Christianity that dominate North America. CPM practitioners aim at the total mobilization of believers in personal evangelism. Believers are taught to search out the man of peace who will in turn become the next church planter in cascading discipleship chains that in turn become churches. While this activism is effective in generating energy, movement and "results," CPM practitioners are discovering that it does not always produce the depth of discipleship sought. The danger of activist ministry is well elucidated by Sherwood G. Lingenfelter:

> Reflection and deep thinking are sacrificed to activism... This is typical of "movement" leaders. Nurtured in an activist paradigm, and then extended beyond capacity by their success in training others, they no longer have the time for essential reflection and self-evaluation. Movement leaders, as a consequence, fall into habitual patterns of teaching and practice that may distort Scripture and become self-serving in the practice of ministry.[93]

While a missional DNA has been set with this total mobilization of the laity, the danger here is that multitudes of churches are being launched without putting an adequate process of a

[91] Garrison, *Church Planting* (2000), 36.
[92] Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting,* 78.
[93] Gupta and Lingenfelter, *Breaking Tradition*, 54.

theological reflection into place. The following chapter considers John Wesley as an example of a movement leader who incorporated theological reflection in to his methods and ministry practice.

Chapter 3: The Wesleyan Tradition and Church Planting Movements

A Free Methodist CPM plan must integrate the values and methodologies of CPM with the Wesleyan Methodist Tradition. Faithful appropriation of this tradition requires reflection on the theology and practices of Wesley and the Methodists to assess their compatibility, particularly the key themes of mission and church. The results of this reflection will provide a guide for developing a Wesleyan church-planting movement ministry plan.

The Wesleyan Revival was a seventeenth-century reform movement. John Wesley had a vision for renewal that encompassed not only England but the world. The mission of the early Methodist preachers was, "above all, to reform the nation, by spreading scriptural holiness across the land."[1] Moreover, when tensions arose over the boundaries of his ministry, he famously declared, "The world is my parish." Unlike the IMB practitioners previously discussed, he did not make careful calculations to determine how many preachers, how many societies, and how many class meetings it would take to accomplish the task. However, like modern missiologists, he did accumulate extensive data in an attempt to understand the causes of growth and decline of the revival in its various locations.[2]

Wesley and His Methodists

Methodism would not exist without the tireless efforts of John Wesley. One critic admitted that Wesley "was formed of the best stuff Nature ever put into a fanatic to make him the successful head and leader of a sect."[3] It was Wesley who not only set the theological foundation of Methodism but also created a movement that sustained the organization and practices that he established. In his itinerant ministry he travelled over two hundred thousand miles, preaching over forty thousand times, firmly establishing the movement in Britain, Ireland, and America. At his death he left behind over a hundred thousand Methodist

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[1] Jackson, *Minutes*, 9.
[2] Hunter, "John Wesley," 26–27.
[3] Outler, *John Wesley*, iii. The comment comes from William Warburton, bishop of Gloucester.

members.[4]

Wesley was not the originator of the Great Awakening of which he became a leader. Nevertheless, it was he who was able to create an enduring movement out of the revival. The remarkable spread and growth of Methodism has inspired many, including some CPM writers, to reflect on both the Methodist movement and Wesley himself.[5]

Though often remembered as a revivalist, Wesley was much more. What made him effective was his capacity as an organizer, innovator, and strategist. What is sometimes downplayed, even by Methodists, is his capacity as a theologian.[6] Probably the main reason for this is the fact that he never attempted a systematic presentation of his thoughts and theology, but rather they are to be found scattered throughout his journal, conference minutes, tracts, and letters. What comprises Wesley's genius is his ability to integrate disparate theological sources, ranging from Eastern Church Fathers to Radical Protestant reformers, and then to shape it into a practical spirituality. More importantly, Wesley's theology, argues Free Methodist theologian and missiologist Howard Snyder, "was *fundamentally* and in *essence* a theology of mission, and to miss that fact is to misunderstand Wesley."[7] Wesley counseled his lay preachers, saying, "You have nothing to do but save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work."[8] He was continuously engaged in the practice of mission and in theological reflection on it.

In time the Methodist movement lost momentum and splintered. The Free Methodist church arose in that context in an attempt to renew and preserve the Wesleyan heritage. In the growing affluence of American Methodism, B. T. Roberts, the Free Methodist founder, called the church back to its roots, affirming that their "mission was twofold—to maintain the Bible

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[4] Snyder, *Radical Wesley*, 3.
[5] E.g. Addison, *Movements*, 56–60; Payne, *Discovering*, 265–77.
[6] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 15, remarks, "even sympathetic Methodist analyses of Wesley's theological convictions have traditionally begun with some type of apology that he was not a 'real' theologian!"
[7] Snyder, "Missional Flavor," 62.
[8] Jackson, *Minutes*, 13.

standard of Christianity, and to preach the Gospel to the poor."[9] Roberts and early Free Methodists wished to preserve the transformative message of holiness and the social implications of the gospel when other Methodists were becoming comfortable and affluent.

A Practical Theologian

Wesley's significance as a theologian has generally been neglected. The largest reason for this is the lack of a systematic presentation by Wesley of his thought. Albert C. Outler characterized Wesley as a "folk theologian" who spoke in "plain words for plain people."[10] Randy L. Maddox concurs with this assessment, noting that in Wesley's day theology was a practical discipline, whose defining task "was nurturing and shaping the worldview that frames the temperament and practice of believer's lives in the world."[11] In the heat of revival, Wesley practiced his theology as he practiced mission and the two become intertwined. The result was that the methods of the Methodists bore the imprint of both.

Outler has complained of the ecclesiological uncertainty of the Methodist church.[12] This is not because Wesley failed to have or develop an ecclesiology but because he failed to apply it fully to the Methodist movement. As Snyder has written, Wesley sought to preserve an equilibrium between the church as institution (Anglicanism), and the church as movement (the revival).[13] He conceived of his Methodists as an evangelical order in the larger catholic (Anglican) church, or in terms of the *ecclesiola en ecclesia* Zinzendorf had proposed. In this sense, the Methodists performed the essential mission of the church which was being neglected. Wesley's goal had not been the founding of a new church but the reformation of the existing church through the societies he created. "Significantly," writes Outler, "and at

[9] Snyder, "Seven Keys," 138.
[10] Outler, *John Wesley*, iii.
[11] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 17.
[12] Outler, "Do Methodist Have a Doctrine," 11.
[13] Snyder, *Radical Wesley*, 126–37, 150–52.

every point, Wesley defined the church as *act*, as mission, as the enterprise of saving and maturing souls in the Christian life."[14]

Despite the shortcomings that Outler has noted, a consideration of Wesley's ecclesiology and the missional nature of his theology are necessary to consider for evaluating the possibilities of a Wesleyan plan for a church-planting movement.

A Wesleyan Theology of Mission

Snyder has written on several occasions concerning the missional themes in Wesley's theology.[15] He suggests four basic themes that make distinctive contributions to a theology of mission: 1) prevenient grace, 2) the image of God, 3) a therapeutic view of salvation and 4) Christian perfection.[16]

Wesley's response to the reformed doctrine of irresistible grace was prevenient or preceding grace. Wesley agreed that the natural state of fallen humanity rendered them incapable of good or responding to God's call, but "there is no man that is in a state of mere nature."[17] Just as the Christ is the light that enlightens every person, so the Spirit precedes and surrounds our lives. Prevenient grace is an expression of the *missio dei*, the mission of God's sending his Son and his Spirit into the world to redeem and restore. God is the first missionary who precedes all others and our work is to cooperate in the work he is already doing. Furthermore grace is understood not simply as pardon but as an enabling power energized by God's presence.[18]

The first word in Wesley's gospel is not human sinfulness but creation in the image of God. The image of God speaks of humanity's capacity to relate to God and to do his will. But

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[14] Outler, "Do Methodists," 19.
[15] E.g. Snyder, "What's Unique about a Wesleyan Theology of Mission," 13–21; Snyder, "Missional Flavor of John Wesley's Theology," 62–73; Snyder, "Toward a Wesleyan Theology of Mission," 69–90. The following discussion follows his thoughts here.
[16] Snyder, "Missional Flavor," 69–71, adds a fifth theme, "The Restitution of All Things" which will be dealt with indirectly here under the headings of the image of God and a therapeutic view of the atonement.
[17] Wesley, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," § III.4.
[18] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 84–85.

it extends beyond that because in a secondary sense all creation bears the stamp of God's image. Wesley was not inclined to make a sharp separation between material and spiritual realities and this enabled him to recognize not only the individual aspects of salvation but the cosmic as well.

Wesley's interaction with the Eastern Church Fathers is reflected not only in his understanding of grace but salvation as a whole. Though accepting the reformed doctrine of justification by faith, he understood God's present work of salvation as addressing more than human guilt. God is seeking to heal and restore both humanity and all of creation. Sin is a disease that has corrupted all of humanity but true Christian religion for Wesley, is "God's method of healing a soul which is thus diseased."[19] Snyder notes that with age Wesley increasingly applied the healing motif to all of creation.[20]

Lastly, Snyder considers Wesley's theme of the perfecting (or maturing) of human character.[21] Wesley's avowed mission was "to spread scriptural holiness over the land."[22] Holiness is not our private or personal spirituality but our character in community. For Wesley it was social, and was seen in the way a person lived in community: "The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness."[23] Social holiness is not social justice though the latter flows naturally from it. Even though Wesley at times preached some form of instant sanctification, his actual ministry strategy of small group meetings suggests that Christian Perfection really meant discipleship.[24]

These themes serve to highlight the missional character of Wesley's theology and to orient a Wesleyan theology of mission. What is already noteworthy is the holistic conception that Wesley has of salvation and the communal nature of Christian discipleship.

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[19] Wesley, "Original Sin," § III.3.
[20] Snyder, "Missional Flavor," 66.
[21] Snyder, "Missional Flavor," 68, notes the difficulties concerning Wesley's language around "perfection" but reminds us that Wesley was only attempting to use biblical language.
[22] Cited in Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People*, 214.
[23] Wesley and Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems,* viii.
[24] Snyder, *Radical Wesley*, 118.

Wesley's Ecclesiology

Mission takes precedent in Wesley's ecclesiology. Nevertheless his loyalty to the Anglican Church created ongoing tensions in his theology and ministry that remained unresolved throughout his life. Wesley appropriated the religious societies' movement to establish the Methodists as an evangelical order within the church. This missional understanding of the church is best expressed in terms of the church as means of social grace.[25]

Wesley expressed a missional conception of the church in his sermon "The Reformation of Manners":

> This is the original design of the Church of Christ. It is a body of men compacted together, in order, first, to save each his own soul; then to assist each other in working out their salvation; and, afterwards, as far as in them lies, to save all men from present and future misery, to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and set up the kingdom of Christ. And this ought to be the continued care and endeavour of every member of his Church; otherwise he is not worthy to be called a member thereof, as he is not a living member of Christ.[26]

Wesley's explanation of the church underlines not only the ongoing aspect of salvation, [27] i.e. sanctification, but the missional work of rescuing people from human misery and building up the kingdom. Moreover it communicates the implicit connection between evangelism and social engagement. It also includes the active participation of every member of the church in this mission, not only individually but corporately. Entwined in this definition are the themes of holiness or discipleship, mission, community, and kingdom.

These themes are integrated in the Wesleyan idea of the church as a means of social grace. Maddox explains the means of grace "as an important channel through which God is graciously at work, nurturing Christian life and spreading redemptive influence in the

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[25] Maddox, "Social Grace," 131.
[26] Wesley, "Reformation of Manners," §2.
[27] Wesley, "The Scripture Way," 273. In this sermon, Wesley teaches that salvation is not what is popularly known as going to heaven, but "the entire work of God, from the first dawn of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory." Thus when Wesley tells preachers that their job is saving souls he meant more than a simple prayer of conversion but rather the whole work of transformative discipleship.

world."[28] He identifies four dimensions of this grace in Wesley's thought.[29] The first dimension of social grace is corporate liturgical worship, which includes the Eucharist. The second dimension is the mutual encouragement and support in the pursuit of holiness that Wesley fostered through the societies and small groups he created. Third is the mutual accountability these groups practiced as they met weekly. Lastly social grace "relates to the church's role as a means of God's gracious redemptive presence in society at large."[30] The redemptive presence of the church in society was not simply evangelistic but holistic. Interventions in human misery are not just precursors to evangelism but concrete expressions of God's kingdom and will for society. These dimensions represent disciplines or habits that shape and transform an individual's affections through repetition and practice. In terms of Wesleyan ecclesiology they bind together the liturgical practice of the Anglican church with the small group meetings of the Methodists, linking also the pursuit of holiness with the church's redemptive presence in mission.

Late in his life Wesley wrote, "In religion I am for as few innovations as possible. I love the old wine best."[31] This apparent contradiction from a man who introduced so many innovations reflects the functional view Wesley had of church structure and practices. Moreover Wesley had an abiding respect for the institutional church and its traditions and steadfastly resisted the temptation to form his own sect. Thus he forbade his societies and their preaching houses from administering the Lord's Table lest they abandon the Anglican Church. Yet Wesley remained an unabashed pragmatist when it came to his apostolic mission. He was ready to "observe every *punctilio* or order, except when the salvation of souls is at stake. Then," he wrote, "I prefer the end to the means."[32] George Hunter suggests

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[28] Maddox, "Social Grace," 131. His expansion of the phrase *means of grace* in referring to the church as means of *social* grace appears to be related to experiencing grace in community rather than in isolation.
[29] Maddox, "Social Grace," 133–35.
[30] Maddox, "Social Grace," 134.
[31] Snyder, *Radical Wesley*, 2.
[32] Hunter, "John Wesley," 26.

that Wesley's articulation of experience as a legitimate source of theological truth, in the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral, provided warrant for this pragmatism.[33]

Snyder's basic thesis in *The Radical Wesley* is that despite his conservatism, Wesley is straining towards a Radical Protestant, believer's church model. But rather than opting for an either/or between institutional Anglicanism and the Radical Protestants, Wesley weaves a synthesis of them both that leaves his theology in tension.[34] Wesley's societies were communities of people who made a conscious commitment to participate in a life of discipline and mutual edification. The authority of scripture and the Spirit took priority over tradition and creeds. Nevertheless God has not abandoned his institutional church even if many of its structures have become corrupted, and thus reform was possible.

Wesleyan ecclesiology asserts then that the church is to be a means of grace—a place where God's presence and power can be experienced.[35] God's salvation is experienced and kingdom work is accomplished through the community of faith. Its structures are flexible to pursue God's mission. People commit to this community to experience accountability and encouragement while working together as God's agents in the world.

The Methodists' Method

As a practical theologian Wesley expressed his theology not only in written form, but in the way he organized and practiced his ministry. In his dictionary, Wesley defined a Methodist as "one who lives according to the method laid down in the Bible."[36] He was aware that how things are done can make just as much a theological statement as a written document. In like manner, the practices that he established have contributed to the shaping of Methodist values and doctrines.

Methodism was a movement driven by small group discipleship and accountability. It

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[33] Hunter, "John Wesley," 26.
[34] Sndyer, *Radical Wesley*, 123.
[35] Heitzenrater, "Wesleyan Ecclesiology," 10.
[36] Cited in Henderson, *Model*, 85.

developed thousands of its own lay leaders to sustain itself. Despite Wesley's reputation for controlling the movement, the basic disciplines and practices he established democratized ministry and the movement.

Wesley advocated a variety of good works to be practiced by his people. While he believed this contributed to their salvation, he viewed these practices as means of grace. Good works did not purchase or merit our pardon, but in the broader view of salvation became opportunities for God to work transformatively in believers, renewing them in the image of God. Such works also then became manifestations of the kingdom, as people opened themselves to become channels of God's grace.

Practice of Evangelism

Wesley followed the lead of George Whitfield in "field preaching" as a form of mass evangelism. Field preaching was a way of generating interest as much as a means of conversion. Wesley employed a team of assistants to circulate in the crowd, inviting those who were "awakened" to form classes.[37] Classes were the point of entry into a Methodist society and were the places where conversions typically happened. This corresponded to Wesley's *via salutis* (i.e way of salvation): 1) people are awakened to their lostness; 2) seekers discover God's gracious pardon through repentance and faith; 3) the justified, still broken by sin, seek holiness through discipline and faith; 4) love for God in mature believers displaces sin's dominating power, freeing them to seek his will whole heartedly.[38] Wesley's work in mass evangelism was aimed at gaining a hearing and engaging people in a process. Heitzenrater notes that despite preaching regularly to twenty to thirty thousand a week, membership in the societies grew on average by about thirty a week.[39] As Heitzenrater

[37] A class is simply a name for a small group that focuses on personal sharing.
[38] Maddox, *Responsible Grace,* 157–91. The *via salutis* is a Wesleyan alternative to the Reformed *ordo salutis.* What is offered here is a suggestive summary rather than comprehensive recounting that would begin with prevenient grace and calling and continue to consummation of salvation in glory. Heitzenrater, "Take Thou Authority," 25, notes that Wesley's advice on preaching also corresponds to his *via salutis.*
[39] Heitzenrater, "Take Thou Authority," 25. The larger crowds were more typical of the early part of the revival.

explains elsewhere, "evangelism itself takes on a different form when holiness is the goal."[40] Wesley viewed salvation not as a decision but as a life of discipleship in pursuit of Christ-likeness, and to that end he employed the nurturing discipline and accountability of the class meeting. As Snyder has noted, Wesley "concentrated not on the efforts *leading up* to decision but on the time *after* decision."[41] The group structures then were the life-force of the Methodist movement.

Small Groups

Wesley's group technology was not haphazard but an integration between theology, structure, and experience. Snyder asserts that Wesley, more than any other, has recognized the intimate connection between Christian experience and ministry structures, "matching church forms to church life."[42] He further makes the connection between social holiness and the classes, affirming that "the class meeting was an ecclesiological statement."[43] D. Michael Henderson evaluates Wesley from the perspective of adult education, noting that Wesley had a clear theological framework which addressed the key questions of an educational philosophy. [44] What is important, according Henderson, is that Wesley was then able to use this theological grid to filter the educational tools he used, matching strategies with his basic educational philosophy.[45] Even though Wesley stumbled onto the class meeting tool by chance, he immediately recognized its potential not only from his earlier group experiences, but because it integrated with his theological and educational program.

The focus of Wesley's small groups was not biblical instruction, which was reserved for large group society meetings, but personal growth and transformation. Every member was obliged to give an account of themselves in response to a set of questions written by Wesley

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[40] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People*, 242.
[41] Snyder, *Radical Wesley*, 2.
[42] Snyder, *Radical Wesley*. 147-8.
[43] Snyder, *Radical Wesley,* 148.
[44] Henderson, *Model*, 85, 128.
[45] Henderson, *Model*, 138.

and the rest were obliged to respond with words of encouragement and admonition. Class meetings focused on behavioural issues, and if a person progressed they could apply to join a "band" which focused on "affective redirection… [M]embers sought to improve their attitudes, emotions, feelings, intentions and affections."[46] This mutual accountability reflects Wesley's understanding of Christian fellowship which included watching over one another's souls.[47]

By making the class meeting the point of entry for the society, Wesley shifted people's conceptions of the faith.[48] In this move he has prioritized behaviour and the experience of community over doctrinal concerns. As Henderson notes,

> For Wesley the locus of activity relevant to the gospel of Christ was the experience or behavior of a person; to most of the Reformers (as McLuhan has pointed out) the locus was in verbal or printed statements—books, pamphlets, creeds, confessions, catechisms and other doctrinal formulations.[49]

Wesley certainly wrote his share of books and pamphlets but an individual's early encounters with Methodism were usually experiential rather than doctrinal.

Lay Mobilization

Part of the genius of the class meeting system is that anyone could lead one. It required no formation just a trustworthy person who cared for others. Local societies however had a number of other positions that were accessible to those with little or no training. In this way, Methodism called for the active engagement of all its members, not only in the class meeting but in service.

Wesley mobilized lay workers both individually and corporately. Societies built schools, established dispensaries and created short term aid projects. Mobilization by Wesley was not limited to official positions in the society. Wesley liked to quote a saying from the

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[46] Henderson, *Model*, 112. Henderson styles the class as the "behavioural mode" and the bands as the "affective mode" and the large group society meetings where instruction took place as the "cognitive mode."
[47] Snyder, *Radical Wesley*, 148.
[48] Society membership required three months of faithful participation in a class meeting before a ticket would be issued permitting entry into the society meeting.
[49] Henderson, *Model,* 104.

primitive church that said, "The soul and a body make a man [person]; the spirit and discipline make a Christian."[50] By discipline Wesley did not mean punishment but rather that believers "engage *informative practices* that would contribute to … attaining the holy tempers that provide greater 'freedom' for holy actions," much the same way that athletes and musicians discipline themselves to excel in their playing.[51]

An example of this is found in his sermon on visiting the sick. Wesley asserts that everyone is personally obliged to visit the sick regardless of age, sex or personal means. What is notable here is the how and why people are to visit those who suffer. Wesley combines concerns for the believer's personal growth with the practice of mission. Wesley recognizes the transformative power of encountering true suffering, and thus he singles out particularly the rich who need to visit the poor and the sick. Nevertheless, when visiting, giving medical aid is not necessarily the goal, though one is obliged to do what is in their means. Visitors are to first of all express concern and be agents of God's love with regard to the suffering but then to inquire after their souls. To those who are responsive or open the visitor can press them with repentance and faith or some other word of spiritual encouragement. "Ask of God," says Wesley, "and he will open your mouth."[52]

This combination of the discipline and mission is a concrete example of Wesley's doctrine of the means of grace. Wesley divided the means of grace into works of piety, which included all the traditional means such as the sacraments, scripture reading, fasting and prayer, etc. and works of mercy. The general effect of this is to unite what are generally considered social concerns with gospel proclamation, creating a holistic mission. Moreover it unites discipleship with mission in concrete ways, as Henderson notes, "Mission was not an end product of discipleship but the means to further it."[53] He goes on to suggest that Wesley

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[50] Wesley, "Causes of Inefficacy," § 7.
[51] Maddox, "Wesley's Prescription," 12.
[52] Wesley, "On Visiting the Sick," § II.5.
[53] Henderson, *Model*, 46.

was way ahead of his time in formulating performance-based objectives and using "interpersonal dynamics of an intimate group to facilitate behavioural change."[54] Spiritual formation was not simply a function of "cognitive acquisition" but required both the discipline of missional practice and the accountability of a group.

The Methodist organization provided an ascending latter of responsibility for lay leaders, culminating in the controversial circuit preachers and the assistants who oversaw them. Though Wesley foregrounded works of mercy in his discipleship program, he did not neglect the intellectual component. His extensive personal writings along with the Christian Library he edited and placed in every society were intended to supply this need. To those lay preachers who had no interest in reading, Wesley admonished, "Contract a taste for it by use, or return to your trade."[55]

Wesley's system of lay mobilization generated thousands of leaders out of the poor amongst whom he worked. Methodists became upwardly mobile as their formation made them useful leaders in business, trade unions, and politics. [56]

Summary

As a practical theologian Wesley's contribution needs to be evaluated in light of both his theology and his praxis. He continuously engaged in theological reflection on just about everything he did. Moreover, he was able to tie all these things together into a compelling spirituality from which his authority as a leader derived. Heitzenrater notes that this capacity for integration and synthesis came as early as Oxford.

> John's acknowledged leadership within the movement came from an ability to fit these various pursuits together with a sense of purpose, which gave direction and impulse to the Methodists' search for salvation.[57]

As long as Methodists held together the methods and priorities Wesley established, they

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[54] Henderson, *Model*, 44.
[55] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People*, 228.
[56] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People*, 217. Cf. Henderson, *Model*,145–7, who cites other historians on the demand for Methodists in British society.
[57] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People*, 42.

continued to flourish. According to Frank Decker and Darrell Whiteman, Methodism lost its momentum as a movement when the class meetings were no longer necessary for membership and churches demanded formally trained pastors thus, professionalizing the ministry.[58]

Free Methodism

Free Methodism at its inception was not an attempt to become something new. B. T. Roberts and his followers were ejected from the Methodist Episcopal Church for what apparently amounted to political reasons.[59] Roberts had been concerned that an increasingly affluent Methodism was neglecting its core values of holiness and ministry to the poor. Their essential concern was to preserve the Wesleyan heritage to which they were heirs.

By the time of Roberts, the class meeting was quickly fading from American practice. The ecclesiology of the holiness movement churches, of which Free Methodism was a part, was increasingly influenced by camp meeting revivals.[60] Moreover, the Free Methodist Church moved to a more democratic stance, when in reaction to the injustices suffered by Roberts and other clergy in the Methodist Episcopal Church, they insisted that the church's legislative bodies have equal representation of lay and clergy so that power would not be concentrated in the hands of a few.[61] Contemporary Free Methodism embraces a wide variety of church styles ranging from house church to liturgical. Leaders attempt to maintain a balance between episcopal and congregational governance in the church. Snyder has written that the two main elements relevant for contemporary Free Methodist ecclesiology are the accents on "Biblical authority and an embodied community in mission within the cultural

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[58] Decker and Whiteman, "When Methodism Ceased," 7.
[59] McKenna, *A Future*, 23–26, notes that the Genesee Conference of which Roberts was an ordained member was divided into factions. He was a victim of this rivalry; his credentials were revoked for an article he wrote criticising the direction of the church. This action was later rescinded and his credentials restored, but only after Robert's death.
[60] Bassett, "Interplay," 90, argues that even though many current Wesleyan ecclesiologies are informed by Wesley, in practice they reflect the exigencies of the camp meeting.
[61] McKenna, *A Future*, 53.

context . . . Our task today is 'simply' to figure out what this means in our contexts . . ."[62]

While Free Methodism has gone through seasons of institutionalization over the last one hundred and fifty years, it is seeking to reclaim its Wesleyan heritage. Small group ministries have sprung up once more, though not necessarily in the form of the original class meetings. Recent conversations about holiness have moved away from the abstinence, sanctified "states" and separation (i.e. isolation) from the world to reclaiming Wesley's notions of social holiness and the means of grace.[63]

Free Methodism today seeks to reclaim the missional flavour of Wesley's theology and movement. The theology of mission statement developed at the 2002 consultation of Free Methodist World Missions asserts that Free Methodism's particular charism in the body of Christ,

> is to witness to and seek to incarnate the gospel among people everywhere, forming communities of love and ethical holiness, with an especial concern for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people throughout the world.[64]

This statement holds together the holistic orientation of mission with a social conception of holiness that characterized Wesley. The same publication includes not only Snyder's article, "What's Unique about a Wesleyan Theology of Mission?" discussed earlier, but articles on community transformation, shalom in mission, integrating mission into the local church, and responding to world religions.

The Free Methodist Church seeks to live the Wesleyan message in its contemporary context. This implies a faithful appropriation of the tradition as it has been received for the times in which we live.

Church Planting Movements and the Wesleyan Spirit

Wesley and CPM practitioners have some clear parallels in their basic methodology. They are both discipleship based movements that prioritize behavioural components in the

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[62] Snyder, "Principles," 4.
[63] Van Valin, "Embodying our Mission," 57–59. Cf. Sheffield, *God's Grace Channels*, 2–3.
[64] "Global Good News," 6.

Christian life. Nevertheless there are some significant differences, some of which are contextual but also some theological. The theological differences create discrepancies in how discipleship is viewed and also some differences in practice.

The following discussion will consider five aspects of Wesleyanism and CPM. First is the contrast in ministry context and focus of the two ministries, followed secondly by a consideration of their conceptions of mission. Third will be a comparison of their discipleship methodologies and then fourth will be themes in lay mobilization or empowerment. Last will be a discussion of their ecclesiologies.

Ministry Context and Focus

Wesley and most CPM practitioners work in fundamentally different contexts. Wesley was a fully authorized representative of the state religion in England during the Methodist revival. Christianity was already the dominant religion, and dissenting voices differed in how Christianity should be practiced and not the truthfulness of Christianity. Nevertheless religious fervour had burned to an all-time low in light of the previous century's bloody religious battles. The industrial revolution was creating a great deal of social upheaval and dislocation.

With this last point, Garrison's research would suggest that eighteenth-century England was a potential candidate for a CPM.[65] In contrast to Wesley, most CPM work happens in places where Christianity is a minority religion and believers are likely to be persecuted. Cross-cultural workers come as outsiders introducing a foreign religious system where any number of attitudes towards religion may be present. Unlike Wesley they do not represent an established church but rather are initiating the first expressions of Christian witness and faith. Their work will become the foundation for the indigenous churches that emerge.

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[65] Garrison, *Church Planting*, 222, identifies societies with a "climate of uncertainty" or upheaval as more likely to experience a CPM.

Wesley on the other hand was attempting to create an evangelical order within the existing church. His basic vision was to bring renewal or revival to an established institution that he felt had lost its *raison d'être.* Wesley was not consciously building a new church and felt free to send his people elsewhere to receive the sacraments. He felt the Methodists as an *ecclesiola en ecclesia* had a charism to share with the larger church but never sought to displace it.

Theology of Mission

CPM practitioners' primary orientation to mission is proclamation and discipleship. The basic goal of mission is the multiplication of churches through personal witnessing and discipleship. CPM understands the basic goal of evangelism, not as conversion but as teaching people to obey Christ's commands in accordance with the Great Commission.[66] CPM writers don't seem to offer a soteriological explanation for this—they just do because the Bible says so.

Wesley's concept of mission offers a theological rationale for making discipleship an element of evangelism. Wesley's basic assumption is that salvation is a therapeutic work of God in humanity and beyond into all of creation. Discipleship then is one channel of the healing of the human soul and the restoration of the divine image in humanity. This healing view of redemption, combined with an understanding of prevenient grace, corresponds to the *missio dei*—God is the first missionary seeking to redeem and restore what has been broken and marred by sin. This missional theology not only gives a rationale for including discipleship in our understanding of salvation, but it also gives a theological support for a church planting strategy that is built on the person of peace. It only makes sense that God in his prevenient grace is already preparing persons in advance to receive the gospel message and to become a catalyst for a new church plant.

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[66] I.e. Matt 28:20 ". . . teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you . . ."

Discipleship Methodology

Earlier we noted that the dynamism of CPM ministry seems to be obedience-oriented discipleship. Both Wesley and CPM practitioners encourage a discipleship that is behaviour focused rather than information or knowledge based. CPM practitioners tend to disciple with the goal of creating (apostolic) church planters. Their use of small group accountability seems founded largely in pragmatism. They do not have a strong theology of community and tend to foster an individualist, though activist spirituality.

Both Wesley and *T4T* redefine the goals of discipleship. *T4T* redefines the goal of discipleship to making trainers, whereas for Wesley, discipleship is about recovering the image of God in people. He redefines salvation as healing, shifting evangelism and salvation from an event to a process, making them a part of discipleship. Salvation is gradually realized in the lives of individuals through the practice of discipline and accountability.

Wesley's use of groups is not an accident but reflects his view of holiness or sanctification. He rejected the private spirituality of the mystics, for holiness is something that is worked out and lived in community. Therefore spiritual growth requires fellow pilgrims as we journey down the scripture way of salvation, and the creation of community is essential. Wesley's mass evangelism efforts always culminated in the formation of small groups where the real work of salvation would happen.

Wesley had the luxury of separating behavioural, cognitive, and affective aspects of discipleship into different settings. By contrast, CPM practitioners using *T4T* seem to squeeze as many aspects of discipleship as they can into a single meeting. This increases the complexity of the meeting, and the skills required to lead it, but is also a more efficient use of time.

Lay Mobilization

Both Wesley and CPM aim at mobilizing the whole body of Christ to ministry but for

different reasons. CPM justifies lay leadership throughout the church on the basis of the priesthood of all believers. Moreover, every healthy living thing in the church must reproduce; disciples reproduce disciples, leaders reproduce leaders, and churches must reproduce churches. In this way CPM practitioners aim at total mobilization.

Wesley mobilized all believers because he believed that it was essential to the process of salvation. Wesley explained this mobilization chiefly by referring to works of charity, such as visiting the sick, which the scriptures enjoin on all believers. Wesley did not believe these works were means of earning our salvation or righteousness, but rather opportunities for God to work his salvation in us by grace. These are places where God meets us, to work in us and through us, effecting his transformation in us and possibly also those who receive our service. Not unlike the puritan idea that commandments are *covered promises*, these are opportunities for us to experience God's presence and power. Works of charity often joined social engagement in the community with personal witness. Just as holiness is a social or relational reality, so the community ought to be banded together in works of charity in the community to relieve human misery. Or as Snyder describes Free Methodist ecclesiology: it is "an embodied community in mission within the cultural context."[67] Lay mobilization for Wesley is a reflection of the idea that mission is not the result of discipleship but the means and context of discipleship.

Ecclesiology

The significant element in CPM churches is that they reproduce. The basic goal of CPM ministries is to see the multiplication of churches through a given region or people group. In order to engender reproduction, CPM practitioners aim for simplicity, pragmatic methods and forms that are easily reproducible, an "ecclesiological irreducible minimum."[68] In the process of doing this CPM ecclesiology tends to reduce the church to its local

[67] Snyder, "Principles," 4.
[68] Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 32.

expressions. While CPM practitioners no doubt realize that every local church is a part of the larger universal church, their ecclesiological reflection doesn't seem to include structures that go beyond the local church—leading to the inconsistencies in their ecclesiology noted in Chapter 2. Programs like *Four Fields* scrupulously look for proof texts for structures and practices that happen within the local church, such as a church treasurer.[69] However, once outside of local church structure they begin to multiply titles and positions such as *CPM facilitator* and *strategy coordinator*.[70]

The missional character of Wesleyan ecclesiology is best seen in the idea of the means of grace. The church is the place where we experience personal transformation through our group participation and practice of mission. The means of grace links together personal discipleship with the corporate life of the church and its redemptive presence in the world. The church is the community that works out its salvation by disciplined practice of mission. Believers work together in the world to seek the salvation of souls from both temporal misery and eternal destruction. Wesley's ecclesiology is catholic in scope; humble enough to recognize that it is only one player in the larger church but yet not ashamed of the charism that it has to offer the larger body of Christ. Moreover, while the local church is its primary expression, it actively seeks to cooperate with the larger church at various levels of connection.

Conclusion

The Wesleyan Methodist tradition and CPM reflect a significant overlap in their respective approaches to ministry. Wesley himself would have appreciated CPM's conviction that evangelism is teaching people to obey all the commands of Christ. CPM's focus not only on discipleship but the behavioural aspects of it agrees with Wesley's practices as well.

Where Wesley would have differed is at the conceptual level. CPM tends to define,

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[69] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 71.
[70] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 93.

mission, ecclesiology, and discipleship in terms of reproduction. This is not surprising in a program that aims at rapid growth. The Wesleyan conception of the means of grace entwines ecclesiology, discipleship, and mission. Whereas CPM created a feedback loop between obedience-oriented discipleship and church planting, Wesley's creates a similar cycle between the pursuit of holiness and the practice of mission. The difference is that Wesley takes a holistic approach to mission and emphasizes the social aspects of holiness. Holistic mission and holiness could be made to include reproduction, but they ultimately imply more both individually and corporately.

Mission for Wesley was not simply making disciples and planting churches. He was a master at multiplying both small groups and local societies but mission for him was still integrally tied to the transformation of people's circumstances and society as whole. That is not to say that CPM practitioners are not interested in transformation but these themes don't surface in the material in the same way they do in Wesley's writings.

Lastly Wesley's concern for community and his perception of the larger catholic church would have made it difficult for him to plant autonomous local churches that did not have a stronger connection to the larger Christian community.

A Free Methodist CPM ministry plan must find ways to integrate Wesleyan values concerning the church as a means of grace, discipleship as the pursuit of social holiness and the practice of holistic mission. The following chapter will propose ways that the Free Methodist DNA can be integrated into the basic CPM framework.

Chapter Four: A Wesleyan Plan for Church Planting in Niger

Introduction

The goal of this thesis has been to develop a plan for church planting in Niger based on theological reflection. The CPM research itself suggests the critical place that a plan has in generating a church-planting movement. Garrison for example, listed *intentional planting of reproductive churches* third on his list of universal factors for a CPM, right after prayer and evangelism. The importance of a plan is underlined in the title by two key terms. The first is *intentionality* which implies forethought and the pursuit of a particular strategy. The second is *reproductive.* CPM literature highlights the importance of reproducible tools and methods whether it is evangelism methods, discipleship materials, or leadership development. What this means is that in each of these key areas, both CPM practitioners and the people they disciple always have clearly in mind the next steps when opportunity or need arises. Workers are not left wondering how to share their faith, how to disciple a new convert or organize a church. A clear plan that can be easily followed is already in place.

The importance of a plan is also reflected in both Wesley's work as an organizer and as a practical theologian. Wesley entered each new community with a clear strategy of what to do if he found a warm reception. In such cases he immediately went about duplicating the structures and processes that he had implemented everywhere else. Hunter notes that the success of American Methodism was the result of Francis Asbury immersing himself in the works of Wesley and applying the strategies he outlined to the American context.[1] In other words, Asbury found in the work of Wesley a reproducible strategy that was easily implemented to the extent that American Methodism surpassed British Methodism even before Wesley died.

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[1] Hunter, "John Wesley," 33.

The danger of overemphasizing a reproducible strategy or plan is that those who use it may lose sight of the God who is at work. Chapter Two noted that the writers of *T4T* at times leave their readers feeling like the subjects of some kind of high pressure marketing scheme. The development of a reproducible plan can be in danger of turning the church into a McDonald's franchise or a factory assembly line. Perhaps this is the source of the shallow spirituality that Wilson complains about in his *RAD* manual.[2] Having a plan is not intended to replace the role of the Holy Spirit in church planting but rather to facilitate the Spirit's work by preparing believers and making them available to be channels of his grace and power.

Wesley, however, has shown us the importance not only of a plan but of the theological reflection that stands behind it. Though Wesley's recognition of experience as a valid source of authority permitted a significant amount of pragmatism, as a practical theologian his ministry approaches were always grounded in theological reflection on the scriptures. Accordingly, it is important that theological reflection be given priority in developing a church-planting ministry plan. The following plan, though reflecting a number of the concerns raised by CPM practitioners and strategists will seek to build on theological concerns rather than simply pragmatic ones. By giving priority to theological concerns we prayerfully invite the Spirit to come and illumine our reflections and to guide our applications as we become partners with God in mission. By giving theological reflection priority in shaping this plan, it avoids reducing church planting to a method rather than nurturing a spirituality.[3] As a part of our practice of mission, it is a means of grace whereby we place ourselves at the Spirits disposal and in faith expect his presence and work in our hearts and minds.

Church Planting and Mission of God

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[2] Wilson, *Rapidly Advancing Disciples*, 4.
[3] Murray, *Church Planting*, 40–41.

In the previous chapter we noted how Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace reflects the larger theology of the *missio dei*, the mission of God. What is important here is that there is a divine mission prior to church planting. Church planting must be appropriately placed in this larger mission both theologically and practically. To do so will require some brief reflections on mission, and church planting.

The language of *missio dei* originally made reference to the sending of the Son and the Spirit into the world to accomplish the Father's will. Implied in this sending is that God is the first missionary and that the churches missionary activity is preceded by and grounded in the prior mission of God. Jesus affirmed to the apostles, that just as he was sent by the Father, so now He is sending us as his agents into the world (John 20:21). Our work in mission is to become partners or co-workers with God (1 Cor 3:9). What that means in practical terms is that the work of mission does not begin with the church but has already been initiated by God and we are pursuing paths and plans already prepared for us by God (Eph 2.10). God is the initiator of mission and our work in is to follow in his lead.

The nature of God's mission is best seen in the unfolding narratives of God's action in creation and in calling and sustaining his people.[4] This culminates in the incarnation of Christ whose life is defined by mission. Jesus' use of kingdom language to describe his ministry and message perhaps best encapsulates what is mission. The kingdom concept is not a novelty introduced by Jesus but draws on deep roots present throughout the Old Testament, including assertions of God's sovereignty over the whole earth, and the day of YHWH when he visits his people to vindicate the righteous and judge the wicked leading to a restoration of *shalom*. Jesus' injunction to "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (or justice)" means among other things that his disciples are to work to see the establishment of God's kingdom not simply through proclamation but through the way they live and relate to one another. In

[4] Wright, *Mission of God*, 48–49, asserts the very existence of the scriptures as an act of self-revelation by God is a reflection of his mission. "The text in itself is a product of mission in action."

other words, Jesus is inviting his disciples to become agents in the fulfillment of the mission of God to work redemption and bring restoration to the world.

While evangelism and the new communities that form as a result are an important aspect of God's mission, the kingdom of God cannot be equated with the church nor church planting with fulfillment of God's mission. As Bryant Myers asserts, "church planting cannot be the final objective of mission, only its beginning. A church full of life and love, working for the good of the community in which God has placed it, is the proper end of mission."[5] The church is a both a sign of God's kingdom and an agent of God's mission. Without this broader context of mission church multiplication is in danger of being reduced to "ecclesiastical expansionism."[6]

This understanding of mission and church planting has several repercussions for Niger. It forces the church to ask first of all, 'What is God doing in Niger?' and secondly 'What does the gospel mean in Niger?' With regard to the former, prevenient grace reminds us that God has not only left himself a witness in Niger (Acts 14:17) but is already at work in drawing people to himself. Both CPM and Wesley give expression to this conviction in speaking of awakened individuals and persons of peace.

The primary strategy employed by CPM practitioners for finding persons of peace has been to mobilize all the existing local believers or the culturally closest believers they can find through saturation training of CPM methods. For example, *T4T*, *RAD* and Dave Hunt all begin by training massive amounts of believers in order to find the twenty percent who will actually be effective. This is similar to Wesley's work in mass evangelism that was intended to identify awakened persons—people who were not yet converted but in whom the Spirit was stirring. David Watson is perhaps the exception here. He recounts beginning with one worker in whom he invested for a two- to three-year period before seeing any results. Watson

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[5] Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 39.
[6] Murray, *Church Planting*, 40.

did not intentionally begin with one person but was forced to because of a lack of response. The danger of investing in only one is they may never be a part of the twenty percent that Smith and Kai identified as the "good soil." This mobilization is designed not only to equip lay planters but also to identify yet to be reached persons of peace who will be the next generation of planters.

A holistic understanding of God's kingdom mission suggests that aggressive evangelism may not be the only way to identify where God is at work. Some CPM workers suggest healing prayer as a tool of evangelism while Wesley suggested not only visiting the sick but a wide range of works of mercy. The danger is that such holistic ministries become tied to big budgets in parachurch organizations rather than reflecting the everyday spirituality of ordinary believers. Myers, a former vice-president for World Vision International, articulates the conviction that "the sign of the kingdom is the church, the community of faith, not the development worker or the development agency."[7] While development agencies and their projects have their place and can serve the community in positive ways, large budgets often attract those looking for money but an incarnational lifestyle and spirituality is likely to attract those who are spiritually hungry and serve as witness to the kingdom. It also prepares the way for setting a missional DNA at the heart of the church.

Lastly God's initiative is sometimes seen in visionary experiences as God directly intervenes in the lives of individuals. In Scripture this is found in the persons of Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road and Cornelius who was told to send for Peter. While these divine interventions are beyond the control the control of believers and non-believers alike, widespread reports suggest that this phenomenon is occurring frequently in the Islamic world.[8]

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[7] Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 38.

[8] Some ministries among Muslims use this phenomena quite extensively though others remain skeptical. Examples of the kinds of dreams that Muslims are having and the way people are using them can be found at

What is essential for church planting is the identification of those individuals that God is preparing who can become part of the foundation of a new church plant. What makes this important is that persons of peace are indigenous members of the community who are able to shift the church plant from an outsider ministry to an insider movement.

The statistics for the Nigerien church presented in Chapter One suggest that this is one of the primary problems in local churches. Nigeriens continue to be minority figures in their churches, leaving the impression that Christianity is a foreign religion. Creating an insider movement demands more than a demographic shift. It also requires the difficult step of giving authority and influence to insiders. Timing the transfer of power has been historically difficult on the mission field, often engendering ecclesiastical revolutions. CPM practitioners generally attempt to circumvent this problem by avoiding making themselves authority figures. Instead they centre authority on the scriptures, through obedience-oriented discipleship and mutual accountability in the local congregation.

The importance of indigenizing the Free Methodist Church in Niger cannot be overlooked. The one local church in Niamey is currently led by a Rwandan pastor, and a significant portion of the congregation is non-Nigerien. Future growth will be dependent on drawing in Nigerien insiders and finding ways to ensure that ministry can at least take on some indigenous flavour. It is essential that the ministry identify local persons of peace for its future development. This need not marginalize the current members of the church and its multi-ethnic character may be an advantage, but long-term growth will require the development of truly Nigerien workers and leaders.

A two-fold approach would be most productive in Niger. First the existing church and its members must be introduced to the church-planting plan and be trained in its

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http://www.morethandreams.org/ and in Tom Doyle's recent book *Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World?*

implementation. This is the fundamental principle of CPM—to make the essential *skills* of church multiplication accessible and practicable at the lowest grassroots levels of the church.

Secondly, the church in the past has run leadership seminars in which other independent congregations have been invited to participate. The seminars can become vehicles for transmitting a vision for church planting and mobilizing workers. Such efforts may not actually produce Free Methodist churches but may help to create energy around church planting and equally important may help to create a network of planters who can share their experiences and support one another in the process. Such a network would reflect both the values of community and catholicity of the Wesleyan DNA. Furthermore, it would also be a channel for discovering how God is working locally with other ministries. The Free Methodist missionary team would seek to become a "church planter magnet"[9] not simply to draw in lone church planters but to facilitate a learning community and to support workers in their efforts.

Training people to identify persons of peace also provides an opportunity to pass on something of the Wesleyan DNA. Using works of mercy as well as direct evangelism to discern the Spirit's activity likewise also reflects Methodist spirituality. The idea of persons of peace as those that God is preparing in advance for both the gospel and founding a church corresponds to the doctrine of prevenient grace and Wesley's category of awakened persons. The person of peace principle reminds us that God is the first missionary, already at work, and our role is to watch for signs of his work, cooperating with his initiative.

What does the Gospel mean in Niger: Evangelism and Discipleship

What Wesley and CPM suggest is that our theology and practice of discipleship (or sanctification or Christian perfection) needs to be seriously considered in terms of church planting theology and strategy. Furthermore, they both attempt to weave evangelism and

[9] This term comes from Free Methodist church planter Jay Mowchenko and pastor Howard Olver in their work with church planters in the Toronto area.

discipleship together into a continuous single process. Perhaps the clearest example of this is Watson's definition of evangelism, as "the intentional calling to a family to study the word of God in order to move from not knowing God to falling in love with him through Jesus Christ."[10] Recognizing salvation (and conversion) as a process that does not end with a decision is essential and helps to connect evangelism with discipleship.

The paradigmatic text for discipleship is probably Jesus original call to the disciples, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." What this text reflects among other things is what Wesley taught concerning the means of grace, namely, that as individuals engage in faithful obedience to Christ they will experience his transforming presence at work. Paul gives a fuller expression to this idea in Philippians 4:8–9:

> 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.
> 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

What both of these passages call for is imitation on the part of the disciple, in pursuing the mission and practices of their teacher. What is particularly notable about Paul's statement is the balance that he places on reflection and action: think about these things and practice these things. This symmetry between reflection and action is a helpful corrective to the CPM practice of discipleship. This does not deny the value of a behaviourally focused, obedience-oriented discipleship but simply insists that theological reflection must be included in the process. Lastly what can be derived from these discipleship texts is the importance of relationship or community. The focus on imitation reduces the need for literacy and maximizes the place of the common life of a community. What Jesus and Paul seem to call for is not the importance of reproducible lessons and programs but lives that are worthy of reproduction.

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[10] Watson, *CPM Awareness* Video 3.

Many CPM models have in mind a rapid conversion method of evangelism that generally isn't effective in Muslim contexts. They suggest for example the bridge illustration that can easily be drawn in the dirt and used by non-literate people to share the gospel. Moreover, they suggest a plan for using this personal evangelism tool with all the immediate members of their "*oikos*" network. This is problematic in Muslim contexts where the immediate announcement of conversion to family and friends often leads to rejection and homelessness. Some have sought to resolve this latter concern by creating rather controversial Muslim insider movements.[11] Discussion of the various levels of Muslim contextualization is beyond the limits of this thesis yet it needs to be noted that a method that in effect perpetuates the older extraction model of evangelism undermines the very focus of a CPM ministry plan.

What evangelism must work towards in a Muslim context is the engagement of Muslims with the Christian message in a manner that will allow for longer term exposure. In this context Watson's definition noted above is helpful. This definition refocuses conversion away from a crisis decision to a discipleship process that is more consistent with the Wesleyan tradition. It also seeks to engage families rather than individuals, but the question of how to do so remains.

Some CPM practitioners like Kevin Greeson have used evangelism methods that begin with the Qur'an to gain a hearing.[12] Unfortunately in Niger, most Muslims are not familiar enough with the Qur'an to respond to such an approach, which can then degenerate into debate over whose holy book is better. Nevertheless, a contextually sensitive approach that addresses Muslim concerns is appropriate. A recent interview with a Muslim background

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[11] Martin, "Biblical Critique," 4–7, explains the C-scale in which higher levels of contextualization encourage believers participating in Muslim insider movements to continue praying in their mosque and reciting the confession: "*Allah* is the only God and Mohammed is his Prophet."

[12] Greeson, *Camel Training*, 51, says the purpose of his method "is not to lead a Muslim to salvation in Christ. Its purpose is to draw out a person of peace. It can also assist you to build bridges between you and the Muslim community." Greeson's work has largely been in South Asian countries.

believer leading an in insider movement in East Africa makes some positive suggestions for themes that are relevant to Muslims. He asserts that:

> … you still have something to start with in Islam. You start with their limited Christology and Christ's role in the kingdom of God, mainly his role in the Day of Judgment. Muslims start to think from Islamic Christology, but they end up with Isa [as the one] who overcame the power of death. They progressively understand him, from prophet and messenger to Savior and then to Lord. But this takes time and the Holy Spirit, as it also did for Peter.[13]

He later remarks:

> Islam has a different theology of sin; they don't accept that Jesus died on their behalf. It is *true* that he died on their behalf, but it is not the only benefit [of Christ's death]. When he died on the cross, he defeated death and the one who owned the power of death, Satan. And because God raised Jesus from the dead, he was appointed by God as a judge on the Day of Judgment, and the Savior from the Day of Judgment. The Cross is the answer for every [issue] in life. It is the solution regarding our relation to God, Satan, sin, death, and so on…
>
> Muslims are afraid of evil spirits; they are afraid of the Day of Judgment. They are afraid of the Devil. I have a message from the kingdom of God that addresses all of these spiritual needs. So we are using the Muslim way of thinking about Isa, even if it is incomplete. If Muslims understand even one of these, they will call to Isa, and the Holy Spirit can lead them to understand more benefits of the Cross.[14]

What this former Muslim is suggesting is that Christians do have a meaningful and relevant message to share with Muslim people but that it needs to begin where Muslims are at. Rather than making negative assumptions about the word Allah or attacking Islamic Christology, an effective gospel presentation will begin where Muslims are, to provoke curiosity and draw them into a deeper search to understand Jesus and his importance for their lives. Moreover, as both Wesley's and Watson's models suggest, conversion is more likely to be an evolving process for a Muslim rather than a crisis decision.

New believers need to be given a gospel presentation that introduces Jesus as more than a prophet but while avoiding provocative statements about the Trinity (e.g. the Son of God) or Mohammed. Islam recognizes that Jesus plays a role in the final judgement, as well

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[13] Daniels, "Worshipping Jesus," para. 26.
[14] Daniels, "Worshipping Jesus," para. 42–43, 45.

as performing miracles and raising the dead. New evangelists also need help in formulating a personal testimony concerning how their own encounter with Christ has impacted their life.

Most Muslims are not likely to respond with a quick decision to follow Christ. This does not mean that reproducible gospel presentations are irrelevant in Muslim ministry but rather we must understand the role they play in the process of conversion. Just as Wesley tended to emphasize the coming wrath of God in his mass evangelism efforts not to convert people but to identify awakened individuals, so also evangelism in Muslim ministry is important for identifying persons of peace. Once identified, witnesses need to be ready to lead people into a discovery/discipleship process where they can truly know Christ and learn to follow him.

An effective discipleship plan is composed of a short-term and a long-term discipleship program. A short-term discipleship program is designed to meet the needs of a new believer and move them towards forming a church. A long-term program initiates a self-sustaining teaching process. For the Shanks this is essentially "A simple reproducible bible study method."[15]

The Niger context requires a modification in the short-term program. *Four Fields* begins with the assumption that discipleship is for converts whereas it was just indicated that conversion in the Nigerien context is more likely to be a part of the discipleship process. Therefore an effective discipleship plan in Niger needs to accommodate a process oriented conversion while at the same time setting the key elements for the church's DNA. Furthermore the discipleship process is complicated by issues of literacy in Niger.

Short-term discipleship plans are generally six to ten sessions long, and are intended to get people started in the Christian life. *Four Fields* recommends the use of George

[15] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 54.

Patterson's Seven Commands of Christ material for initial follow-up.[16] This material is built on the characterization of the early church in Acts 2:42–47. They assert that these studies will address the beginning needs of a new church as well as provide a platform for implanting an obedience DNA into the church. While this seems good logic it does not seem essential. *T4T* and other programs suggest a variety of short-term discipleship packages. What seems of ultimate importance is that it connects with your target audience, it promotes obedience and accountability, and it is not only reproducible but it moves people towards reproduction. In the end, defining a short-term discipleship package seems to be more of a process than a product. The experience of Steve Smith in *T4T* seems typical:

> Through trial and error, finding out what does and doesn't work, my team and I kept boiling them down to eight key nuggets that could start a new believer on the right track to loving Jesus, loving others well and fulfilling the Great Commission.[17]

What seems key is identifying the basic building blocks that are relevant to people in a seeker-discipleship process and then working through the refinement of presentation through practice and experience.

The most relevant themes to pursue in a Muslim context are the message of the prophets and the kingdom message of Jesus. Muslims already have an awareness of Moses' Torah and the Psalms of David through the Qur'an. However, as noted above, the kingdom themes related to the person and ministry of Jesus perhaps represent a better way forward. A possible series of topics could include Jesus' power over sickness, demons and death, his commands and his imminent return. These kingdom themes not only address some of the generally expressed concerns of Muslims but also serve to highlight Jesus' identity as more than a prophet and have the potential to begin moving people towards acknowledging him as Saviour and Lord. While the teaching focus in these early meetings could remain on the

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[16] Shank and Shank, *Four Fields*, 52.
[17] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle locations 3338–3340.

stories and teachings of Jesus, a few Psalms could be read in the early phases as expressions of prayer and worship.

Long-term discipleship concerns moving the discipleship group towards a self-sustaining teaching method often using some sort of inductive Bible study. In this case it could begin the process of chronological storying through the Old Testament. Many Old Testament stories and figures are already familiar to Muslims and hold an interest for them. However the Old Testament also has the added value of laying a foundation for developing a Christian understanding of sin and salvation, as well as pointing to Christ as the fulfillment of the prophets.

So far the focus has been on the topics to be studied but those are almost secondary concerns to CPM and Wesleyan discipleship. Both of these generally are more concerned with behavioural aspects of discipleship rather than intellectual or doctrinal ones. Wesley used a small group accountability process that focussed on self-examination and confession and left teaching to large group meetings and local church attendance on Sundays. Pioneer church planting does not have the luxury of assuming that basic teaching is being addressed elsewhere. The topical focus is therefore necessary but it cannot be allowed to displace the larger concerns of spiritual formation and passing down basic ministry skills to the lowest grassroots levels of the movement.

What that means is that discipleship cannot be reduced to studying the Bible. Jesus said, "Follow me." Paul said, "Do what you saw me doing." Discipleship involves walking together outside of a bible study. Community is critical part of developing a biblical spirituality and growing in social holiness. While scripture remains the foundation and authority for all that we do, a significant amount of biblical discipleship involves modelling and imitation. In Wesleyan discipleship, mission is the context of discipleship and it is practiced in community. What scripture does is to guide us into that mission and to give it

shape.

Using a chronological storying with a missional hermeneutic is a starting point for addressing these concerns. One of the great assets of chronological studies is the unfolding of salvation history and the revelation of God's plans and purposes through history. Believers are invited to see their own story as part of the larger story of what God has been doing. Moreover, it serves to call believers to join God in his mission to the world. Helping believers discover the *missio dei* not only draws them in to participate in it personally, it serves to undercut the animistic philosophy that flourishes in both folk Islam and folk Christianity. This animistic philosophy encourages people to use religion to manipulate God in order to accomplish their own goals and ends. In contrast, Wesley taught that as we make mission the arena of discipleship, joining God in his work in the world, God is then able to accomplish his ends in us. This is essentially what the means of grace are about. Chronological storying can then be used to cast vision and draw people to participate in God's mission as a part of the discipling process.

Lastly there is the practical concern of equipping potentially non-literate individuals to disciple others. Storying has been generally used as means of dealing with non-literate, oral cultures. It usually involves encouraging individuals to memorize successive stories so they can be passed on to others. While non-literate people may well memorize these stories faster than literate people, it still remains a tedious process and according to *T4T* becomes more difficult in its reproducibility: "Training using oral methods is like driving a car with the parking brake partially or fully engaged. You can drive the same speed, but it takes more effort." [18] The major drawback to this process is the necessity of getting everyone to memorize not only the stories themselves but also the discipleship process. Alternatives to group memorization when leaders cannot read are essentially twofold. In many cases

[18] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, Kindle locations 3377–3378.

educated children and youth can be found who can do the reading so the group can discuss and apply the meaning of the text. A second alternative that is increasingly available is the use of some kind of digital media player. In Chapter One we noted two particular products, the Megavoice and the Proclaimer which can be ordered specifically for the national languages of Niger such as Zarma or Hausa. A simpler solution can be found in the ubiquity of cellphones in Niger, even among those who cannot read. Many cellphones come equipped with sufficient memory to hold digitally recorded scripture portions. While having the whole Bible saved onto somebody's phone may not be practical, it may be possible to download weekly texts and readings for memorization and meditation. The difficulty with this latter solution is that technology can be expensive and unreliable but its increasing presence makes it a viable alternative in Niger.

What the gospel means in Niger is calling people to a deeper understanding of who Jesus is through a process of discipleship. While there are important doctrinal concerns that need to be addressed in terms of Muslim discipleship, Wesleyan discipleship is concerned to draw seekers into a participating in a community that actively practices holistic mission. It uses the accountability of group life foster social holiness in its members to move them to redemptively engage the outside community. Conversion is process the follows extended exposure to the biblical presentation of Christ and participation in the discipline of Christian community.

Planting Healthy Churches

The obvious goal of church planting is to establish healthy churches. What defines church health may be more elusive. CPM defines health primarily in terms of reproduction while Wesley's concern was for holiness. While these definitions of health can be identified with the biblical images of the church as God's field (1 Cor 3:9) or as the bride of Christ (Eph 5:25–27), two foundational metaphors for the church may be more helpful for identifying

church health. First of all Paul identifies the maturity of the church with the growing body of Christ in Eph 4:7–17. Secondly, Paul uses the image of the church as the household of God when he instructs Timothy to restore order to the Ephesian church troubled by false teaching and internal conflicts.

The language concerning the church as the body of Christ is used somewhat fluidly in the New Testament. In 1 Cor 10:16–17 it is associated with one loaf of communion and our union with Christ and his covenant community. Later in chapter 12 the sacrament of baptism is identified as the means of incorporation into the body of Christ (vv12–13). This leads to an extended discussion of the charismatic life of the congregation as members of the body. A similar discussion occurs in Eph 4:7-16 where Paul underlines the unity of the body and its growth.

In terms of church health and maturity, the church as the body of Christ is the living extension of Christ's kingdom mission and ministry. As the members of the body believers are gifted by the Spirit to incarnate the *missio dei* just as Christ did during his earthly ministry. Practically this image speaks to church planting by connecting the sacramental with the charismatic, identifying the church as the centre of the divine presence and activity. These texts also speak to the mobilization of the whole body in mission. More importantly this image resists forcing every believer into the mold of apostolic church planter by recognizing the variety of charismatic gifts and ministries in the church.

First Timothy develops the ecclesiological metaphor of church as the household of God (3:15). In practical terms, Timothy is to bring erring members in the congregation back into line with God's *οἰ κονομια* (literally household management or administration). Moreover the better part of First Timothy has been characterized as an extended application of Greco-Roman household codes to the church. [19] Such an application is not unusual, as the

[19] Verner, *Household of God*, 95, 106.

household was considered the basic socio-economic unit of society, while at the same time functioning as a political ideology that made the empire one giant household with Caesar as its head. Household administration involved the use of slaves or servants as stewards or managers who ensured the proper functioning of the family and its business. In a similar manner both in the political arena and in the church, leaders and officials were considered stewards who managed the household on behalf of its head. In accordance with this image Paul identifies Apollos and himself as stewards (*οἱ κονομοι*) in 1 Corinthians 4:1–2, likewise the overseer in Titus 1:7, and that is essentially the task Paul gives Timothy with regard to the troubled Ephesian church.

With regards to church health this image communicates the importance of a church's organization and its leadership. This treatment of church in terms of household management and household managers has been criticised as an attempt to accommodate the faith to bourgeoisie values and to replace the earlier charismatic structures with institutional ones.[20] Philip Towner's study of the Pastorals ethics rejects that conclusion, asserting that the driving concern in the Pastorals is not accommodation or self-preservation but the accomplishment of the church's mission:

> The New Testament house code ethic does not by any means advocate a compromise. It merely teaches that institutions of society are necessary avenues for the missionary enterprise, and as far as possible the Church ought to move along these avenues according to society's rules.[21]

The church as the household of God does support a more institutional understanding of the church than the organic image of the body of Christ, but that does not justify a maintenance orientation to church life. Rather it acknowledges that management and administration are oriented to seeing the family business prosper, which as Towner noted, is the church's missionary enterprise.

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[20] Verner, *Household of God*, 180–186.

[21] Towner, *The Goal*, 256. The church as household is best understood as an attempt to contextualize the gospel and not as imposing the ethics of the household code on the church in every place and time. This is realization frees the church to think about how it can contextualize itself in other situations.

A final comment concerning church leadership in the New Testament and theological reflection is appropriate here. While many CPM practitioners seem to suggest that autonomous churches built only with new believers will be healthy if they are simply taught to obey the Scriptures and follow the Spirit. What that fails to take seriously is the presence of individuals such as Paul, Apollos and Timothy in the New Testament. Selection of local leaders in the Pastoral Epistles is grounded in character, probably reflecting an imitation based discipleship as noted earlier, but nevertheless people like Paul did feel free to intervene from outside the local church to bring correction and instruction. Moreover most of the New Testament writings show that local congregations needed those outside the local church with spiritual authority and the capacity to apply theological reflection to local problems. Itinerant individuals such as Apollos, Timothy and Titus could visit local congregations to supply what was lacking and to preserve the apostolic deposit that had been entrusted to the church.

In Niger church health can be facilitated in several ways. The first is the observance of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Table. While this seems obvious, what is important is the effect they have in establishing the group's identity as a church. As such the sacraments serve as community building exercises that knit the members together as the body of Christ. This in turn can develop the charismatic body life of the church in mutual support and accountability.

A second practice that will facilitate the community's development as a church is collecting an offering. The value of taking an offering is in the questions it forces the congregation to deal with, namely, "What should we do with the money?" and "Who will take responsibility for it?" In a house church where financial concerns are limited, this becomes an opportunity for the church to discuss its engagement in holistic ministry as a community. While holistic ministry ought not to be reduced to giving money, it forces the church to think corporately about mission. Moreover, it begins to invite the group to think

about leadership, and places the priority on character ethics in its choices. Encouraging the church to develop functional organization structures and systems will help to develop its capacity for mission and to engage the larger community.

Leadership development is often the bottleneck in a growing movement. The key elements of leadership multiplication are a process for identifying leaders, then equipping and deploying them. CPM practitioners generally prefer building leaders from within rather than hiring from without, in order to guarantee the missional DNA of the church. They prefer to empower new believers with increasing levels of responsibility as soon as possible in the discipleship process. Moreover, the discipleship is aimed at mobilizing all members of the community into mission. Those who are faithful in following through are deemed worthy of further investment and their responsibilities are increased. Despite claims to rejecting hierarchy in the church, *Four Fields* depicts a clear ladder of both ascending responsibility and ascending authority in the movement.

What the household metaphor contributes to this is an understanding of servant leadership or leadership as stewardship. It also clarifies that leadership is not simply a question of giftedness or effectiveness in service but the capacity of the leader to model both mission and character. As noted earlier, Paul's leadership and discipleship model was built on imitation: "What you have learned and received and heard and seen *in me*, do." Leaders are not simply those who are educated or have certain ministry gifts, they are people worthy of imitation. This concern is reflected in the CPM literature in the language of reproducibility.

The primary concern is the lack of theological reflection built into the process of leadership development. The serious amount of proof-texting that seems to happen throughout the CPM literature suggests a concern for pragmatics at the expense of theology. Leaders of small house churches are not expected to be serious theologians or Bible teachers. Part of what makes this viable is the tendency to multiply small churches without looking

beyond to consider what might happen when they get larger. In fact, CPM practitioners prefer to keep local house churches small so that church organization and administration remain simple while keeping leadership expectations low and manageable. This may be effective for short-term strategies, however it is near-sighted and fails to consider the needs of the church ten to fifteen years in the future. CPM fails to consider the requirements of the church beyond its existence as a movement or to seriously consider what the necessities of a local church beyond itself are. The leadership hierarchy beyond the local church described by *Four Fields* for instance is fixated on further mobilization and multiplication of the movement rather than any serious development of infrastructure for the nascent movement. To use Howard Snyder's typology, this is to develop the church as a movement while neglecting the reality of the church as an institution. The primary fear is that the energy of the movement might be diverted into organization building and drain it of its outward momentum.

In chapter three it was noted that Wesley provided for the intellectual needs of the movement in essentially two ways. The first was through his own writings and the Christian Library he edited and placed in every society. These were to be a resource to the community but more particularly for its leadership. Secondly, he established a top tier category of itinerant lay preachers who travelled from society to society doing evangelism and promoting the revival. Wesley insisted that these spend large amounts of time in reading and personal study. They were also invited to regular leadership conferences where doctrinal questions could be discussed. While they lacked the formal education of an Anglican clergyman, Wesley "was convinced that they should be learned."[22] Their itinerant schedule meant they were able to share their growing understanding while pursuing a missional lifestyle.

Wesley, like CPM practitioners, aimed at grassroots mobilization and provided increasing levels of opportunity and responsibility. Identification of higher levels of

[22] Heitzenrater, "Take Thou Authority," 21, suggests that Wesley's libraries foreshadowed distance learning for his preachers.

leadership such as the lay preacher was based on the threefold criterion of gifts, graces (i.e. proven character) and ministry fruit.[23] This remains the essential Methodist leadership development plan. The local society continues to be the fundamental proving ground of ministry where skills in small group leadership, ministry to the poor, and preaching are developed. The Free Methodist Church continues to recognize and use lay ministers in local congregations. Translocal ministry and ordination are the result of local congregations affirming the ministry track record of an individual within the local church before further (i.e. formal) education is considered.

Earlier it was already stated that the Free Methodist leadership would use their leadership seminars to create a network of church planters. Such a network would foster a learning community and a connection between churches. Developing leaders within congregations will be invited to these networks as an ongoing vehicle of exchange between congregations. These network groups will function as an opportunity for theological reflection on the ministry and to discuss best practices in ministry, much as Wesley's conferences did. While financing itinerant lay preachers may not be feasible in the Nigerien context, exchanges between congregations of developing leaders and preachers would give both parties an opportunity to see and learn from what others are doing and to facilitate the connections between them. These church planter networks provide a pool of developing leaders to assist in the oversight of the movement.

An appropriate leadership development plan seeks to find a balance between generating the energy and momentum to sustain the movement and the spiritual depth necessary to sustain the faith it promotes. Ideally in Niger indigenous leaders will be developed from the grassroots through the accountability system built into the discipleship plan. CPM and Wesley have a proven track record of creating leaders through systems of

[23] Heitzenrater, "Take Thou Authority," 4.

accountability combined with increasing levels of responsibility. Both promote on-the-job training and learning by doing. Spiritual maturity is not measured simply by what a person knows but by the way a person lives and serves. While CPM appears to recycle the same basic training, the Free Methodist Church will seek ways to invest in leaders, to develop their capacity for Christian theological reflection. Moreover the use of a church planter network allows the Wesleyan ecclesiology of the church as a means of grace to be reflected not just at the local church level but at higher levels of the organization. It will value people who can give visionary leadership to the church in its mission and who can wrestle critically and theologically with the challenges to Christian faith in Niger.

Conclusion

CPM shows a remarkable overlap with the Wesleyan tradition despite its differences of context and orientation. While Wesley never attempted to plant churches, let alone practice cross-cultural ministry, his holiness-oriented discipleship program was effective in multiplying small groups and leaders. CPM uses similar accountability structures to multiply and mobilize believers to plant small house churches. This overlap means that Wesleyan values and theology can be integrated without difficulty into the CPM model of church planting. The challenge then has been to adapt these values and practices to the Nigerien context.

One of the primary challenges in Niger has been creating a church for Nigeriens. Statistics indicate that the church continues to be dominated by people whose origins are outside the country. In asking the question, "What is God doing in Niger?" the mission proposes to mobilize existing members in the Free Methodist Church and coordinate with existing church planters to reach person of peace within the Nigerien population. Wesleyan theology asserts that God is already at work preparing people through prevenient grace, and that the church's responsibility is to partner with God in this work.

A second challenge that confronts ministry in Niger is the influence of Islam. Muslims are less likely to respond to a quick gospel presentation. They require a more sustained exposure to the Christian message, which is better facilitated by a process orientation to conversion. The plan proposes a non-combative approach to Islam building on Muslims' pre-existing Christology rather than attacking Mohammed or the Qur'an. The goal of a gospel presentation is not to aim for immediate conversion but to engage Muslims in a study of the biblical presentation of Jesus.

The short-term discipleship plan is where that study of Jesus begins. At the same time it begins to set the obedience-oriented DNA for the nascent church. The long-term program of chronological storying develops the unfolding mission of God, inviting participants to become partners with God in mission. In reality, chronological storying is another form of evangelism that serves to draw those who may still be seeking. Both discipleship plans incorporate the challenge to respond in obedience with accountability. Resources also exist to facilitate oral and non-literate learners in the process where necessary.

The plan for healthy churches applies the Wesleyan idea of the church as a means of social grace. This has been already started through the group processes of mutual accountability and encouragement found in the discipleship plan. It is now furthered in the sacramental practices of baptism and the Lord's Table, and in the move towards holistic mission. The collection of an offering forces the church to think about how to engage its community as it decides what to do with the money. The church is also forced to identify responsible people to handle the money on its behalf.

Leadership multiplication is accomplished by connecting developing leaders in the local congregation with the church planter's networks and leadership conferences. These networks serve as a learning community where questions can be asked and experiences

shared. It also provides a location for those developing their skills as a leader of leaders, and training ground for those who can give oversight to the developing movement.

This plan brings together key aspects and values of CPM with Wesleyan tradition. The shared value of accountability-based discipleship has been integrated with the CPM concerns for reproducibility and insider facilitation, and the Wesleyan theology of mission and ecclesiology. This use of Wesleyan theology is not an attempt to be sectarian but to be intentional about connecting theological reflection with the practice of ministry.

Conclusion: Reflections on Ministry in Niger

The goal of this thesis has been to create a Free Methodist church-planting plan that is contextualized to Niger. To create this plan, research has focused on recent materials coming from church-planting movements. Theological reflection was used both to critique the research and then to integrate it with a Wesleyan theology of mission and ecclesiology. The result is a plan that incorporates the practices and methods of church-planting movements and Wesleyan values to create churches that address the needs of ministry in Niger.

The first chapter identified three primary areas of concern for ministry in Niger. The most obvious are the Islamic context of Niger and the challenges of its fragile economy due to harsh climate. The more serious issue is that the Nigerien church has yet to become truly Nigerien. The statistics suggest that Nigeriens continue to be a minority in the churches of Niger.

The second chapter considers the history and evolving models of ministry among CPMs. It identified obedience-oriented discipleship in cascading discipleship chains as a means of reproduction and multiplication. Moreover, CPM ministries work toward creating insider movements by identifying *persons of peace* in the local community. In this way ministry takes on an indigenous flavour as missionaries take a behind-the-scenes mentoring role in the process. Tools and structures are kept as simple as possible so that ordinary believers can carry out the work of church planting without the need of professional training or skills. While some CPM engaged in unnecessary proof texting, these basic principles can be considered valid practices. Nevertheless, the need for better theological reflection was recommended to address the problem of proof texting and nurturing spiritual depth in the nascent community.

The third chapter explored key themes in John Wesley's theology and how they were manifested in his ministry. As a practical theologian, Wesley exemplifies the way that

theological reflection can serve the practice of ministry. Relevant themes in Wesley's work were the idea of prevenient grace which complements the CPM conception of persons of peace, and social holiness which reflected his use of small groups similar to obedience-oriented discipleship. A critical theme that touches both Wesley's concept of discipleship and ecclesiology is the means of grace. The means of grace are the places and practices that bring us into God's presence to experience his transforming power. For Wesley the practice of holistic mission is a key means of grace and survived to mobilize early Methodists to engage their communities in transformative ways.

The fourth chapter integrates these findings into a church-planting plan based on theological reflection. First the plan considers the place of church planting within the larger category of the mission of God, asking the question, "What is God doing in Niger?" Second the plan asked what the gospel meant for ministry in Niger, working from a process orientation to salvation that combined evangelism and obedience-oriented discipleship. Lastly it addressed the question of developing healthy churches through corporate practices and leadership development.

The proposed ministry plan addresses the needs of Niger in several ways. The basic design of CPM ministry shifts from outsider based ministry to insider persons of peace. This means that frontline church planters are essentially Nigerien. It also moves very quickly toward empowering Nigeriens in church leadership and ministry. CPM is designed to build up local leadership rather than creating long-term dependence on external leadership. In doing all of this, hopefully Nigerien Christians will be able to develop ministries that are legitimately indigenous expressions of the Christian faith and relevant to the larger community.

Muslims continue to be resistant to the gospel in most parts of the world. CPM may sometimes be perceived as a quick fix approach to ministry, as a result the plan suggested

above focuses on engaging people in a process rather than using rapid conversion style evangelism. The storying approach to long-term discipleship is chosen with an understanding of the pitfalls of folk religion, including folk Christianity. The storying approach is used to mobilize people for mission moving them towards aligning their lives with God's purposes rather then seeing God as a means of pursuing their own interests. It also responds to the needs of oral learners in the discipleship process.

The final concern addressed by this plan is the need for holistic ministry in Niger. Such ministries can often create goodwill towards missionaries and others sharing the good news. However, it's already been noted that Nigeriens are frustrated with outside interventions that have been imposed on them. At the same time many projects create dependence rather than building the capacity of the local community to be self-sustaining. The need for holistic ministries is addressed indirectly building incarnational ministry into the basic discipleship of new believers. The goal is to equip both believers and congregations to understand and engage their local context in transformative ways. This is not to rule out outside aid but to put the initiative into the hands of local insiders. It also seeks to develop their capacity to address their own needs while making outsiders facilitators who support rather than act as the primary agents of holistic interventions. The best community transformations come from the inside out.

This ministry proposal for church planting is developed with the hope of seeing indigenous Nigerien churches flourish. The methods of CPM are intended to allow local leaders to rise to the challenge of reaching their people with the gospel. Wesleyan vision is to see their churches become a redemptive kingdom presence in their communities.

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