

Extending God's Kingdom:

Church Planting Yesterday,
Today, Tomorrow

An EMQ Monograph

Laurie Fortunak Nichols,
A. Scott Moreau, and
Gary R. Corwin, eds.

**Extending God's Kingdom: Church Planting Yesterday,
Today, Tomorrow** (An EMQ Monograph)

Edited by Laurie Fortunak Nichols, A. Scott Moreau, and Gary R. Corwin

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Endorsements

In *Extending God's Kingdom* our friends at EMQ have sifted through years of Great Commission lessons to give us valuable insights into church planting. What a great service to the Body of Christ! Thank you, friends, for your excellent work and for giving this back to the Body of Christ.

—**David Garrison**, missionary and author, Church Planting Movements

Missionaries eagerly anticipate each edition of *EMQ* to spark creative ideas, engage them in a global dialogue, and encourage them that they are part of a worldwide team of sisters and brothers just like them. *Extending God's Kingdom* gives church planters a one-stop resource to glean the best of the *EMQ* conversation over recent decades. You'll find yourself experiencing "ah-ha" moments of fresh insight, arguing with proposals that provoke you, and stimulated to try exciting new methods. Classic articles are bookended by original pieces by J.D. Payne, Craig Ott, and Tom Steffen that insightfully survey the recent past and expected future of church-planting paradigms. All church planters will want to add this valuable resource to their ministry toolbox.

—**Steve Strauss**, professor of mission and intercultural studies, Dallas Theological Seminary; former missionary, SIM; former director, SIM USA

The task of seeing indigenous, biblical church movements among the unreached is too complex and demanding to ignore the careful research, proven ministry insights, and hard-gained wisdom from reflective missionary practitioners over the last decade. This latest *EMQ* monograph offers a wealth of practical help and perspective for all in the mission enterprise. I would strongly urge everyone involved in church planting to make it a field handbook and not just a reference book on your shelf. Better yet, gather your team members and colleagues and energetically engage in discussion and application around these invaluable insights.

—**Daniel Bacon**, leadership consultant and former U.S. national director, OMF International

Extending God's Kingdom: Church Planting Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow is an excellent book written not only by theoreticians, but by practitioners on the field as well. It is comprehensive in scope, and addresses most of the contemporary issues in church planting without overlooking the burden of history. As a practitioner, I am concerned about church planting becoming just another theological or missiological gobbledygook; section one of the book addressed my concerns. Ultimately, it is the man or woman of God who is the most important factor in church planting. *Extending God's Kingdom* is a great contribution to the growing library of literature on church planting. I wholeheartedly endorse it.

—**Dr. Damian O. Emetuche**, assistant professor of church planting and director of Cecil B. Day Center for Church Planting, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

4 Extending God's Kingdom: Church Planting Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

Extending God's Kingdom: Church Planting Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow promises to be the best book yet in this EMQ monograph series. Laurie Nichols, Scott Moreau, and Gary Corwin have done a superb job in selecting and bunching the articles into six easy-to-read sections. With articles by such practitioners as Ben Sawatsky, Robert Vajko, Johan Lukasse, and Tom Steffen, the volume represents the best of church planting by westerners in the past generation. And the two epilogues by Steffen and Craig Ott are excellent. *Extending God's Kingdom* is an invaluable addition to the church planter's toolbox in the global Church's passion to see the church planted and fully established among every people group in the world.

—**Dr. Monroe "Monnie" Brewer**, president, National Association of Missions Pastors; international director, Centers of Church Based Training

In every generation, the Lord gives us challenges that send us back to his word and keep us dependent on him. Ideas about church planting change, grow, and develop. This EMQ church-planting volume provides a summation, both valuable and surprising, of current ideas from the experiences of his laborers.

—**Meg Crossman**, editor, PathWays to Global Understanding

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FOREWORD

An Epoch of Church Planting

J. D. Payne

All missionaries are a product of their times. History is not simply a thing of the past; it is a dynamic force molding and shaping missionaries of the present. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before—both taking delightful drinks from cisterns we did not dig and reaping the problems of the seeds of trouble sown yesteryear. The contents you will find in the chapters that follow are no exception to this rule. They have been influenced by the good, the bad, and the ugly of two thousand years of church history.

In light of our connection to such history, this Foreword is an attempt to provide you with a glimpse of an epoch of church planting, one that follows the dismantling of colonialism and culminates in the present. As we gloss over this time span, I hope to bring to your attention seven significant issues shaping Western expressions of church planting today.

Issue 1: Mission Stations

One of the missionary methods used during colonialism was that of *the mission station paradigm as a means to reach nationals and plant churches* among them. This model (which continued for many years, even after colonialism) was a geographic and cultural bastion of Western civilization in the midst of what was often considered to be an uncivilized and uncultured society. While the Lord was able to work through such an approach, the model reflected a paternalistic endeavor for missionary labors.

Western missionaries, usually locating close to the European military establishments and gunboats and merchants, would establish a missionary compound containing homes for the missionaries, schools, hospitals, and church facilities. While ministry and evangelism took place outside of the station, society within the compound was patterned after the homelands of the missionaries. As nationals came to faith, they would be gathered together as a church, often on the property of the compound and meeting with a building that was reminiscent of a church facility in Europe.

Teaching, preaching, liturgy, and leadership development followed common Western practices. The mission station approach to church planting required not only that the new believers and churches know the scriptures, but that they embrace complex Western church traditions, organizations, and structures in order to serve the Lord in their lands. Both believers and

unbelievers came to assume that following Jesus was to be equated with Western cultural expressions.

Issue 2: Indigenous Churches

On both sides of the Atlantic, two contemporaries—working apart from one another—began to advocate for the need for missionaries to plant indigenous churches that were self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating (self-extending), and not to reflect a paternalistic approach. These two highly influential men were Henry Venn (1796-1873), general secretary of the Church Missionary Society (London), and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880), corresponding (foreign) secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Boston).

Describing Venn's missiology, Max Warren writes,

Venn, we must remember, was deeply committed to the goal of a genuinely native church. His great ambition was to see a native church become self-governing under a native bishop. This, so it seemed to him, was much more likely to happen if the church grew naturally with only a very simple organization to begin with than if there was foisted upon it from the start the complex structure that in Venn's time seemed likely to be necessary, once a foreigner was appointed as a bishop (1971, 25).

Anderson, in a similar vein, believed that the chief work of the missionaries was that of planting churches that would not depend upon foreigners, would have their own national leaders, and would multiply themselves (Beaver 1967, 23).

John L. Nevius (1829-1893) was a Presbyterian missionary who served in China in the late nineteenth century. However, it was in Korea where his influence regarding the importance of planting indigenous churches from the very beginning was felt the strongest.¹ Nevius placed great emphasis on raising up national leaders, self-support of those leaders, and not extracting such leaders from their social networks to serve the churches.

Issue 3: The Holy Spirit and Spontaneous Expansion

Shortly after surviving the Boxer Uprising in Peking at the turn of the twentieth century, Roland Allen, Anglican missionary/priest, returned to England and began studying the work of the Apostle Paul.

Allen noted that following his return to the New Testament writings, he came to realize where Western missionaries were falling short in their work by continuing to practice a paternalistic approach to missions and requiring long periods of time before removing Western dependency from the native churches. He argued that it was exactly where the Apostle Paul succeeded in missions that contemporary missionaries missed the mark.

By 1912, Allen published what would become his most popular book,

Missionary Method's: St. Paul's or Ours? It was clear—even from the poignant title—that Allen believed the contemporary church-planting practices were miles removed from that of the apostle. So much so that missionaries of his day (particularly those with the Anglican Church) had a choice to make: either continue with a variation of the mission station paradigm (gradually devolving authority to national churches to be the churches in their contexts without Western domination) or follow the approaches advocated in the Bible (that local churches were to be indigenous from the moment of their birth).

Since Allen believed missionaries practiced paternalism because they feared possible corruption which could become of new churches, he argued that contemporary missionaries had to manifest a missionary faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. For him, it was the only way to overcome the fear of people.

This faith was that the Spirit was able to seal, protect, empower, guide, and sanctify the new churches without forms of Western paternalism. According to Allen, it was only when the missionaries were planting indigenous churches—from the beginning—and manifesting a missionary faith, that the setting was ripe for the Spirit to lead the churches in spontaneous expansion, thus resulting in the multiplication of disciples and churches throughout the society. As long as the missionaries were in control, the Spirit could not be in control and the health and growth of the churches were at stake.

Issue 4: Church Growth Movement

The contemporary Church Growth Movement was birthed in India in the 1950s. Donald A. McGavran, a third-generation missionary, had served for many years in this nation. Over time, he began to wonder why some churches were not growing and others were growing with substantial conversions.

By 1955, he published the movement-producing book *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions*. Having been influenced by the work of Allen, McGavran was strongly opposed to the mission station paradigm, believing it extracted people from their social networks and hindered the rapid dissemination of the gospel and the planting of churches (McGavran 1955).

He wrote that "...today's paramount task, opportunity, and imperative in missions is to multiply churches in the increasing numbers of receptive peoples of the earth" (McGavran 1970, 63). While McGavran recognized that the missionaries could not control God's sovereignty or the social contexts, he strongly believed that they could change the institutional factors that hindered the advancement of the gospel and church planting. He believed that strategy—or the lack thereof—and methods mattered when it came to the birth of churches.

Issue 5: Contextualized Churches

During the middle of the twentieth century, theologians and missiologists began to change their language from that of "indigenous churches" to

“contextualized churches.” Some people began to note that local churches could be self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating, and still remain very Western in their understanding of themselves as followers of Jesus and how they were to function as churches. It was possible to teach churches to manifest these self’s, but teach them how to do so according to the missionaries’ cultural preferences.

The result was churches consisting of national believers, but not churches deeply rooted among their cultures. They were not tightly connected to their contexts (i.e., contextualized), again, leaving those outside of the faith to equate Jesus with the abandonment of their people’s culture.

Issue 6: Unreached Peoples

McGavran became the founding dean of the School of World Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1965. With the opening of this school, the influence of the Church Growth Movement expanded exponentially across the globe. Concepts such as receptivity, people movements, homogenous units, strategy, and research began to influence church-planting methods in all regions of the world.

One of the first faculty members of the school was Ralph D. Winter. And while Winter’s influence on church planting was significant, it was felt the strongest in his advocacy for the hidden peoples of the world and the necessity for cross-cultural evangelism.

It was during the 1974 Lausanne Congress for World Evangelization that Winter presented a paper which would forever change the world of missions in general, and church planting in particular (Winter 1975, 213-241). Leaders from across the world began to recognize the need to reach the unreached people groups, large numbers of peoples who would only be reached by cross-cultural evangelism and church planting. Shortly after that Congress, evangelicals from across the globe began researching and strategizing for planting churches among the unreached people groups.

Issue 7: Church-planting Movements

It was during the last decade of the twentieth century that church growth reports, reflecting professions of faith, baptisms, and newly-planted churches, starting showing high growth rates among different people groups across the globe. David Garrison would describe these as church-planting movements which were understood as “a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment” (Garrison 2004, 21).

Over the first decade of the twenty-first century, missiologists would research and attempt to determine the commonalities among such movements, with the desired result of developing strategies and methods that would attempt to help facilitate future movements.

Conclusion

To get a good overview as to what has been happening at the beginning of the twenty-first century beyond church-planting movements, I will direct you to Craig Ott's concluding chapter, "Church Planting and Tomorrow's Challenges." Here, Ott provides us with a glimpse of present realities of the church-planting world. I would only add two items to his excellent chapter.

First, Ott addresses the development of support networks within the United States. I would add that I expect the numbers of such networks to continue to swell in the future. Second, evangelicals will continue to give more and more attention to planting churches among the cities of the world.

Extending God's Kingdom: Church Planting Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow is an outstanding collection of articles on the topic of church planting. This book represents a multitude of both wisdom and experience and the editors have done a great job of taking the "best-of-the-best" from previous volumes of the prestigious *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* and wedding them together in this single work.

Now, let me invite you to prayerfully read through this collection of articles. Reflect on them. Discuss them with others. Apply your findings to your ministry context.

Lord willing, may this book be used to advance the gospel, resulting in the multiplication of disciples, leaders—and yes—future churches among the peoples of this world!

Endnote

1. For a description of what came to be known as the Nevius Method, see *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches* (Nevius n.d.).

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Bible we clearly see that God's ultimate plan for the world—the *missio Dei*—has as its primary means of reconciling the world to himself God's initiating and continual developing of the Body of Christ we know as the Church. The Church, however, is neither a disconnected set of discrete "human molecules" nor an amorphous blended blob. Rather, this universal bride of Christ is the net composite of countless individual fellowships and congregations—churches—in every corner of the globe. Every one of these local gatherings is comprised of individual Christians banded together by the love of Christ and their Holy Spirit-fueled desire to glorify God.

While God alone regenerates people and brings them into this universal body, over the past two millennia he has consistently used Christians who have experienced the presence of Christ in their lives as the primary instruments for planting, growing, and developing the individual churches we see scattered everywhere across the planet.

IT IS EASY TO SEE that everything the Body of Christ does—whether directly or indirectly—is connected to God's eternal purpose of building his Church founded on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ.

In light of this, it is easy to see that everything the Body of Christ does—whether directly or indirectly—is connected to God's eternal purpose of building his Church founded on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ. Given that, making resources available to assist believers in this great task as directed and empowered by God should be one of our top priorities.

Over the past several decades *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* has published hundreds of articles focused on planting, growing, and/or building the Church. From this large treasure trove we have carefully chosen the thirty-six that appear in this volume, and supplemented them with pieces commissioned specifically for the book.

As the best of our best, we consider this book indispensable for those engaged in church-focused ministries. Each chapter comes from a cross-cultural servant who, having lived in the trenches, chose to offer the rest of us his or her hard-won insights on methods, models, and strategies. They stem from successes, certainly, but also from that hardest of teachers known as failure.

Together they comprise a mosaic of biblical, practical, and helpful resourc-

es which help all of us think and act more biblically and clearly about:

- (1) those who plant and nurture churches
- (2) the biblical framework for church planting
- (3) ideals of what a church plant should produce
- (4) strategies for planting churches
- (5) partnership in church planting

The case studies in our final section give focused attention on implementing ideas in specific settings.

It is our prayer that God will give you insight and energy as you draw from the well dug by our authors, and that you will be prepared and propelled into the calling God has for you as you participate in his *missio Dei*.

—A. Scott Moreau, co-editor