THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF MOVEMENT MISSIOLOGY TO
INDIVIDUALIST URBAN CONTEXTS IN THE WEST

by

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ABSTRACT

"The Contextualization of Movement Missiology to Individualist Urban Contexts in the West"

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This thesis examines how movement missiology, an approach to Christian mission that has developed in majority world contexts and borne remarkable fruit, can be contextualized to the Western cultural setting. Secondary research from a variety of intersecting subjects in cultural studies, theology, and missiology is employed to this end. This thesis finds that the church in Western culture is in a period of missional decline as large amounts of disaffiliation are occuring at the same time as dwindling success is achieved in the areas of evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. Current obstacles to successful adoption of the movement missiology approach as a solution to this problem are studied, such as the strong and complex influence of urbanization and individualism on the West. The thesis concludes that the adoption of movement missiology in the West is advisable, although practitioners should seek methodological flexibility to account for complexity in the Western context.

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CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING THE TOPIC

"That could never happen here." This is one of the most common responses I hear when I share stories relayed to me by missionary coworkers from frontier contexts. Their stories, laced with accounts of multiplication of churches, staggering numbers of baptisms, and a thrivingly healthy church in the midst of oppressive political environments seem distant, far-fetched, or even offensive when considered in light of the realities experienced by those in ministry in the twenty-first century North American church.

Optimism about the future of the North American church and broader Western church contexts seems to be growing rarer and rarer. It is undeniably discouraging to witness the massive trend of disaffiliation that has occurred across the Western church within the lifetimes of those who are now coming to the tail end of their careers as pastors, with even the United States' proverbial bastion of religiosity deeply affected.[1] The reasons for this exodus are most comfortably chalked up exclusively to an anti-religious cultural environment. Christianity's decline in the West can be pinned on sociological changes that have diminished the salience of religious faith in the emerging demographics of Millennials and Generation Z. The easiest truth to believe for those struggling through ministry in the twenty-first century is that this is a "hard generation."

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[1] "How U.S. Religious Composition Has Changed."

However, Jesus was under no illusions about the merits of the generation he found himself in, but he nonetheless remained an optimist about what God could do in that context. The book of Matthew records, "Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.'" (Matt 9:37–38, NASB). This thesis will contribute a methodological examination of how the church can adapt in the face of this century's unique challenges for Christianity in the West, but its ultimate purpose is to foster an optimistic outlook on the future of the church through the adoption of Christ's missionary mindset that will result in an aggressively innovative missional approach in the years to come. This outlook, grounded in a realistic and nuanced understanding of the facts surrounding both the western church and the church movements overseas, will nonetheless give light to a way forward that bears promise towards a solution to an Occidental church in decline. Although this positivity is anchored within a corpus of missional practices, it is also hopeful that the adoption of such a strategy by the Western church could also lead to a revitalization of its missionary identity, reimported from the frontiers of global Christianity.

Methodology Matters

As a missionary in a global mission organization (Youth With A Mission, also known as YWAM) that sees thousands of churches planted each year through new converts coming to Christ on the frontiers of Southeast Asia and other locations, I have long noted a philosophical divide between how the mission of the church is conceptualized in overseas

"field" locations and in the church in post-Christian contexts. The former is missionary driven and takes a pioneering approach that facilitates exponential growth by the standards of numerical and qualitative metrics. The latter's vision of mission has often been co-opted by either a protectionist conservation of influence and power, or a dominionist attempt to grow in ability to exert authority over the societal systems the Western church finds itself entangled in. Both of the latter approaches seem to me to be problematic in their own right and fail to produce fruitful realities within the cultural climate of the West.

Scripture states, "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt 7:17–18). If we were to examine the fruit of the church's efforts (or lack thereof) to re-reach the West with the gospel through evangelism, discipleship, and church planting, would we determine that the *trees* of methodology that we currently operate from are worth keeping, or should we toss them away? If we were to look for new innovations in mission in the West, what sources could we draw upon to construct this new paradigm for engagement?

This thesis takes an approach of adapting the missiological truths that have born fruit in Majority World contexts. Rather than taking a simplistic approach of merely copying these approaches' exact methodologies, trying to transplant them in the west (which has not worked yet and is unlikely to anytime soon), this thesis is devoted to analyzing which values make these movements explode on the frontiers of missions and recommending culturally responsive models for implementing them in the West.

The focus here will be to learn from an approach used in Majority World missionary engagement that has received both a significant treatment in academic literature and a good amount of buzz due to the increases reported where it has been implemented, namely movement missiology. Movement missiology has been developed through "reverse engineering" the phenomenological observations of missiological researchers who stumbled across some of the most remarkable mass conversions to Christ that have happened on the missions field.[2] Although the word "movement" has been used to describe many unplanned Christian religious phenomena that have been documented (such as the Jesus Movement documented across America in the sixties and seventies or Donald McGavran's research on People Movements), movement missiology has become its own sub-discipline with a distinct corpus of practices, research, and theological beliefs. The focus of this discipline is the intentional recreation of the specific Majority World church planting movements observed in the 1990s, not just the studying of organic religious phenomena. The resulting movement framework has borne remarkable fruit across the world as hundreds of these movements have been documented as a result of these methodological shifts.[3] However, the lack of movements developing in the West[4] points to the fact that the current framework may not be as culturally flexible as proponents of the approach would like to believe.

This thesis argues that Western society's complex and pluralistic culture presents problems to missionaries working to implement discipleship strategies that move rapidly through interpersonal relationship networks (movement missiology). Individualism and increasing urbanization in the West break down the social structures that these

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[2] Garrison, *Redeeming a Lost World*, 11–12.
[3] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 10.
[4] Stetzer, "Movements in the Western World," 5.

missionaries have come to rely on in Majority World settings. To overcome these challenges in western contexts, movement missiology must move away from conversion methods that rely on an intact family structure towards a strategy that spreads through interest and economic-based relationship networks.

In order to demonstrate this, this thesis will turn immediately to reviewing the current literature contributed towards this dialogue at the present time. The second chapter will be devoted to identifying the core principles of movement missiology and tracking their development in academic discourse. The thesis will then turn to determining whether the demonstrated strengths of movement missiology would be helpful areas for the Western church to learn from by analyzing the current status of these relevant variables in the Western context. From these findings and a developed understanding of the deeply influential cultural dynamics of globalization, urbanization, and individualization across the Occident, a model for responsively adopting movement missiology into Western ecclesial settings will be constructed. Finally, the thesis will conclude with recommendations for practical application within the local church and a recommendation for further engagement with this topic in the academic sphere.

Research Methodology

This thesis seeks to support its arguments by conducting secondary research. This methodology is selected due to the existing literature's reasonably extensive but unsynthesized nature. The sources consulted will include quantitative research examining sociological phenomena across cultures, qualitative research on attitudes towards relevant topics (particularly within ecclesial contexts), popular movement approach materials, and

missiological reflections from theologians and practitioners. This thesis will synthesize these sources of research through critical interaction towards a cohesive synthesis of ideas.

I acknowledge that my own experience as a missionary practitioner and geographical-cultural location within Eastern Canada informs this thesis's approach to the interpretation of both missiological and cultural research. However, I attempt to adopt as impartial and critical an approach in my evaluation of existing research as possible in order to provide the highest quality of research in this thesis.

This research methodology proved effective for the purposes it was employed. Nonetheless, some limitations were encountered during the course of the research. One such limitation was caused by the sheer scope and variety of nations that constitute the West and the Majority World. Few studies were broad enough to suitably give all encompassing findings on the entirety of Western society or its Majority World equivalent. However, this problem can be overcome by synthesizing findings from a variety of national backgrounds to provide commentary on the status of the West (or Majority World) as a whole. For the sake of transparency, when a concept was extrapolated out from a study of a more specific context interior to the larger culture and suggested to apply generally, that is explicitly stated in the text and is informed by findings from a variety of similar studies.

A second limitation was the current lack of nuance in current movement missiological research. Current proponents of the approach often fail to engage in meaningful self-criticism or even criticism of their colleagues, while many of the main critics fully reject the approach without seeking to synthesize their criticism into better

applications within the discipline. Neither of these polarized outlooks is conducive to creating objective research and can muddy the waters of quality evaluation, but through taking both voices seriously and seeking to integrate both critical input and an overall optimistic attitude towards the capabilities of the model, this thesis seeks to provide a helpful addition to advance the dialogue.

Literature Review of Existing Research on This Topic

Any study of movement missiology would be amiss without building in some capacity upon the work of Roland Allen's *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?* This historical work is notable for constructing the missiological traditions from which movement missiology ultimately emerged, and remains today an oft-quoted treatment of biblical interpretation of Paul's methodology. Allen argues for an approach that values the indigeneity, ultimate independence, and self-sufficiency of the local church that was counter to the colonialist missionary impulse at the time of his writing around the beginning of the twentieth century.[5] Close to a hundred years later, this work remains an oft quoted and deeply influential text that can be used to extrapolate deep held assumptions about mission that reside in many different streams of missiology.

Dave Coles and Stan Parks provided a notable perspective in their book *24:14—A Testimony to All Peoples*. *24:14* is an extensive treatment of the practical methodology of movements consolidated by two of its most influential figures, Coles and Parks. The book contains a rallying point for a network of practitioners to focus on reaching every unreached people group with the gospel through CPMs (Church Planting Movements)

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[5] Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 151–63.

and constitutes a guidebook of sorts unto that end.[6] Although it fails to offer a particularly academic treatment of the subject, it does provide a very good understanding of the current methodology that is employed worldwide. Its orientation around an explicit strategic goal and identity as the text of a collaborative movement missiology network will help this thesis identify the current trends of the field in order to ascertain if course correction is necessary.

Standing as a more analytical and sociological contribution to this conversation, Anna Collar's big idea housed within *Religious Networks in the Roman Empire: The Spread of New Ideas* is that the historical religious movements studied in Rome can be most effectively understood and dissected through the use of social network theory.[7] Although this historical hypothesis is only indirectly associated with movement missiology, Collar's findings correlate heavily with the movement missiology's primary assumptions about how the gospel spreads through relationships when the priesthood of all believers is more fully realized. This thesis will draw upon Collar's research to construct a Western social model for comparative analysis with presupposed movement models. It will also give sociological substance to some surface level observations about religious conversion made by movement missiology practitioners.

Warrick Farah's *Motus Dei: The Movement of God to Disciple the Nations* stands as the most comprehensive academic treatment of the subject of movement missiology, which brings together many of the key voices in the field. This book provides a systematic understanding of the strategic content of movement missiology as well as a deep understanding of the historical context of the discussion. These are synthesized

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[6] Coles and Parks, eds., *24:14*, 2–3.
[7] Collar, *Religious Movements*, 38–9.

towards a positive view of the potential for movements to innovate missionary practice and provide a framework for effective ecclesial engagement with the Great Commission worldwide. The statistical information included about successful movements will also be useful as a guide towards fruitful application in other contexts. However, its focus never lingers on the issue of the barriers to movements in the future in Western contexts. This book provides the backbone of the more sophisticated thought around movement missiology employed within this thesis. It is also helpful for designating currently under-researched topics within movement missiology.

The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church is Frost and Hirsch's radical commentary on the current status of the Western church and vision for an "apostolic" approach to ecclesial identity in the future and stands as one of the most responsive missiological books to the issues presented by postmodernism. This diagnosis is known for providing fuel for today's postmodern-influenced emerging church movement, but also the need for Western leaders to begin looking at how to readopt missional ecclesiology as the core dynamic of church life. Although Hirsch's contributions to the idea of the emerging church began decades ago and have gained a lot of traction within the dialogue of church leaders, his insights into the problems facing the Western church in the postmodern age remain helpful observations for the construction of today's models.

David Garrison's seminal work *Church Planting Movements* provided the explosive first coverage of the topic of movement missiology and remains today one of the defining documents by which movements across the world today are measured and acknowledged. This document is mostly composed of case studies and two lists of

common traits of movements that are observed within the case studies, all married with some theological reflection from relevant scriptures. The conclusion of the work is a call to the global church to engage with movement missiology and subsequently reap the benefits of exponential church multiplication.[8] This work is historical in its influence on the dialogue, and can help with understanding the grassroots origins of these Majority World phenomena. It will also help us understand David Garrison's philosophy of ministry. This is important because Garrison remains to this day amongst the foremost thinkers engaging the topic of movement missiology as well as being its unofficial founder.

Jayson Georges also made a critical contribution to the discussion of this thesis in his work *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures*. This book holds insights into the differences between effectively communicating the gospel across Majority World and Occidental settings, drawing sociological research into relevant conclusions for Christian evangelists. The findings are predicated on the model of innocence/guilt, honour/shame, and power/fear binaries being the value structures upon which the major streams of human culture are primarily different from each other. Georges's main recommendation is for Western practitioners to stop assuming that Western gospel communication models will transfer seamlessly to Majority World settings, but the breakdown in the opposite direction is also clearly demonstrated. For the purposes of this thesis, it will provide a helpful Christian treatment of the cultural differences between the Western and Majority World cultural perspectives with a particular emphasis on missionary work.

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[8] Garrison, "Church Planting Movements," 57–8.

Finally, Philip Jenkins wrote *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* as a striking interpretation of global religious trends that holds an optimistic view of the future of Christianity worldwide. Jenkin's work holds insights into both the Western Christian decline and the corresponding explosion of Christianity in the Majority World. Although it never touches on the concept of movement missiology, this book includes useful insights into the trends which indicate the need for the Western World to learn from ecclesial insights originating from the East and the Global South. This book will be employed to interact with the larger trends of the worldwide development of Christianity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and elucidate research informed perspectives on how we can best respond to these realities.

Conclusion

This thesis seeks to advance the discussion around church planting movements and argue for an increasing adoption in the West of some of the key values associated with the approach. Because of this, it seeks to take an attitude of cultural humility and frankly discuss the merits of many perspectives developed across the world. This thesis will propose a responsive way forward for the Western church to revitalize our missiological edge for the twenty-first century, inspired by the accumulated findings of the conducted secondary research.

CHAPTER TWO: AN OVERVIEW OF MOVEMENT MISSIOLOGY

Movement missiology is notoriously nebulous to define, given the dynamic, complicated, and diverse perspectives wrapped up in the terminology. The field has been plagued with an overabundance of acronyms, slightly differentiated methodologies, and general overuse of the terms involved, resulting in a cloudy perception of the defining attributes of the relevant phenomena, methodology, and theory. This chapter attempts to both clarify the core tenets of movement missiology by tracking the development of the ideas and elucidating the central concepts and defending those tenets through synthesis of the relevant research, both theological and sociological in nature.

The Origin of the Concept of "Movement" in Missiological Discourse

Although the development of the missiological ideas that unite movement missiology is traceable, the exact origin of the central term "Church Planting Movements" (CPMs) in reference to the phenomena of rapidly multiplying house churches is disputed. This is evidenced by Garrison's claim that "No one recalls who first coined the term Church Planting Movements,"[1] which is contradicted by David Watson's statement that he was at the meeting where the term was intentionally chosen (albeit providing little information about where and when that meeting happened).[2] Farah states that "Both as a phenomenon and an approach to ministry,

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[1] Garrison, "Church Planting Movements," 9.
[2] Watson and Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, 17.

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church-planting movements (CPMs) were introduced into mission discourse in the 1990s,"[3] but Montgomery writes that Church Planting Movements were discussed as early as the Ralph-Winter-led World Consultation on Frontier Missions in the year 1980,[4] denoting that the term likely existed in oral discussions between missiologists well before it was crystallized in academic literature.

What is clear is that these ideas developed from the natural progression of the concepts presented in several streams of missiological thought. The foundations for movement missiology were laid by the British Henry Venn and American Rufus Anderson through their respective philosophies of indigeneity within missionary established churches in the early and mid 1800s.[5] These men (both missionary society secretaries) arrived largely independently at what is now known as the "Three Self" formula for indigenous churches, although they had some discussions with each other on topics relevant to its development.[6] The Three Self formula states that missionary planted churches should be self governing, self funding, and self propagating.[7] Although later generations have placed great emphasis on the specific constitution of the Three Self formula, Venn and Anderson merely were theorizing how they could reform missionary efforts towards a greater goal of empowering indigenous expressions of the church.[8]

Roland Allen would develop these ideas about indigenous churches into more sophisticated forms in his writings in the early 1900s.[9] In his seminal work *Missionary Methods: Saint Paul's or Ours?* he detailed theories of indigeneity in mission based on

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[3] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 1.
[4] Montgomery, *DAWN 2000*, 27.
[5] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 4.
[6] Shenk, "Special Relationship?" 171.
[7] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 4.
[8] Shenk, "Special Relationship?" 171.
[9] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 2.

reasoning from scriptural accounts of missionary efforts. In Allen's eyes, if practitioners could walk in the principles described in the book of Acts to reach people groups in the contemporary environment, we could see a replication of the scope of the growth of the church in Acts.[10] The conclusion of his foray into studying the methodology of the apostle Paul's missionary efforts was to warn against his day's status quo of cross-cultural proclamation, which left missionary-planted churches dependent, homogenous (despite being in different contexts), and unfruitful.[11] The converse of this was a model of missions that empowered the indigenous believers to become the core of the missiological efforts, with foreign missionaries taking an empowering approach.[12] Allen's work provided a cohesive and sophisticated biblical theology for the ideas housed in the Three Self theories.

Influential missiologist Donald McGavran would shift the dialogue even further towards the current status of the movement paradigm. In his work he coined the term "People Movements," which was a phenomenological observation of how large groups of people converted to Christianity (particularly in favourable cultural conditions) during his experience as a missionary in India in the early 1900s. A parallel concept developed in his writing was the homogenous unit principle, which theorized that the ideal situation for salvation was when there were minimal cultural differences to overcome in order for an individual to accept Jesus.[13] McGravan can be credited with the insight that the gospel spreads most effectively through networks of interpersonal relationships,[14] which gives

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[10] Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 3–9.
[11] Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 141–47.
[12] Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 141–47.
[13] McGravan, *Church Growth and Christian Mission*, 69–71
[14] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 2.

rise to the need for sociological examination of the mechanics of said networks in every

cultural setting.

Movement missiology researcher Warrick Farah notes that today's

conceptualization of movement missiology can be rightly stated to have arisen from

"Allen et al.'s concept of indigeneity, McGavran et al.'s observation of the influence of

social networks, and Winter et al.'s focus on unreached and multiplication."[15] Given these

authors' centrality to the overarching discipline, these contributions highlight the

increasing attention devoted to movements in the twentieth century.

Although movement missiology benefited from a long and rich history of

dialogue, development of the contemporary missiological approaches more recently is

rooted in radical innovation in the 90s within the Southern Baptist's International Mission

Board (IMB), particularly a subdivision named the "Cooperative Services International"

or CSI. This innovation relied upon the novel concept of non-residential missionaries

who utilized training and empowerment of indigenous churches to catalyze the spread of

the gospel across a region.[16] These missionaries often took the title of "Strategy

Coordinators" (SC) to describe their novel approach to international missions work.[17]

The Strategy Coordinator was trained in "creating a strategic master plan based on

thorough research of the context, having a God-sized goal, mobilizing abundant prayer,

coping with limited resources, studying the book of Acts, discussing case studies, and

developing the giftings and capabilities of the SC for effective networking."[18] The

observations and methods that these practitioners wrote about after utilizing this strategy

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[15] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 3.
[16] Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 1–7.
[17] Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 1–7.
[18] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 4.

provide the core paradigm that most current movements teach today.[19] Eventually, the CSI's radical reframing of missionary values and practice grew too unorthodox for Southern Baptist sensibilities and ultimately met with fiery criticism within the IMB.[20] Those who developed and applied CPM approaches were squeezed out of the organization,[21] and several subsequently joined or started other missions organizations,[22] catalyzing a diasporic spreading of the methodologies formed within those years of the CSI.

Strategy Coordinator David Garrison's seminal work *Church Planting Movements* brought the concept of movement missiology to wider attention in the year 1999, notably identifying ten characteristics of movements.[23] These ten "Universal Elements" of movements were prayer, abundant gospel sowing, intentional church planting, scriptural authority, local leadership, lay leadership, cell or house churches, churches planting churches, rapid reproduction, and healthy churches.[24] These observations echo some of the earlier theoretical developments proposed by Allen, Winters, and others but with the added weight of testimonials of surprising growth across the many nations. Garrison's contribution achieved a degree of virality as the movement paradigm effectively burst onto the scene of the missions world and warranted a re-release of the book in 2004 with even more testimonies from the explosion of church planting movements across the world during those years.[25]

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[19] Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 6.
[20] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 4.
[21] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 4.
[22] "Former IMB Missionary Leader Steve Smith Dies," Mar 21, 2019, see also Watson and Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, 13.
[23] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 5.
[24] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 33–36.
[25] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 4–5.

One of the most significant movements that was documented in the early 2000s was a movement in China that was recorded by Taiwanese-American missionaries Ying and Grace Kai was the basis for their methodological book *Training 4 Trainers* (T4T) and corresponding training curriculum.[26] These practitioners' writings outlining specific strategic methodologies to achieve movement status in missionary efforts began to emerge, like the Kai's *T4T* and Steve Smith and Nathan Shank's *Four Fields*, amongst others.[27]

Additionally, David Watson and Victor John began to write about a massive movement amongst the Bhojpuri people Watson worked with in Northern India.[28] However, the general overuse of the CPM label through attachment to disparate ecclesial phenomena of varying quality and size led to the cheapening of the term.[29] In response, the Watsons coined the term Disciple Making Movement (DMM) to denote the specific explosive growth phenomena in order to give greater clarity to the topic.[30] This term unintentionally became synonymous with some of David Watson's strategy for achieving the phenomena rather than the phenomena itself, taking its place beside *T4T* and *Four Fields* as a method towards missionary success.[31] Nonetheless, David Watson's influence remained strong within the field of practitioners, as many well known and reportedly successful contemporary movement practitioners were mentored by David Watson, such as YWAM's Cindy Anderson[32] and Accelerate Global's David Broodryk.[33]

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[26] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 4.
[27] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 5.
[28] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 4.
[29] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 5–7.
[30] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 5–7.
[31] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 5–7.
[32] "Movements Mindset."
[33] "Multiplication Principles."

Eventually, through the multiple iterations of both academic research and practitioner methodological insights saturating the community of those with an interest in seeing movements unfold, movement missiology developed specific characteristics that were (usually) present in the theory and practice of its adherents, even across different streams and organizations.[34]

The Crystallization of Methodologies Associated with Movement Missiology

Proponents of movement missiology have written at length about their observations of common identifying dynamics in movements in an attempt to reverse engineer methodologies that are effective for stimulating CPMs. Although many authors highlight aspects of movements that could be applied to almost all beneficial missiological approaches (for example, David Garrison's observation that movements generally exhibit a foundation of prayer),[35] there are consistent and significant shifts from previous missiological norms in the foundational areas of evangelism methods, discipleship methods, and church planting methods present across the writings of the major contributors on the subject.

Evangelism Methodology: Reaching the Person of Peace

Luke 10 holds the central scriptural framework for evangelism within the movement paradigm. Jesus commissions his disciples to reach towns by seeking for households of peace that have positive dispositions towards the preaching of the gospel and generously support those who are proclaiming the gospel (Luke 10:6–7). He instructs the disciples

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[34] Farah, "Church Planting Movement Missiology," 8.

[35] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 33.

to linger at these houses rather than going door to door to proclaim (Luke 10:7). The openness of these households provides the starting point for the receptivity of the whole community (Luke 10:8–9).

For movement practitioners, evangelism should focus on locating Spirit-prepared individuals much in the same way. By proclaiming the gospel liberally (depending on cultural contexts) and exercising spiritual discernment, practitioners can locate people eager to participate in Christian discipleship.[36] These individuals (the people of peace the evangelistic approach is named after) will enthusiastically multiply their newfound lifestyle in their circles of influence as they themselves are discipled by the initial practitioner.[37] The person of peace evangelism strategy has a high value for long term relationships that develop out of evangelistic encounters, and gives a resilient framework for engagement that allows the gospel to spread in both repressive and permissive cultural environments. The underlying philosophy of the approach is quality over quantity.

Here McGavran's observation of cultural networks being the streams through which the gospel flows most quickly[38] comes into play. In the context of the Majority World collectivist cultures (where most of the initial movements were observed), this often looks like household salvations, where an entire family unit accepts Jesus.[39] Movement missiologists point to this phenomena as evidence that the methodology closely mirrors both the methods and the fruit of the church of Acts' evangelistic efforts.[40]

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[36] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 68.
[37] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 68.
[38] McGavran, *Bridges of God*, 21–23.
[39] Coles and Parks, eds., *24:14*, 40.
[40] Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, 93–99.

This evangelistic model necessitates the early empowerment of new believers as evangelists to their own friends and family.[41] Not only are new believers permitted to proclaim, they are actually considered the most effective missionaries to their own circles,[42] an idea consistent with previous conceptualizations of indigeneity in mission.

Discipleship Methodology: Becoming Obedience Based

Another paradigm shift is present in the method of discipleship. Movement advocates suggest a shift from knowledge based models of discipleship that rely primarily on the transfer of theological information towards a model referred to as "Obedience Based Discipleship."[43] This approach holds that obedience to Christ's commands is the primary marker of a mature disciple.

To arrive at obedience, a philosophy of discovery based learning is recommended.[44] Rather than missionaries providing explicit teaching on doctrine, movement practitioners focus on facilitating seekers' engagement directly with the Scriptures and assisting them in establishing goals to live in response to the commands of Christ that they find within the pages of the Bible.[45] These steps of obedience include sharing what they learn from their study of the Bible, ideally producing more and more participation in the Bible studies.[46] These study groups are referred to as Discovery Bible Studies (DBSs). Most models have DBSs as the building block from which all multiplication, church planting, and discipleship stems from.

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[41] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 140.
[42] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 15.
[43] Watson and Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, 19.
[44] Watson and Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, 126–34.
[45] Watson and Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, 126–34.
[46] Watson and Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, 126–34.

Discipleship, in the minds of movement practitioners, is accessible for all. No Bible College degree or certificate of ordination is necessary for those seeking to fully disciple new believers.[47] Rather than a traditional reliance on setting up educational institutions to support growth, CPMs have a technically-minimalistic set of qualifications for leadership.[48] These focus more on lifestyle and ethics than credentials and theological knowledge.[49]

Church Planting Methodology: Rapidly Multiplying House Churches

DBSs, when fully realized, are designed to take on ecclesial form and blossom into churches. Movements' statistics report that for every one to two DBSs started as exploratory learning opportunities for unbelievers, one eventually becomes formalized into a house church congregation as people accept Christ and decide to remain in community with each other.[50] In a movement paradigm, church planting is the organic outflow of successful discipleship of a group of people into mature relationships with Christ and each other.

CPMs are defined by multiple generations of churches formed in this manner. Every believer within every church has the potential to plant a church themselves if their personal circle of influence proves receptive to the gospel. Given the dynamics of evangelism and discipleship mentioned previously, everybody who can make a disciple can make a church. Because of this, movements by nature have a high view of the theological value of the priesthood of all believers.

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[47] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 44–46.
[48] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 44–46.
[49] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 44–46.
[50] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 33.

Due to the limitations of resources, nearby seminary institutions, and government restrictions experienced by most movements, simple ecclesial models are essential. With the lay leaders rather than missionaries being the driving force behind church planting, simple models of church enhance the likelihood that successive generations of church plants will be reproduced accurately from the original. This leads to a minimalist approach to biblical ecclesiology being present in most movement paradigms.

Houses commonly are the setting for these churches (although not exclusively). Private dwellings provide a religiously neutral atmosphere for individuals exploring Christianity, and anonymity outside of the public sphere that assists the church in being undetected by hostile entities. House churches also create an impetus for church multiplication, as house churches tend to multiply when they reach their numerical cap for gathering.

The movement model may be catalyzed by an outside missionary, but it rises or falls on the back of indigenous leadership. In the movement paradigm, evangelists are indigenous to the culture from the very beginning, disciple makers are indigenous to culture from the very beginning, and ultimately, church leaders are indigenous to culture from the very beginning. This provides a strong interaction with the host culture that circumvents the common issues with western colonial mindsets in missions or misinterpretation of cultural phenomena.

Critics of Movement Missiology and their Arguments

Movement missiology has come under fire from vocal opponents in academia. Their criticism ranges from the practical to the sociological to the theological. Although it is

impossible to do justice to all of these commentators, this chapter will highlight some of

the most sophisticated and influential critics.

Global Missiology contributor Jackson Wu argues against the assertion of

movement missiology proponents that the modern phenomena and methodology of

movements can be demonstrated from the Bible.

> It is one thing to use the Bible to affirm certain ministry principles; it is quite another to claim that particular mission practices are actually in Scripture… CPM theorists claim that in the Bible we see God starting CPMs through the Apostle Paul. However, they do not use the Bible to define a CPM. In that sense, the standards used to assess CPMs are quite arbitrary. By "arbitrary," I simply mean that such measures are determined by CPM researchers, not the Bible. Practically speaking, an unfortunate correlation is thus made. CPM theorists appeal to biblical authority while affirming the extra biblical criteria established by researchers to assess so-called "CPMs."[51]

Wu points out in his work that it is completely anachronistic to refer to the apostles in

Acts (particularly Paul) as having catalyzed CPMs or even having the goal of starting

CPMs.[52] He cautions that communicating these methods as biblical in origin will likely

cause harmful pragmatism to dominate missionary expressions; unrealistic expectations

for those in the missions field; create a sense of failure for those who do not experience a

CPM as part of their ministry; exaggerated reports from missionaries to make phenomena

look like a CPM because of an overemphasis on quantity of converts and church plants;

poor biblical theology and a downplaying of theologians; reducing biblical obedience to

just evangelism; and inappropriately reforming the missionary identity into that of an

administrator.[53]

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[51] Wu, "Church Planting Movements," 2.
[52] Wu, "Church Planting Movements," 2.
[53] Wu, "Church Planting Movements," 10–13.

Matthews echoes some of the same concerns about exegetical process in his treatment of person of peace evangelism.[54] "If this was the preferred methodology for church planting, why do we not see these instructions repeated in the Great Commission or in Acts 1:8 or in John 20?"[55] he questions. Another argument he offers against the utilization of person of peace missiology is pointing out that post-pentecost evangelism is not necessarily the same thing as Jesus' pre-pentecost evangelism.[56]

George Terry's article in Themelios, "A Missiology of Excluded Middles," criticizes the Smith & Kai's T4T methodology specifically, although many of his arguments can be applied to T4T's equivalents. He writes,

> "The foundational theological weaknesses of T4T translate into an excessively narrow paradigm that oversimplifies God's vision and the church's calling to the nations and, consequently, constrains the church's ongoing effectiveness in cross-cultural and resistant contexts. . . T4T's approach to the Scriptures at key points is characterized by proof texting and. . . depends on a series of false dichotomies that regularly exclude the middle area that conveys the biblical balance."[57]

Although Terry's criticism of T4T has several points, the most relevant to the broader tradition of movement missiology beyond the specific framework of T4T is his discussion of Obedience Based Discipleship. He holds that Obedience Based Discipleship approaches downplay the importance of doctrine by creating a false dichotomy between orthodoxy and orthopraxy.[58] Terry's strongest line of reasoning towards this conclusion is his argument that not all of the council of Scripture is directly applicable to every believer's life, as we have a great cultural and chronological distance

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[54] Matthews, "Person of Peace", 191–92.
[55] Matthews, "Person of Peace", 193.
[56] Matthews, "Person of Peace", 194–95.
[57] Terry, "Excluded Middles," 336.
[58] Terry, "Excluded Middles," 348.

from the original recipients of the council of Scripture.[59] Another argument he presents is

that where T4T "demeans" knowledge of Scripture, the Bible itself has a positive view of

knowledge.[60]

Abner echoes concerns about proof-texting and eisegesis brought forward by

other authors and adds his own considerations about the ecclesiology of movements.[61] He

notes that the specific church structures that may be relevant for the quick multiplication

valued by movement practitioners are not necessarily conducive to deep formation of

individuals within the house church.[62] Abner's specific conclusion about T4T is that "The

simplicity of the ecclesiology imbedded with the T4T process allows for a church to be

agile as she grows; but also, may hinder her maturity."[63]

Answering the Critics of Movement Missiology

The overall insights of Wu and Terry's corrections are relevant, even possibly poignant.

However, their conclusions towards more traditional approaches to evangelism,

discipleship, and church planting in missiological approaches throw the baby out with the

bathwater. Additionally, some of their argumentation is fallacious and (ironically) weak

biblically. This chapter will turn now to the defence of the core values of movement

missiology.

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[59] Terry, "Excluded Middles," 348.
[60] Terry, "Excluded Middles," 348.
[61] Abner, *Embryonic Ecclesiology*, 96.
[62] Abner, *Embryonic Ecclesiology*, 130.
[63] Abner, *Embryonic Ecclesiology*, 119.

In Defence of Person of Peace Evangelism

It cannot be reasonably defended that the Person of Peace evangelism is the only prescribed method of evangelism by Scripture.[64] However, when Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," (Matt 28:19) the only practical instructions were to baptize and to teach obedience, and the epistles do not add any pragmatic restrictions to the discipline. Because Jesus gave no exclusive methodological guidance to the Great Commission, the New Testament church employed various strategies for reaching the lost in different contexts, ranging from reasoning in synagogues (Acts 17:17) to preaching to crowds in the street (Acts 2:15) to evangelizing house to house (Acts 5:42) to one on one conversations on the roadways (Acts 8:26–40). Any critic arguing for a restriction to the modes of evangelism available to Christians must give an explanation for the seeming unrestricted freedom of form with which the New Testament church navigated the challenges of effectively witnessing within their cultural context.

Therefore, evangelists seeking to inform their practice from the Word must turn to some combination of imitation of the descriptive passages of evangelism and general instruction for Christian conduct (such as the fruit of the Spirit in Gal 5:22–26). Additionally, evangelists who seek to do their job well must employ wisdom and understanding to honour God with the fruit they bear.

Where movement missiology has been in error is where it has used descriptive texts to give biblical weight to specific methodologies, especially its treatment of Luke 10 as a prescription for healthy evangelism. However, it is cognitively dissonant to disqualify the approach for lack of direct biblical prescriptive passages if another evangelistic strategy is to be employed, as any other model will equally suffer from a lack

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[64] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 49.

of prescriptive texts to back its exclusive or preferred use. No other model benefits an explicitly prescriptive passage of Scripture, either.

A strong case can still be made for the Person of Peace approach. It is certainly not forbidden in Scripture, and Jesus has left the specifics of how to go about reaching the nations in the hands of the church. As such, it is a forceful argument to see the phenomenological reality of success of the person of peace methodology, and that it is an appropriate and even advisable approach to reaching the lost due to its effectiveness in carrying out the command of Christ in the Great Commission. The wisdom with which Jesus instructed his disciples in Luke 10 has born fruit when a similar strategy is followed today.[65]

In Defence of Obedience Based Discipleship

Although person of peace evangelism must be argued for from an understanding of cultural wisdom and the pragmatic realities of the practice in producing the fruit Christ has called the church to, the concept of obedience as the foundational marker of discipleship to Jesus can be clearly demonstrated through Scripture. Jesus' Great Commission command to make disciples describes that task as "Teaching them to observe all I have commanded you," (Matt 28:19). John 15's lengthy discourse on the topic of discipleship makes the basic argument that it is necessary to be obedient in order to abide in Christ, and that it is necessary to abide in Christ to bear fruit, and that it is necessary to bear fruit in order to be a true disciple – in this manner he ultimately states that obedience is the basic building block of a life of discipleship (John 15:1–11). Finally, Second Timothy states that "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for

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[65] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 266.

teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16–17). If the express purpose of Scripture is ultimately good works, and obedience is the basis for discipleship according to Jesus, this places the Discovery Bible Study method and Obedience Based Discipleship as a strong response to the trajectory of the text.

When doctrinal and theological learning become the central core of Christian discipleship, an intellectualist hierarchy is likely to arise in conflict with the concept of the Priesthood of all believers. However, Jesus' approach of choosing to prefer uneducated fishermen as his disciples instead of educated religious specialists provides a quiet commentary on this approach.

<div align="center">In Defence of Rapidly Multiplying House Churches</div>

Church planting movement house fellowships certainly betray their missionary-rooted value of rapid reproduction with how they are structured. However, critics of the model create a false dichotomy between quick growth and full discipleship of congregants. If this dichotomy was true, the rapid growth described in Acts 2:47 would have inhibited the maturity of the early church.

Dave Coles argues that most criticisms of the ecclesiology of CPM planted churches spring from ignorance of the actual realities of those congregations.[66] Preferences for the prevailing (extra-biblical) models of evangelical church gatherings can inhibit acknowledgement of the maturation of disciples that happens within the CPM context.[67] "Movements prefer to have disciples who consistently *apply* God's Word rather

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[66] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 46.
[67] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 47–48.

than passive listeners to weekly polished monologues," he states. "But I suspect that the shortage of weekly Sunday "preaching" in many CPMs leads some, whether implicitly or explicitly, to conclude that the weekly (or more frequent) gatherings in CPMs are not 'real churches.'"[68] Cole's arguments may be uncharitable and even slightly fallacious, but it highlights the reality that the minimalist ecclesiology of indigenous church movements raises the eyebrows of ecclesial thinkers. However, this thesis holds that the minimalist approach to church planting is both biblically defensible and strong.

The approach of ecclesial minimalism can be theologically defended in much the same way as the argumentation in favour of person of peace evangelism was mounted. Although the apostolic development of order across the New Testament church is evident, exegeters of Scripture will be hard pressed to find anything remotely resembling a biblical recommendation of the modern conceptualization of formalized liturgy, educational models and salaried positions which funnel church leadership, and physical church buildings dominating the activities of the congregational lifestyle. This is not to say that these forms are impermissible, but it does constitute a problem to those who would criticize movement formed churches in favour of another ecclesiology.

Additionally, the minimalist ecclesiology is what allows the movement churches to multiply, free of inhibition from resources or formalized clergy. Instead of needing buildings to be built or rented in order to make space for church expansion, homes open up for small gatherings as a natural implication of new believers joining the body of Christ. Instead of requiring promising young leaders to go through several years of educational development towards ordination (that will likely displace them from their

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[68] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 47–48.

local ecclesia in the process), the movement model of church allows for the development of leaders through intentional discipleship.

That isn't to say that movements have a weak ecclesiology. Though without some of the more formal vestiges familiar to many Christians, movement leaders pride in strong church engagement with the sacraments, interpersonal generosity, personal evangelism, and mercy and justice initiatives, amongst other things. The missional multiplication present in disciple making movements is unavoidably tied to a somewhat minimalist ecclesiology, and the radicalness of the missiological approach to reimagine church for a missional impulse into the culture surrounding is what movement missiology ultimately offers.

Conclusion

Although in no sense is the current form of movement missiology a perfect model, this chapter has recounted the model's rich heritage of development at the hands of the foremost intellectuals in the field. The current practical approaches to movement missiology are too contextually dependent to be useful in every cultural setting, but the strong theological and practical evidence for the general values of the paradigm warrants a closer look at how some adaptations could be made to the current form which would allow it to enrich the mission of the church in the west. Any model created must avoid the pitfalls of previous iterations of movement missiology, avoiding poor exegesis of Scripture as justification for methodology.

However, to justify importing an innovative mission strategy into something as important as the ecclesial model of the West (with many implications for overall

ecclesiology), there must be an extensive evaluation of the current status of the state of

mission that already exists. This thesis will now turn to taking a deeper look at the status

quo to ascertain if the adoption of movement missiology would be a helpful addition

within the Occidental context.

CHAPTER THREE: AN ASSESSMENT OF MOVEMENT MISSIOLOGY'S
SUCCESS IN WESTERN CONTEXTS

With church planting movements bursting onto the scene across the world, this thesis

now turns to examining the current status of the church in North America in regards to

the quality of its missional identity. While movements worldwide are thriving in

equipping every believer to share the gospel, is this the case of churches in Western

civilization? While movements hold high standards for the quality of discipleship that

believers engage in within the church, what are the discipleship standards assumed within

Western countries such as the United States and Canada? How does the quantity and

survivability of Western church planting and Western movement practitioners compare to

Majority World movement contexts?

 This thesis holds that the current models and philosophies of Christian mission in

the West often enjoy default adoption without regard to their degree of effectiveness.

Although the discussion of Western ecclesiology in a Post-Christian age has advanced

markedly through the work of the trailblazers of emerging church thought, such as Alan

Hirsch and Michael Frost, this chapter will highlight how the philosophical development

has not yet resulted in statistically significant differences in the missionality outcomes for

churches across the region.

 If any presuppositions of efficacy of the current institutions did prove to be true,

that would markedly reduce the necessity to adopt a more drastic missiological approach

like movement missiology. To justify a full adoption of the approach, movement

missiology's outcomes must be shown to far outstrip the current quality of church planting, discipleship, and evangelism of existing church models employed in the West today. This thesis identifies and compares the attractional and emerging ecclesial models to movement missiology for their success in these areas, as well as taking stock of the general status of these dynamics in the broader Western church. Movement missiology does exist as a radical alternative that will require significant effort to implement, so the failure of its existing alternatives must be elucidated in order for it to be seen as a reasonable alternative.

Additionally, this thesis will examine some theological concerns with prevailing models, just as critics of movement missiology have sought to do with that approach. If the majority model can be shown to be not only ineffective but theologically bankrupt, it will necessitate a radical approach to dealing with the issues at hand.

This chapter examines these areas of missional engagement in order to ascertain if the Western church would do well to learn from the strengths of movement missiology and determine if an adoption of values from these contexts would be advisable. This will be accomplished through consolidating empirical research on the church in Western contexts and examining these same practices in light of teachings from Scripture.

Evangelism

Evangelism is deeply connected to the health and growth of the body of Christ in any particular region. However, studies indicate an increasing crisis of evangelism in the West. There are many ways in which this is manifested, each with an intersectional impact on the overall effectiveness of the mission of the church.

Firstly, Christians across America have increasingly less conviction about personal evangelism. A 2018 Barna study showed that Christians were three times as likely to say that it was the local church's job to reach the lost with the gospel as compared with the 1983 numbers, expanding from one in ten Christians to three in ten that felt they were not personally responsible.[1] This growing dissipation of individual responsibility creates a church trend that devalues individual conversations. However, research on effective evangelism to emerging generations show that these populations prefer a more individualized, personal, and organic approach of presenting the gospel.[2] These trends conflict, as the broader church is gravitating more and more towards programmatic presentations of the gospel,[3] which is in turn becoming less and less salient to those who are receiving it. This mismatch of trends between culture and gospel witness from the church will be problematic for the overall effectiveness of the evangelistic venture.

Secondly, the Barna study revealed that Western Christians are increasingly deterred from sharing their faith by perceived social barriers.[4] If these believers perceived that their sharing their faith bore the likelihood of rejection, or that their sharing would be to someone with whom they did not have an strong existing relationship with, they were much less likely to be willing to share than in previous decades.[5] Evangelism's almost intrinsic dynamic of social discomfort means that this reticence for breaking unspoken

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[1] "Sharing Faith is Increasingly Optional."
[2] Santos and Naylor, *Mission and Evangelism*, 56.
[3] This is not to say that there are not many Western churches that are effectively revitalizing their model towards holistic and personal relationship evangelism in light of the revealing research on this topic, but the data suggests that these efforts are not enough to buck the trend of more programmatic ecclesial approaches to evangelism being assumed and supported by most Christians in the West. See "Sharing Faith is Increasingly Optional."
[4] "Sharing Faith is Increasingly Optional."
[5] "Sharing Faith is Increasingly Optional."

norms inhibits evangelistic initiation within many settings where it could be commonly engaged in. Western evangelistic approaches struggle to have a meaningful impact in the public sphere as a result.

Although Western Evangelical Christians remain optimistic about the importance of evangelism in their current cultural climate,[6] this surface level positivity fails to reflect the nuance of evangelistic approaches that is hidden within the broader terms of discussion. Bill Bright notably delineated that there was a difference between two contrasting philosophies of evangelism, both of which encapsulated a distinct corpus of gospel sharing practices.[7] The first of these, permission evangelism, is exemplified by a willing listener who has accepted an invitation before hearing the gospel. Some notable examples of this approach are the (now mostly obsolete) crusade evangelistic gatherings, the invitational youth group model, and the evangelistic philosophy of seeker friendly Sunday services in contemporary evangelical church culture. This is juxtaposed with what Bright labeled "aggressive evangelism," in which the evangelist initiates sharing the gospel without invitation from the hearer.[8] One to one evangelism on the street often takes this approach. This thesis utilizes the alternative term "initiatory evangelism" in the place of "aggressive" evangelism, due to the unnecessary negative tone of the previous term.

Of these two models for evangelistic engagement, we saw in the previous chapter that movement missiology's philosophy most closely aligns with initiatory evangelism. Proponents of initiatory evangelism by necessity rely on mobilizing the laity to start conversations with those who might not of their own accord seek out information about

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[6] Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide*, 85.
[7] Fleming, *Bill Bright's Theology and Methodology*, 115.
[8] Fleming, *Bill Bright's Theology and Methodology*, 114.

Jesus, as those people will not be found in any of the professional ministry settings coordinated by the institutional church. Conversely, Western Christians are far less likely to engage in initiatory evangelism than their Majority World counterparts. To this end, Stetzer and Bird stated,

> Without exception, the CPMs in the Two-Thirds World that are experiencing exponential growth in conversions and making disciples are movements where intentionality is focused on training people to share their faith, and those people intentionally do it. They're trained to win people to Christ, and they hold each other accountable not just to holiness but for evangelism. This just doesn't seem to be happening in America, or it is happening in outmoded, non-indigenous ways or as a sales pitch for a particular gathering. No current Western phenomenon of aggressive person-to-person evangelism is apparent, and CPMs won't happen in the West without it.[9]

Stetzer and Garrison find that initiatory evangelism is correlated with positive growth dynamics through conversion.[10] As such, Western evangelistic timidity provides a major barrier for missions, and something that must be unseated from the ecclesial culture if another outcome is to be desired.

Attractional methodology by nature locates much of the duty of gospel proclamation squarely in the realm of the clergy. A large part of the role of the laity in evangelism is seen as "inviting people to church" or to other gospel events. The consequence of this is that often the actual communication of the good news is left for trained, qualified ministers within the institutional framework. It is important to acknowledge that the amount of encouraged personal evangelism varies greatly from church to church that subscribes to the attractional model; however, the very standard format of often making time during Sunday services for initial responses to the gospel betrays the philosophical space for this as a primary evangelistic method.

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[9] Stetzer and Garrison, "Church Planting Movements," 20.
[10] Stetzer and Garrison, "Church Planting Movements," 17–20.

Alan Hirsch wrote as recently as 2006 that this attractional church-growth system of ecclesial strategy has become the predominant form across the West. He estimates that 95% of churches either intentionally or unintentionally utilized this approach, concluding,

> This is a strategic issue for us because various recombinations of contemporary church growth theory and practice seem to be the only solution we have to draw upon to try to halt the decline of Christianity. It seems to be the only arrow in our quiver-this can't be a good thing. Solutions based on church growth so dominate our imaginations that we can't seem to think outside of its frame-works or break out of its assumptions about the church and its mission. And that's tragic, because it doesn't seem to work for most of our churches and for the majority of our populations. In fact, it has become a source of frustration and guilt, because most churches do not have the combination of factors that make for a successful application of the model.[11]

Hirsch's diagnostic (and subsequent forays into the topic) proved to be impactful in shifting dialogue towards the idea of reimagining missionality within churches, and in part contributed to the rise of the emerging church movement. However, although the academic and even pastoral leadership discussions may have shifted over the course of the last few decades to reflect a more missional approach to church, this has failed to materialize as a greater level of missional engagement at the congregational and individual levels of the body of Christ in the West. This is evidenced by decreasing rates of initiatory personal evangelism and a large preference for invitational models rather than initiatory evangelism approaches.[12]

Ultimately, Hirsch argued that this attractional and invitational evangelism approach fails to reach the majority of the population who are reluctant to attend a traditional church.[13] If the gospel is only being preached within churches and the lost are not willing to go inside churches, how can the lost be reached?

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[11] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 36.
[12] "Reviving Evangelism in the Next Generation."
[13] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 36–37.

The impotence of the attractional form spurred the aforementioned emerging church into being. The emerging church may appear at first glance to bear much similarities to the movement approach described in the previous chapter - varied and unique meeting locations,[14] non-institutionalist approaches to ecclesial formation,[15] and missional language at the core.[16] However, there are several crucial differences. First, the emerging church is purposefully oriented around pluralism and as a response to pluralistic society,[17] while Majority World movements tend to be associated with homogeneity. Second, churches that identified themselves as emergent tend to lean much more to the political and theological left than their more traditional evangelical and mainline protestant equivalents,[18] whereas Majority World church planting movements' location contributes to them leaning more conservative.[19] Third, the emerging church's methods are commonly "sustained, improvised, and experimental creative acts,"[20] while movement missiology has a history of finding something that works and sticking to it. It is also interesting to note that movement missiology was developed as a corpus of ideas largely by missiologists within the Southern Baptist Convention, which statistically has one of the weakest emerging church dynamics of any denomination in the United States,[21] possibly indicating some autonomy of the idea's development.

However, only so much clarity in the distinction between the two approaches can be achieved due to the vast number of concepts developed inside the emerging churches. These blurry lines are acknowledged within the academic literature on the topic. "We

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[14] Ganiel and Marti, "Emerging Church Movement," 106.
[15] Ganiel and Marti, "Emerging Church Movement," 107.
[16] Wade, "From Mission to Missional," 217.
[17] Ganiel and Marti, "Emerging Church Movement," 105–6.
[18] Burge and Djupe, "Politics of the Emerging Church," 649.
[19] Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 6–8.
[20] Bielo, "Notes from the Emerging Church," 24
[21] Burge and Djupe, "Politics of the Emerging Church," 642.

categorize emerging Christianity as an orientation rather than an identity," write emerging

church researchers Ganiel and Marti.[22] This "orientation" towards a missional Christian

church contextualized for a postmodern culture certainly overlaps with movement

missiology applied in the West. Certain researchers have notably contributed to the

development of both philosophies, such as Alan Hirsch.

     Although there is an admittedly enthusiastic adoption of the term "missional"

within the emerging church movement, it is important to note that the metrics of mission

within this paradigm may not be the same as the metrics utilized by movement

missiologists. The low theological and homogeneity amongst the emerging church

churches contributes to a vast number of perspectives on the topic of mission, and a

segment of the emerging movement downplays or even disavows concepts such as

conversion, proselytization, and religious exclusivism.[23] Often in the emerging church,

mission is conceptualized as holistic and more focused on demonstrating the values of the

Kingdom through just and merciful action.[24] Although this is definitely an important

realignment with God's heart for the world around the church, it runs the risk of

downplaying the importance of the Great Commission's call to preach the gospel and

make disciples. In his reflections on the development of the movement, Cronshaw

ruminates that the emerging church could be "More effective for attracting back

over-churched people than drawing in unchurched people."[25] Ultimately, the emerging

church contributes much to the dialogue and richness of Western Christianity, but this

thesis holds that there is no evidence to suggest in either the broader demographic trends

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[22] Ganiel and Marti, "Emerging Church Movement," 105.
[23] Mackenzie, "Mission and the Emerging Church," 319.
[24] Cronshaw, "Shaping of Things Now," 28–29.
[25] Cronshaw, "Shaping of Things Now," 29.

of the West or upon closer inspection of the emerging churches themselves that they will be able to help meaningfully restore the body of Christ's missionary effectiveness in the area of evangelism.

Both the attractional and emergent streams factor together to create a reality across the West of extremely low numbers of conversions per church members. In Western Europe, this number is thought to be as low as one yearly conversion to Christianity for every 700-800 church members.[26] Although the United States are often considered to be a bastion of Christian religiosity, research tends to reveal that the plight of America is similar to that of the rest of the West.[27] Both liberal and conservative denominations are struggling, although at different scales.[28] Ultimately, evangelistic infertility stands a crucial challenge to the future of Christianity in the Occident.

Romans 10 presents a picture of evangelism that necessitates initiatory evangelism. Paul writes,"'Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent?" (Rom 10:13–15). If the proliferation of salvation is reliant on people hearing the good news of the Kingdom of God, we cannot in good faith restrict the preaching of the gospel to only settings where people have ventured to place themselves purposefully within that setting to hear the Christian message, but must instead take it to where they are. It is for this reason that Paul emphasizes the need of the sending function of the church, and Jesus initially gave the Great Commission so that his Disciples would "Go" (Matt 28:19).

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[26] Paas, "Church Growth by Church Planting," 43.
[27] Yung, "Center of Gravity for the Church," 77–78.
[28] Yung, "Center of Gravity for the Church," 77–78.

Something clearly is not quite right about how evangelism is conceptualized, theologized, and exercised in the Western context. Another voice from another context must be heard in order to wake up the Western church into its missional identity.

Movement missiology notes that abundant and initiatory evangelism is a defining attribute of church cultures that experience movements in Majority World contexts. However, the Western church is trending away from these evangelistic attributes and towards a decreasing quantity of sharing and timid disposition towards initiating these conversations. Emphasizing and training churches in movement approaches to evangelism and adopting movement missiology influenced ministry philosophies bears promise to address these critical dynamics through tested methods, albeit from another cultural context.

Discipleship

The Western church, long thought to be the bastion of global Christianity, is dealing with a problem of impotency. The American Christian majority serves as an example of this, as current Christian Protestant families struggle to effectively transmit their faith to their biological children. Rather than reaching maturity in their faith, young people spending years of their life within the church are more likely than not to leave as they grow older and enter college.[29]

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[29] Thiessen and Wilkins-Laflamme, *None of the Above*, 36, 46, and "Five Myths about Young Adult Church Dropouts."

This shocking exodus indicates a crisis of discipleship. As children who grow up within Christian families are perfect examples of people who are exposed to Christian formational practices within the current ecclesial context over a fairly long period of time and during an impressionable era of their life, shouldn't they be an indicator of the quality of discipleship that is going on in the church? What is breaking down in Western spiritual formation that young people do not have the spiritual resilience to retain their faith that had been in development for many years?

Thiessen argues that previous privatization of faith is a key factor in disaffiliation during the young adult years.[30] In this way, an individual's discipleship reaching a point of being mature and loyal is interwoven with the practice of evangelism, as the practice of this public exercise of faith helps reinforce existing religiosity.[31] As a consequence, churches that encourage embodied and public responses to faith and Scripture (whether that is street evangelism or attendance at a Sunday service) will be correlated with greater tenacity of affiliation. The Barna research study *Reviving Evangelism in the Next Generation* affirms this, stating "Overall, discipleship and evangelism go hand in hand. Data show that faith conversations strengthen young Christians' beliefs and encourage them to seek out more moments to share them."[32]

Attractional churches' main programs are directed towards fulfilling the evangelistic functions of the church, and designed to facilitate the translation of attendees to adherents (and ultimately donors) to drive the growth of the church. Because this approach is focused towards an initial decision rather than maturity in Christ, it co-ops

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[30] Thiessen, *The Meaning of Sunday*, 7.
[31] Thiessen, *The Meaning of Sunday*, 7.
[32] "Reviving Evangelism in the Next Generation."

the spiritual formation role of the body of Christ to drive the economics of large

buildings, large congregations and large professional staffs that execute the ministry

programs.

Biblical church institutions are instead oriented towards disciples reaching full

maturity in Christ and activity in the work of the body rather than numerical growth for

the sake of growth itself. Ephesians 4 is a centrally thematic passage that indicates this by

affirming that the purpose of church leadership is serving the development of the

members of the body of Christ into mature ministry rather than themselves accomplishing

it, as we read,

> And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (Eph 4:11–17)

This passage highlights the theme of maturity being the ultimate teleological end

accomplished by the church through training for obedient ministry. It contrasts with the

idea that the central gatherings of the body should be oriented towards spiritual seekers

making a decision for Christ.

This is not to say that evangelism is ignored or downplayed in the biblical

ecclesial model. Rather, it is generated as a result of a healthily maturing Christian

lifestyle. Much as Jesus called his twelve disciples to himself and used the missional

phrase "Fishers of men," (Matt 4:19) to describe their role in his entourage, true discipleship to Christ is necessarily an invitation to initiating evangelism outside the four walls of the church building. In this model, the exclusive and intense spiritual environment of the Christian ecclesial community forms a training ground for the launching of all disciples into their spheres of influence for the purpose of godly witness.

Many discipleship structures in the Western church are not oriented towards the biblical standard of obedience as discussed in the previous chapter, but rather towards information transfer. The prevalence of pastor/teacher-central ecclesial structures in the West[33] betrays a preoccupation with a model of once-a-week intellectual formation that is unfortunately disconnected from the everyday lifestyle of congregants.[34] Other emerging models of discipleship within postmodern culture have favored a contextual approach that conceptualizes discipleship as an individual spiritual journey towards Jesus, without particularly sharp delineations between nonbelievers and believers.[35]

Concerns about switching forms of discipleship from current models are reasonable objections to adopting movement missiology's obedience based approach to discipleship. Postmodern church leaders, especially from emerging philosophies, may be uncomfortable with adopting a methodology closely connected with the baggage of Majority World Christianity, with its hardline theological conservatism, charismatic fervor, and pervasive anti-intellectualism.

These specific stances likely do not have to be duplicated exactly in order to reap the benefits of movement missiologies' multiplicative approach to discipleship (after all, many churches in the Majority World has successfully imported elements of some

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[33] Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things to Come*, 165.
[34] Hirsch, *5Q*, 118.
[35] Mackenzie, "Mission and the Emerging Church," 319.

liturgical models from various denominations without also importing those denominations' theological liberalism in the process),[36] but they do point to a key factor in successful discipleship. Much like Thiessen's argument for active and embodied public religious expression,[37] the strictness imposed by movement missiology's discipleship paradigm creates a clear delineation between a disciple and someone who is not a disciple and naturally encourages healthy spiritual growth towards maturity as a result. Whether it is lingering in the "seeker" category or existing in an undefined (and arguably uncommitted) relationship with the gospel as part of a spiritual journey, the lack of clarity present in discipleship is not conducive towards making disciples who remain in Christ. Christianity can only walk hand in hand with pluralist postmodernism for so far until it poses the same challenge that Jesus posed, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

David Watson summarizes the crises of discipleship in the Western church. "In our efforts to swell the ranks of the church, to be inclusive, to be politically correct, to impress others, we have thrown away one of the most important and foundational teachings of the Bible—obedience."[38] A model of discipleship within the church must be adopted that is oriented towards equipping the saints for an obedient and active lifestyle of ministry, unlike the consumerist approach animating the prevailing attractional church models or the pluralist-individualist approach within emerging church philosophies.

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[36] One example is the Anglican church in Africa, see "Conservative Anglicans Reject Church of England."

[37] Thiessen, *The Meaning of Sunday*, 7.

[38] Watson and Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, 42.

Church Planting

Church planting is an essential part of developing healthy church culture in any region.

Older churches statistically grow less and less effective at growing with every passing

year, while young plants are five times as effective at attracting conversion growth by

some estimates.[39] This reality is demonstrated in both studies on general growth and

conversion growth.[40] As churches age, they grow from gaining a majority of their

members from amongst previously unchurched backgrounds to a firm majority of church

growth being transfer driven between existing churches.[41]

As such, effective church planting remains an important element of any strategy

to reengage the church missionally across a region that has grown stale. In this way, the

metrics of church planting initiatives serve as an indicator of general missionality, as

positive planting statistics correlate with so many other positive realities like

evangelization.

Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird's evaluation of church planting in the United States

says that, "Church plants are defined as newly organized localized gatherings of

followers of Jesus Christ which identify themselves as churches, meet regularly to engage

in spiritual activity, and would broadly be defined as Protestant."[42] Although this simple

definition is congruent with the ecclesiology of church planting within movement

missiology, this thesis argues that much of Western church planting has adopted

extraneous qualities that limit the planted church's abilities to reproduce and reach

maturity in the way required to reach movemental momentum. However, this conviction

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[39] Paas, "Church Renewal by Church Planting," 41.
[40] Paas, "Church Renewal by Church Planting," 46.
[41] Paas and Vos, "Church Growth in Western Europe," 244.
[42] Stetzer and Bird, "Church Planting in the United States," 4.

is shared with the emerging church, whose deconstruction of current models has led to flexible and varied strategies for church location.[43]

The first of these additions to the basic ecclesia is the hiring of professional church staff. While having a vocational church planter can be very helpful for focused attention on the work of planting, it also has its drawbacks. The church planting model today tends to jeopardize the finances of the pastor planting the congregation. Vocational church planting pastors report being in financial difficulty at much higher rates than the general population (with one in three either surviving off of assistance programs or struggling week to week with living costs).[44] Within the prevailing model of church planting, the survivability of the church is correlated with full time pastors, raising the minimum investment that most churches must make in order to plant a new body. These professional pastors limit the reproducibility of the church body as it relies on both the financing of more jobs and the training and education of more individuals who want to enter into the clergy. It also makes smaller congregation sizes less feasible as they are less likely to be able to afford to support a pastoral staff.

This financial tension extends beyond just the pastoral staff. Studies have indicated that successful church planting in the majority model is correlated with ongoing financial support from denominational and church planting bodies.[45] This by nature restricts the number of plants possible due to limitations of resources. Dependence on external funding is often assumed in church planting in the West, but is considered bad practice when starting indigenous churches in cross-cultural settings due to limiting the

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[43] Ganiel and Marti, "Emerging Church Movement," 106.
[44] "Church Planters and the Cost of Starting a Church."
[45] Meraz, "Survivability of Church Plants," 53–55.

church's autonomy. This should stand as a warning flag that the model is not optimized for retaining the missional edge of the church.

Despite high costs and low rates of reproduction, church plants in the West remain high risk ventures. Survivability of church plants in the North American Baptist Association shrinks to 68% in four years.[46] Other studies locate the survivability of church plants at 47%.[47] As we have seen that church plants take significant resources to catalyze, it becomes evident that a good deal of risk is involved with majority model church planting strategies.

The common attribute of these dynamics inhibiting church multiplication in planting strategies is over-institutionalization. Stetzer and Garrison state,

> "Institutionalization occurs when brush arbor meetings are institutionalized into brick and mortar buildings. Uncredentialed revival preachers give way to seminary trained and, eventually, doctorate-enhanced pastoral leaders. Furthermore, as the institution grows, churches accumulate staff to meet a growing array of congregational needs, thereby making the congregation more and more internally self-sufficient and less reliant upon non-Christians with whom they might otherwise have redemptive contact and relationships."[48]

These forces of institutionalization limit the rapid reproducing nature exhibited within the Majority World movements, and ultimately away from the organic apostolic values present in Scripture. Although there were apostolic structures that builders such as Paul implemented for the health of the church, these were a far cry from the board meetings, committees, budgets, business models and vision statements that have come to be unavoidable in the ecclesial landscape in the twenty-first century. What did exist was a simple but sophisticated network of house churches, whose strength was their ability to remain on mission and multiply until they had saturated the entire Roman empire. It was

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[46] Meraz, "Survivability of Church Plants," 53.
[47] Meraz, "Survivability of Church Plants," 55.
[48] Stetzer and Garrison, "Church Planting Movements in the West," 7.

a deinstitutionalized level of flexibility (shared with today's persecuted church) that allowed them to untether from the brick and mortar realities of the religious models of its day and create a more subversive Kingdom expression that existed both within the Jewish and gentile religious contexts, all the while retaining its individuality.

Contemporary church planting culture is struggling to keep pace with the rate of decline across the West. Although the importance of church planting to the ongoing health of the body has been demonstrated, the prevailing model creates many barriers to the rapid multiplication of churches across the region. A reevaluation of methodology and values is needed for the body of Christ in the West to see movements unfold in its context.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes with the observation that the church of the West should seek to apply movement missiology not just in its sending of missionaries but its efforts on home soil. When examined through the metrics of evangelism, discipleship, and church planting, the future is bleak without a methodological and theological course correction in the West. While the southern and eastern churches retain and even grow their missional edge through each of the three key dynamics explored in this chapter, their Occidental equivalent flounders.

Sam Chaise notes, "Our entire ecosystem—from schools to agencies to churches—was designed and created in the era of Christendom and is optimized to produce our current results. Pastors get paid for certain things; ministries get donations for certain things. Very few congregants and very few donors are willing to invest in the

unknown and experimental."[49] The current results will ultimately result in the collapse of Christian witness across the West, yet innovation is unlikely to happen within the bounds of current systems.

However, movement missiology does not rely on large sums of money from external sources in order to successfully plant multiplying churches. It doesn't have the same caps on growth (via educational restrictions for clergy or hoops to jump through for eligibility to plant with an organization) that bottleneck the expansion of the church. It values and has patterns that encourage and steward congregational sharing of the gospel through initiatory evangelism. It is oriented missionally, and provides a framework for a new awakening to sweep the West.

Centuries ago, the first great awakening began as John Wesley and his compatriots operated outside of the institutionalism of their national church for the purpose of re-evangelizing the English nation. Challenging current ecclesial assumptions that hindered evangelism, their effective witness scandalized the religious status quo as they did not limit their preaching to the pulpit but began to take initiative to evangelize in fields and street corners. Although they received pushback from the prevailing models, their innovations proved to be the missiological key for reaching both the decaying religiosity of Britain and the pioneering grace for the new movement that would sweep America under the leadership of Francis Asbury. What unfolded in this era is arguably the only truly successful "movement" to be witnessed in the Western continent, and the effects are still visible today.

In very much the same way, it is likely that the same principles that have given life to the rapid expansion at the frontiers of mission may very well hold the key for

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[49] Santos, *Mission and Evangelism*, 22.

re-evangelization of the post-Christian West. If we are to learn anything from the exploits of the Wesleys and Asbury, we must ultimately leave the boundaries of the current model imposed upon us by the vestiges of Christendom in order to pioneer the new expression that will restore the integrity of our Christian mission.

This thesis holds that movement missiology's radical and unconventional approaches to church planting, discipleship, and evangelism are these modern keys, and that they are a reasonable next step informed both by the history of missions and the research of the current status of the Western church. We will now turn to constructing a model for the integration of these concepts into a contextually responsive model.

CHAPTER 4: CONTEXTUALIZING MOVEMENT MISSIOLOGY FOR COMPLEX
URBAN AND INDIVIDUALIST ENVIRONMENTS IN THE WEST

As the previous chapters have exposited, Christian mission to the Post-Christian West is at a critical state. Action is necessary to overcome the challenges of growth presented to churches across the North America, European, Australian, and New Zealand contexts. The current strategic approaches and overarching philosophies must be radically reformatted for the postmodern age.

However, previous attempts to contextualize the promising area of movement missiology towards this end have proved unsuccessful. To this date, there remains few (if any) movements in the West that bear the full scope and quality of the movements described by Garrison in his work. This is not for lack of trying, which illustrates that the models in use themselves cannot be considered to have universal potency. This reality clashes with many of the overconfident promises of CPM materials, which commonly state that if the model fails to produce the fruit of movements, then the practitioner must be diverging from the recommended techniques for application.

This thesis argues that movement missiology is successful in the Majority World not simply because of its superior methodology but ultimately in its contextual application of strong biblical values. The often criticized attempts to recommend movement methodologies directly from the Bible have missed the opportunity to develop overarching biblical values that can be situationally applied across many cultural settings. Hence, the previous attempts to transplant the resulting methodology from the frontier

of missions into postmodern contexts has mostly resulted in disillusionment and
disappointment for practitioners. We will turn now to identifying how the cultural
differences from Majority World to Western World actually demand that the application
of the effective and true values of movement missiology must be contextualized
differently. From these findings we will construct a new model towards the goal of
revitalizing the western mission through the values of movement missiology.

The Importance of Urban Contextual Understanding in the West

Most of the movements documented across the world have occurred in rural, villagelike
contexts.[1] These settings tend to lend themselves to intensely geographically oriented
relationships, due to lower population density and overall homogeneity.[2] With less
options for who to interact with, geographic proximity becomes a large factor in who is in
a close relationship with whom.

However, the West is over eighty percent Urban, and in the process of urbanizing
even further.[3] In cities, the crowds of humanity create an effect of (somewhat
counterintuitive) social anonymity.[4] In the process of being seen by so many different
individuals, people are seen by no one because they are lost in a sea of faces. In the
process of so many trivial interactions stacked on top of each other, few meaningful
relationships or even memorable moments are developed. Amidst the hustle and bustle of
a busy life, city dwellers often report the feeling of urban loneliness.[5]

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[1] Stetzer and Garrison, "Potential for Church Planting," 5.
[2] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 254–55.
[3] "Urbanization."
[4] Monti, *Urban People and Places*, 119–20
[5] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 254–55.

Cities are also economic hubs that propel their inhabitants forward by necessity. The many strains of living in an urban environment are combined with greater financial opportunity to create a "survival of the fittest" atmosphere.[6] The pace of life is fast and the day to day margin of spare time is slim. Long term relationships also become less common due to the increased likelihood of people suddenly moving on towards better economic opportunities in a different city.[7]

A high percentage of people who live in cities have moved into that urban setting, away from their more rural upbringing.[8] In so doing, cities become places where individuals are often unmoored from the more traditional social networks. Families of origin often live far away, and the individuals are subsequently disconnected from their traditional religious, familial, and even ethnic backgrounds.[9] Monti illustrates how this affects the type of relationships that people form in urban contexts by exploring the differences between "bridging" and "bonding" social ties.[10] "Bridging" occurs when relationships are built over differences of ethnicity, culture, and other social dividers, and "bonding" occurs when relationships are formed because of shared identity in those areas.[11] Each type of relationship has its strengths, as Monti notes, "Bridging ties are especially useful in creating new possibilities for sharing information but may be too superficial or fleeting to support sustained collective action. Bonding social capital can create networks on which members can rely when they need assistance, but deeply bonded groups can also be insular and exclusive."[12]

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[6] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 254–55.
[7] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 254–55.
[8] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 254–55.
[9] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 254–55.
[10] Monti, *Urban People and Places*, 107–8.
[11] Monti, *Urban People and Places*, 107–8.
[12] Monti, *Urban People and Places*, 107–8.

In summary, urban life affects the social culture and general patterns of interpersonal relationships of those who live within cities. As urban centers seem for the most part to resist the advances that movement missiology has made in other settings,[13] a contextualized approach that accounts for the underlying philosophies of city dwellers is necessary to fully reach these significant populations.

The West as an Individualistic Culture

An influential dynamic that differentiates the Western World from the Majority World contexts is the predominantly individualist philosophy that permeates this society. When sociologists rank countries on a scale of individualist to collectivist, the Western nations are very nearly all ranked as more individualistic than all of their Majority World counterparts.[14] Of the Western nations, the United States, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Hungary constitute the most extreme individualistic cultures.[15] These findings establish a clear correlation between individualistic culture and national economic wealth.[16]

Members of an individualistic society are more likely to derive their sense of identity from themselves, and have a strong value for friendship and being a harmonious part of the broader society.[17] Contrasted with this, members of a collectivist society are more likely to derive their sense of identity from the traditional social groups that they are born into, such as their ethnic identity and (extended) family.[18] Both of these philosophies affect individual's preferences for social relationships, with friendship

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[13] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 254–55.
[14] Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 73–75.
[15] Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 73–75.
[16] Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 73–75.
[17] Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 76.
[18] Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 76.

playing an important role in the individualist social sphere and family central to the collectivist.[19]

These differences play out in a variety of manifestations in group dynamics. Hofstede notes, "Students in a collectivist culture will also hesitate to speak up in larger groups without a teacher present, especially if these are partly composed of relative strangers, or out-group members. This hesitation decreases in smaller groups. In a large, collectivist or culturally heterogeneous class, creating small subgroups is a way to increase student participation."[20] This stands as evidence that groups have vastly different modes of operation along the individualism versus collectivism progression.

An area particularly relevant to the study in focus for this thesis is the breakdown of the family that is correlated with individualist cultures. Although it is very common for Majority World families to include nephews, nieces, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, and beyond, not only in the inner circles of trust and family identity but also living situations, these dynamics are much less common in Western environments.[21] The Western severance of connection with extended family is coupled with the fracturing of the nuclear family. Individualist nations see higher rates of divorce,[22] and children report more distant relationships from parental figures.[23] When individual interests take priority, even over the interests of the family, it is not shocking to find that the intimate familial bonds that constitute the lifeblood of Majority World communities are less central in the West.

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[19] Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 76.
[20] Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 89.
[21] Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism*, 97,
[22] Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism*, 97, 140–41, 179.
[23] Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism*, 112.

One further dynamic relating to these differences is how Western individualist-influenced approaches to sharing the gospel, mission, and church break down when in collectivist cultures. Jayson Georges' book *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures* provides a well-known and well crafted coverage of the intricacies involved in cross-cultural gospel communication. This work focuses mostly on the content of the gospel message and how that can be contextualized in communication depending on context.

Georges points out how individualistically oriented individuals are motivated to avoid guilt and to retain innocence.[24] To this end, individualistic cultures are oriented around rules and codes of conduct, by which the society measures the standing of every single person.[25] As such, the gospel speaks relevantly to these cultures when it addresses our innocence through the removal of sin and justification before God through Christ's sacrifice.[26]

The corresponding collectivist value system is the avoidance of shame and the pursuit of honour.[27] Both of these dynamics are communal in nature, as the actions of the individual can cause the collective group (whether it is a family, an ethnic background, or even a neighborhood) to lose face in the eyes of the adjacent groups.[28] The poignant aspects of the gospel speak of the removal of the shame of sin and Father God's bringing those who accept his Son Jesus into the honourable status of a child of God through the process of adoption.[29]

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[24] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 17–19.
[25] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 17–19.
[26] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 35–37.
[27] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 20–24.
[28] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 20–24.
[29] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 37–42.

Georges' big idea is that evangelism across cultural barriers should think critically about which elements of the gospel message to emphasize. He bemoans the Western colonial mindset that contributes to some un-thoughtful contextual approaches to mission that could be rectified through greater understanding of collectivist culture. He writes to this end,

> The gospel is a many-sided diamond, and God wants people in all cultures to experience his complete salvation. But despite the multifaceted nature of Christian salvation, Western Christianity emphasizes one aspect of salvation (i.e. forgiveness of sins), thus neglecting other facets of the gospel of Jesus Christ.[30] Imagine a diamond with only one side! For cross-cultural workers, a truncated gospel hinders spirituality, theology, relationships, and ministry. We unintentionally put God in a box, only allowing him to save in one area.[31]

As Georges points out that our cultural presuppositions get in the way for cross-cultural workers doing effective ministry, it is important to recognize that the thematic context of the gospel isn't the only dynamic affected by the differences between Western and Majority World cultures. Methodologies must also be responsive to host cultures as they are implanted in the rest of the world from the West.

Conversely, movement missiology is a Majority World church phenomena and approach that practitioners are striving to introduce into the Western context. The same cultural breakdowns are present in this process, only in reverse. Unfortunately, contextualization around the key cultural differences has not been adequately explored in the existing literature.

Ultimately, any missiologist who has learned to rely upon structures such as the intact extended family or close bonds based upon inherited identity, or utilizes culturally

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[30] It is important to note that since the time of Georges' study of the gospel there has been progress in several circles towards models that are more holistic in their presentation of the gospel. See Beach, Church in Exile, 168–74.

[31] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 13.

relevant content within either evangelistic or discipleship resources and approaches, must come to terms with this reality: the social fabric of society is completely different in the West.

Network Theory as a Guide to Movement Application

Many evangelists and apologists presume that the primary attraction of Christianity is (or at least should be) its doctrinal superiority.[32] This viewpoint subsequently relies upon convincing people to agree with the orthodox viewpoints on critical theological matters through various forms of rhetoric.

However, historian Rodney Stark illustrates that this viewpoint diverges from the observable sociological patterns of conversion that seem to actually emerge when phenomenologically observed.[33] He references a case study of the Moonies, a successful Korean cult that gained traction in America as well as its homeland, and revealed the surprising conclusion that converts to that religious movement were much more motivated by strong interpersonal relationships developed with adherents than familiarity or agreement with the cult's doctrines.[34] Stark writes,

> The principle that conversions spread through social networks is quite consistent with the fact that the earliest followers of Jesus shared many family ties and long standing associations… although the very first Christian converts in the West may have been made by full-time missionaries, the conversion process soon became self-sustaining as new converts accepted the obligation to spread their faith and did so by missionizing their immediate circle of intimates. This offended many pagans and has confused some historians. Pagans saw something sinister in "the personal approaches made by Christians to non-Christians."[35]

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[32] Stark, *Cities of God*, 8–13.
[33] Stark, *Cities of God*, 8–13.
[34] Stark, *Cities of God*, 9–11.
[35] Stark, *Cities of God*, 14.

Stark's contribution is fashioned to sociologically explain the rapid growth that the Christian movement experienced in its first few centuries, as evidenced by its footprint on history. In so doing, he provides indirect commentary on how subsequent (modern) movements that seek to spread across society might go about proliferating their message. If the scandal of historic Christianity was a movement of religious conversions sweeping subversively through relational networks rather than the exertion of force from powerful institutions and leaders, is there similar evidence for this in the mission field today?

Movement missiologists' observations from their contexts also highlight the importance of interpersonal relationships in creating ideal contexts for conversions. Much like the historic trends outlined by Stark, movement sources report that the evangelistic expansion of the Christian religion in frontier contexts mostly is occurring through the relational networks of every-day believers within the host culture.[36]

"Oikos mapping" is a missional tool commonly employed by trainers within movements, as evidenced by its recommendation within models such as Four Fields.[37] Oikos is the Greek word for household, and within movement terms it refers to the relationships of particular influence within any given person's social circle.[38] The activity of mapping the oikos is practically a network visualization of the individuals' relationships for the purpose of sharing the gospel strategically with those most likely to receive it due to pre-existing relational trust.[39] This technique mirrors the network maps constructed throughout sociology to chart relationships,[40] and as such betray an element of similarity that movement missiology shares with the study of Social Network Theory.

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[36] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 11–12.
[37] "Oikos Mapping."
[38] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 8, 49.
[39] "Oikos Mapping."
[40] McCulloh et al., *Social Network Analysis*, 5.

Network theory is a model for sociological study of relational dynamics in a given population.[41] This approach has gained utilization for the purposes of analyzing religious conversions,[42] but is a common approach for technical charting of social data within the broader study of sociology.[43] The basic concept that the finer points of the theory's philosophy are elucidated from is the switch from mainly observing the properties of data points towards an approach that observes the relationships (ties) between data points (nodes).[44] The strength of this approach is its unique insight that it provides into how the individual components of a system relate and correspond to the properties of the whole system.[45]

Network analysis holds several overarching observations that are mirrored (likely unintentionally) within movement missiology. Firstly, it finds that information (or religious beliefs) flow most effectively in close (high-trust, high frequency of exposure) interpersonal relationships and slower in loose acquaintance relationships that hold less trust and frequency of meeting.[46] This corresponds with the movement principle that holds that the most effective gospel communication path is between individuals who are already close relationally, like the occurrence of household salvations.[47]

Secondly, network analysis acknowledges and studies "information cascades", the phenomena in which a particular belief or social trend saturates a network after reaching a critical level of adoption.[48] This corresponds with the central theme of movement missiology, the real phenomenon of movements themselves. If network analysis is to be

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[41] McCulloh et al., *Social Network Analysis*, 4–5.
[42] Stark, *Cities of God*, 13.
[43] McCulloh et al., *Social Network Analysis*, 4–5.
[44] Collar, *Religious Networks*, 10–11.
[45] Collar, *Religious Networks*, 6.
[46] Collar, *Religious Networks*, 10–13.
[47] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 8, 49.
[48] Collar, *Religious Networks*, 14–16.

taken seriously within the realm of missions, movements are logically a reasonable phenomenon to expect from successful evangelistic efforts.

Thirdly, network analysis holds that "information cascades" that take over a network are most likely when the belief reaches an influential, well connected, religiously open, cultural innovator.[49] These individuals are undeterred by being different than their peers, and are generally estimated to make up about 2.5 percent of the broader population.[50] The corresponding strategic concept within movement missiology is Person of Peace evangelism. The receptive, influential, and interpersonally connected target for this type of evangelism is clearly the cultural innovator described by network theorists, though undeniably in more spiritual terms. David Watson argues to this point in his resources by noting that the person of peace he connects with is often an influential and open spiritual leader.[51]

Network theory is relevant to this study in that it shares many assumptions with movement missiology about how ideas spread in society. Current movement resources rely upon the presumptions about networks based upon the cultural locations of said movements, but social networks are vastly different in the West as compared to the rural, Majority World contexts where the famous missiological breakthroughs have taken place.

Any situation that involves shifting the way a network is constituted will also shift how a religious idea (such as the gospel) most efficiently spreads throughout society. If we are to consider this line of thought, the methodologies predicated upon assumptions on people's relationships that are imported from Majority World contexts will then presumably break down when applied in the West. As such, the values of movement

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[49] Collar, *Religious Networks*, 16–20.
[50] Collar, *Religious Networks*, 17.
[51] Watson and Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, 116.

missiology must be contextualized into new formats for effective evangelism, discipleship, and church planting in this setting.

A Synthesized Model of Urban, Individualist Relationship Networks

With the cultural realities of urbanism and individualism being strong factors in reaching the Western World with the gospel, how can we adjust the network model of movement missiology to provide a foundation for a superior contextual model? Fewer total strong social relationships due to both urban and individualist factors will mean that individuals are statistically more open to changing their beliefs. This is because the more strong relationships that an individual has with people holding any one existing belief, the less likely they are to be persuaded to change their perspective on it.[52] Urban loneliness and the absence of collectivist cultures' often inherited social network through group dynamics lead to this dynamic of smaller numbers of close, trustworthy relational ties.

The flipside of the previously mentioned dynamic of fewer total strong social ties is that individuals have less avenues for sharing ideas within trusted relationships. Although there is a higher chance of someone being willing to adopt a new belief, the impact of their switch will be less likely to spread to close neighbors due simply to a decreased number of close ties.

Those secondary nodes (individuals) will likewise be less connected with each other, as they will be less likely to be family members or other traditional group identities. The odds in individualist cultures that two people who both have a relational tie to a common individual will also have a social tie with each other is much lower than in collectivist contexts. The consequence of this is that the effect of having multiple close

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[52] Collar, *Religious Networks*, 15.

relationships who make a change in their religious beliefs is less likely to occur.[53] This effect of philosophical pressure that builds up with multiple close ties making changes to their beliefs is a key dynamic of the network cascades described within social network theory.

However, the dispersion of information through an individual's social network reaches a more diverse, varied number of secondary social networks than a collectivist context. This is due to a greater diversification of loose relational ties, which are less likely to be from a homogenous group than close ties.[54] For example, a homogenous, collectivist relational network generally means that a philosophical innovation will remain localized to a particular village, people group, tribe, or some other social unit. Conversely, urban individualist social networks are much more likely to spread through many complex facets of human culture, as the diversity of cities empowers a profoundly varied combination of other individuals that will be interacted with in the course of day-to-day life.

The closest relational ties in this matrix will be much less correlated with familial relationships. Instead, these close tie relationships will be more likely to form along the lines of economic and interest based connections. Due to geographic mobility, the prevalence of the smaller nuclear family living situations over the extended family living situations, and many broken family ties through divorce and poor child-parent relationships, Westerners are much more likely than their Majority World counterparts to pick friendships through connections through work or play.

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[53] Collar, *Religious Networks*, 15.
[54] Granovetter, "Weak Ties," 1366.

A Vision for Movement Evangelism in the West

A consistent preoccupation for movement missiologists has been the undeniably encouraging reality of "household conversions" within Majority World movements. Much of the emphasis of day to day evangelism in these settings relies upon sharing gospel lessons learned within a Discovery Bible Study group with their close ties within the family. Based on what has been established so far in regards to social networks, it is clear that the compounding network pressure that mounts as individuals within a family begin to accept the gospel contributes towards the family salvation phenomena.

However, given that in individualistic cultures the strongest interpersonal ties are commonly found in work and recreational friendships, and that friendship is considered a relationship of high importance,[55] it is logical to relocate effort away from Majority World models of extended family witnessing. With this shift, the most effective locations for evangelism should instead be the places that facilitate the construction and maintenance of individual's friendships. If someone's social circle is their coworkers, movement missiologists need to respond to this and train this believer how to best navigate witnessing in the workforce. If an individual spends a lot of their time playing chess, movement trainers should help this believer navigate the subculture and contextualize the gospel. If, contrary to cultural trends, an individual's family remains their primary social network that they exist within, movement trainers should invest into sharing wisdom regarding witnessing to family (much of which can be found within current movement resources).

The evangelistic values recommended by practitioners in the West should remain consistent with Majority World models by locating the person of peace and sharing with

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[55] Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 73–75.

them through initiatory evangelism. However, instead of assuming these people of peace will be primarily found within family structures, an added emphasis should be given to sharing through connections in workplaces and recreational activities, where social networks are commonly rooted in the West.[56] The attractional evangelistic format common to the evangelical West should be done away with in order to mobilize the gospel effectively through all subcultures, even those that are uninterested in initial church attendance.

Much like in the general cultures of nations that are hostile to Christianity, in Western nations such as the United States, workplaces and workers often frown on proselytization or any other religious actions.[57] The person of peace approach is key here to identify the open and relationally connected individual in order to be certain that the religious advance will be well received without backlash. The movement values are deeply relevant for application in these contexts, but the setting looks very different.

Practitioners can adjust their methodology to recommend individuals praying through each of their (likely many) spheres of engagement in the world and ask God to highlight people of peace in each one individually. Although there might be less total relational proximity to the people of peace, the established "strength of weak ties"[58] can empower the gospel to impact many areas of society through thought influencers in those areas.

Here is the challenge of urban missions in an individualistic (and pluralistic) culture. The host culture can not be conceptualized as a monolithic unit but is instead composed of an insurmountably complex combination of subcultures. The shift from

[56] John et al., "Movements in Urban Areas," 46.
[57] Beane et al., "Workplace Religious Displays," 82–86.
[58] Granovetter, "Strength of Weak Ties," 1360–66

missions in more homogenous groups to missions in urban Western cultures is the fact that every believer who wishes to share their faith must do some of the work of contextualization to their specific spheres. No longer will models where the missionary catalyst of the movement recommends a model for engagement across the board and trains whole groups of believers in the identical tactics be responsive enough to spread multiplicatively. Instead, every believer must be equipped with the tools to interpret their culture, apply the values of the movement, and ultimately be led by the Holy Spirit to speak the gospel well to those around them.

What is recommended in response to this reality is a hermeneutical training approach formed around the creation of skill sets in the everyday believer to interpret culture so that they can best apply their movement-inspired missional values in every sphere of their life. This calls for evangelism trainings to become more focused on the skill set of contextual theology. The fractal nature of Western society is an undeniable deterrent for effective movemental evangelistic strategies to take root, but a more sophisticated training approach can compensate for these realities to see similar fruit.

A Vision for Movement Discipleship in the West

As we established earlier in this thesis, discipleship models produced by movement practitioners tend towards a one-size-fits-all approach. Specific lessons in particular sequences are recommended, and small group discipleship is emphasized rather than personal, one-on-one models.

However, this rigid methodology fails to be responsive to the complexity of the individualized urban West. Ethnic diversity, diversity of religion of origin, and other

variables lead to a complex makeup of any given individuals' relationships. These different backgrounds and experiences result in differing discipleship needs from person to person, and small group dynamics are less likely to be helpful to the spiritual needs of all participants.

Although previous models banked upon homogeneity for their creation of monolithic discipleship frameworks, it is necessary to address the critical issues at the heart of each individual subculture for spiritual formation. The urban individualism of the West has created a complicated mixture of individual strengths and weaknesses that must be examined at the individual level.

Rather than training disciplers to walk through a set lesson plan like T4T, the Three Third schematic or other forms of DMM resources, this thesis recommends that the best way to disciple new believers in the context of the complexity of Western urban individualism is to adopt a cultural hermeneutic approach informed by movement values and the Holy Spirit. Through practice in applying values in a way that is responsive to the particular needs of their own social network and avoiding standardized training that duplicates forms to accomplish these values, individuals can be empowered for their own missionary task. In much the same way as a missionary organization might situationally train and commission one field worker to northern China and another to southern Argentina, this adjusted model of movement practitioner training should spend a significant amount of time assisting participants in identifying their mission field and the cultural networks related to it, and empower them with the specific tools to do responsive evangelism, discipleship, and church planting in those contexts. This may expand the

total number of hours or days needed for training completion and decrease the total class size possible per trainer, but will ultimately create a more feasible route to multiplication.

The role of the Spirit in these processes of movement application is also an important aspect for trainers to emphasize. Although the bulk of movement training has emphasized tool-based methodology as the thrust of its training, allowing the voice of the Spirit to assist in interacting wisely with subcultures should be also emphasized. As several scriptural passages where the gospel needed to be contextualized into an impactful presentation note, there is a dynamic of being "filled with the Spirit" that empowers cultural communication as well as research (Acts 4:8, Acts 13:9, Acts 2, Acts 4:31, Matt 10:19). To emphasize this, some teaching and training should be devoted towards practices for engaging in listening to the Holy Spirit in relation to cross cultural communication, such as (but not limited to) the spiritual discipline of listening prayer.

Additionally, within individualistic societies like the West, a more individual, one-on-one scope of discipleship is advisable. Although most movement practitioners have favoured group discipleship settings,[59] the non-homogeneity of the West demands the inclusion of additional mentorship frameworks to truly help every disciple reach their full potential maturity in Christ.

Throughout all of these adjustments, this thesis holds that the underlying value that makes movement missiology so strong is the emphasis on obedience based discipleship. Beyond the previously established biblical basis for this value, it forms the foundation for the movements' call to all believers to engage with abundant and initiatory evangelism in response to Jesus. It empowers the rich discipleship experience that comes through participatory learning.

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[59] Farah, ed., *Motus Dei*, 327–28.

Finally, Obedience Based Discipleship connects to the "strictness" element that is correlated with healthily growing ecclesial bodies. Studies have shown that when churches implement clear and firm moral and activist expectations for their membership, it strengthens the social value of the membership through deterring freeloaders and contributing to a stronger communal identity.[60] Although stricter boundaries between Christian disciples and outgroups may appear on the surface to be more of a deterrent than an attractive force, this counterintuitive social factor has been deeply tied to the growth of Christian movements worldwide.

The forms of discipleship models may be adapted to fit cultural contexts, but ultimately movements are more likely to occur when God's spirit moves his disciples to live in obedient response to the Great Commission.

A Vision for Movement Church Planting in the West

House churches have long been the preferred ecclesial setting for movement practitioners. The Majority World's strong emphasis on hospitality and family values have proven helpful mechanisms that empower church health. However, due to urban realities, churches that are primarily defined by these virtues may not come as naturally to Westerners.

However, Christian fellowship does not depend on a particular setting. Westerners' own community oriented strengths (a high value for friendships)[61] should be considered and drawn upon in the formation of the dynamics of ecclesial discipleship settings.

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[60] Iannoconne, "Strict Churches," 1208–209.
[61] Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 73–75.

As we established earlier, urban relationships tend to be oriented around interest-led and economic based networks. David Broodryk, a movement practitioner and researcher, said of his work in urban settings,

> What we've found is that there are social networks and there are pre-existing communities in cities, especially among the younger generation, but they look very different to what we think they should look like. They're often not bloodline families. They're often not the village kind of community. They're often more linear relationships. But young people understand this. They understand social media. They have networks. They have friendships. They have large oikos influence groups—that are often not as deep or as meaningful—but they are there."[62]

The urban movements that Broodryk is involved with have coined the term "affinity groups."[63] This term refers to these emerging urban social networks formed around interests and employment.[64]

As such, the church's meeting location should be moved to the more natural meeting place. When planting churches amongst businesspeople in Dallas, are they more likely to gather in coffeeshops than their private dwellings? In surfing communities along the Californian coast, can Discovery Bible Studies be relocated to beaches, boardwalks, and skateparks? Can churches form within groups that already exist for environmental causes and take place while people undertake the activities that they are already passionate about?

With individualistic individuals deeply prone to loneliness[65] and coupled with the Western high value for friendships, many individuals will find much value within the community relationships created within micro-church contexts. Generally, smaller

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[62] John et al., "Catalyzing Movements in Urban Areas," 46.
[63] John et al., "Catalyzing Movements in Urban Areas," 46.
[64] John et al., "Catalyzing Movements in Urban Areas," 46.
[65] Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism*, 179–80.

churches have a strength of building meaningful communities.[66] Movement missiology

will remain concerned with reaching the lost within an individual's social networks, but

in the West there is an additional need to help people construct social networks in the first

place.

Church planters must in some ways reconceptualize their task as building a Christ

centered friend-group. Reclaiming the ecclesial unit as a community that gathers in

multiple places to go about study and worship is an essential task for the church in the

West. The immediately post-pentecostal church illustrates the spontaneous and organic

nature of the early Christian community in Jerusalem, as Acts records,

> And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and
> they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all,
> as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple,
> and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together
> with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the
> people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were
> being saved. (Acts 2:44–47)

The early church utilized existing structures and patterns within society - neither the

dinner party or temple worship was an innovation within the host culture of Second

Temple Judaism. However, they participated in these settings within the context of a

radical Jesus community. There was an intentionality about doing the day to day together

that provided a rich alternative community and even an alternative economy of life.

Much in the same way, movemental church planting within the Western church

will track the everyday lifestyle of each individual involved, inspecting each moment for

unique ways of incorporating the ecclesial community. Urban lunch hours at a favourite

cafe become both a hub for evangelistic conversations and a platform for Bible study

over a sandwich. Crossfit gym memberships provide opportunities to meet up and go

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[66] "The Strength and Possible Weakness of Small Church Life."

through the day to day lifestyle of believers together. When specific, carved out time for the community is required, western church planters should consider where the individuals they reach would generally spend an evening out, whether that's an evening hike above the city or a campfire on a beach.

Rather than being identifiable primarily by a physical location or setting, in a Western context churches must exhibit a large amount of flexibility to be responsive to the complexities of urban life and relationships. This requires the deconstruction of formulaic models that inflexibly limit the content and liturgy of Christian gathering in the name of reproducibility.

Responsive movement missiology should interpret culture to form churches through the hermeneutical interaction between established movement values, the Holy Spirit's situational leadership, and the host culture. This stands opposed to a methodologically central cookie cutter approach like the three-thirds model, T4T, or even the Watsons' *Contagious Disciple Making* materials.

Movement practitioners should begin to identify and study the prevalent affinity groups in the cultures around them and coordinate specific equipping efforts to train believers to reach them. This requires a more elaborate, situational research-informed, and academic approach to movements, but it remains locked in with the value of rapidly multipliable churches. Additionally, in response to the relocation of ecclesial practice mentioned above, Western movement missiology's preoccupation with the house church model should be removed to make space for the broader microchurch paradigm. In movement missiology contextualized for the Western context, the formation of small, reproducible ecclesial communities usually meeting within the established social

gathering spots (microchurches) becomes more common than family-based preference for house churches, although not excluding them.

Synthesis

It can rightly be asserted that given the established complexity of the task, no monolithic approach is available that will prove effective across the vast array of Western cultural realities. In the stead of such an all-encompassing recommendation for the church in these contexts, I suggest an application of the tried-and-true biblical values of movement missiology applied with the hermeneutic of the Holy Spirit and a passion for deeply understanding culture.

This approach answers many of the broader criticisms of movement missiology. Reading descriptive texts as prescriptive for missional methodology can lead to the errors of formulaicism, but an approach that seeks to extract the underlying ecclesial and missional values that empowered the early church's rapid expansion can be both biblically sound and make room for practitioner's explanations of the phenomena that they see and seek to emulate.

The approaches to evangelism, discipleship, and church planting listed above are all designed to be responsive to the specific needs of Western culture. To initiate them will require some additional consideration, to which we will now turn.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This thesis began by examining current contributions in the area of movement missiology and the associated fields relevant to the scope of this project, namely the study of urbanity, individualism, the Western World, and network theory. It found that although a consistent narrative of development was evident, there was a need for synthesizing work to assist movement missiology in gaining traction and effectiveness in the West.

The thesis completed an overview of the field of movement missiology. The heritage within the broader fields of missiology and theology was traced from its roots in history and biblical theology to its current form in the models that exist today. The thesis mounted a defence of the framework's core presuppositions against criticism from academic sources, while being realistic about the shortcomings in the current dialogue (especially the weakness of using descriptive texts as prescriptive instructions). Altogether, this thesis concluded that the movement missiology had some valuable contributions to make to the field and that its findings should be learned from and applied to the greatest capacity possible.

Next the thesis took stock of the state of movements in the Western context. It found that there were no significant movements to be seen in the Occident. Additionally, when examined for the strengths of movement missiology (strong evangelistic endeavors and success, deep and empowering discipleship, and multiplying churches rapidly) the

Western church was shown to be floundering in all three respects. The thesis argued that effectively applying the frontier approach to ecclesiology found within movement missiology would be critical for reclaiming health within these important dynamics.

In the next chapter, a network approach was covered to explain the current breakdown of movement missiology in the West. The social fabric of the West was demonstrated to be entirely different than Majority World contexts where movement thrived, due to the West's hyperindividualism and urbanized population. The complexity of these realities removed the social structures that movement practitioners had learned to rely upon for growth, such as the breakdown of the family and the non-homogenous populations in tight proximity with each other.

In response to this, the thesis recommended three shifts for missiologists in the Occident. Firstly, it recommended adapting the model of person of peace evangelism that relied upon household salvation to shift towards an approach that emphasized person of peace evangelism within "affinity" groups of interest and economic based networks. Secondly, it recommended shifting discipleship strategies from relying upon one size fits all group gatherings towards strategic personalized and responsive approaches that included one on one mentorship as a supplement to those group discipleship models. The third recommendation was to do away with "house church" missiology as a main emphasis of movements, and adopt a responsive model that allowed for flexibility of time of meeting and location to reflect affinity groups' existing patterns of life. Throughout all of these shifts, the consistent theme that emerged was applying the values (rather than the rules or forms) of movement missiology as led by the Spirit and informed by a contextual understanding of the social networks existing in society.

Application

Movement practitioners have long been known for their focus on training seminars to equip Christians at every level of leadership within the (unfolding) movement. This is perhaps most noticeable in what the acronym T4T's means, Training for Trainers. Whether evangelism training, Discipleship Bible Study seminars, majority model church consultations, or house church planting conferences, equipping individuals and groups through practical tools has always been one of the strengths of the approach.

However, these tools are generally formulaic in the name of consistency, ease of learning, and reproducibility. Examples are the common gospel sharing tool "three circles" (which utilizes a simple diagram as a template for communication),[1] and the "three-thirds" meeting outline (which gives a set liturgy for the Discipleship Bible Study to be experienced that any house church leader can imitate).[2] Although the simplicity of these prefabricated tools is effective at empowering believers to take steps of obedience to the Great Commission with as minimal practical resistance as possible, it can have the consequence of disempowering the everyday believer from truly thinking like a missionary to their circles of influence. Existing methods of movement missiology relegate almost all strategic and contextual thinking upwards in the organizational structure towards the movement oversight, even though the model's spoken value is the priesthood of all believers.

However much this approach may work in more homogenous settings, this thesis has demonstrated that the West is a complex environment, and that some adjustments to the model must be made. If only an elite class is thinking through contextualization and

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[1] "3 Circles."
[2] "How To Conduct the 3/3rds Discovery Bible Study."

prescribing tools and approaches for a whole movement, it will lack the flexibility to adjust to meet every specific area of society's cultural needs.

What this thesis suggests is that movement practitioners marry the pre-existing culture of rigorous trainings with a goal of training every believer with the skills to understand subcultures, conceptualize social networks, and contextualize missional practices. From the foundation of these skills, practitioners can equip through training patterns of affinity group person of peace evangelism, individually personalized obedience based discipleship, and contextually located and structured micro churches that form meaningful communities.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study has uncovered a few areas that are in need of greater focus and further academic thought if the dialogue around movement missiology is to progress to its full potential. Firstly, more research should be done on successfully contextualizing the corpus of Majority World missiological thoughts and practices into Western contexts. Most thinking around contextualization has occurred in the opposite direction, with Western models being imported into the Global south and Eastern settings. The step of missiological discourse maturing into a fully mutual and bidirectional flow of Kingdom movements is essential not just for greater worldwide efficacy of mission but also the reversal of Occicentrist and colonial attitudes that still pervade the discipline. Movement missiology can serve as a foremost venue for beginning to introduce these topics within the contexts that they need to be discussed.

Secondly, further insights into the few urban movements that have been successful would be beneficial for Western practitioners. Although not in Western contexts, these less common breakthroughs will likely shed much light on what Western practitioners should seek to implement in their efforts. Urban movements have unique characteristics and should in some ways be considered their own phenomena. They deserve special, academic, and extensive research in light of global urbanization.

Finally, this thesis recommends further general research in the area of movement missiology. This thesis found that the current overarching standards within movement missiology has many areas of weaknesses. In some ways, this is to be expected, as the field itself is relatively new and rapidly developing. However, there is an opportunity to engage further with shoring up the biblical theology, contextualization of the methods, and internal criticism. The latter is a particular problem, as most of the authors of the main academic (and pragmatic) sources mostly form a united front defending against external criticism from authors who argue against movements as an appropriate missiological approach. What would be superior for developing the field would be if there was more internal criticism of ideas, to help refine some of the rougher edges of the discipline while agreeing upon the real strengths and opportunities presented by the phenomena.

Concluding Thoughts

I am reminded of the parable of the talents that Jesus gave to his disciples in Matthew 25. In the passage, he tells the story of a master who gives three servants three different amounts of money to manage during his absence on a trip. The three servants have

different responses, with the two with the most money investing it and receiving double the amounts they started with. The other servant with the least money buries it out of fear of losing it. When the master returns, he rebukes the servant who buried the money, saying, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents'" (Matt 25:26–28).

The West is at a point of decision. There is an undeniable heritage received from previous generations, a church tradition that stretches back centuries. However, our "talents" seem to be slipping away every day, hemorrhaging its inheritance as the church slides into a downward spiral, specifically in the area of mission. What we must consider is at which point we must take a "risk", and step out boldly to see multiplication once again. Is fear of losing what we have holding us back from adopting a more aggressive frontier approach to ecclesiology? If so, we will ultimately lose what we already have anyways, like Matthew records (25:28).

Movement missiology is a voice to the West from the rest of the world. We must take an attitude of humility and allow ourselves to be taught, led, and nurtured by Majority World voices and sources. We must apply ourselves to the work of contextualization, understanding both the culture we live in and the hour that we inhabit.

We need a movement of God to sweep the nations of the West, and ultimately this will not come by anything other than the Spirit of God giving his people the words to speak into the culture and discernment to walk wisely as witnesses for the Kingdom. For

the church, let this thesis be an invitation to engage boldly in investing what the Lord has

given us in insight from the Majority World so we may see multiplication take place.

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