

What is the Church Growth School of Thought

Donald McGavran
Fuller Theological Seminary

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

For more than fifteen years I have been developing the interdisciplinary field known as the Church Growth School of Thought, defining its limitations, formulating its concepts, developing or borrowing the methods proper to it and discriminating its findings. I have written a number of church growth books, supervised many church growth researches in Asia, Africa and Latin America, had close connection with researches in church growth in Europe and North America, edited the Church Growth Bulletin for eight years, and built up a missions faculty devoted to *classical Christian mission* – which is to say, to *the basic tenets of church growth*.

Yet I have never stopped formally to answer the question posed by the title of this paper – What Is the Church Growth School of Thought? I am grateful to Professor Pyke and the Association of Professors of Mission for giving me the opportunity to speak to the subject. I am also delighted that three other members of our seven-man faculty are here. The Church Growth School of Thought is a joint production. I have, in fact, played a rather small part in it. The men on our faculty have played a large part. Alan Tippett, Arthur Glasser, Ralph Winter, Charles Kraft, Peter Wagner, Edwin Orr, and Roy Shearer, have all added significantly to the complex. So have men not citizens of the United States – like Dr. Peter Coterell of the great Sudan Interior Mission and David Barrett of the Anglican Church Missionary Society – Church Growth is much bigger than Pasadena.

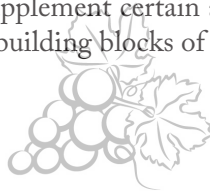
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The Church Growth School of Thought will be better presented today because Dean Glasser, to whom I turned over the administration eleven months ago, will read the paper on Theology of Church Growth, and Professor Wagner, our specialist on church growth and our Latin American man, will speak on “Scientific Research in Church Growth.” Had I known in time that Dr. Winter was going to be here, I would have persuaded him to read a paper on “The History of Missions from the Point of View of Church Growth and the Expansion of Christianity.” I regret that under the circumstances the historical aspect of the spread of Christianity will have to be taken on trust. It is an integral part of church growth thinking and contributes many insights.

National leaders and career missionaries who study, research, learn and write at the School of Missions and Institute of Church Growth greatly enrich our thought. This year, for example, we have had over eighty of these men and women from twenty-three different countries. Through the last eleven years more than 500 career missionaries have studied with us. Each one has contributed to that rich realistic understanding of the propagation of the Gospel, which is essential to biblical mission everywhere.

When in September 1971, I received Dr. Pyke’s kind invitation “to present to the members of this Association an account of the Church Growth Movement,” I thought of making the first paper a history of this School of Thought, showing its antecedents, origins, development decade by decade, the contributions by which the gifted faculty at Fuller’s School of Missions have enriched, broadened and deepened the church growth way of looking at missions, and finally setting forth the remarkable spread of church growth thinking by means of seminars, research centers, departments in seminaries, experiments, and the like now being instituted and carried on all over the world by nationals and missionaries of many denominations from Anglicans to Pentecostals.

I have turned from a historical presentation partly because it could not help but be quite personal. I am going to treat the subject by setting forth *ten prominent elements in the church growth point of view*. The next three papers will then supplement certain aspects. You will see in greater detail some of the main building blocks of the edifice.



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CHURCH GROWTH AND SCHOOLS OF MISSION

Before coming to the ten emphases, let me point out that the Church Growth School of Thought has a special value to Schools of Missions. It has developed a curriculum suited to missionary training and competence, a particular philosophy of education for missionaries.

It insists that these be trained in *mission*, i.e., in communicating the Gospel, in discipling *ta ethne*, in reconciling men to God in the Church of Jesus Christ. That is the function, we maintain, of a School of Mission. A School of *Mission* is not preparing Americans to solve all of America's problems. It is not preparing Brazillians to solve all of Brazil's problems. It is not a school for the implementation of Christianity. It is a School of *Mission*.

The Church Growth School of Thought feels that mission is a discipline or an inter disciplinary field of knowledge in its own right. At least a hundred thousand missionaries are now at work and more will be in the years ahead. The knowledge and skills these men and women need determine the courses, which make up the curriculum of Schools of Mission. Missions, you see, is neither theology nor science. It is neither church history nor anthropology. Its goals and purposes and boundaries are different from all these. Missions, to be sure has used theology, sociology, comparative religions, anthropology, church history, ecumenics, and the whole biblical field. Yet it is none of these. It is a *combination of these, particularly suited to equip founders and leaders of young Churches to perform their calling*.

It follows that professors of mission should be especially proficient in communicating the Gospel. That, broadly conceived, is their field. At this point, however, because doctorates of mission were unobtainable in the United States, schools of missions have suffered grievous handicaps. They have had to employ professors each of whom developed his competence in some field other than communicating the Gospel and multiplying churches. Some for example, like myself, have taken their doctorates in education, some in history, linguistics, anthropology, or comparative religions. Some have developed competence in the fields of ecumenics, church unity, mission administration turning authority over to national leaders, or leprosy.

It is a constant temptation for teachers whose education is in some specialty to emphasize it at the expense of the central objective.

Sometimes, they even define mission as that specialty. Thus, training in mission becomes training in ecumenics, or in right relationships to younger Churches, or in anthropology and linguistics, or in comparative religions. Recently much training in missions tends to limit itself to the scientific principles of communication.

All these certainly should be parts of the mission curriculum, but they should be *parts*. The beautiful, precise, and changing *balance* between all the various factors which go into the propagation of the Gospel and the up building of sound Christian churches can be easily destroyed. In some schools, some of these factors are elevated to a position of supreme prominence. They become *ends* and the School heavily stresses a narrow segment of the total field. Sometimes a school maintains a formal acknowledgement that the goal is to bring the *ethne* to faith and obedience. Sometimes even the formal acknowledgement is lacking. Thus a professor in a noted School of Missions was said to teach anthropology “without caring whether anyone was ever converted to Christ or not.

The Church Growth School of Thought sets its face resolutely against all such reduction of mission. It defines the discipline of missions broadly. We maintain that the curriculum of missions has eight branches.

- I. Theory and Theology of Missions
- II. Apologetics of the Christian Missions vis-à-vis non-Christian religions
- III. Mission Across Cultures – anthropology, sociology, secularism, etc.
- IV. Techniques, Organization, and Methods of Mission
- V. History of Missions and Church Expansion
- VI. Church Growth
- VII. The World Church: Ecumenics
- VIII. Biblical Studies and Theology



I often tell my colleagues that SWM-ICG lives in constant danger. In order to give good missionary education we must be open to new currents of thought and movements of the Spirit. We must be as broad as the multitudinous aspects of mankind. The world is truly our parish. We must move with the rapidly changing times. We must speak both to young Churches led exclusively by nationals, *and* to missions operating where there is as yet no church. We must not only recognize the revolutions of our day, but must fit missions to them. Education of special messengers of the Gospel must be broad.

At the same time, such education must probably contribute to reconciling men to God in the Church of Jesus Christ, i.e., to mission in the classical sense. The curriculum must not be a potpourri of currently fashionable mission emphases whether they reconcile men to God or not.

Teachers of missions must therefore stress *proportion* in the ingredients. To change the metaphor, we must make sure that the short-range goals are controlled by the long-range goals. For example, on its outbound voyage, in mid-Pacific, the Yankee Clipper facing adverse winds tacks to and fro. But while doing this, the captain remembers that he carries cargo for merchants in Hong Kong. He is not tacking aimlessly. He is heading for Hong Kong. Much of the confusion in missions today arises at just this point. The captains of some clippers headed for Hong Kong have changed course, are sailing for Los Angeles, proclaiming loudly over the radio that they are Orient bound. Semantically they are right. From mid-Pacific, Los Angeles does lie to the east; but to use the word "Orient" under these circumstances is somewhat less than transparent.

Speaking of definitions, some of you may be wondering how I use the words: "mission" and "missions." Let me explain. Quite conscious that a massive effort has been mounted to reinterpret mission to mean "everything God wants done" or even "everything Christians ought to do," I decline to use the terms that way. "Everything Christians should do," I hold, can much more simply and honestly be called "our Christian duty." I favor individual Christians and churches doing their Christian duty; but refuse to call it "mission." I reserve that term for propagating the Gospel and reconciling men to God in the Church of Jesus Christ. *That* is mission (singular) – the general concept. Missions (plural) are specific embodiments of mission. However, it is often convenient to use "missions" in a general inclusive sense. Consequently, according to context, I say both "Missions has a long history" and "Missions have entered every nation on earth."

When missions and mission are thus defined, it is clear that I use the words “church growth,” “missions,” and “mission” almost synonymously. Historically, “church growth” had to be used, precisely because the word “mission” was being extensively debased. Had I spoke of mission or missions, I would have been badly misunderstood. Either, I had to use “church growth,” or to define mission almost every time I used the word.

Of course, church growth is not nose-counting. It is as broad as classical mission. Almost everything that classical missions valued and did are parts of the Church Growth School of Thought. However, since we are living in the nineteen seventies not in the eighteen seventies, I lay before you ten distinctive emphases which church growth makes *today*.

TEN PROMINENT EMPHASES IN THE CHURCH GROWTH SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

First, The Church Growth School of Thought is Deeply Theological

Church growth is born in theology. It arises in a certain view of God and man, sin and salvation, brotherhood and justice, heaven and hell, revelation and inspiration. The tremendous labor involved in Christian mission, the selfless outpouring of prayer and life that others may enjoy the benefits of right relationships with God as revealed in His Word, would never be undertaken for human reasons. As one looks at the history of Christian mission he sees how closely the fortunes of the apostolate have waxed and waned with the rise and fall of spiritual vitality and biblical conviction in the sending congregations and denominations.

Only those who believe that God wants church growth, continue to send their sons and daughters abroad. Only an unshakeable conviction that God wants His lost children found produces or long maintains biblical mission. Of course, when endeavor becomes institutionalized, it can continue on for years on the momentum of the machine. The freight train coasts down the track for twenty miles after the boiler explodes. What we are seeing in some missionary societies today is momentum without theological steam. Long continued mission, however, demands a hot fire and a full head of steam.

A few years ago Winburn Thomas wrote an article for the International Review of Missions, entitled “Growth: Test of a Church’s Faithfulness.” Church growth men agree with that. In responsive

populations (note the condition), faithfulness to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ results in church growth. It is unfaithful to come out of ripe harvest fields empty handed.

If you would understand the church growth position at all, you must see it cradled in theological concepts – doctrines – which have been common to all denominations from Baptist to Roman Catholic.

The vigorous response of the Church Growth School of Thought to the deviations from these doctrines, which have been built into the mode of mission being promoted by the World Council of Churches, need surprise no one. We are not against the Council. Five members of our faculty come from Churches affiliated with the World Council. We have no theological or ideological objection to centralization of power. But we believe that the Council, as concerns the world mission of the Church, is seriously in error, that the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism has been captured by a view of mission both wrong and disastrous.

Church growth thinking is poles apart from the theological rationale of mission, which the ecumenical movement has promulgated during the last fifteen years and which found such clear expression in the Uppsala document "Renewal in Mission." The distress we voiced in the May 1968 issue of the *Church Growth Bulletin* which asked "Will Uppsala Betray the Two Billion?" rises out of the heart of the Church Growth School of Thought.

The theological basis of church growth is tremendously important. Since, however, the second paper today, read by Dean Glasser will devote itself entirely to the *Theology of Church Growth* I shall say no more as to this first emphasis.

Second, The Church Growth School of Thought Advocates Proportion in Mission

It holds that men have multitudinous needs of body, mind, and soul to meet, which is thoroughly Christian. The Church is properly engaged in relief of suffering pushing back the dark pall of ignorance, and increasing productivity. But such activities must be carried out in proportion. They must never be substituted for finding the lost. Christians must never be guilty of turning from the Spirit to the flesh or of deceiving men by offering them transient betterment as eternal salvation.

In regard to the battle raging today between advocates of evangelism and social service, we say that finding the lost and bringing

them back to the Father's House is a chief and irreplaceable purpose of Christian mission. It is not the *only* purpose. It is not even *the* chief purpose. It is, however, *a chief and irreplaceable* purpose. Finding the lost is not simply "a chief purpose." That opens the door to very minor emphasis on what was a major emphasis in the New Testament Church. That allows men to slight our Lord's great commission. Bringing the lost home is *a chief and irreplaceable purpose*.

We plead with any who are so ardent about social justice that they define evangelism exclusively in terms of changing social structures to enable more this-worldly justice to obtain, saying, "Press ahead with social justice." Our ancestors were abolitionists and prohibitionists and we honor their memories. But lay at least equal stress on winning men to Christ and multiplying churches. Remember the two billion, shortly to be three billion, who are living and dying without any chance to become Disciples of Christ, without any opportunity to sit down to the communion table and partake of the Medicine of immortality. "How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach unless they be sent?" We also plead with any who may be so devoted to vertical reconciliation that they tolerate horrible injustices, which they have power to correct. "Press on with evangelism." But remember that the Bible straightly charges Christians to do good to all men, to love mercy, and to do justice. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father. Inasmuch as you do it to one of these least, you do it to our Savior Himself.

Third, The Church Growth School of Thought Seeks to See the Actual Situation in Mission

It advocates action in view of the true facts. It deplores the vast discrepancy between theory and practice. It seeks to bring performances into line with promise. For example, the positions set forth in Sections One and Two above are generally accepted by Christian missions and denominations and written into their constitutions. Practically however, both liberals and conservatives,

faced with many human needs,
often limiting themselves to resistant populations,
always bound by previous patterns of action,
cumbered by institutionalism in advance of the Church,
burdened with cultural overhang, which leads them to
evangelize and serve in Western ways,
committed to a non-biblical individualism,

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not understanding multi-individual accession as a normal way men come to Christ, and deceived by their own promotional efforts (whatever our missions do is wonderful!),

constantly under-emphasize and betray the truths voiced in Section One and Two. Liberals and conservatives too frequently are content to carry on splendid mission work whether churches multiply or not. Bitter experience teaches them to entertain small expectations of church growth and they spend most of their budget, time, and men for other things.

Perhaps it is this realistic appreciation of the true situation, which sets Church Growth Thought apart so decisively. We are resolved not to kid ourselves. We do a great deal of promotion, but we never inhale. We spend much time digging out the truth concerning “the amount of Church” actually there teaching constantly that church growth is more than number of members, that it includes growth in grace and in organic complexity, we nevertheless insist that numbers of the redeemed are never “mere.” We deride the cheap scorn with which some churchmen always view church statistics and show it up for what it is – defensive thinking afraid to face its own defeats. We preach that most worthwhile human efforts draw heavily on exact quantitative analysis that the Church should do the same. The Church consists of countable men and women and there is nothing particularly spiritual or meritorious in not counting them.

To be sure, no one was ever saved by accurate membership counting, but then, no one was ever cured by a thermometer. Yet the physician always puts it in the patient’s mouth. Statistics do not cure, but they (like the thermometer) tell a great deal about the condition of the patient. They enable correct diagnosis. They are indispensable to responsible churchmanship. They help dispell the fog of good intentions, promotional inaccuracies, hoped for outcomes, vast generalizations, and general ignorance, which hide the real situation from ministers, missionaries, mission boards, and professors of mission. Since hard facts enable us to be better stewards of God’s grace, men with church growth eyes try to be vividly aware of actual situations.

Let me give you one illustration. Professor Wagner, digging into church growth in Bolivia, unearthed the fact that a two year program of Evangelism-in-Depth which held large numbers of Bible studies, multiplied preaching of the Word, dramatized the Christian cause, secured thousands of decisions for Christ, and drew Evangelicals together in a wonderful way, had (despite all this) made no significant difference to

church growth. In seven denominations, church growth continued through the Evangelism-in-Depth years at the same speed it manifested before and after. As a result of Wagner's work, Evangelism-in-Depth programs are up for revision toward making them more effective.

Fourth, The Church Growth School of Thought Believes We Live in a Most Responsive World

Searching for truth, no matter where it may lead us, we have been pressured by the weight of evidence into accepting the revolutionary idea that during these decades, the world is much more receptive to the Gospel than it has been in 1900 years. This idea is enhanced when mankind is viewed as a vast mosaic of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural units. Citizens of India, for example, are not just Indians. They are members of several thousand ethnic units called castes. They are further divided by languages and dialects, and by educational and economic levels. Urban units are very different from rural units.

In almost every land some pieces of the mosaic are receptive to the Gospel. People after people, tribe after tribe, caste after caste, is now winnable. Urban segment after urban segment can now be discipled. After a professor in Hindustan Bible Institute, which enrolls 140 men training for the ministry, had studied at Fuller Seminary's School of Missions and after a Church Growth Seminar in Madras, the faculty of the Hindustan Bible Institute decided that it was feasible to plant 100 new congregations in Madras City in receptive units of that huge metropolis.

Again after Dr. E. C. Smith got his Master of Arts in Missiology at the Pasadena School and returned to Java, the Southern Baptist Mission there had an extraordinary spiritual revival, in the course of which it embarked on a deliberate policy of starting – to use its words – “thousands of house and hamlet churches” among the receptive Moslems and Chinese of East Java. The mission had started looking at East Java as a mosaic, some parts of which are receptive. It had discovered a degree of receptivity so large that only a goal such as the mission adopted would match the opportunity.

Three years ago, I often said that in Africa by the year 2000 there would be a hundred million Christians. Dr. David Barrett told me he thought my estimate far too conservative. I asked him to make one of his own and let me print it. He kindly proceeded to do the demographic calculation necessary and his estimate appeared in the May 1969 issue of the Church Growth Bulletin. He judged that by 2000 A.D. there would

be 357 million Christians in Africa! Later, the *International Review of Missions* picked up the story and then *Time* and other newspapers broadcast it, and it has now (1972) become part of much Christian thinking.

Church Growth men keep pointing out that we live in a responsive world. This fourth characteristic of the Church Growth School of Thought is serving as a useful corrective to the deep depression which so discouraged missions following World War II and the liquidation of European empires.

Fifth, Despite this Widespread Receptivity, Enough Discipling is not Happening

This is partly because mission suffers from a paucity of knowledge about finding lost men and building them into the Church. For example, many missionaries and ministers are propagating the Gospel solely along the individualistic lines, which in the West have been so successful in building Gathered Churches out of Culture Churches or State Churches. Ministers and missionaries simply do not know the people movement – the mode of discipling so often used by God to bring strong and enduring Churches into being.

Paucity of knowledge concerning people movements, receptive populations, arrested Christian movements, the effects of revivals, the real outcome of the school approach in Africa, and a hundred other aspects of mission keeps the church-mission organism working in the dark, going it blind concerning its God-given task. All kinds of theories as to the desirability of methods (such as dialogue with non-Christian religions, industrial evangelism, and accommodation to culture) are propounded without adequate knowledge as to the effect these have on bringing *ta ethne* to faith and obedience.

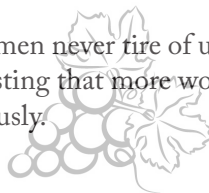
Enough discipling is not happening – this is typical church growth thinking. Traditional missions take offence at the word “enough” and like to consider lack of discipling as inevitable in view of the hardness of the world or the lack of funds. Church growth men recognize, of course, that some fields are so resistant that no Church grows; but they also recognize that often appeal to the difficulty of the field simply masks the fact that the Church concerned is not seeking lost sheep or is resolutely looking for them in ravines where they are not grazing. In Chile, for example, all the old-line missions are getting very little growth in a country where several hundred thousand have become Evangelical Christians in Pentecostal Churches.

Granting quite that God is sovereign and men can neither make the Church grow nor convert anyone, the Church Growth School of Thought continually asks, “how can we be better stewards of the grace of God?” It continually turns up cases where lack of growth is clearly the result of preventable human factors. For example, several cases have come to light recently where a whole population became suddenly responsive; but because the old line Churches were accustomed to working in highly resistant populations and did not change their ways of working, the population became Christian in new line Churches. And it did this while the old line Churches were bitterly criticizing “sectarian competition.” They might better have asked themselves whether, seeing their dullness of heart, God had not sent in other laborers to reap the ripened grain.

Church growth thinking insists that our goals for the next thirty years must not be set in view of the long slow exploratory periods in Christian mission. Defeats of the past are not to be our guide in estimating the future. In view of the tremendous growth of the new religions of Japan and other lands, we must give up the concept, canonized in many quarters that the great ethnic religions of the world will continue to reject the Gospel.

An interesting thing is happening in South India. The dominant party (the DMK, the Dravidians) is aggressively atheistic. It makes fun of idols. It ridicules Hinduism. It taunts the Brahmans. It has turned great numbers of Dravidians into atheists. Dr. V. B. Subbamma, the Lutheran, when doing her thesis with me two years ago, repeatedly said, “Indians are becoming Christian not from Hinduism but from atheism. Christians will make a great mistake if they fail to speak convincingly to the vacuum, which the atheistic movement is creating. True, some hard-core atheists are violently against Christianity also; but tens of thousands of others have lost their faith in the monkey-tailed, elephant-headed, big-bellied gods of Hinduism and are religiously hungry. Christians must feed them.” Yet in these very years some misguided missiologists limit the task in India to quiet Christian presence or patient dialogue with a Hinduism, which will not listen to the Gospel.

Church growth men never tire of urging that *enough church growth is not going on* and suggesting that more would if God’s special messengers would work at it assiduously.



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Sixth, Emphasis on Research on Church Growth

Convinced that hundreds of millions who have yet to believe are diverted from knowing Christ through a paucity of knowledge concerning discipling, the Church Growth School of Thought lays great emphasis on scientific research to ascertain the factors which affect reconciling men to God in the Church of Jesus Christ. We believe that tremendous discoveries await us there. Where have denominations grown? Where have congregations multiplied? Where have they *not* grown? How much – or how little – have they grown? Above all, why have they grown? This last question may be asked in an exact way by saying, “Why has each segment of the Church grown?” We must know accurately the growth patterns characteristic of thousands of pieces of the mosaic.

Seventh, Publishing Church Growth Studies

Church growth men believe that the hard facts about church growth once discovered should be published, taught to ministers and missionaries, read by serious minded Christians, and used in all evangelistic labors whether in the local churches or in nations.

We encourage those who write master’s theses and doctor’s dissertations to publish them. We believe that, far from withholding publication until a highly polished research has been done, it is desirable to publish research in progress. We live in the midst of an explosion of information. Mission must discover more and more about its field and disseminate what it discovers. We hope our convictions on these matters will commend themselves to fellow professors of missions, mission executives and leaders of younger Churches and older Churches. A firm foundation of facts needs to be placed under the missionary enterprise. To do it, large-scale cooperation among the Christians of many lands and many cultures is urgently required.

I have spoken very briefly about the sixth and seventh emphases of the Church Growth School of Thought because Professor Wagner is going to devote his entire paper to this most important topic. Enough can scarcely be said on it.

Eighth, Using the Sciences to Further Discipling

The Church Growth School of Thought lays great emphasis on using the social sciences – anthropology, sociology, and psychology – *to aid Churches and missions in bringing the nations to faith and obedience.* It

is not merely that we use the social sciences. Every state university and almost every college does that. We use them to *further discipling*. The state universities often use them to further the spread of a religion of relativism. The sciences themselves, of course, are neutral. They can be used to almost any end. They can be used to prove man is the sum and substance of all things, or that he is merely a highly developed animal, or to help build the Church of Jesus Christ.

Missionary education has used anthropology for many years. When I was a student in the College of Missions in 1922-23 we studied Fraser's *Golden Bough*, Crawford's *Thinking Black, Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces*, and other similar books. Ethnological studies were undertaken to help missionary candidates know the peoples to whom they went and thus to aid discipling. After World War II, however, anthropology was taught in missionary training schools very largely for the purpose of breaking down the missionary's ethnocentricity, of destroying his race pride, of making him able to see values in other cultures. Church growth men, while not denigrating this use of anthropology, emphasize that the more we know about cultures and social structures, the better we can communicate Christ, establish churches in harmony with their surroundings, and train leaders who conform to indigenous leadership patterns. Urban sociology is emphasized because the Church will disciple urban populations faster and better if it knows how these are put together, what makes them function, how they are going to develop in this decades ahead, and what characteristics urban congregations and denominations are likely to exhibit.

At Fuller's School of Missions and Institute of Church Growth, three of the teachers have professional training in anthropology and the rest have first hand knowledge of other cultures through working amongst them. Dr. Alan Tippet spent twenty years in Fiji, living very close to the Methodist congregations, which arose out of more than twenty people movements to Christ. He has an enviable understanding of tribal configurations and animistic religion. Since for these twenty years he was also a missionary and latterly the principal of the seminary, he has been able to combine anthropological erudition with missionary passion. Dr. Charles Kraft approached anthropology through linguistics. His missionary experience left him with a vivid sense of the need of many missionaries to identify with and understand the peoples whom they served. He is our Africa man and another mainstay in the harnessing of anthropological and linguistic lore to the discipling of earth's tribes and peoples.

Most of our theses to date have explored at length the anthropological nature of the people being claimed for Christ. Thus their researches provide ethnological insight for other workers in these fields. The extensive bibliographies, which form part of each research, list the books and articles available on each population concerned.

Ninth, The Church Growth School of Thought Emphasizes Classical Evangelism

We believe every form of it should be greatly increased. Personal evangelism, good deed evangelism, newspaper evangelism, radio evangelism, evangelism in depth, and saturation evangelism – all are good. Circumstances dictate, which form, should be used.

Evangelism is, of course, by word and deed. If the *intent* is to proclaim Christ and encourage men to become His disciples, then almost any activity of voice, pen, hands or feet is evangelism.

Its effectiveness is to be measured by the degree to which it does in fact communicate the faith. In judging whether evangelism is effective or not, the *field* must be considered. Some fields are ripe; others have yet to be bought. Evangelistic methods will be different in each.

Church growth thinking holds that when God sends men into ripe fields, he wants sheaves brought to His barn. If evangelism is not delivering them, something is the matter. Looked at from God's side, it is not faithful enough. Looked at from man's, it is not effective enough.

For example, if thousands of decisions for Christ are obtained, but church membership remains the same, we recommend careful attention to folding and feeding the newly found sheep. If thousands become secret disciples and gradually disappear, it may be because to them existent congregations are too, distant, too culturally uncomfortable, or linguistically confusing. If this is the case, we recommend, not that secret discipleship be lauded as correct, but that congregations be formed within the natural homogeneous units from which the secret disciples come.

The School of Missions at Fuller Seminary is pleased to have on its faculty Dr. J. Edwin Orr, the world's chief authority on revivals, and an active evangelist himself. To be credible, a School of *Mission* must teach evangelism and revival. If a school claims to prepare men to propagate the Gospel, it must not shy away from proclaiming Christ and baptizing believers.

Tenth, Revamping Theological Education

The final emphasis to which I call attention is that theological education in the lands of the younger Churches should be revamped so that Bible Schools and seminaries graduate men experienced in multiplying churches. Younger Churches cannot afford the static patterns of theological education used in the West when the Church exists in disciplined populations.

Yorke Allen a few years ago surveyed the whole world and published his findings under the title *A Seminary Survey*. It showed literally hundreds of schools training leaders of Third World denominations. These institutions absorb large numbers of missionaries. Often these go out straight from seminary and begin teaching immediately. They know nothing of communicating the Gospel in that particular piece of the mosaic. They take no part in church planting evangelism. Yet they teach the oncoming ministers of the Church. Church growth theory, appalled at this, maintains that a seminary is not a place where men learn subjects. It is a place where men learn how to nurture and multiply churches.

Some years ago Clark Scanlon, while studying in the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote a thesis, which took my eye. I encouraged him to publish it under the title *Church Growth Through Theological Education*. It has been widely read. Scanlon maintains that theological professors should themselves be competent church planters as well as historians, exegetes, theologians, or what not. Seminaries should engage their students and faculties in multiplying churches. Theological education should be revamped so that passing through a seminary turns out men accustomed *so* to present the Good News that churches do eventuate and proliferate.

This tenth emphasis underlies theological education by extension, which has played such a prominent part in missions during the past few years. When Dr. Winter first proposed extension he had been greatly influenced by the Pentecostal churches and their leadership training. He noted that while the Pentecostals produced church leaders who identified with their members and operated in a natural indigenous manner, Pentecostals gave pastors their inadequate biblical instruction. Winter said, "Theological education by extension will train the real leaders of the churches, the laymen who now carry on the work, and will give them systematic theological training. Thus it will turn them out even better church planters than the Pentecostal laymen-preachers."

Theological education by extension has other values, but all around the world where it is being used, the church growth emphasis is an essential part of its structure.

CONCLUSION

I hope that something of the length and breadth of the Church Growth School of Thought is becoming apparent. I am confident that as my colleagues speak you will see more of its concepts and programs.

As we work forward to fuller understanding, we should avoid a small concept of the movement. Please do not identify church growth thinking with *The Bridges of God*. That book launched the movement and is still influential. But it dealt with only one aspect of church growth. The whole concept has been widened and enriched since 1955. When one speaks of church growth today, he is talking about a way of looking at missions to which a multitude of practioners and theorists have made contributions.

A final word. We stand at the beginning of church growth thinking. The biblical base will not change much; but we are only beginning to see the many ways in which discipling and perfecting are carried on. I invite all of you, my colleagues in the teaching of missions, to contribute to church growth from where you stand. You have to start from your own theological mission organizations, and ecclesiologies, and work forward in your own way bringing your *ethne*, your peoples to the obedience of the faith. To the degree that you do this, you will be engaged in church growth. We need you. In fact, we all need each other.



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