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Church Planting Movements

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Church Planting Movements

How was it that the Early Church spread so rapidly throughout the hostile Roman Empire in the first century of its existence? It was not just evangelism of winning individuals to Christ but rather the bonding of every individual believer into local groups that committed themselves to follow Jesus' commands and share their new found freedom of forgiveness and acceptance through Jesus Christ.

Garrison declares that today a Church Planting Movement (hence CPM) is much more than evangelism. Most missionaries have never experienced a CPM where thousands of unreached people begin to turn to Christ and bond together in small churches.

A Church Planting Movement is not "evangelism that results in churches." Evangelism that results in churches is a part of a Church Planting Movement, but the "end-vision" is less extensive. A church planter might satisfy himself with the goal of planting a sing church or even a handful of churches, but fail to see that it will take a movement of churches planting churches to reach an entire nation of people (Garrison, 2003, p. 228).

This chapter will discuss the relatively recent development of the CPM strategy for building His Church throughout the world. Something was needed to break through into an exponential growth pattern if we were ever to reach the world. Daylton showed that "Although the number of Christians in the world is growing, the percentage of Christians to non-Christians has remained more or less constant for the past fifty years." (Dayton, 2003, p. 161)

The transition in mission strategy from its early beginnings were fitting for that time, but as better understanding both of the biblical concept of the church, evangelism, and the role of the missionary, new strategies developed to spread the gospel.

Mission Compound or Mission Station Strategy

In the early years of the missionary movement (1800-1914) the standard practice was to build a Missionary Compound or Mission Station. Land was purchased and buildings/houses were erected to facilitate all the mission activities within a secure area. This might include a school, clinic and church, as well as housing for the missionaries and some workers. It was all financed by foreign funds, managed by foreign missionaries and left little possibility for the area Nationals to ever be more than an employee of the missionaries, which could be difficult at times.

The primary model of missions up to this time was the Roman Catholic monastery approach, which was modified for Protestant missionaries, but there were a lot of similarities. Dependency was created from the beginning: if you wanted health, education or a job you had to depend on the foreigner. Thus the missionaries were seen as rich and powerful people that could never be imitated. Likewise, during this period often the missionary was of the same country as the dominating country of the Colonial era, so he could easily have had political connections.

The "Golden Rule" of power was fully on the side of the missionary: "He who has the gold, rules." No matter how benevolent, whenever foreigners are ruling or have power, resentment, envy, and disillusionment are inevitable. During most of this period

there was little or no attempt to give the nationals any of this power, and certainly none of the “gold.”

But great accomplishments were made: gave medical aid, translation of the Scriptures, literacy, founded printing establishments, rescued orphans, changed a number of abhorrent practices (i.e., burning of the living wife in the funeral pyre of the deceased husband, or murdering female babies or twins). Many highly trained national leaders were left to manage. The missionaries demonstrated the Christian Life principles as best they could in the new environment.

When the political world scene changed at the end of WWII, when all of the countries of the world demanded their independence from their European lords, many of the missionaries were expelled. When their liberation from Colonial powers did not come through negotiations, revolutions shook the world scene. Since the only world power that was not obligated to the European Colonial powers was Russia, many of the revolutions sought help from the Soviets and were amply supplied. The missionary cause was devastated in many of these countries, especially in Africa.

In many countries the nationalistic reaction to their new liberation was to obligate that every official entity or organization have nationals as either a majority or key leadership roles. This forced the missionary to rethink the strategy for the future.

Indigenous Church Strategy

The indigenous policy began in the mid-nineteenth century when Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson developed the three-self formula. "They believed that young churches should be self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing from their inception." If the missionaries spoon-feed the nationals would create "rice Christians"-- people who converted only for the benefits they received. The more that was given to the nationals the more was expected, but the quicker “results” could be tabulated for supporters. Sadly when persecution came the “rice Christians” vanished.

This movement came to a head in China during the Mao Cultural Revolution in 1948-49 with the expulsion of all American missionaries from China. Whatever was mature enough to survive on it own continued. The few who were grounded enough went underground. From this point mission began to rethink their heavy financial support of all their institutional ministries (Institutes, schools, clinics, hospitals, etc.).

Most agencies came to the conclusion that they did not want to go through what happened in China, so throughout the 1960's missions began to divest or turn over their institutions to national church organizations. This was often in a gradual reduction of subsidy over a decade, but usually the burden was too great for the association of churches to bear. Many of the former institutions folded or were greatly reduced.

The transition from heavy subsidy to fully indigenous support is more than difficult; it is agonizing and full of suspicion. “What are the rich Americans doing with all the money that was coming to us?” It was only worse when the subsidy came directly from individual missionaries: “You are withholding money that should be coming to us,” or “You are getting richer with our money.” Once money comes into the picture it can get pretty ugly when it is withdrawn, even for their good.

The indigenous policy “emphasized the need for true conversion, which was reflected by the willingness of local Christians to support the work of the church. The

foreign mission, they said, is like scaffolding. When the construction is finished, the scaffolding is removed. In many mission settings, however, what was built is unable to stand without the support of the scaffolding." (Pocock, 2005, p. 285)

Hodges' definition of an indigenous church is "a native church...which shares the life of the country in which it is planted and finds itself ready to govern itself, support itself, and reproduce itself." The church, according to Hodges, must be like a banana plant in Central America -- so indigenous to its environment that it requires no special attention to thrive. Banana plants grow in this climate wherever there is adequate water: A banana plant in Canada, however, cannot survive without special care. Before winter it must be dug up and transported indoors, and it seldom, if ever, is able to bear fruit (Hodges, 1957, pp. 7-8).

During the decades of the '60-'70s, major shifts in the church planting strategies began to take place, giving the measure of success not to the size of the missionary-led church, but to the ability to transition from missionary control to national-led ministries.

The skill of developing national leaders was not taught in the missionary's training nor observed in his home church experience. Most pastors in the US have never disciplined a single person. They have no motivation to prepare someone to take their place, on the contrary! To make matters worse, most missionaries have had little or no missiological training. They naively go to the field thinking that everything will work similarly to how it worked in churches back home. With this background it is no wonder that missionaries go to the field ill-equipped, and easily get frustrated. The idea of constantly "working themselves out of a job" gives them little visible credit for *their* accomplishments.

As missionaries were trying to figure out how to implement the "indigenous" policy that their mission agencies were demanding, Donald McGavran began to gain fame for his Church Growth Principles.

Church Growth Movement

Donald McGavran was dean emeritus and former senior professor of mission, church growth and South Asian studies at the School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He was raised in a missionary family in India but came under the influence of the Student Volunteer Movement and became a third generation missionary as well. His passion was to overcome the social barriers to Christian conversion, especially in India with its caste system limiting the spread of the gospel. His research into how the Church grows resulted in his classic texts were *Bridges of God* and *Understanding Church Growth*, was a key element in changing the methods that missionaries use to focus their ministry on specific people groups and sparked the Church Growth Movement.

McGavran rejected the popular view that mission was primarily education, evangelism, medicine, famine relief, world friendship, etc., but rather the goal of the Church should always be to disciple the peoples of the world. His passion for the Great Commission and the application of research, including statistical methods, to derive the best methodology for a given people group inspired thousands to travel to Pasadena to study under his tutelage.

One of the major tenants of the Church Growth movement is seeking the objective of a People Movement Approach, in stead of individual decisions. McGavran shows how that group decisions or people movements is the natural way of growth throughout most of history around the world. Admittedly this pattern is often unfamiliar to Western missionaries who come from an individualistic society, unique in the world. Around the world most converts often are non-literate and under educated so that decisions are made by the group, not the individual.

McGavran postulates five great advantages to understanding and applying church growth principles:

- (1) Permanent churches deeply rooted in the soil of the culture, which are independent of and not dependent upon Western support. Thus the new churches are freed from bonds to another culture and have the spiritual authority and motivation to multiply themselves. Since it is their church, not that of the foreigner, they are willing to endure persecution.
- (2) Churches are naturally indigenous being immersed in their own culture so they can easily cloth all their activities in their cultural ways. Being excited about their own kind of Christianity they become vibrantly evangelistic.
- (3) "Spontaneous expansion of churches" is natural because it is linked with growth points among their own people, which are not broken when they become Christians. Only moderate assistance of outside is needed usually in the area of training.
- (4) A People Movement may be created in nearby cultures through cultural bridges that may exist to other communities. As communities are convinced about Christ by bridging to another community may produce another people movement where multitudes turn to Christ together.
- (5) Movement provides a sound pattern of becoming Christian because biases are gone and changes in the lives of Christians can be demonstrable and infinitely reproducible (McGavran, 2003, p. 184).

People become Christian as a wave of decisions for Christ sweeps through the group's minds, involving many individual decisions, but being far more than merely the sum of individual commitments. "This may be called a chain reaction. Each decision sets off others and, the sum total powerfully affects every individual. When conditions are right, not merely each subgroup, but the entire group concerned decides together" (McGavran, 2003, p. 178).

McGavran had considerable criticism of evangelistic methods that focused on getting "decisions," yet little or no fruit ever resulted. Ray Comfort, likewise, has documented the same lack of results in his study of American evangelistic efforts (which are part of the "baggage" that American missionaries take with them to the field.

At a 1990 crusade in the United States, 600 "decisions for Christ" were obtained. No doubt, there was much rejoicing. However, ninety days later, follow-up workers couldn't find even one who was continuing in his or her faith. That crusade created 600 backsliders -- or, to be more scriptural, false converts...

Charles E. Hackett, the division of home missions national director for the Assemblies of God in the United States, said, "A soul at the altar does not generate much excitement in some circles because we realize approximately ninety-five out

of every hundred will not become integrated into the church. In fact, most of them will not return for a second visit."...

A pastor in boulder, Colorado, sent a team to Russia in 1991 and obtained 2,500 decisions. The next year, the team found only thirty continuing in their faith. That's a retention rate of 1.2 percent.

Pastor Elma Murdock stated, "Chuck Colson's concern was ours. He states that for every 100 people making decisions for Christ, only two may return for follow-up a few days later. George Barna says that the majority of people (51% minimum) making decisions, leave the church in 6-8 weeks."...

A mass crusade reported 18,000 decisions -- yet, according to "Church Growth" magazine, 94 percent failed to become incorporated into a local church.

In Sacramento, California, a combined crusade yielded more than 2,000 commitments. One church followed up on fifty-two of those decisions and couldn't find one true convert.

A leading U.S. denomination reported that during 1995 they secured 384,057 decisions, but retained only 22,983 in fellowship. They couldn't account for 361,074 supposed conversions. That's a 94 percent fall-away rate (Comfort, 2006, pp. 97-98).

McGavran's answer would be to not simply preach for "decisions" but to make obedient disciples. Only disciples produce a church that multiplies itself spontaneously within a culture. ... Repentance goes deeper than a decision; it is a permanent change wrought by God's Spirit. We are born all over again. Few purely intellectual decisions in any culture lead to permanent, obedient discipleship (McGavran, 2003, p. 184). He helped stem the tide toward the social concern priority back to a confrontational evangelism and aggressive disciple-making focus.

The application of the Church Growth data can be seen in John Slack's research with the congregations of the Southern Baptist Convention. Here were his conclusions:

1. New units grow faster than established churches.
2. Aging within a church almost inevitably ushers in a "come-oriented" ministry in contrast to a "go-centered" ministry.
3. Older churches do not start as many new churches as do younger churches.
4. Churches and church planting drift upward on the economic scale.
5. The longer a church is in a community, the less like that community the church becomes.
6. Existing, established churches have normal plateau and ministry limits.
7. Only as a church effectively expands its discipleship base will it sustain infinitely reproducible church growth and church planting.
8. More baptisms and greater membership growth occurs in zones or areas that are farther from the existing church and its come-oriented activities.
9. The difference between so-called "responsive" and "non-responsive" peoples is not in the average number of baptisms per church but in the number of new units -- churches -- that are started.
10. Churches in resistant cultures tend to begin as or soon become cosmopolitan rather than community. In resistant cultures, community churches have far greater influence on the culture than do cosmopolitan churches.

11. As beginning models of church planting, training, and materials are repeated and age, they become hallowed -- and almost "unchangeable" -- patterns even when and if they are no longer relevant.
12. If a lost person or people group is illiterate and poor, the chance of their being evangelized decreases proportionately to the heights of their illiteracy and the depths of their poverty.
13. Training in most theological programs has become more academic than functional.
14. Bible teaching, including the Sunday School and other forms of discipleship, to be effective, must be done in the context of evangelism (Slack, 1998, p. 504).

Though these results apply specifically to the SBC USA, the missionaries going overseas come from this type of church and easily carry these same practices with them. We become like our teacher (generally).

Criticism of this movement stems from the foundations being primarily based on statistics and social behavior rather than theology, and also the principle of more numerical growth being equated to evidence of correct analysis.

The principles of the Church Growth Movement laid the grown work for the Seeker Movement, which produced some of America's largest mega churches reaching over 20,000 weekend attendees. The three most notable church leaders who followed this strategy are Robert Schuller (Self-Esteem Reformation), Bill Hybel (Seeker driven church) and Rick Warren (Purpose Driven or Seeker-sensitive church).

By the 1980's the Church Growth and Seeker movement would be overwhelmed by the Signs and Wonders Movement, Power Evangelism and Strategic Level Warfare, World Prayer movement and the new Apostolic Reformation churches (but this is another trend to be discussed in a later chapter). However, many of the same principles laid the groundwork for these movements as well.

Church Planting Strategy

There are many models for planting a new church, some are preferred or required by different mission boards, but in general, everyone should be contributing directly or indirectly to the planting of indigenous churches, whatever your assignment, platform or task may be, so a good understanding is vital. Basically, a "church planter" and family moves into a new location to start a church with little or no believers. The CPer has very little connection with or pre-existing support in the target area. They are "pioneering" new territory.

Generally, an existing church or mission agency plays the role of "Mother," providing the initial leadership and resources to get the new church ("daughter church") started. Whether this is a church in the US starting another church in the US or overseas the daughter church usually is a reflection of the Mother church. Usually it is more difficult to get resources for the international daughter church than the US based church. The "bragging rights" syndrome among pastors in the US carries over to the foreign field. Missionaries closely tied to US pastors want to speak their language: attendance, souls saved, baptisms, etc. To maintain their status the effort is made to gain the numbers to keep in the conversation and be respected by their US cohorts in the ministry. With enough resources, this can happen for a while, but the long-range effects are more negative than positive.

When *giants* go to the mission field (as the nationals see us usually), it is hard to take a secondary role and build up the national's ministry as a priority. To hinge your success and reputation on a national pastor, to many, is a scary process.

Furthermore, the inequality of resources and income between missionary and national, then the inevitable reduction or elimination of foreign resources when the missionary passes the leadership off to a national, plus the tendency to respect the foreign missionary more than their national pastor, puts enormous pressure on the national pastor to attempt to "measure up" to the *giant* who preceded him.

In the view of contemporary churches "Church planting" is such an all-inclusive and critical "button" that everyone must prove their involvement in a church-planting ministry in order to raise any support, even if they don't participate directly. Nurses, school teachers, accountants, etc., must use the claim to be "church planters" in order to raise their support. Ministries not related to church planting typically find considerable less sympathy in US churches.

Partnership Strategies

Pocock reports, "During the 1990s, a significant transition occurred in the use of money in missions. In 1996, U.S. mission agencies reported that they employed 30,000 national missionaries of other countries and just under 40,000 American missionaries. By 1999, these same agencies were still supporting just under 40,000 U. S. missionaries, but the number of national missionaries they reportedly employed had grown to 71,000. " Pocock reports that over 130 agencies in Canada and the US, "advocate and assist indigenous missions." A trend is evident that there is a modern move from indigenous self-support to international partnerships (Pocock, 2005, p. 290).

Church Planting Movement Strategy

How can a limited missionary pool spread the gospel to millions of people? In greater Osaka, Japan there are 22 million people with only 0.26% attend a church with an average size of 39 attendees. In order to someday reach just 1/3 of this city it would take 100,000 new churches. The old way of doing church would take forever. A new strategy had to be developed to quickly motivate new believers to plant new churches from the beginning of the Christian life.

Light at the end of the tunnel began to shine when IMB Strategic Coordinator David Watson in NE India in a highly resistant people group, the Bhojpuri people, the tribal group of Mahatmagndi. Watson pioneered a strategy that now has spread around the world as the primary methodology for reaching resistant people groups.

When missionaries Jan and David Watson were sent to work with an unreached people group in 1989, less than 30 churches existed for more than 90 million mostly illiterate and impoverished people who speak the Bhojpuri language -- a number that had remained stagnant for more than four decades.

The task appeared to be nearly impossible -- except for the fact that the Watson's believed in a God who specializes in the impossible. But their early efforts seemed

to confirm the dismal outlook. Six evangelists sent by the Watson's to Bhojpuri villages were brutally murdered within one year of each other. Although David wanted to leave, God wouldn't release him to return home.

But that time of soul-searching and turmoil led the couple to adopt a brand-new strategy that focused on simply finding a person of peace, discipling him into the Christian faith, and making him the pastor of a brand new church.

The results came almost immediately. In 1993 the number of churches among the people group had jumped from 28 to 36. The next year, there were 78 churches. Then there were 220 in 1995. Finally, Watson could no longer continue counting the instances of exploding growth. In 1998, he cautiously estimated the number of Bhojpuri speakers who had committed their life to Christ in the previous seven years to be more than 55,000. By 2000, the safe estimates were more than 3,200 churches, 250,000 believers, and more than 10,000 new church starts. Today, Bhojpuri believers number nearly 1 million (Perry, 2005).

Headquarters in Richmond was skeptical. "This can't be," they said. "Either you've misunderstood the question or you're not telling us the truth." The words stung, but David held his tongue. "Come and see," he said.

Later that year, a survey team headed by Watson's supervisor arrived in India to investigate. Together they visited Lucknow, Patna, Delhi, Varanasi, and numerous smaller Indian towns and villages David had listed in his report. The supervisor later commented, "I personally went in very doubtful, but we were wrong. Everywhere we went it was exactly as Watson had reported. God was doing something amazing there." (Garrison, 2004, p. 2)

Within a year reports began to filter into different mission circles of similar CPMs that were following a similar pattern. In East Asia, a missionary reported: "I launched my three-year plan in November, 2000. My vision was to see 200 new churches started among my people group over the next three years. But four months later, we had already reached that goal. After only six months, we had already seen 360 churches planted and more than 10,000 new believers baptized! Now I'm asking God to enlarge my vision." (Garrison, 2004, p. 3) The IMB reports, "The Southern Baptist International Mission Board...is currently seeing more than half a million baptisms each year, the great majority of them resulting from Church Planting Movements. At present, the IMB is monitoring more than fifty locations around the world where variations of CPM can be seen." (Garrison, 2004, p. 3)

Common Characteristics

After considerable analysis and study of numerous CPMs, a list of ten common factors in CPMs has been compiled for future missionaries:

1. **Worship in the heart language**, where people can intuitively express their deepest emotions to a God who cares for them.
2. **Evangelism has communal implications** (as opposed to Western individualism and personal commitment) relying on family and social connections or webs.
3. **Rapid incorporation of new converts** into the life and ministry of the church, especially expected to become witnesses immediately. As they are witnessed to and discipled, so they immediately begin to do the same to others.

4. **Passion and fearlessness due to a sense of urgency** of the importance of salvation and conversion. "A spirit of timidity or fear quenches a CPM. Boldness may invite persecution, but it fuels a CPM."
5. **A price to pay to become a Christian.** CPMs are typically emerging in an environment of persecution and resistance. "Persecution tends to screen out the uncommitted and ensures a highly dedicated membership."
6. **Perceived leadership crisis or spiritual vacuum in society**, especially "during war, a natural disaster or displacement may be a ripe environment for a CPM."
7. **On-the-job training for church leadership** is a critical element to keep the movement growing. If they have to leave their churches for training, then it will die. Typically these are "short-term training modules that do not impede the primary tasks of evangelism, church planting and pastoral leadership."
8. **Leadership authority is decentralized** for ease of decision-making in a dynamic movement. "It is important that every cell or house church leader has all the authority required to do whatever needs to be done in terms of evangelism, ministry and new church planting without seeking approval from a church hierarchy."
9. **Outsiders keep a low profile**, in order to "minimize foreignness and encourage indigenity."
10. **Missionaries suffer persecution:** "the disproportionate degree of suffering by missionaries engaged in CPM is noteworthy (Garrison, 2002, p. ch.4). This is especially true in Muslim lands.

David Watson, now an international Church Planting Movement consultant for hundreds of missions around the world, adds a few more essential distinctives in order to see the CPMs become successful:

1. **Prayer:** "An emphasis is given in the CPM strategy to know the mind of God and join Him in His work." Sadly, many missionaries have become virtual secularists in spiritual matters, depending on programs, events and technology and little utter dependence upon God's power.
2. **Scripture:** Often strategies take precedence over Scripture, which is often related to a confirming of cultural values, instead of a blueprint to mold a Christian culture.
3. **Household or family focus**, instead of an individual focus. Since families become the major persecutor to new believers, the objective is to win the family together.
4. **Disciples:** In traditional missions every effort is made to bring people to a "decision" to accept Christ, but slim efforts to bring them to maturity as true disciples ("learners") of Christ for life. Since few missionaries have ever been disciplined, nor have many ever seen what discipleship looks like, this is a major philosophical shift in their thinking.
5. **Teach Obedience:** The objective of teaching is obedience, not understanding or knowledge. The Great Commission says to "teach them to obey all things..." (Matt 28:20). Watson emphasizes three questions: a) What does the passage say? b) What does it mean for me? c) If it is the teaching of God, what must I do to obey it? Watson teaches that knowledge-based ministries kill church planting. Only obedience orientated ministry motivate rapid reproduction of churches. In the explosion of multiplying churches great dependence on the Holy Spirit to keep people in line with the Scriptures (1 John 2:27) and the discovery process which leads to obedience will bring committed believers to live out His will.

6. **Access Ministries:** The “ministry” in a CPM is basically an unpaid ministry so creative ways are developed for church planters to gain access to the villages that they target for ministry. After making a study of the needs of a specific people group, a church planter moves in to meet that need: store, school, teacher, medical or dental, etc. As the church planter serves the people well, confidence is built and access to the hearts of the people and the right to speak into their lives is granted.
7. **Plan:** Distractions, especially for “tent-maker” church planters, are inevitable, so a plan must be priority: win disciples and gather families into units to study and obey His Word together.
8. **Person of Peace – Discovery Bible Study method.** When Jesus sent out the 70 He told them to seek out a “person of peace.” Find someone who would be willing to discover the meanings in the Bible, who often becomes the leader of the first Bible study. Teaching begins as soon as a relationship is built, not waiting until he has decided to follow Christ. Faith must be exercised to believe that God is at work preparing people to hear His Word.
9. **Community of believers** (a simple church): Early groups are “practice groups” (committed to practicing what they learn) where they carry on the essentials of a local assembly. If left alone in most environments, few if any believers can survive isolated.
10. **Reaching out** (missions): If they have encountered the truth, yet they know that none of their friends have any idea of how to know God, they immediately have a burden to share their new faith.
11. **Reproducing:** Church reproduction is expected in all levels of the CPM process. Everyone is expected to reproduce other believers and corporately to reproduce other fellowships in other areas. It becomes the DNA of the movement.
12. **Inside Leaders:** Instead of depending on leaders for local assemblies from the outside, they become reproducible because the leaders are in every group from the beginning.
13. **Authority and the Holy Spirit:** The dependence upon the Word and the Holy Spirit to work as the authority for individuals and the corporate group. There is a great expectation for God to work miracles in drawing people to Christ and keep them sensitive to His will.
14. **Persecution:** Especially in Muslim environments, persecution is the norm. Watson declares that wherever he witnessed torture, or assassinations a church was born.
15. **Training/Mentoring:** Mentoring is continual training for effective ministry. Those with more experience lead those with less experience and eventually hand off the new ministry into the hands of the maturing leader.
16. **Outside Leaders:** Non-resident leaders guide from a distance. His task is to model, to equip, to watch and to leave at the appropriate time. His leaving is not to abandon, but to entrust the young leaders to carry on the task begun.
17. **Self-supporting:** Local leaders maintain all the work. The methods of Muslims around the world are never paid for their work as a spiritual leader. Believers take up the task of meeting needs in villages, becoming good citizens, and lead the young church, while maintaining a work ethic in order to keep their family needs met. This eliminates the major obstacle to planting multiple churches: money. It is

not essential any longer. Only those who are uniquely gifted and mature enough to have an expanding influence will become supported in a full-time sense.¹

Definitions

Garrison gives this definition of a CPM: "a rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment." A CPM is more than "evangelism that results in churches," but rather a movement where church birth of other churches is a norm of their existence.

A church planter might satisfy himself with the goal of planting a single church or even a handful of churches, but fail to see that it will take a movement of churches planting churches to reach an entire nation of people. It goes back to what is our objective: plant a church or reach a people group?

A CPM is more than a revival of pre-existing churches. Revivals are highly desirable, but they're not CPM's. Evangelistic crusades and witnessing programs may lead thousands to Christ, and that's wonderful, but it isn't the same as a CPM.

A CPM is not simply an increase in the number of churches, even though this also is positive. A CPM occurs when the vision of churches planting churches spreads from the missionary and professional church planter into the churches themselves, so that by their very nature they are winning the lost and reproducing themselves (Garrison, 2002, p. ch.1).

Garrison reports that other CPM's are surfacing every few months: 30,000 believers in a SE Asia country. 100,000 believers swelling 800 new churches in eastern India; 20,000 coming to Christ over a four-year period in one Chinese province; church starts doubling in six months in one Western European country; 383 churches starting in a single state in Brazil (Garrison, 2002, p. ch.2).

This has long been the dream of missionaries, but they have insisted in such a movement happening they way they wanted it to happen. Patterson declares, "I hope it takes you less time than it took me to learn that formal pulpit preaching is ineffective (often illegal) in many of today's remaining unreached fields." (Patterson, 2003, p. 216)

Some tough and often uncomfortable decisions have to be made or the work gets stymied or blocked again. It is essential that everything be evaluated on the basis of whether it is reproducible. "Authentic Church Planting Movements always take on the appearance of their context. If villages are made of bamboo, then church buildings are made of bamboo. In urban areas, cell or house churches emulate family structures instead of a congregational structure that requires expensive buildings used exclusively for worship meetings. CPM practitioners evaluate every aspect of each church start with the question: "Can this be reproduced by these believers?" If the answer is "no," then the foreign element is discarded." (Garrison, 2002, p. ch.7)

A Few Key Principles

Garrison sees the CPM as a "sovereign act of God, but in His sovereign grace and mercy He has chosen to partner with us. There are some practical things that

¹ Watson, David. Church Planting Movements Seminar, Level One.

missionaries can do to help initiate or nurture a CPM." The following steps are not meant to be sequential, nor particularly given in a priority of importance, rather each situation must determine which and how to apply these principles:

1. **Pursue a CPM orientation** from the beginning. "Missionaries who want to start a CPM must begin by 'modeling a CPM-type church' complete with evangelism, discipleship and multiplication training within a cell-group setting."
2. **Evaluate everything to achieve the end-vision.** "The effective strategy coordinator is ruthless in evaluating all he or she does in light of the end-vision -- A CPM-- discarding those things that do not or will not lead to it."
3. **Gather them, and then win them.** It is most effective to "gather a group of lost seekers into evangelistic worship and Bible study groups. These 'not-yet Christians' are brought into the vision for a CPM even as they are brought into the family of faith."
4. Try a **POUCH methodology.** POUCH church "utilizes Participative Bible study and worship groups, affirms Obedience to the Bible as the sole measure of success, uses Unpaid and non-hierarchical leadership and meets in Cell groups or House churches."
5. **Develop multiple leaders** within each cell church. "Avoid the trap of inadequate leadership required to meet growth needs by sharing the work with multiple leaders."
6. **Model, Assist, Watch & Leave (MAWL).** "Missionaries who are competent church planters face as much challenge from themselves as they do from the people group they are trying to reach. There is always a temptation to 'do it myself' rather than turn the work over to the emerging local leadership. This transfer of responsibilities is complicated by the fact that many, if not most, missionaries enjoy pastoring and ministering to people." If the missionary is wise from the beginning to have shared the leadership responsibilities with nationals, there will be little to transfer. This shared leadership becomes the model for the national leadership as well, thus assuring a "passionate renewal of indigenous church planting" and a movement is born. "Only when the missionary has actually stepped away from the work is the cycle of MAWL completed." (Garrison, 2002, p. ch.5)

Case Study of the Cambodian Church Planting Movement

The 20th century has seen more than its share of wars, dictators, and genocide, but few surpass the tragic modern history of Cambodia. Buffeted by the Vietnam conflict for more than two decades, Cambodia emerged from that war with Maoist dictator Pol Pot driving the country into ruin. During his five-year reign from 1975-1979, Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge engineered the murder, disappearance, or starvation of up to 3.3 million of the country's 8 million citizens.

This reign of terror left Cambodia's infrastructure in shambles, its adult male population decimated, and its youth illiterate. The subsequent rule by a Vietnam-installed government ended the genocide, but could not undo the damage done to Cambodian society.

The societal upheaval set the stage for changes which were to come. Centuries of Buddhist influence were undermined by communist ideology; the Khmer Rouge because of perceived foreign ties specifically targeted Roman Catholicism. Earlier in the century, missionaries from the Christian and Missionary Alliance and Overseas Missionary Fellowship had introduced Protestantism, but their numbers had never exceeded 5,000. During the Pol Pot's rule, the Khmer Rouge dealt them a severe blow, expelling missionaries and murdering many of the scattered flock. By 1990, Cambodia's evangelical population had dwindled to no more than 600 believers.

According to a senior missionary who served in Cambodia for decades with OMF, the turning point for Christianity in the country began in the 1990s. By 1999, the number of Protestant believers had risen from 600 to more than 60,000. The primary catalyst for change came in December 1989, when a Strategy Coordinator (SC) was assigned to the Khmer people. By 1991, he completed language study and had begun to implement a strategy for reaching the Khmer.

Instead of planting a church himself, he began mentoring a Cambodian layman. Within a year, he had drawn six Cambodian church planters into the mentoring circle. Over the next few months, he developed a church-planting manual in the Khmer language and taught the Khmer church planters doctrine, evangelism, and church-planting skills using resources such as the Jesus film, Chronological Bible Storying, and simple house-church development. He also instilled in them a vision and passion for reaching their entire country with a CPM.

In 1993, the number of churches in this movement grew from six to ten. The following year, the number doubled to 20. In 1995, when the number of churches reached 43, the Cambodian church leaders formed an association of like-minded churches. The following year, the number of churches climbed to 78. In 1997, there were 123 churches scattered across 53 of the country's 117 districts. By the spring of 1999, there were more than 200 churches and 10,000 members.

Few of these churches met in dedicated buildings. The vast majority met in homes in the countryside that could accommodate 50 or more individuals.

The SC departed the assignment in 1996, leaving behind the small team of cross-cultural workers and a network of vital church planting churches scattered across much of the country. The work has continued to grow and strengthen (Garrison, 2003, pp. 231-232).

Although Garrison acknowledges that some people might be concerned about the relatively short amount of time between accepting Christ and being thrust into leadership in these particular movements, he counters by stressing the importance of ongoing theological education. But a CPM will usually add a twist to traditional models of theological education. Instead of ministers-in-training being pulled out of their sphere of influence to go to seminary for a few years, in CPMs new leaders get training as they need it, without having to leave their family and ministry.

"This is really one of the turning points in the history of the church," Garrison said. "Church-planting movements are happening whether we like it or not. Some people are a little threatened by this, but they shouldn't be, because these movements are taking us back to our New Testament roots. That can be a little unsettling, but if God is doing this, that's what matters most. The question for us is, are we going to participate?" (Perry, 2005)

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Appendix 1 Resource sites on Church Planting Movements:

The Bible league: www.BibleLeague.org

YWAM Church Planting Coaches: <http://cpcoaches.pngusa.net/>

Train and Multiply: <http://www.trainandmultiply.com>

email: pwr@telus.net

"Church Growth" at Southern Nazarene University:

<http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert.fs/chgrowth.htm> Christian Associates:

www.christianassociates.org

World Team: <http://www.churchplanting.net>.

The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting offering the Omega Course at

<http://www.alliancescp.org/html/omegacourse.html>

"Church Planting Movements," (available on-line, produced by the International Mission Board), www.imb.org/GlobalVision/NewDirections Prepare: <http://www.prepareint.org>

or write prepareint@hotmail.com Church Planting Resources:

<http://genesis.acu.edu/cplant/resources.html>

<http://www.fcpt.org>

<http://www.nextchurch.org>

<http://members.optushome.com.au/churchplanting>

www.plantingministries.org

UIM International: www.uim.org

Antioch Network: www.antiochnetwork.org

Global Missions Fellowship: www.gmf.org

Church-Planting Handbooks

"Getting Started - A Church Planting Handbook for Laypeople" by Brad

Boyston. (You can also download the complete handbook in text format:

184KB) From the introduction: This handbook was written specifically for people who are interested in or involved in helping to start Evangelical Covenant Churches.

Christians from other groups will find a lot of transferable information but should recognize that the organizational procedures in other denominations will be slightly different.

"Handbook for House Churches" (130KB) and *"Planting House Churches in Networks - A Manual from the Perspective of a Church Planting Team"* (520KB) by Dick Scoggins.

Jim Allen's Church Planting Manual. (158K) (Jim Allen is a "home missionary" of the Assemblies of God in the USA.)

Bill Easum's *Church Planting Workbook*

A strategic guide to churchplanting from the perspective of the church growth movement is the *Church Planters's Toolkit* by Bob Logan and Steve Ogne.