

Book Reviews

Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World
David Garrison,
2004, ISBN: 0-9747562-0-2



-Reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

Very few booklets have been as avidly consulted by as many mission leaders as Garrison's booklet *Church Planting Movements* (published in 2000), which lays down vital perspectives on the planting of small cells as churches. Now he comes back with an entire book on the subject.

The new book-length version surges with stories of runaway growth in places all over the world. At the same time, it hones and refines what was present in his year-2000 booklet. Of course, books don't get read as widely as booklets, but let's all see if we can make this one a best seller anyway.

I have talked to Garrison about one slight problem. In line with his thinking that CPMs are quite new and unique, he for the first time tries to make three "significant" distinctions between his kind of "Church Planting Movements" (CPMs) and the "Church Growth Movement" (CGM). The latter gained its impetus from the long-standing concepts of Donald McGavran, in particular his concept of "people movements to Christ" (PMCs) within "homogeneous units" of society.

1) Garrison says that the Church Growth Movement has moved in the direction of believing that bigger churches—mega churches—are better churches.

Not McGavran.

But, admittedly, some people within the CGM stream no doubt have said such things. Garrison emphasizes that smaller is better (as would McGavran), for either stand-alone congregations or cells within larger churches.

2) He says the CGM has steered people away from unresponsive fields. Most missions were already avoiding unresponsive fields. McGavran, however, emphasized taking note of the "bridge of God" represented by even one lone believer in the back of the church, especially if that person comes from an apparently "unresponsive" group different from the rest of the congregation.

Thus, we see McGavran's awareness of the strategic importance of any kind of breakthrough into what we now call an unreached people. Furthermore, years ago, when McGavran became the chair of the board of directors of the U.S. Center for World Mission, he had clearly accepted the strategic relevance of even starting from scratch where no work at all had been done. In any case, pursuing that "one lone believer" back into his own untouched caste or group was a type of pioneer perspective if there ever was one.

I know of one denomination whose official policy is not to make a move overseas without working

in partnership with some national church. And where there is no national church? Don't go! That is not McGavran's stance.

3) He says that the CGM emphasizes going to the responsive fields.

As above, McGavran did emphasize alertness to even one person representing an unreached group—did that constitute a responsive field? This is not the same as simply going where other missions are flourishing.

I know of a denomination whose official policy has been to send missionaries only where other types of Christians are rapidly multiplying. This group has been completely blind to the need of unreached peoples. Again, that is not McGavran's point of view.

Thus, the CGM may have wandered a bit. But McGavran's basic convictions are quite in tune with Garrison's CPM approach, and, no matter what, the concept of "people movements to Christ," which is one of McGavran's main insights, is clearly alive and well in the CPM movement.

To set the record straight, both McGavran's concept of "People movements to Christ," and Garrison's "Church Planting Movements," are distinctly different from mass movements that lack accountability in small units. McGavran's perspective would mean even less respect for a Bonke or Graham crusade, without church planting follow through. Thus, when Garrison seems to assume (p. 24) that McGavran was talking about mass movements in general, he is clearly referring to misunderstandings of McGavran's concern.

Just personally, Garrison's book helpfully parts ways with both the concept of the American "Church"

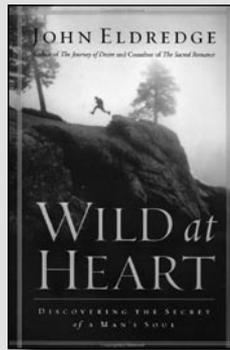
of gathered family fragments, and the concept of “Planting” as what happens when a new fellowship begins. Thus, Church Planting Movements as a phrase can lead people astray. But with this warning, most readers can profit immensely.

He will bring 100 free copies to the fall meetings of the IFMA/EFMA/EMS, and is a speaker our society, the International Society for Frontier Missiology (ISFM), which is meeting at the same time (see p. 100).

Wild At Heart, John Eldredge, 2001, ISBN: 0-7852-6883-9

-Reviewed by Rick Wood

Have you ever asked yourself, “Why is life so hard?” or “Why is the abundant life that Christ promised all believers seem so elusive?”



In each of his four books, author John Eldredge calls his readers to come alive in their heart relationship to God. He explores what it means to love and serve God from the depths of our hearts and to overcome all the forces that are set against us to keep us from living out God’s design and purposes for us.

In the process of doing this, Eldredge lays out a worldview with major missiological implications.

In his bestselling book, “Wild at Heart,” (now over 1.3 million copies sold and still 3rd on the best-seller list after 2+ years in print) John Eldredge provides men with a manual for understanding their heart motivations and the fierce masculine image of God that he has placed in men. Eldredge says about men,

Deep in his heart, every man longs for a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to rescue. This is how he bears the image of God.

Eldredge states that men reflect in themselves the fierce warrior nature of God,

A man must have a great battle to fight, a great mission to his life that involves and yet transcends even home and family. He must have a cause to which he is devoted even unto death, for this is written into the fabric of his being...This is why God created you, to be his intimate ally in the Great Battle. You have a specific place in the line, a mission God made you for.

Satan is seeking to steal, kill and destroy all men (and women) and keep

them from the battle at hand. According to Eldredge, all men have been wounded in varying degrees and need to regain their lost hearts. Only then will they find God’s place for them in the Great Battle and begin living the abundant life God designed for them.

Why does man long for a battle to fight? As Eldredge explains,

Because when we enter the story in Genesis, we step into a world at war. The lines have already been drawn. Evil is waiting to make its next move.... Man is not born into a sitcom or soap opera... This is not Home Improvement, it’s Saving Private Ryan.

Prior to the creation of man, Satan and a third of the angels in Heaven rebelled. There was a fierce battle in Heaven and Satan was thrown down to the earth.

As soon as man enters the scene, Satan strikes against mankind thereby taking us out as an effective force for God in the ongoing struggle. The rest of Scripture lays out God’s plan for bringing mankind back into fellowship with himself to do battle with Satan. Eventually we see the ultimate return of God’s complete authority on earth and Satan’s demise.

Because spiritual warfare is foundational to the worldview laid out by Eldredge, he provides helpful guidelines for recognizing and protecting ourselves from Satan’s attacks and schemes. Understanding the context of our lives as one of doing battle on a daily basis is key as we launch out into enemy territory to bring the Gospel to the unreached peoples

Eldredge has done ground breaking work in helping men understand their God-given role and the heart motivations that guide their lives. Tens of thousands of men have found the insights of this book to be life-changing. On a personal level, I would highly recommend this book to everyone, women included. It is one of the most encouraging, challenging and thought-provoking books I have ever read.

There is, however, one key element that has been left out which could have made this book a much more powerful resource for the cause of Christ and for the men who could have gained a more complete understanding of what the Great Battle is all about. Eldredge sees much of the focus of the battle as one to restore our lost heart and gain our freedom, thereby enabling us to find our true place in God’s kingdom purposes. He also sees the battle as one between the expansion of Christ’s kingdom and that of Satan’s. While this is all true, Eldredge has not gone far enough in his understanding of God’s kingdom and the nature of the Great Battle we have been called to fight.

He has not yet understood the peoples-focused battle strategy that God laid out in Gen. 12:1-3, Matt. 24:14; 28:19-20 and the ultimate nature of the kingdom that God is fighting to create. In Rev. 5:9 we see that Jesus is worshiped because he purchased men for God

with his blood from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. This is the kingdom God is building, one people group at a time until all peoples are represented before God's throne, each one glorifying God in their uniqueness. This is the Great Battle plan that Satan is fighting against because he knows his time is up when the task of reaching every people is complete. If Eldredge had understood this, he could have called men to join the Great Battle which has a specific goal in mind and a strategy for getting there. If men are to find their place in "the line," then an understanding of the nature and context of the Great Battle is essential. As Eldredge goes forth to help men and women regain their hearts for God, he would do well to help them connect with God's heart for all the peoples of the earth. I invite him to look into this further, talk with Pastor John Piper or read his book, "Let the Nations be Glad" and take the "Perspectives" course. He needs to break out of the typical misunderstandings and ignorance of the church regarding the missions foundation of the Bible and God's plans for all of history. His monumental achievements deserve the finishing touch of this key understanding.

Christians, Cultural Interactions, and India's Religious Traditions, Ed. Judith M. Brown, Robert Eric Frykenberg, William B. Eerdmans, 2002, pp. 241 + x.

-Reviewed by H. L. Richard

This is an outstanding collection of nine scholarly papers discussing Christianity in India. This review will outline briefly the contents of the nine papers, drawing particular notice to two issues (both illustrating "contextualization with a twist") of very great importance that need to be understood by those

who wish to think clearly about the Christian enterprise in India.

The Great Poet of Tamil Nadu

The opening paper by Indira Viswanathan Peterson is a study of Vedanayaka Sastri (1774-1864), the great poet of Tamil Nadu. The focus is on his musical drama *Bethlehem Kuravanci* (*kuravanci* being a Tamil dramatic style). Sastri's adaptation of Tamil cultural forms is celebrated, while problems and controversies related to his work are outlined. Interestingly,

while Sastri offers no direct criticism of Hindu practices in his poem, he criticizes and abuses the Catholic Church at the end of many of BK's songs, following the practice of the authors of the Tamil Saiva hymns, whose hymns often ended with invective against the Jains and the Buddhists (pg. 21).

Peterson points out that only in the 20th century was the BK first fully performed as the dance-drama it was intended to be. One must question whether this type of work really does support the author's conclusion that Sastri's work "continues to affirm for Tamil Protestants the Tamil cultural roots and character of their religion" (pg. 36). True, there are examples of deeply Tamil expressions of biblical faith, yet mainstream Christianity in Tamil Nadu did not embrace Sastri as deeply as seems to be suggested, and his work is little more than a cultural artifact among a deeply westernized Christian community.

Hindu Perspectives on Christian Mission

Richard Fox Young's paper looks at "Some Hindu Perspectives on Christian Missions in the Indic World of the Mid Nineteenth Century." This is an insightful study of how Hindus perceived and responded to missionaries. The three responses considered were those who considered missionaries as a nuisance (people who "got in the way" of others), illustrated in the Maratha pandit Krishna Shastri; others, and

the fascinating case study here is Arumuka Pillai of Sri Lanka, saw the missionaries as God (Shiva), sent to rebuke corruption and spur revitalization ("getting back on the way"); finally there are those who "got out of the way" entirely by conversion to the Christian way, like Nilakanth/Nehemiah Goreh. The analysis of Goreh is sensitive and insightful, concluding that it is disappointing that he failed to integrate his Hindu heritage into his new-found faith in Christ.

Muslim Responses to Christian Critiques

Modernist Muslim responses to Christian critiques are analyzed by Avril A. Powell. The Christian critique that is outlined is that of William Muir (1819-1905). His Muslim respondents were Saiyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) and Saiyid Amir Ali (1849-1928), both reformers who advocated modern scientific education for Muslims. The essay shows how the idiom of debate was modern and English, strikingly in contrast to traditional Christian and Muslim apologetics.

Dalits, Christianity, and Patron-Client Relationships

John C. B. Webster contributes a paper on "Dalits and Christianity in Colonial Punjab: Cultural Interactions." This is a study of the Chuhra movement to Christianity, looking at the Chuhras, their change, and developments in the next generation after the original conversions. For Chuhras,

the central reality in the village was clearly the patron-client relationship to which almost all of them were bound and upon which they were dependent for life itself (pg. 98).

The evidence is that Chuhras, accustomed as they were to patron-client relationships, sought to adopt the missionaries and missions as new, more benevolent patrons. It is equally clear that this was a role that the missionaries did not relish and that they resisted (pg. 103-104).

Baptism not only established a relationship between the missionaries and the Chuhra converts but also identified each with the other. Since that was what both missionaries and inquirers wanted, the nature of their relationship and its consequences for both parties became the central issues of cultural interaction. That it would be some sort of paternal relationship was a foregone conclusion. This fitted in with the 'guardian' mentality of these particular Protestant missionaries in relation to 'uneducated' India in particular, as well as with the patron-client relationship to which the Chuhra were accustomed. The two groups, however, did not share identical perceptions of what that parental relationship involved (pg. 106).

This perspective is fundamental to a proper understanding of Christianity in India, and has been documented from case studies from other parts of India as well. The mass movements of Dalits to Christianity were not nearly so much movements for freedom in protest against bondage as they were movements from one patron to another. Patronage systems continue in place throughout Christian institutions in India today, and even many evangelical missions reflect this mentality. This is contextualization of a type that has barely been recognized by westerners who interact with Indian Christianity.

Webster traces out the weaknesses of the village churches that resulted from the Chuhra movement, the successes and failures of Christian education among these people, and the trend to migrate to urban areas and develop a new non-Dalit identity, although most who went to the cities continued in occupations considered only fit for "unclean" Dalits. He closes lamenting that all the records of the interaction are from missionaries, and one can only guess at the true Chuhra Christian perspective(s).

Social Stirrings

Peter B. Anderson writes about the autobiographical account of Sona

Murmu (c. 1862-1918), a Santal woman who had been baptized as a young teenager. Her story is interrelated with the Santal social stirrings seen in the Hul and in the Kherwar movement. The Hul or insurrection of 1855 was a Santal uprising against oppression by non-Santals. The Kherwar movement arose in 1868 and is suggested as a parallel of the Christian movement among the Santals, as both responded to both social and religious problems as perceived by Santals themselves.

Controversy over Tribal Conversions

Contemporary tribal conversions to Christianity are studied in a paper by Bengt G. Karlsson. The context here is the controversy over tribal conversions, particularly in Gujarat where there has been violence against Christian activity. The case study is from the other side of India, the Rabhas of northern Bengal. The interesting point is that Christianity has been present among the Rabhas for a century, yet only since the late 1970s has a serious conversion movement arisen, to the point that two thirds of Rabhas are now Christians (Baptists). There is insightful analysis of the failure of some missions contrasted with the success of the Baptists, the central point being that

the change of religion...related to a more implicit agenda of modern 'identity formation'. By becoming Christian, a tribal community like the Rabhas could construct themselves as both different and modern. Their conversion was a form of 'cultural strategy' by which the community struggled to establish a new sense of self (pg. 140).

Inevitable Failure

The Anglican Church in late colonial India is studied by Gerald Studdert-Kennedy. He looks at Bishop E.J. Palmer, William Miller, and the Westcott brothers (George and Foss), before concluding with Roland Allen. Allen's work "reads like an attempt to escape the inescapable conditions of existence for compet-

ing, communally centered beliefs" (pg. 181); an insightful comment in an insightful paper that illustrates the inevitable failure of institutional Christianity in the Hindu world. (Allen's principles point to contextualized faith outside of "Christian" institutional structures and without developing a separate "Christian" community; thus his dissonance with classical Anglican perspectives.)

Successful Assimilation?

Susan Billington Harper writes on a success story from institutional Christianity, the Anglican diocese of Dornakal in Andhra Pradesh and its first bishop, V. S. Azariah. This chapter is all about cultural context and particularly the issue of caste. Azariah stood in the classic Protestant tradition of total rejection of caste: "The moment a person is baptized, he is no longer a Mala, a Madiga or a Sudra, but all are one in Christ Jesus" (Azariah, quoted from pg. 191). Caste names were dropped in favor of biblical names or names of virtues; the sacred tuft of hair had to be cut and "caste marks" had to be removed from the woman's forehead.

The heart of the chapter is a careful study of how newly introduced Christian values that conformed with values of the caste hierarchy (in particular, not eating carrion) were successfully assimilated among the new converts. But Christian values that were out of accord with the values of the caste hierarchy (in particular, sexual and marital mores) were nowhere near so successfully assimilated. Here again is contextualization with a twist.

In attempting to build a new community with a new identity that replaced and transcended old caste identities, the church almost inadvertently created new social organizations, rituals and customs that bore remarkable similarities to the old ones they replaced (pg. 193).

Of particular interest is the development of non-beef eating habits among the new converts. This was not learned from beef-eating bishops and missionaries, but illustrates that the converts were interested in their standing within the caste hierarchy.

Although optimistic Western missionaries of this period tended to regard mass movements as a means by which outcasts and low castes were rejecting not only their particular position in the caste hierarchy but also the entire hierarchical value system upon which it was based, conversion to Christianity seems primarily to have provided an effective instrument for improving the status of depressed class groups within that same caste hierarchy (pg. 209-210).

(Cf. Juergensmeyer, "even in the cheeriest piety of church fellowship there were tensions between the global perspective of the missionaries and the parochial concerns of village Christians, and in the end the illusion of Christendom as a new society remained mostly that, an illusion" (pg. 210 from *Religion as Social Vision*, pg. 192).

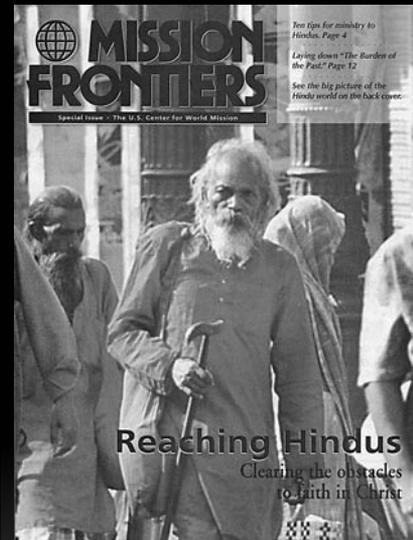
Pure Tamil and Bible Translation

Michael Bergunder closes the volume with his paper on the pure Tamil movement and its impact on Bible translations. The development of "church Tamil" as a separate dialect is outlined, followed by a survey of the development of the pure Tamil movement which seeks to eliminate Sanskrit-derived terms from the Tamil language. An ecumenical Bible translation based on pure Tamil is then discussed; insightful translations and inconsistent remnants of Sanskrit based terminology are pointed out. The ambivalent response of most Protestants to this new translation is discussed.

These outstanding essays bring the reader into close contact with various aspects of the Christian movement in the varying contexts of India. There are types of contextualization to affirm, but also types of contextualization to reject.

Often the deepest contextualization can be going on without even being consciously noticed. Especially invaluable at the current time are the insights in the papers by Webster and Harper that demonstrate how the reality of Dalit conversion movements does not match popular Christian wishful thinking about those movements, what has been termed above as contextualization with a twist. These true insights into Dalit conversion movements must be internalized and must inform analysis and decisions about current discussions of mass movements of Dalits to Buddhist or Christian faith. Standard simplistic paradigms about why and how Dalits have and do change to the Christian religion are desperately in need of revision based on the kind of careful historical and sociological study evident in the works of Webster and Harper. This is only the most significant point for the current time among many astute and important points in these papers.

reaching hindus:



Clearing the Obstacles to

faith in christ

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