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Book Review: Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions by Steve Rundle and Tom Steffen

Anthony Casey

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Casey: Book Review: Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business unique in his call for reform in these areas. Belcher's ecclesiology is a healthy one, but in reality, it is simply a healthier version of the traditional church. He has more in common with Kevin DeYoung and other younger members of the traditional church than he realizes.

Another area of critique stems from Belcher's understanding of evangelism. He describes people coming to Christ as being "drawn to the well." While he is correct that there is a component of attraction to evangelism, it is not the only component. The church is commanded to be outward in focus (Matt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8) and should be active in reaching out to the lost, not simply waiting for them to be drawn into the community.

In the end, Belcher's work is a helpful analysis of how the church should blend together the desire to be founded on God's Word, rooted in historical orthodoxy, while at the same time driven by a passion to reach this generation for Christ. His work is especially helpful for younger church leaders who feel caught in between the traditional and emerging camps.

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Steve Rundle and Tom Steffen, *Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions*, 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011, 239 pp.

Reviewed by Anthony Casey. Casey is the research assistant to the director of the Great Commission Center at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Steve Rundle is associate professor of economics and business as mission at Biola University in La Mirada, California. He has also edited *Economic Justice in a Flat World: Christian Perspectives on Globalization*. Tom Steffen is professor of intercultural studies at Biola and also directs the Doctor of Missiology program. Steffen was a missionary in the Philippines for fifteen years and has authored numerous books on missions and cross-cultural ministry.

The first edition of *Great Commission Companies* was published in 2003, when the term "Business as Mission" (BAM) was relatively unfamiliar to many Christians. That edition was written to show that God was doing something new and outside the traditional missionary-sending model (7). Five companies were profiled to show various ways businesses could function as ministries. This second edition brings readers up to date on the development of BAM over the past decade. Two of the companies featured in the first edition are revisited, and three new BAM companies are profiled. The book is divided into two parts. Part one (chapters 1–6) provides the economic, historical, and missiological context for Great Commission Companies (111). Part two (chapters 7–12) contains a series of

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case studies featuring businesses operating under several businesses as mission
models.

The authors state that their purpose for writing is to show how it is not only possible but is also now necessary for Christian business professionals to become more actively involved in missions (18). BAM allows believers to go places around the world that those working through a traditional mission agency cannot (20). The authors are quick to note that they do not view businesses as a disguise or cover for missionary activity, but rather the ministry itself is embedded within and flows out from the company. The business is to be profitable, job-creating, tax-paying, and an integral component of the local economy (26–27).

BAM has been viewed with suspicion in the past not only by foreign governments but also by mission agencies and missionaries themselves. The authors point out three common objections regarding BAM. First, some believe that “work” takes time away from “ministry.” Next, some believe that a business can either serve society or make money but not both. Finally, a profitable business can create complications for a ministry’s tax exempt status (23–24).

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Responses are provided for these concerns. Rundle and Steffen note that BAM allows believers to share everyday life with lost people, on their own turf, and have many more hours of personal contact than might otherwise be possible. Rather than Christian business owners using the company as a cover to do missionary activity outside the company, the idea is to create ministry opportunities within the walls of the company. In response to the objection that BAM companies cannot serve society and make money, the authors point out that a business operating on foreign soil that is not making money will be viewed with suspicion. Multinational companies are expected to grow and prosper and can use their earnings to develop the local community. Finally, the difficulties of operating a business and working with a tax exempt agency are real. They should not, however, detour a business professional from moving forward with the proper advice from tax professionals. Additionally, not all BAM models need to partner with a tax exempt agency in order to be effective in ministry.

The authors see the greatest value of a Great Commission Company (GCC) when it is reaching populations that cannot be reached by other means (88). A main point of the company’s vision should be to draw people into the family of God and promote their spiritual growth (44).

In addition to reaching individuals within the company, the business must have an impact on the community. A GCC must be socially responsible, providing good wages for employees and developing their job skills while retaining the highest ethical standards. A GCC should be an income-producing business; the presence

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of the company should improve the local economy. A GCC should be managed by those the authors call kingdom professionals. These managers have excellent business skills but use them to serve the body of Christ. The management team should have a diversity of spiritual gifts. The GCC should bring glory to God. The company does not draw attention to itself but to its Ruler, Jesus Christ. When business pressure is on, the company will not compromise ethics and standards to meet the bottom line. A GCC promotes the growth and multiplication of local churches. If ministry leaders are not being won and trained within the company with new local churches resulting, something is awry. Finally, a GCC's main focus should be on the least evangelized and least developed parts of the world. Again, the authors believe that a GCC has the most value when it operates in a place other ministries are not likely to penetrate.

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The book has two main strengths. First, the authors do an excellent job addressing the common objections to the BAM model. The authors state that a new paradigm in missions requires new thinking and lifelong learning (224). In the past, BAM has often operated as a cover for missionaries to obtain visas, and the companies were not managed by qualified business professionals. The result was that many BAM models failed and consequently brought a bad name to the concept. *Great Commission Companies* is written from a business background and goes in depth regarding what is needed to ensure the success of the company. As noted above, the authors list common characteristics of effective GCCs (45–47). They list steps to launching a GCC (82). They list the necessary roles a GCC must employ, including who should be on the governing board and what role the board should play in the company (100–103). Additionally, all of chapter six addresses internal issues that are necessary for company growth, such as planning, finance, vision, organization, mission, and investor relationships. After reading *Great Commission Companies*, one should be able to establish a solid strategy for planning and starting a GCC.

A second strength is the use of the case studies provided in the second section of the book. Each of the five companies profiled operate under a slightly different business model, so the reader is able to see the pros and cons of various models as well as how his or her personality and business background might function in a BAM model. The authors provide a glimpse into the calling and training of each of the company founders, complete with their mistakes and frustrations. The authors focus on the character and personalities of the company owners as much as the inner workings of their companies.

The book has one main limitation. It is written for entrepreneurs with skills and networks that the majority of believers do not possess. The companies profiled

Great Commission Research Journal, Vol. 3, Iss. 2 [2012], Art. 11 are large in both annual income and numbers of personnel compared to most BAM companies. As the authors state, most missionary-run businesses never move beyond the “mom and pop” phase and do not become financially self-sustaining (9). Because of such examples, many readers will have a difficult time relating to this section of the work.

The authors have done an exceptional job defending and explaining the BAM model and have provided a book that combines the best of the technical side of business with the missional heartbeat of Great Commission Christians. The authors help the reader think through issues unique to BAM and provide countless practical examples and insights from a diversity of global settings. The inclusion of company profiles and personal biographies of their founders give real-life context to the technical issues discussed in the first section of the book. In summary, *Great Commission Companies* is a must read for churches supporting BAM, investors with a Great Commission desire, mission agencies, and current and potential BAM entrepreneurs.

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Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011, 256 pp., \$22.99.

Reviewed by Tereso C. Casiño. Casiño is Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Studies, School of Divinity, Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, North Carolina.

At a time when many congregations in the Global North still view *mission* in terms of location (overseas) and cultures (non-western), Michael Goheen’s book, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*, is a suitable read. Goheen is a minister of preaching at New West Christian Reformed Church. He is also Geneva professor of worldview and religious studies at Trinity Western University and teaching fellow in mission and world Christianity at Regent College, both located in British Columbia, Canada.

The book, *A Light to the Nations*, presents an interface between ecclesiology and missiology that unfolds the church’s “missional identity.” Goheen laments the lack of biblical-theological and exegetical work on “missional ecclesiology.” In nine chapters, the author weaves together selected passages of both Old and New Testaments in an attempt to unpack the meaning of a “missional church,” using the framework long established by Leslie Newbigin.

This book contends that the biblical narrative is a record of the *Missio Dei* and the church’s participation in it. “It is an attempt,” as the author states, “to describe ‘mission’ as the role and identity of the church in the context of the biblical story”