Anticipating Change: Missions and Paradigm Shifts in Emergence

Abstract

As our global community is in an unprecedented period of rapid change, missiology, being a study of crossing boundaries, plays a critical pathfinder role in anticipating, participating and mediating the change process, for change itself is a temporal boundary. Failure to do so in the past has left the Church and other groups in a position in which they lag change, and have been marginalized and considered irrelevant. Emergence theory is introduced as a new model, in place of Kuhn's pyramid of causality, to describe how change itself has changed, as networks are now the opinion leaders. As well, Emergence theory informs missiology of avenues by which Christianity can help people anticipate, participate, and in particular, mediate temporal boundaries. John Wesley is offered as a case study of how these avenues helped the Methodist movement navigate a previous wave front of change.

Key Words: change process, deterministic agents, emergence, missiology, paradigm shifts, technology

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Introduction

As a biomedical engineer, my task was not only scientific research, but to develop new technologies or apply new technologies to existing problems. The focus was always looking forward to try and discern new trends in an attempt to stay on the leading edge of innovation or better yet, ahead of the wave front of change.

But when I hung up my lab coat for the pastoral stole, the questions of my vocation changed. They centered on the past – how to stay faithful to the biblical text. They centered on the present – how to minister to people’s needs. And occasionally, they looked forward – how can the church stay relevant as culture changes. The difference in perspective was such that outside of using my former vocation as an evangelistic bridge ("why did you give up your lucrative career for the ministry?") or to mine analogies for sermon illustrations, there was little overlap between the questions I asked as an engineer and as a pastor.

As such, it was a surprise to me when I returned to seminary for doctoral studies and was sitting in the History of Christian Missions class to hear about the polycentric nature of global Christianity and missions from “everywhere to everywhere.” The phrases smacked much of parallel distributed processing (PDP) theory. And when I sat in my Anthropology for Christian Mission class, I was surprised to hear about centered, bounded, and fuzzy sets. I thought I was daydreaming and back in my advanced mathematics class. The same can be said about the centripetal and centrifugal nature of mission in my Biblical Theology of Mission class and the “bottom up” nature of subaltern studies in my Christian historiography class.

With each succeeding experience, it seemed hidden connections were emerging between what I was learning in missiology and what I had learned as an engineer. The question is “Are these events random or somehow correlated?” It became increasingly clear that the field of missiology was experiencing the same rapid change that I had experienced in the field of science. Indeed, David Bosch writes, “...there is a growing awareness that we live in an era of change from one way of understanding reality to another” (Bosch, 1991:185). Howard Snyder as well echoes the same observation,

Observers in many fields agree: The world is experiencing historic change, a period of fundamental transition. A hinge of history, some say. People differ wildly as to what this means and where we are going, which way the hinge will swing. But almost every cultural analyst sees this as an epochal time of change. In fact, a growing consensus states that the world is entering a period unlike anything experienced before in human history. (Snyder, 1995: 13)
As well, I began to understand that the task of missiology in religious studies is very much akin to that of engineers in science and technology. Craig Ott, citing David Bosch, writes that missions is "the gadfly in the house of theology" (Bosch, 1991:496). Theology of mission calls the church out of its comfort zone and the academy out of its ivory tower, holding the world ever before their eyes" (Ott et al, 2010: xiv) If so, then the role of missiology will be increasingly critical, especially in the rapid era of change we are experiencing.

Hence, as much as missiology is about understanding how to cross boundaries, often understood as geographic and cultural boundaries, missions now more than ever must also be concerned with change because change is itself a temporal boundary. As such, perhaps missiologists need to ask the same questions as engineers, i.e., not just the "how" or "why," but as well the "what if"? For unlike cultural boundaries in which one can choose to cross or not to cross, and where to cross, the change boundary is inevitable, enveloping cultures and societies. Today, because of globalization, no culture and society is immune to change.

If the Church does not anticipate and participate in change, there is a dangerous consequence of irrelevance, marginalization, and becoming obsolete. In fact, this is exactly the predicament facing many churches today. It does not mean the message is irrelevant, for the gospel message is timeless; rather, it is we the messengers who have buried the talent God gave us.

This challenge is particularly true in Development Studies which in essence seeks to help people respond and adapt to change. But as past experience has shown, development programs have failed because they are limited in scope and often act in response to a change that has already occurred (Sine, 1987, Bragg 1987, Fikkert and Corbett: 2010). Failure results because by the time people are "developed," their environment has already changed. Ideally, development studies should prepare people for anticipated changes and be able to actively engage the crest of change rather than merely responding to it.

This paper then explores the question: "How should missions help the Church better anticipate and participate in the change process in an era where even change is changing?" To frame this question, it should be noted that this paper is not primarily concerned with how to manipulate the change process such as that which is described in Everett L. Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovations (2003). Rather, this paper looks at change through systems theory to understand how change is changing and the critical parametric role of missions in the unfolding narrative of change.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first part explores how the change process has itself changed in the era of globalization, arguing that Thomas Kuhn’s pyramid of knowledge description of how paradigm shifts
occur is no longer valid and has been superseded by Emergence Theory which suggests that paradigm shifts are increasingly systemic and therefore simultaneous and concurrent. Second, this paper explores the critical and necessary role of missions in emerging change, especially in view of religion's historically recent marginalization in the change process. In the last section, this paper explores how Emergence theory can aid missiology in helping the Church anticipate, participate in, and mediate the change process, using John Wesley as an example who successfully anticipated, participated and mediated change in a previous era of rapid change.

From Convergence to Emergence

For the past four centuries, science and technology have been the deterministic agents of change, ushering in both the modern and global age. Karl Marx was among the first to understand that “apart from their economic implications, technologies create the ways in which people perceive reality, and that such ways are the key to understanding the diverse forms of social and mental life.” (Postman, 1992: 21) In fact, technology is used as a historical, economic and social measure. Consider for example how epochs are based on technologies such as the Stone, Bronze, Iron, Industrial and Communication Ages and the understanding the nature of nations as developed, underdeveloped and undeveloped. Hence, Neil Postman writes that historians and social scientists “... hold technology and science to be powerful agents of social change. This is noteworthy because deterministic thinking took root when people began to attribute agency to technology as a social force” (Postman, 1992: 2) In other words, science and technology are understood to be the primary initiators of change in the world view and daily lives of both academics and the general public.

But how do science and technology determine change? Published in 1962, Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is one of the most influential books not only in the history of science, but across all disciplines, including the social sciences, philosophy and religious studies in understanding how change occurs. Kuhn basically argues that science is not as objective nor change as constant as one would assume. Rather, because scientists are human, science is also subjectively driven. Hence, while science progresses “normally,” i.e. at a steady pace, moving from one discovery to another, there are also periods where a “scientific revolution” occurs (Kuhn, 1996: 10). This is because humans tend toward certain patterns of thinking and it requires a significant shift in perspective to get “out of the rut.” Kuhn describes the process in the following manner:

In science . . . novelty emerges only with difficulty, manifested by resistance, against a background provided by expectation. Initially, only the anticipated and usual are experienced even
under circumstances where anomaly is later to be observed. Further acquaintance, however, does result in awareness of something wrong before. That awareness of anomaly opens a period in which conceptual categories are adjusted until the initially anomalous has become the anticipated. At this point the discovery has been completed. [this] process or one very much like it is involved in the emergence of all fundamental scientific novelties. (Kuhn, 1996, 64) Kuhn calls this a shift in world view, like "scales falling from the eyes," or the "lightning flash," that "inundates" a previously obscure puzzle, enabling its components to be seen in a new way that for the first time permits its solution." (Kuhn, 1996: 122)

Of importance for the purposes of this paper is that a paradigm shift involves a community. In other words, change results not merely as a result of a shift of a single scientist's way of thinking, but must infuse the entire scientific community before change can result (Kuhn, 1996: 179). Hence, a paradigm shift is systemic in nature, requiring the transformation of the world view of the entire community – what Kuhn calls "revolution."

In a revolution, anomalies are no longer discarded as spurious, but become something to be anticipated by the community, as a result clusters of scientific discoveries begin to occur as scientists see things in a new light. It is as if a puzzle is solved, and when scientists, each holding a piece of the puzzle, see the whole picture, they realize how their piece fits together with other scientists. Connections are made between seemingly isolated scientific discoveries and as a consequence, new ways of thinking result, generating even more discoveries. Hence, because a paradigm shift is communal in nature, a revolution results in clusters of scientific discoveries as members of the community begin to see things through the new paradigm.

With respect to technology, the process is similar, though W. Brian Arthur would term as domains (Arthur, 2009:70). For example, in inventing the automobile, multiple technologies were necessary before it could be realized. It involves not only the invention of a viable engine, but the development of a gearbox to transmit energy to the wheels, a means to steer the wheels, and so forth.

Hence, in Kuhn's era, change in science and technology required a "pyramid of causality" over a period of time for change to occur. Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations essentially echoed Kuhn's concepts and applied it across many disciplines. For example, Rogers argued that change required opinion leaders to influence through a network until critical mass was reached. (2003: 361-362)

But in today's global society, with its ever increasing network of connections, change has changed and no longer requires a pyramid of
causality, or if one exists, it is extremely shallow in nature. Change is no longer hierarchical, but simultaneous and concurrent. Hence, Emergence theory is now more the norm for explaining change than Kuhn.

Emergence theory was originally developed to support evolution to explain how the simple can become complex and in the last half century, as a response to problems resulting from science's propensity toward reductionism, i.e. the simplest answer is the correct answer, and its inability to explain complex systems. Although it has a long history, as far back as Aristotle, Emergence theory could not be visualized until the advent of computers which could empirically model and trace and express the interconnections and interactions between various entities in a comprehensible manner.

An example of modeling complexity is "the Butterfly Effect," coined by Edward Lorenz, and popularized in James Gleick's 1987 book entitled, Chaos: Making a New Science that brought Chaos Theory, a subdiscipline of Emergence and Complexity Theory, into the secular media. The idiom comes from computational models for prediction weather. The Butterfly Effect stipulates that the wind motion of a butterfly in China flapping its wings, when combined with other minute, random events, can result in the formation or absence of a hurricane in the US (Gleick, 1987: 20). Thus, minute, random disturbances can influence macroscopic events with catastrophic consequences.

Emergence theory is itself a paradigm shift which is interdisciplinary in scope. It understands that when sufficient events occur, patterns will become evident, resulting in illumination on something previously seen as anomalous or chaotic. But unlike Kuhn who saw a "pyramid of causality" in which observations of anomalies have to reach a critical mass to initiate a paradigm shift, Emergence postulates that because of the interconnections in complex systems, paradigm shifts can occur spontaneously, simultaneously and concurrently across disciplines. In the terminology of the seminal work of Evelyn Fox Keller and Lee Segel in 1988, no longer are "pacemakers" or an "executive branch" needed for change. Rather, change comes from "bottom up" and simultaneously throughout an entire community and increasingly across communities. (Johnson, 2001: 17-18)

These simultaneous clusters of change are being observed in exponential frequency. Jeffrey Kluger writes, "Across all the disciplines — chemistry, physics, astronomy, biology, economics, sociology, psychology, politics, even the arts — investigators are making similar discoveries, tilting the prism of complexity in new directions and seeing the light spill out in all manner of unexpected ways." (Kluger, 2008: 12) The prism analogy is of note because it reflects the same processes in the different colors of the rainbow, recognizing confluence in both the particular and the universal patterns.
Readers should note two things in Kluger’s observation. First, Kluger notes that discoveries are increasingly made simultaneously and concurrently across disciplines. Because of the intrinsic interconnections of a system, it is possible that multiple entities can see the same thing at a given time. John Naisbitt, quoting from the work of Virginia Hines, summarizes this phenomenon in the following way:

Networks cut across the society to provide a genuine cross-disciplinary approach to people and issues. . . . Networks emerge when people are trying to change society, said Hines. “No matter what the ‘cause,’ the goals, or beliefs, and no matter what type of movement it is—political, social religious. . . . whenever people organize themselves to change some aspect of society, a non-hierarchical but very effective form of organizational structure seems to emerge,” she writes. . . . Structurally, the most important thing about a network is that each individual is at its center. (Naisbitt, 1982: 196)

In the vernacular of Everett Rogers, what pushes change is now no longer the opinion leader, it is the network.

Second, missiologists should note that Kluger does not mention religion at all. If change is simultaneously occurring across all disciplines, as I noted in the introduction, one must ask why this absence. This is the subject of the following section.

**From Artificial Boundaries to Natural Emergence**

If the argument that paradigm shifts are now occurring across disciplines in parallel, one must ask why religion is not considered as a member of the community in shifts? Why is Christianity in particular not considered part of the emerging paradigms, especially since it was the genesis for the technological revolution? In fact, many would also argue that the change process could not have been as strong if it were not for such a view. Thomas Parke Hughes writes that

. . . literate men and women in Europe and America contemplating technology’s transformation of a natural into a human-built world situated technology as a creative tool into a religious context. Many persons with a theological or philosophical turn of mind who thought about technology believed it to be a God-given way in which to recover a lost paradise, or Edenic state. (Hughes, 2004: 17)

George agrees, writing that

'Technology seeks to overcome humanity’s physical and mental limitations. Religion, particularly Christianity, with its concept of resurrection, seeks to overcome human limitation,
including the ultimate human limitation of death. This mutual drive to transcend has even been used to explain the emergence of a technological society from a Judeo-Christian culture. (George, 2006: 8)

The answers to the above questions emphasize the critical role of missiology in today’s world. But before answering the question, it is important to understand the reasons why religion is not considered a determining agent of change. This section suggests three reasons, historically, epistemologically, and pragmatically, for Christianity’s exile from the change process. But as well, this section suggests that the isolation is artificial, i.e., manufactured, whether purposefully or ignorantly. If so, then the reality is that Christianity and in particular the discipline of missiology are critical elements of the paradigm shifts that are occurring in our global community.

The first reason why religion in particular may not be considered as part of the paradigm shift is the historical influence of the Enlightenment which created a rift between the sciences, seen to be the agent of change, and religion, seen to be the obstacle of change. Susan George writes that “Science came into conflict with religion as early as the 17th century. At that time, Galileo (1632) was persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church for his view on science and religion... This is because the goals of the two disciplines are totally different: theology is concerned with salvation of the soul, while the sciences are concerned with understanding of nature.” Hence, George writes “... the message of scientists from the 17th century onwards has been that science must be free of religious and ethical constraints. This is necessary in order for humans to master nature. Not surprisingly, this view created antagonism between science and religion... [After all,] the Bible was written centuries ago, it lacks the information scientists established from natural experiments” (George, 2006: 8) In essence, modern science is saying was that religion cannot possibly be part of any paradigm shifts because its information is based on revelation from centuries ago. Further, it was understood that religion by its nature resists and hinders change (Gibbs and Bolger, 2005:17; Kim and Kim, 2008:59; Scherer, 1987, 96).

Second, in the intervening time since then, the tendency toward reductionism has resulted in denying the validity of religion and by compartmentalizing it from science – treating both as separate, non-overlapping systems in epistemological isolation. Paul Hiebert writes that

Modernity imposes another dualism on us. As [Leslie] Newbigin points out, in the West science is seen as public truth, having to do with the “natural realities” of this world. All students must study mathematics, physics, chemistry, and the social sciences. Religion is seen as a matter of personal truth, having to do with “supernatural realities” such as sin,
salvation, miracles, and prophecies... This dualism between science and religion, fact and faith, natural order and miracles, body and spirit dominates the worldview of most ordinary Westerners and leads to an otherworldly Christianity and to the secularization of everyday life. (Hiebert, 1999: 23)

Hence, paradigm shifts in science and theology as the agents of change could not possibly transmit across the epistemological boundary with religion. Thus, while science and technology are seen as deterministic agents of change in the world, religion is not because it is otherworldly.

As such, there was no need for religion to be involved in the paradigm shift. According to Neil Postman writes, “Scripture lost much of its authority. Theology, once the Queen of Sciences, was now reduced to the status of Court Jester.” (Postman, 1992: 34)

Missiology is not exempt from marginalization and the current general viewpoint both externally and internally is that missions is increasingly irrelevant to the change process. Saronjini Henry writes, “The church's witness also gives the impression that mission is designed for another place and another time, not the world of the twenty-first century, permeated by a galaxy of scientific concepts.” (Henry, 2002: 237) In the same vein, Gordon Aeschliman writes, “The world has gone through enormous changes in the past 150 years, yet most of our mission structures reflect very little change. It is possible that our mission to the world is becoming irrelevant.” (1990: 11)

Lastly, the third reason why religion may not be included as part of the paradigm shift is because the Church itself has placated to these views, oftentimes sitting out the change process. Newbigin argues that it is tantamount to a “tactical retreat” which has resulted in the “domestication” of Christianity (Newbigin, 1989:3). The Church has acquiesced to the marginal, otherworldly role it has been given. As a consequence, there is a certain amount of ignorance among Christian leaders as how the world has been changing. Indeed, Henry writes that church leaders

... seem to feel uneasy about the new insights in the philosophy of science, currently debated among philosophers and scholars of various disciplines. Further, most church people still cling to the Newtonian science [as opposed to Quantum mechanics] that has dominated Western culture for more than three hundred years. They hardly realize that a great revolution in philosophical thought has emerged with the advent of quantum physics and the theory of relativity in the new physics of the twenty-first century. (Henry, 2002: 237)

But ignorance is no excuse, and neither is acquiescence to the current status quo; rather, the Church must recognize that this is but an artificial isolation created by the passage of a temporal boundary. Rather than
accepting marginalization in an eddy of change, the Church must recognize its role in the change process, that the temporal boundary is itself a missionary encounter. As such, Newbigin writes, this missionary encounter . . . must bring us face to face with the central citadel of our culture, which is the belief that is based on the immense achievements of the scientific method. . . . The church, therefore, in its missionary encounter with modern Western culture, has to be quite bold and unembarrassed in using the language of testimony, since this testimony, so far from being capable of validation by methods of modern science, provides itself with the foundation on which modern science rests, namely, the assurance that the world is both rational and contingent. When the ultimate explanation of things is found in the creating, sustaining, judging, and redeeming work of a personal God, then science can be the servant of humanity, not its master. (Newbigin, 1986: 79, 94)

It is in this environment that the role of missiology is critical in helping the Church regain its role as a deterministic agent of change. Christianity must remember its role as an agent of globalization (Netland, 2006: 24; Ott, 2006: 33). Hiebert writes “Missionaries and transnational church leaders are critical in mediating the growing encounters between cultures and churches in the emergence of a global world and a global church.” (Hiebert, 2006: 308) As “engineers in the field,” the interdisciplinary and incarnational nature of missiology makes its members among the most able to inform the Church how best to anticipate, but more importantly, participate and mediate the process of change. Charles Van Engen concludes,

In all aspects and at all levels of society, we are in the midst of profound changes like nothing seen since the Industrial Revolution. Given the paradigm shift that the church and the world are undergoing, we must free ourselves to reconceptualize the foundations, the forms, and the goals of ministry formation in the future. Ministry formation must likewise undergo a radical paradigm shift so that it can appropriately serve the church in the world of tomorrow. (1996: 241)

This is the critical role of missiology today. We are called not only to cross cultural boundaries, but especially the temporal boundary. Crossing cultural and geographic boundaries is no longer sufficient in this era of rapidly changing change.

**Finding Mission in Excellence**

From the last section, one may ask then what should the missiologist’s role be in helping the Church to anticipate, participate and mediate the
evolution of change? Emergence theory, which now explains how change changes, provides valuable insights in how to achieve each of these tasks. There are of course dangers with every model, such as the inherent danger of re-affirming evolutionary theology and bottom-up universalism; but we will leave these discussions to our theology colleagues. However, missiology may greatly benefit from the existing literature on Emergence theory, particularly in the field of computational modeling. Axioms from Parallel Distributed Processing, object-oriented programming, complexity mapping and network theory may help identify emerging needs and as well solutions. For example, the presentation by Gary Fujino and John Cheong on “Emerging Cities and Globalization” at the most recent Evangelical Missiological Society meeting in Phoenix, AZ (September 29 – October 1, 2011), identify new unreached groups in the “interstices of multi-dimensional urban arrays” and how best to use limited resources and personnel to address their needs. As well, though some of the concepts may not be new, at least using newer terminology may help general public perception to recognize that missiology is both relevant, progressive and even “cutting edge” (Scherer, 1994: 175)

First, as much as missiology as become a discipline within religious studies, Emergence theory would argue for its necessity to retain its interdisciplinary nature if it is to anticipate change. Rather than accepting a view on the margins, because change now occurs simultaneously and concurrently across all disciplines, missiologists need to be reflective of what is occurring across all disciplines in order to ascertain the emerging patterns of change. Because the nature of change is across the spectrum, the more disciplines which are monitored, the more readily elementary units of change will be perceived and emerging patterns recognized. Alan R. Tippett, the first editor of Missiology, understood missiology to be a “synthesis of material that speaks to an entirely new world situation.” (Scherer, 1994: 177) In the same vein, Samuel Escobar writes “I define missiology as an interdisciplinary approach to understanding missionary action. Missiology examines missionary facts from the perspectives of the biblical sciences, theology, history and the social sciences.” (2003: 21) And because of they are deterministic agents, Mark Hutchinson et al. argues that “... such studies include the localization of science and technology.” (Hutchinson, 2002: 123)

The missiologist is best able to discern emerging patterns because s/he is both transcultural and intracultural. Hiebert argues that missionaries are what P.S. Adler would call multicultural, described as the following

  Multicultural man is the person who is intellectually and emotionally committed to the fundamental unity of all human beings while at the same time he recognizes, legitimizes, accepts, and appreciates the fundamental differences that lie
between people of different cultures. . . . multicultural man is recognized by the configuration of his outlooks and worldviews, by the way he incorporates the universe as a dynamically moving process, by the way he reflects on the interconnectedness of life in his thoughts and his actions, and by the way he remains open to the imminence of experience (quoted in Hiebert, 2006: 301)

As such, the missiologist is more able to recognize change through reflecting the interconnections across boundaries, whether cultural or disciplines.

A clear historical example of how one missiologist anticipated change is that of Paul Hiebert himself whose writings suggest that he was cognizant of scientific discoveries and technological innovation and as a consequence, included missiology as a partner of the emerging paradigms. Consider Hiebert's theory of bounded, centered and fuzzy sets which has fundamentally shifted the understanding of conversion. His theory sees conversion not as a clear-cut decision, but a process of transferring allegiance to God. This understanding can now be found in many mission textbooks.

How did Hiebert develop this theory? Hiebert looked to developments in mathematics. If one looks at Hiebert's bibliography, one finds the works of mathematicians Robert Stoll and Lofti Asker Zadeh. (Hiebert, 1991: 110 - 119) What is interesting was that Zadeh and Stoll's papers were published in the late 1960's and Hiebert drew from them in the early 1970's, about the same time set theory was making its impact in mathematics and computer science.

Hence, as the change boundary approached, Hiebert anticipated its advance, caught the wave, and travelled with it. But this was only possible if Hiebert was cognizant of what was going on in the fields of mathematics and the computer sciences on a contemporary level. In the same way, missiologists must not withdraw to our own labs, but be incarnational in the field and interdisciplinary, laying out sensors across disciplines, if we are to detect the emerging patterns of change.

Second, Emergence theory offers prescriptive measures to aid missiologists and their constituents to participate in the process of change by identifying its "bottom up" nature of network as opinion leader. Johnson writes . . . in the third phase — the one that began sometime in the past decade, the one that lies at the very heart of this book — we stopped analyzing emergence and started creating it. (Johnson, 2001: 21) . . . Just like the clock maker metaphors of the Enlightenment, or the dialectical logic of the nineteenth century, the emergent worldview belongs to this moment in time, shaping our thought habits and coloring our perception of the world. As our everyday life becomes increasingly
populated by artificial emergence, we will find ourselves relying more and more on the logic of these systems—both in corporate America, where “bottom-up intelligence” has started to replace “quality management” as the mantra of the day, and in the radical antiglobalization protest movements, who explicitly model their pacemakerless, distributed organizations after ant colonies and slime molds... Our minds may be wired to look for pacemakers, but we are steadily learning how to think from the bottom up. (Johnson, 2001: 66-67)

Friedman concurs, writing that “Individuals from every corner of the flat world are being empowered.” (2005, 11) This understanding is critical to missiology because it strengthens the importance of global Christianity. No longer are “pacemakers,” i.e. opinion leaders, the primary means of change. Rather, it is the network, the ordinary citizens of each people group.

This axiom is already an inherent understanding of Christian transformation. Samuel and Sugden write that “Spiritual transformation must begin in the individual but must spread to encompass the transformation of all of society, indeed of all creation... spiritual regeneration must accompany and encourage transformation and thus distinguish it from mere development.” (1987:467)

As such, where secular development agencies focus macroscopically with various development programs, missiologists, rooted in the biblical narrative of individuals, families and peoples, hold the key to “bottom up” change. With the majority of Christians now in the non-West and their voices growing both in numbers and volume, learning to flap their wings, they are now becoming perhaps the greatest parameter in the evolution of change. If ordinary Arab citizens can usher in the “Arab spring” or youths in England can create riots, all without any identifiable leadership, imagine what changes can occur as the millions of flapping wings of Christian populations beat in unison. Missiology, which serves to cross boundaries and bind cultures together needs to ask, “How will the global Communion emerge in unity and participate in emerging paradigms?”

Lastly, Emergence theory provides a framework for missiologists not only to anticipate and participate in change, but reaffirms Christianity as a deterministic agent effecting the trajectory of change. In the secular, pluralist global environment, Emergence offers a pathway forward that Postmodern theory does not. While Emergence and Postmodernism recognize the particular and describe the “bottom up” paradigm, unlike Postmodernism, which leaves us aimlessly drifting without direction and without clear understanding of plurality, Emergence theory intrinsically recognizes the universal, looking for connections across disparate, seemingly random entities.
This is perhaps the most critical need in today’s developing nations. As Rebecca D. Costa writes,

*A society advances quickly when both human needs—belief and knowledge are met.* In other words, we thrive when facts and beliefs coexist side by side, and neither dominate our existence.

But as social processes, institutions, technologies, and discoveries mount in complexity, obtaining knowledge becomes more difficult.

Suddenly, water we once fetched directly from our well comes from a faucet, and we no longer can discern where it originated, how it was processed, distributed, priced, or allocated. The same goes for our monetary system, laws, taxes, satellite television, and terrorism. Every aspect of life accelerates in complexity. Not only does the number of things we must comprehend grow, the intricacy of these things also exponentially increases. So the amount of knowledge our brains must acquire to achieve real understanding quickly becomes overwhelming.

When complexity makes knowledge impossible to obtain, we have no alternative but to defer to beliefs; we accept assumptions and unproven ideas about our existence, our world. This is the second symptom: the substitution of beliefs for fact and the gradual abandonment of empirical evidence.

*Once a society begins exhibiting the first two signs—gridlock and the substitution of beliefs for facts—the stage is set for collapse.* (Costa, 2010: 12)

Postman agrees, writing that “... cultures must have narratives and will find them where they will, even if they lead to catastrophe. The alternative is to live without meaning, the ultimate negation of self” (Postman, 1992: 173)

Historiographers recognize this as the missing link in trying to understand emerging global history (Iiggers, Wang and Mukherjee, 2008: 365).

In the midst of complexity overload, missiologists can provide the means to help people groups with a universal hermeneutic that enables them to respond to global changes. Missiologists can provide a metanarrative for people to respond to paradigm shifts. Missiologists can serve to hold the tension between the historical and eschatological as humanity crosses successive temporal boundaries (Costas, 1994: 7), for missions expresses “our belief that there is a real future for us and for the world and that there are therefore solid grounds for hope.” (Scherer, 1994: 24) Justo Gonzalez in the same way echoes, “...if any should be able to survive such cataclysmic changes, it should be those who claim to be heirs to the faith of the psalmist who long ago sang: ‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though..."
the mountains shake in the heart of the sea." (Psalm 46:1-2)³⁷ (Gonzalez, 2002: 46)

For example, scientists in emerging nations are a critical group that can benefit from a universal paradigm. Many come from cultures which do not share the dualism of the West. As such, though they may be trained in Western science and technology, they still retain a traditional world view. For many, neither the Western world view nor their indigenous world seem compatible creating what Costas terms mental "gridlock." Bradshaw writes that the science and technology

... have a secularizing effect on cultures. People do not believe the innovations bear witness to the inspiration of God. Instead, the innovations create the problem of fitting God into the scientific presuppositions that produce the innovations. The people ask: How is God relevant to the modern world? What is God's place in science? Is healing from God or from medical technology? ... Since Westerners do not believe in the interaction of the physical and spiritual realms, God's role in development is not obvious. The challenge, therefore, is to transform world views of the people so that they see God effecting changes in the physical environment. (Bradshaw, 1993: 171)

As an example, mainland Chinese scholars who have been converting to Christianity in record numbers. For Chinese intellectuals, much of this has been achieved through seeing God in nature and the sciences. In fact, evangelists such as Binchung Fong, himself a physician with a Ph.D. in physics, and Zhenmin Yuan effectively use science as an evangelist tool. Samuel Ling writes "They were looking for a faith which was valid in their scientific pursuits, in their hopes for a democratic China, and in their private lives... the need to believe in something became a significant felt need for Chinese intellectuals after June 4, 1989." (Ling, 1999: 16) As one Chinese scholar put it, "Taoism informs us of our relationship with the world, Buddhism informs us of our relationship with heart, and Confucianism informs us of our relationship with society, only Christianity informs us of everything."

As Emergence theory helps individuals, it can also aid corporately in providing missiologists with direction in unifying the multitude of pluralities. Hiebert writes,

Different cultures raise different theological questions that need to be answered through the study of Scripture. But the questions go deeper. Different cultures use different categories and create categories using different principles (intrinsic and extrinsic, digital and analogical, or fuzzy) and different logics
(abstract, algorithmic analytical versus concrete functional versus tropological), which they bring to the study of the Bible. How do we deal with these fundamental worldview differences? (Hiebert, 2006: 307)

While recognizing diversity, Emergence theory also recognizes a “unified field theory” which looks for emerging patterns. The models and terminology of Emergence theory research may provide insights for missiologists to integrate the universal hermeneutic of *missio Dei* across vanegated local world views. In Emergence theory, Arthur Peacocke suggests that “...the world is somehow located within the divine...the patterns of emergence are grounded in the divine wonder and that God continually respond to the evolutionary process, but also that the world is located within the divine being” (Clayton, 2006: 319)

Emergence Theory also addresses some of Bosch’s concerns about using Kuhn’s theory of paradigm shifts which requires replacement of old paradigms and leads toward relativism (Bosch, 1991: 186). In fact, if one looks at the last third of Bosch’s book, Emergence theory well describes his efforts to integrate the differing paradigms under the umbrella of *missio Dei*. Understood in Emergence theory, they can be seen not as either/or but both/and (Scherer, 1994: 184). Michael Amaladoss writes that missiologists are to be prophets who interpret “the signs of the times from the point of view of God and of God’s covenant...The prophet does not proclaim a new God, but challenges the people to go deeper into their own experience and discover the manifest newness of One who is ever Ancient and ever New” (1994: 67). Hence, Emergence theory holds in tension the past and future as well as allowing diversity in unity (Ott, 2006: 324). Van Engen summarizes, “In this view, the essential Church is never the same during any two days, because it is constantly becoming, developing, and ‘emerging’ Yet in another sense the Church is already by nature what it is becoming and simply must continually change, improve, reform, and emerge.” (1994: 59) As such, the Church remains relevant and critical even in the midst of change.

Emergence theory may also explain why there is a resurgence of interest in Wesleyan theology, for of the various systems, it comes closest to embodying the nature of Emergence theory. Sarah Lancaster writes “In the twentieth century, a new appreciation for Wesley’s work in theology began to emerge. One reason for this renewed interest was the growing concern about the unity of the Church that had sparked the ecumenical movement.” (Lancaster, 2010: 303) Timothy Tennent agrees, writing “With the dramatic rise of Christians from the Majority World church, many of whom do not trace their history to the Reformation, there is a need to discover a deeper ecumenism that can unite all true Christians. Wesley
anticipated the future multicultural diversity of the church and the common
experience of rebirth from above that unites all Christians of every age.”
(Tennent, 2009: 110) It should be noted that Wesley's "ecumenism" is not to
be confused with the narrow definitions which create divisions, but a "catholic
spirit" where "the phrase 'warm heart, give me thine hand' has become
symbolic of Wesley's commitment to ecumenism." (Tennent, 2009: 104).

Wesley could anticipate the future because he characterized Emergence
through his broad perspective, his emphasis on individuals, and his ability
to hold in tension unity and diversity. First, Wesley's broad perspective
could be seen in his range of publications. Isabel Rivers writes, "Wesley's chosen
authors came from an extraordinary range of nationalities and
denominations, including his contemporaries as well as historical figures,
lay people as well as ministers, and women as well as men." (Rivers, 2010:
152) His Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation; or A Compendium of Natural
Philosophy was among his most popular. Randy Maddox writes that unlike
his contemporaries who sought to separate religion from science, Wesley
regularly offered "...theological reflections upon the wonders of the natural
world being described." (Maddox, 2010: 168) It was admittedly a view not
expressed by other Protestant Reformers (who by the way were also not as
missional as Wesley) who considered the "book of nature" clearly
subordinate and surely not essential for Christian life." (Maddox, 2010: 169)
Instead, Wesley argued that "... although scripture is sufficient for the
knowledge of salvation, all Christians should be encouraged to seek the
fullness of understanding and felicity, which is derived from conjoined study
of scripture and nature." (Maddox, 2010: 169) In a sense, through his broad
perspective and publications for Methodists, Wesley was planting sensors
across disciplines to prepare people to anticipate change.

Second, Wesley focused on the "individual unit" of the system, the "people
called Methodists" (as opposed to church or movement). His emphasis was
not so much in the development of structure or looking for opinion leaders,
but in reproducible units and in networking. (Hunter, 1987: 56, 70). As
such, it was in the development of people that was the focus of Wesley's
efforts. Lancaster writes, "Wesley's pressing concern was to bring theology
in service to the needs of ordinary people, helping to revitalize their faith
and practice in the world." (Lancaster: 2010, 300) It was why Wesley saw
his classes as foundational because discipleship was the foundation for
growth. (Hunter, 1987: 118) As well, Rivers writes, "The people called
Methodists were expected to be readers. ... It cannot be that the people
should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading
people will always be knowing people." [Wesley quoted] ... Wesley had a
high idea of the intellectual level that ordinary Methodists members and
their preachers ..." (Rivers, 2010: 150). In equipping and training individual.
units, Wesley understood that they would reproduce and a larger movement would emerge as Emergence Theory dictates. He was preparing his people by equipping them to participate in change.

Lastly, Wesley mediated changing circumstances by holding differing views together, albeit in tension, by anchoring them in missio Dei. On the one hand, Wesleyans have sought to chart the trajectory of change for people in their own context. Kenneth Cracknell writes,

Salvation meant not only the transformation of individuals, but actively changing the conditions in which people live... Accordingly, Wesleyan-based missiologies have usually focused on social issues: from the early attempts to abolish the slave trade, through concern for justice for the Maori people of New Zealand; from the provision of clinics and hospitals in Africa and China, all the way to black and feminist theology in North America and liberation theology in Latin America. (Cracknell, 2010:260-261)

On the other hand, the desire is to keep the trajectories within God's work. Lancaster writes that Wesleyan theology is able to “...find a way to focus attention on Christian faith that not only brings clarity but also accounts for a range of concerns that have traditionally been set in opposition to one another. Even though his thinking was not captured in a grand system, Wesley was working with a sophisticated theological understanding that attempted to express the complexity of human experience before God.” (Lancaster, 2010: 304) Characteristic of Emergence theory, Wesleyan theology is able to balance the myriad of pluralities, holding them together in God's grace, prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying.

In conclusion, missiologists, as the engineers of the Church, play a critical role to help the Church to anticipate, participate in and mediate the shaping of the wave front and trajectory of emerging paradigms. In fact, as change has changed from hierarchical to emerging, undergirded by missio Dei as universal hermeneutic for history, we can no longer claim ignorance nor acquiesce to being on the margins; rather, it is contingent on missiologists to exercise their prophetic role with regard to emerging paradigms. As Costas writes,

The new order of life is seen most concretely in the small and large transformations that occur within history. To be sure, these historical signs are not easy to discern. Just as wheat and chaff grow together, so signs of the new order appear in the midst of contradictory situations and thus make it very difficult at times to distinguish clearly between a real signal and a short circuit. Nevertheless it is possible to discern the “signs of the times” through the Holy Spirit's guidance and by the orientation of the Word of God. The church, as the
community nourished by the Spirit and the Word, has the privilege and the responsibility to interpret history, distinguishing the signs of the kingdom of God from the antisigns produced by the kingdoms of this world.” (1994: 8).

As such, we would do well to heed Aeschliman’s challenge,

“As such, we need the courage to adapt to a new jungle, a new uncharted world in which the accomplishments of the past have produced a global society that desperately needs a new visitation from the people of Jesus. If we’re brave enough to let go of the security that old ways of thinking allow, we will have the honor of entering the new territories of the coming century—and of serving the broken and needy inhabitants. (11)

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