

A New Kind of Research

Steve Spaulding

May 1, 2018

8th Lausanne International Researchers' Conference

resident missiologist

O.C. International

Colorado Springs, CO

719-332-6974

stevespaulding@oci.org



A New Kind of Research

Steve Spaulding, resident missiologist, OC Intl

Context

Am postulating a new kind of research as it pertains to the ethos of the great commission agencies in the 21st century.

This is in no way seeking to undermine the great history of missional research, especially by the likes of Peter Brierly, David Barrett, Patrick Johnston, Bob Waymire, Paul Yaggy, many others on various denominational or specific ministry boards—like IMB, or SIL/WBT, and certainly Todd Johnson, Larry & Stephanie Kraft, Justin Long and Roy Wingerd in recent days. What great shoulders we have to stand on—and some of them are among us!

I propose, though, a new kind of research—and hence—researcher, given at least the following factors:

(I've bolded and italicized the main summaries of each of these)

Certainly, the **advances** of even the past decade **of our information age**, and the fact that secular branches of research have simply ballooned into a massive industry, with very exciting new methodologies and arenas in which they're ever increasing the reach of solid data-gathering and interpretation. Think of:

- Hans Rosling's Gap-minder Foundation and his socially conscious laying out of indicators of the many ways that this world is actually improving on many sociological and economic fronts.ⁱ (*demo*)
- Steven Wolfram's *Wolfram Alpha*, which takes the "Internet of things" world to a new level of democratized computing.ⁱⁱ

The **massive shifts going on**—as we speak—**of global demographics**. Millions of people migrating out of terrorized zones, resettling in places like Western Europe or into, what are thought to be, more stable democracies of Asia and Africa. And this does tie to our global status of the church. For instance, one popular myth these days is that almost all of the largest churches in Europe are pastored by Africans, most specifically, Nigerians! While this reflects global mass movements of humanity, it obviously changes the dynamics of the church, and even how it's measured.

Things like **urbanization** are changing as we speak, given that so many mega-cities are often home to well over 100 distinct *ethnic groups*—so that the uniqueness and even 'unreachedness' of so many formerly *unreached people groups* are now within easy, or easier, access of the reach of authentic Gospel proclamation and manifest deeds of kingdom kindness.

Looking at open history, we've had to realize that for all our love affair with **the West**, that empire **is showing many of the historic signs of dying**.ⁱⁱⁱ It seems to me that most of us, especially as *westerners*, are not aware of or considering the longer-term implications of this historic, tectonic shift.

There is also **increasing unity** in the global Body of Christ, whether you're talking about the "Word, Work and Wonder," the major streams of Protestantism^{iv}, or even many new efforts to collaborate between the three largest branches of Christendom: Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. There will likely be countless stories in the future of as-yet unforeseeable acts of unity between these groups, as the church globally continues to mature and deepen its visible love—that only, solid criteria by which the world will know who are the true followers of Christ.^v

One of **the biggest theological debates of the 20th century**, between the "work" (social gospel) people of the mainline denominations and the "word" (proclamation) people of the conservative groups, **is largely over**. Almost everyone now says the "gospel" is, by necessity, and by Christ's example, necessarily embodied in **both** what we *say* and what we *do*.

Thanks mainly to the effects of globalization and the mass migrations of humanity in recent decades, as well as significant evolution of our missiology from Western or even colonial mindsets to more global paradigms of mission, everyone now understands the pithy myth that “*missions is now from everywhere to everywhere,*” or however you put it... The church is present in every country. More and more of the UPGs are being engaged. Certainly, we are all well aware of the shifts going on globally with the demographics and concentration of the **church** around the world. And this is not just, any longer, an end to the “West to the Rest” focus of **missions**, but that, given the fact that the church is now present in some form in every country of the world, even our great missiological distinction of *sodalities* and *modalities* is increasingly a muddy water break-down and often overlapping to the point of real confusion.^{vi}

There has been a slow and steady “**charismatization**” of the **global Body** of Christ—(this is the “wonder” group, following on the other two “w”s mentioned above). This has certainly affected our worship experience, but also our expectations of the gifts, signs and power of God showing up in our gatherings, as well as our missions initiatives. This, by itself, will call for a new kind of data-gathering, which posits the visitation of God upon all of the expansion of the world Christian movement, and what factors this, too, will affect.

There is also a kind of ‘**post-religious**’ **qualifying of our numbers**. We all know that Christ did *not* come to establish a religion. But we also know that these days, after at least 1700 years of an established, institutional faith, the ‘church’ is being redefined by many internal and external factors, often to the simple definition of “two or three gathered in my name.”^{vii} But we also know that many, valid ‘insider movements’ are often asking people of various other religious backgrounds to follow Christ fervently; but this will be without necessarily leaving their socio-religious settings. While we can apologize to the counters of religious numbers, there are increasing numbers and groups of people who can actually and legitimately be counted in two “religious” groups, not one. Obviously, to the degree these realities are taken seriously, they will have significant effects on our data-gathering methodologies.

All of these mentioned so far, seem to dovetail into a perfect storm. Many friendly followers of Christ out there seem worried about some of these latest waves of change upon us, and I have obviously not mentioned here the cutting edge of micro-biology, robotics, nano-technology and the countless ways microscopic computers are being created to do good and not so good things, invading our privacy and quantifying everything for our mass production economies—as well as often, big-brother, governmental bodies.

* * * * *

A Proposed Exercise

At this stage, I’ve proposed a simple exercise to do in this meeting, to ask ourselves to tabulate (small groups):

HOW is today, *thinking of our world, my church, or our work* **different** that even a half-generation ago?

It’s a brief exercise, and we might simply tabulate the top three on each person’s or group’s list, as a way of stating publicly how so much has shifted under our feet, even after the turn of the millennium

* * * * *

But this all does lead to my final, and I believe, greatest rationale for a new *kind* of research.

First, I say that there is now **a kind of tiering of the missional task**. This moves from the frontier realms of the entire UUPG world, with its large contingency of mobilizers, mappers and missionaries, moving to quickly lower the long listing of truly UPGs;^{viii} the second tier would be “the whole church reaching the whole nation/people group”...mainly through something like saturation church planting. This is mostly seen in the DAWN-type initiatives going on in many parts of the world, thanks in part to the ongoing work of the GCPN and similar networks.^{ix} But this is a global network which seeks to bring agreement or fuller coalescence between DAWN-type national projects and the rapid proliferation of ‘CPMs,’ church-planting movements or disciple-making movements—which have tended to be mostly pioneer work among this first tier of UPGs. Lastly, there is the entire ‘transformation crowd’ who are moving from merely transforming individuals to communities, what many groups like CHE have done now for decades, but increasing numbers sensing that God would have us work—

with Him—and that means fully transforming even the largest families of the earth...the nations.^x But this third group seems to be operating well beyond the borders of the church, and are looking for signs of transformation of the larger society, which delves into things which rather expand our missiology.

But, beyond this simple tiering of our work, I have called ***this fresh version of the great commission simply “obedient nations.”*** Certainly, this would dovetail with many groups out there already, like the 7 Mountains people, the Discipling Nations Alliance, the work of Harvest Evangelism with its Transform our World network, along with Luis Bush’s Transform World congresses, along with much of what larger groups like YWAM have been doing now for decades.^{xi} There are other congresses which push in this direction, although very few have adopted the obedient nations posture—yet. But this final point is the one we’ll focus on for the rest of this paper/presentation, as a dominant rationale for a fresh form of research in mission.

At the same time, in terms of a proposal for this new kind of research, there have also been some significant changes in our now completely global missiology. We’ll deal later with some significant shifts in the global church’s *m.o.* but now, let me mention some obvious changes. First, given the fact that with post-modernity and globalization, the era of specialization seems to be largely over. Things like majors in college and focus of studies at the MA level are increasingly interdisciplinary...the merging of multiple fields, and analysis of things which, even a half-generation ago, were not much conceived to intersect. There is talk of things like, for instance, “kingdom economics,” certainly a broad intersection between historic translation of Scripture projects with the unique needs of oral cultures. But there seem to be hundreds of independent organizations out there merging things like some element of creation care with solid, local community development and sustainability projects. There is clearly a new wave of missional reporting; just think of the proliferation of the *missiographics* from groups like Missio-nexus. As the globe has shrunk to a village, and as our reporting mechanisms have only increased in their sophistication and our ability to quantify virtually everything, missional reporting does seem to have gone through significant internal changes as well. I’ll illustrate these momentarily.

But I say these things simply to illustrate that not only will we need to keep up with times in terms of ***how*** we report our data, but rather, with the shifting of our global demographics and even things like the ecclesiology which changes with that, we will also need to be flexible with our ***strategies***, and, the main point of this paper being, ***what exactly are we after?*** I believe *that dynamic* is possibly the greatest shift going on in contemporary missiology these days. If you carry on a conversation with the leaders of those three tiers I just mentioned, you will find pretty strong distinctions in their own answers to this “What exactly are we after?” question.

Ever since Luis Bush did a global survey (after closing down AD2000 & Beyond in 2001), for many, the word *transformation* became the dominant theme for where global mission seemed to be going. And it was a host of others before and after Luis, who camped out on that term. Think of George Otis’s exciting videos by the same name (mostly put out in the 90s), citing instances of incredible transformation, at least at the city or community levels in diverse locations. Ed Silvano, Vishal Mangalwadi, Pieter Bos of Amsterdam, and many others have titled books around the term *transformation*, but have also chronicled scores of their own stories from the furthest reaches of this planet. I could cite Darrow Miller, Abraham John, Landa Cope, and others who, in their niches, have found a voice for a transformative, holistic and creative mission, which looks very different than the world of mission into which most of us first embarked, just a couple decades ago.

There are also other debates or trends which are converging or coalescing, to create an environment for very different demands and outputs when we think of “missional research,” especially as it has to do with “kingdom impact.” I have only positive affirmation to the Lausanne ‘missional research’ group who planned this meeting around this theme. I certainly see the four outcomes from the Lausanne movement, starting with individualistic “gospel” to every person, moving through evangelical “church for every people” (a very broad support of the whole UPG movement) and then Christ-like leaders for every church—speaking to emergence of groups like TOPIC in the past couple decades, culminating in “kingdom impact in every sphere of society.” These seem to point to an almost decadal progression of the global mission movement, in terms of priorities at least through the duration of Lausanne.

A Personal Application and Question

If you are, indeed, a vocational, missional researcher, imagine your superior coming to you at some key point in your near future, and saying, “I would like to commission you to, from now on, only do research that will have actual, authentic Kingdom impact.”

Could you give your life to that? I would hope so. Of course, since you are researchers by nature, your first question would be to clarify things. What exactly do you mean by kingdom, and by kingdom impact? Ah, that’s where I am!

I say this in part because we all know that some researchers might go diligently to work, and, when asked how they’re doing, would anticipate some future date, say three years down the road, when a column in a report would state, “Kingdom impact achieved!” and the empty x-box on the right would be checked off. We do know that the right word-craft could document or build stories that would inspire people and at least give the impression that in some way, the Kingdom of God really is having an impact in certain settings. But, even in the tradition of the missional greats of the past few decades, with Andrew Walls, Donald McGavran and Ralph Winter, we know that unless actual activity is delineated, demarked and described, there may be much so-called activity, but often no guarantee that the Kingdom of God is having measurable impact.

As Christ said early on in his ministry, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God—and just righteousness/justice.” That is what we are all seeking to do, even as we gather here. My first impulse, when I hear of kingdom impact in the research arena is to ask, “What exactly are we after here, in light of this rather nebulous, grand phrase, Kingdom impact?” And, my logical answer seems to go back to Scripture and ask our Lord Christ, what, specifically, was the task you left in our hands to do...that would naturally, and supernaturally, obey your words—including your mandates—to your followers?

So, let’s repeat the question: What exactly are we seeking to achieve, in this missional data gathering? In Dawn Ministries, we made much of Nehemiah’s role as researcher and how it gave him a prophetic message. He did solid field research, finding out what existed—compared it to what needed to happen, then shared this research, which doubtless they all already knew, but then built it into a prophetic, action-oriented vision—to finish building the wall. And then, the rest is history. They did it in record time.

There are many today, which speak of “finishing the task,” yet I have hardly heard them say what the task they’re anxious to finish, actually is! Or, if they have stated it, what comes out seems to be far short of what our inspired text is driving at, as we will point out below. If we’re raising money, recruiting and seeking in some, substantive way to work toward finishing the *task*, and yet few have really come forward and told us what the task is...it’s a strange equation!

Here is my one-minute answer to the question: when will we be completing this task? I would propose, Scripturally, it is *not* leading the last person to Christ, or making the last disciple; it is not planting the last church; or translating the Bible into the last known language, or “reaching” the last unreached people group; I believe it is *not* simply showing mercy and justice to the needy, although ***this is all part of our task***.

I would say, conjoining the commission passages of Matthew through Acts, with the fullest version in Matthew, that one of the most significant ways of measuring whether we’re actually ***finishing*** the task (countering John Piper among others—see his blog-sight on how much is left of our G.C. task^{xii}) is that “all the nations” of which Christ spoke in Matthew 28:18-20, will be *so disciplined—as nations*—that they, all the nations, will be in some ways baptized, and then “obedient to everything I’ve commanded you!” I always refer to obedient nations whenever I seek to in any way speak of finishing this task. And clearly, that in itself is not the entirety of this task, but it is one of the fuller expressions, biblically, of what Christ put in our hands to actually accomplish.

I mention these historic changes, in part because, this moment in ‘his-story’ seems ‘historic’ in new ways. But, as my final point above illustrates, it also seems to be presenting some fresh forms of our missional mandate, in light of these changes, as well as a return to our authoritative text. Let me illustrate this personally.

A Personal Pilgrimage

I spent about the first half of my career with Dawn Ministries. “DAWN” stood for “discipling a whole nation,” and we were openly discussing “What would a disciplined nation look like?” We *did* have an answer for that question. It’s hard to forget the acetate on which our answer to that question was a simple, two-fold solution: 1) first everyone on the planet must have a culturally and proximate delivery of the gospel message, by which they could make an intelligent decision for Christ. 2) Our second answer was what created Dawn in the first place: *everyone* who responds positively to Christ, *must* have some form of local church, a group of people culturally and geographically close, by which they can grow up in Christ, be disciplined.

While I’ve always been a “Why?” person, the overall DAWN vision did captivate me, and I still greatly honor those who have given their lives to this end. What I found, over time, when, in fact, I finally decided to ask, “Are these nations being disciplined, the ones in which the church has reached a level of saturation?” I finally picked the first DAWN country in each of the nonwestern continents: Philippines in Asia, Guatemala in Latin America and Zimbabwe in Africa. Dawn started on each continent in these countries. And, the story is, at one level, stellar. In Manila, a very interdenominational church united in the early 80s, knowing that they already had around 5000 Protestant churches, and set about to do a national-level task of planting 50,000 churches, to saturate the nation’s neighborhoods (*barangays*) with the presence of Christ in local congregations. We were living there when they celebrated, through extensive research, that the church had actually achieved their numerical goal of 50,000 plus by 2001. What a thing to celebrate!

My research mind quickly pursued some unanswered questions in that environment, and there were many. I do recall a very specific lunch conversation with one Filipino, a man who had been the leader of the Philippine Missions Association, who told me flat out: “I grew up with the DAWN movement.” It was so popular that right after we moved to Manila in the mid-1990s, a taxi-driver, when I mentioned that I worked with DAWN, he said, “Oh, yeah, Dawn 2000: 50,000 churches to go!” He knew about DAWN and he was just another taxi-driver in the capital city. *But* our leader of the PMA simply said that the nation had **not** been disciplined in any fashion, nationally. There were simply no indicators that the nation had been remotely disciplined. And this was even though the actual number of churches had gone up more than 1000%, over 10-fold in about a 20-year span!

Similar stories can be told about Guatemala, and look at Zimbabwe! Something fundamental, DNA related, was missing from the otherwise beautiful DAWN vision, of “planting Christ’s presence in every place.” This level of frustration, in the end, sent me back to the text, to find what that missing piece was—in terms of this so-called *great* commission.

A Biblical Defense of this larger task

When I finally went back to Scripture, this is what I came up with.

To do this briefly, and in ‘future-perfect thinking^{xiii}’ style, let’s start at the end, and move back through time.

The apostle John is our great portrait artist, for depicting in grand language some of what our *end* looks like. Here is one of his closing paragraphs:

*I did not see a temple in the city [of God], because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.... The **nations** will walk by its light, and the **kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.... The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.***

Rev 21:22,24, 26

This passage, dealing with kings and nations, it seems, of actual history, needs in some way to be connected to the kings and nations of our era. They are not just illusory or fantastic/mystical beings of some other age. When I make this claim, clearly we must go to a stellar personality of our age like the Apostle Paul, to see if there was anything in his worldview which would embrace this idea—of “kings of the earth bringing the glory and honor of the nations” into God’s eternal city.

For brevity, I just visit here the benediction to likely Paul’s most popular epistle, to get a glimpse of his personal missiology:

*Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that **all nations** (*panta ta ethne*) **might believe and obey him-***

Rom 16:25-26

These are more than merely benedictory words, for Paul is speaking here of a mystery of God, revealed in those days of the birth of the church-age, a mystery, actually a vision, which was that **all the nations** (*panta ta ethne* in Greek) **might believe and obey God.**

Given the excitement that the last generation has had in terms of realizing that the Matthean commission was about discipling all of the ‘ethno-linguistic’ groups of the earth, *not* simply the 200 or so nations of the U.N., I have certainly participated in this new discovery and tracking of discipling a vastly larger number of the *ethne*. But, counter to almost all writers on the subject, I do not, thereby reject the discipling of the geo-political nations of the earth. As we meditate on the last paragraph of Revelation, it certainly seems that God will, at that point in post-history, play the gentleman and invite people/individuals/families to join that nation, tribe, people group or geo-political nation to which they most readily identify. Think, momentarily, of the “people” or “nation” to whom you most readily identify.

Back to Paul. I believe, in the context of the closing chapter of this popular epistle, he was talking about families of the earth, large groupings of humanity, in part because of the next set of passages I will here cite. For Paul’s calling into mission, as pretty much the greatest missionary of our age, came only three days after his unforgettable Damascus Road conversion. There, Christ tells Ananias about a very specific call:

*But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the **Gentiles** (that’s “*ethne*”) and **their kings** and before the **people of Israel.***

Acts 9:15

I believe the church has missed a jewel, by possibly not paying enough attention to the missionary calling of the man who was also likely the greatest missiologist and theologian of our Christian era. The “people of Israel” was a logical call, if only for the fact that Paul was, certainly, a “Hebrew to the Hebrews.”^{xiv} And, in some ways, it seems Luke may have stepped back from that calling and determined to structure the entire book of Acts around these three audiences. For the first nine chapters were almost exclusively about the Jews. These were Paul’s people. And he made it his practice in his missionary journeys to always “go to the Jew first.”^{xv} But the

other two audiences were, in some way, what charted Paul's entire career. His three missionary journeys were to take him to the *ethne* of the Roman empire. The record does not have him intentionally targeting the Gentile kings during those journeys. But, when he is arrested, at one point, he states, as a good Roman citizen, "I appeal to Caesar,"^{xvi} likely knowing well that he would be traipsed around the Roman empire meeting various heads of states, and finally bringing his own case before the most powerful man of the then known world. Paul is in chains for the last six or so chapters of Acts and the plot really does change. At that the story centers around Paul's encounters with Felix, Festus, Agrippa and his wife, the governor of Malta and, finally, Caesar's household. So Acts ends with six chapters stressing that Paul went to that third audience—from that first calling.

Paul lets the Philippian believers know, at the end of that letter, that he's already seen some of Caesar's household come to Christ.^{xvii} On retrospect, even with some initial regrets, I believe Paul's meeting with all of those rulers was a belated, but strategic effort on his part, if only to fully obey that missionary calling from the Christ, just three days after that unforgettable, Damascus Road conversion.

Now let us go back to the "great commission" passage given to us most thoroughly by Matthew.

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Matt 28:18b-20

If all we had was Matthew 28's version of the so-called great commission, I would believe it was *great* because of the reach of its task. It is best summed up here by the simple phrase, "obedient nations." How I thank God for the advent of Cameron Townsend, Donald McGavran, Ralph Winter and others like Jim Montgomery who embodied a serious obedience to this version of the great commission and sought to push for a fuller embrace of its larger meaning. I do not believe, though, that any of these great missions men went far enough with this mandate.

But before belaboring that point, let me then quickly review the life of Christ. For here, I see a thematic integration of the following.

Certainly the messianic prophecies of his coming, as the anointed One, which we will touch on momentarily, the birth, main message, the Lord's prayer, the bulk of his teaching, his entire trial proceedings, his ritual death at the hands of the Jewish authorities and the Roman governor and soldiers, and finally his Matthean commission. It had his kingly authority written large over its entirety.

Far back near the beginning, at the end of the book of Genesis, we have one of the earliest messianic prophecies. Here Jacob proclaims a future ruler, to whom belongs nothing less than the obedience of the nations:

*The scepter will not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he comes to whom it belongs and **the obedience of the nations is his.***

Gen 49:10

I've gone through the entire OT text multiple times and it pulses with the lives of kings and kingdoms. God had chosen the Israelites as a model nation,

*Observe them [these decrees and laws] carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding **to the nations**, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "**Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.**" **What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us** whenever we pray to him? **And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?***

Deut. 4:5-8

This passage seems to lay out that the primary, divine rationale for their election was that all the other nations in God's good earth would lean over their shoulders and say, "Ah, **that** is the kind of nation—the kind of god—**we want!**"

When the Anointed One did come, the maji came from the East (three kings?) and their only criteria for finding Jesus was "he who is **born king** of the Jews!" Jesus' birth was surrounded by kingship. Before he started his ministry officially, the tempter:

*led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant **all the kingdoms of the world**. And he said to him, "I will give you **all their authority and splendor**, for it **has been given to me**...."*

Luke 4:5b-6b

In the context of showing Jesus all of those kingdoms/nations of the world, the devil's claim here is exactly the claim Jesus reiterated on the mount of ascension: "**All authority**, in heaven and on earth, **has been given to me**." It seems Jesus may well have been looking out of the corner of his eye, giving this global commission to those humble followers, in a sense, saying: 'Move over, arch-enemy, all your claims three years ago are null and void.' But the context three years later was also the same: **all the nations** to be fully discipled...and taught to fully obey Christ!^{xviii}

We need not dwell on Jesus' fixation with the Kingdom of his father, throughout the gospels, or that he told us, his humble followers, not only that we are to seek *first* the Kingdom of God, but that he was giving us the keys of the kingdom, commissioning us with all authority to bind and loose anything on earth...and it would be done.

As his life on earth came to a close, that final week was heavily influenced with kingly language. Matthew is the one who is quick to point out many OT passages which were fulfilled, largely about Jesus' rulership in those last days of his life...the donkey he rode into Jerusalem, the shouts of praise to the "son of David," his robe, crown of thorns, conversation with Pilate, who at one point blurted out:

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

*Jesus answered, "You are right in saying **I am a king**. In fact, **for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world**, to testify to the truth.*

John 18:37

And, in spite of the objection of Israel's religious leaders, Pilate posted a sign on Jesus' cross, over his head, actually in three languages: "King of the Jews." Have you ever wondered why Pilate of all people, would post a sign, contrary to the wishes of the Jewish leaders, in three languages, that it was Jesus...King of the Jews?

These are all cumulative reasons why Jesus' mandate to fully disciple all the nations makes clearer sense. It was not just a gospel of salvation. It was to be the "gospel of the Kingdom—my reestablished rulership!"

There are times, given this span of the entirety of biblical revelation, in which I've laid out as much of the story of history in one, large circular diagram, just to illustrate this overwhelming theme of the rulership of God—through Christ, his Anointed One, and how all of redemption history is rather wrapped up in the concluding of this story—as seen so pictorially by John in Revelation 21-22.

I conclude this rapid treatment of Scripture, not even exploring the grand theme of kingship throughout the bulk of the OT, by stating that I believe there's been a blind eye by most theologians, missiologists and church leaders throughout most of church history, not only on the Kingdom of God, which so many have sought to rectify in recent years. But, I would add, in, first, our original mandate to rule the earth, Satan's grasp of that mandate with our infamous fall in Genesis 3 (and also the fall of many in God's council in Genesis 6:1-4),^{xix} but then the prophecies surrounding the coming Anointed one...King, and his entire birth, life, message, trial, death and finally commission, which gives us, his people, a call, not only to "make him King" which so often we have not done in all of our discipling. But also, it's been a blind eye to our commission, *not primarily to prepare souls for heaven*, but to declare to a desperate, hungry, and beaten down world, that his rulership is so much of the good news we are preaching, and that our task is to end up teaching *panta ta ethne* the fullest, possible obedience to

the only, just, heavenly and earthly Ruler. And, that this is where so much of the victory of Christ lies, in his authority, by which he prefaces this commission, which is a direct counterpoint to the authority of the enemy, so eloquently articulated right at the moment of his inauguration into the ministry three years earlier, but that the context was the same...the large families or nations/kingdoms of the earth, subjected to one authority over against the other. This merges the Kingdom with the mandate, and spans all of revelation.

How Much Change are We Looking At—in Church and Mission?

As we begin to ponder how our research methodology might substantially shift, if in fact we have a new angle on this *great commission*, let us first consider ways, now that we've considered macro-changes in our landscape, that especially the church, and its missional bodies, is experiencing major shifting or changing, even as we speak.

I've listed about nine of these in one continuous thought (PPT slide). Let's spend about a paragraph on each shift, just to acquaint ourselves with some significant, almost foundational changes, which will certainly affect our missional research. In portraying these shifts this way—as moving from one to the other, of course this is never comprehensive, and in almost every case, the thing from which we are moving is certainly not “all bad.” In some ways they were simply areas or categories which were insufficient or incomplete. These are major changes. ***(Here again I've bolded, italicized and underlined the main point in each paragraph)***

- ❖ First, and likely the most obvious one, from anyone glancing over global mission in the past half-century, is that our outreach or our evangelism has ***moved from decisions to disciples***. Most of us are familiar with what John Stott and friends were exposing about a decade ago, in terms of a global church which seemed, in many corners of the globe to be ‘a mile wide and an inch deep.’ Stereotypically, it was not hard, at the time, to use the African church as a rather typical example of this claim. But I'm certain that if we took a friendly toll in this group today, excluding the Africans, we would find likely everyone coming from a part of the world in which so much of the so-called ‘church’ has, in their region, their megacity, their people group or their nation, been, in most cases a ‘mile wide and an inch deep.’ This has certainly been the known fact for well over a generation in North America. But this move from “mere decisions” to disciples, is not just from global “let's deepen the church” efforts. There were multiple cases in the early part of my missionary career, in which famous field studies were done, finding that entire national populations, like the USA, had been, at some point in our post-war era, been ‘completely evangelized’ actually 3.5 times! This ‘shift’ is listed first, in part because it's almost a thing of the past.
- ❖ The second shift is ***from individuals to corporate realities***. Like so many of these changes, this reflects a “Western cultural” love affair with the individual. America is famous for its almost rabid individualism in modern history. The “I can do it” mentality made so much of America's reputation—worldwide. Our capitalism, our movie industry, our post-war ‘greatest generation’ and a thousand other idiosyncrasies of American culture have love for the power and potential of the individual. In relation to our discussion here, I was raised on three continents, including Japan and Brazil, and we found that we had actually learned to read the Bible with very individualistic eyes. We saw Philip leading the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ, one-on-one, as a glorious example of personal evangelism. That story is actually an exception to multiple stories of “the Philippian jailor *and his household*,” Lydia “*and her household*,” the Gentile Centurion “*and his household*,” or Crispus “*and his household*.”^{xx} I think this is part of the reason it's been so difficult to recapture this ideal of obedient nations, for we have tended to boil all of our talk of repentance, conversion or discipleship to almost a strictly individualistic application, whereas the Bible is filled with corporate realities.^{xxi} Pieter Bos from the Netherlands has done an excellent job in one book giving several chapters to the personality and person-hood of nations as laid out in Scripture.^{xxii} As our theology is becoming more of an international enterprise, these families of the earth will help our understandings of the workings of God spread out far past the individual to families coming to faith, communities transformed by the values of the Kingdom of God, and whole nations learning obedience to the commands of Christ—as laid out in Scripture.
- ❖ From the basic teachings of Christ, there is a healthy move these days, away ***from ecclesiocentrism to basileocentrism***. I coined that latter term. We all know what ecclesiocentrism is, and for many this is a proper centeredness. It is about the people of God throughout history, and it seems to be the running plot throughout our text...beginning with the first human family and stretching all the way to the final chapters of Scripture, where the City of God as the New Jerusalem is really the habitation of the people of God. In some ways this is simply pointing to a significant revival of the Kingdom of God in our age, and with that, a return to the foundational teachings of Christ, who mentioned the *Ekklesia* a couple of times and the Kingdom of God almost constantly. He said, “Seek it first!” His Lord's prayer's apex was the petition that his

kingdom come to earth. And we also know that one of the few times he spoke of the *Ekklesia*, he said, “*I will build my church!*” May I say: His ‘great commission’ mandates never had the slightest innuendo of “go build churches!” So this shift is happening, certainly with so many of the ‘wineskins’ of church shifting away from the “bigger is better” love affair with mega-churches, and that the greatest growth of the church worldwide, seems to be in those nameless, faceless church planting movements which multiply instead of creating country-club type facilities, so popular in suburban America. It’s not a denigration of the church; it’s merely a reminder that we as God’s people exist for the establishing of his good rule on the earth, not just *planting another church*; we’re not an end in ourselves.

- ❖ Given the age we’re living in, with its thousands of decentralizing factors, there really is ***no epicenter of the work or missiological fountainhead of the church*** worldwide anymore. It used to be London, then it was Wheaton or Pasadena, but any more, it’s simultaneously Seoul, Jakarta, Lagos, Sao Paulo. God is moving everywhere! We’ve watched with real relief the ***end of the ‘west to the rest’ phenomenon*** of global mission, but we’ve also seen that there no longer seems to be even on generic way/direction (like the Westward movement pointed out by so many in recent decades) that the gospel is moving. This planet is in so many ways a shrinking village.
- ❖ We’re also seeing a move—Scripturally first—from ***salvation which is preparing us to ‘go to heaven’ (when we die) TO the arrival of the Kingdom of God to earth***. I hope I am not misunderstood here. If we jettison the proclamation of Salvation through Christ, we have created an irreparable vacuum in our larger message. But, this is the opposite direction of so much planning and activity of the past. It’s certainly closer to what Jesus gave us in the Lord’s prayer, but it also tampers with some of especially our North American eschatology, which for so long simply could not believe, even, that Christ came to in any way, make the world a better place. We’ve been so solidly camped out in the justification by faith salvation for a heavenly abode with God, that we’ve forgotten that so much of Jesus’ ministry and message were about the coming of his good reign to earth—in this age. And that the age to come will be a bearing out of those realities. As Hebrews 10:12-13 states, Christ is now waiting for his enemies to be made his footstool. And, when we read the end of the text, we discover that heaven is not really our final destination anyway; it is the new earth, dwelt in by God and the world’s nations—with their kings, in all their glory and splendor! This does not detract or diminish a gospel of salvation, or the reality of heaven; it simply places them in the context of a larger story of the passions of God for this and the coming age.
- ❖ We’re moving, in many corners, ***from ‘bottom-up’ to ‘top-down’*** as well as every other direction. I was raised in a missionary environment in which the missionary community reveled in a *modus operandi* which specialized in grass-roots movements, church planting among the rural poor of Japan. When we attended those small Japanese churches, you almost never saw heads of households; but rather university students or housewives. I only realized decades later that this was a logical outcome of a missionary tactic which was not about discipling nations, or cities, but rather any and all individuals, no matter how peripheral they were to the life and leadership of the larger society. It seems we especially ignored how high a profile the leaders of societies are throughout the bulk of our biblical text. It was James Davidson Hunter who wrote a scholarly book on *To Change the World: the Irony, Tragedy and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, who pointed out, in “Proposition Eight” of twelve key ideas in his book, that “Cultures change from the top down, rarely if ever from the bottom up.”^{xxiii} Again, this in no way demeans the bottom-up or targeting the poor strategies; it simply asks for much more intentional engagement of the most influential members of our societies, ***if*** our intent is to see whole nations, whole peoples taught obedience to Christ.
- ❖ Speaking of authors, it was Alan Hirsch, with Tim Catchim, who wrote an entire book on this next move, from a ***“pastor-church fixation” to a revival of “APEST” or five-fold ministry***. This could be one of the biggest blind-spots to the global church, and Alan is well-poised to expose it in a non-combative, optimistic and progressive way.
- ❖ Lastly, we are moving, almost in light of our first shift, from a ***“mostly proclamation TO holistic proof and transformation message.”*** I can say *mostly* proclamation, mainly because, contrary to most critiques of the ‘gospel-salvation’ speakers and missionaries of the past couple centuries, many of them were involved in very open forms of holistic ministry. This is simply another shift, from a conservative theological camp which

did much of the cross-cultural missionary work of the past couple hundred years, and knew full well what or where a liberal theological position would take them, in terms of the saving message of Jesus Christ, *if* they went the “social gospel” way. Fortunately, I see the debate of the 20th century between the “word” (conservative, gospel-proclamation) people and the “work” (mainline, social gospel) people as essentially over. So much of that debate was the result of the ways and thinking of modernity, when so often these arguments were more nuanced and not quite so easily categorized as seemed the case at the time. As N.T. Wright has put it on more than one occasion, “We are *wholes*, not *souls*!” He’s not thereby denying his or anyone else’s soul, but simply claiming that “saving his soul” would certainly only save a part of him, and that was clearly not the *m.o.* of Christ or his apostles on record. Christ did come to save souls, but he also came to declare his kingship over the entire creation, and to win whole nations back to his rulership over this entire planet, to heal bodies and reconcile relationships in broken families, in warring tribes, and even bring back our rightful place as rulers of this created order on this planet.

Now, citing this long listing of shifts going on under our feet, what in the world does that have to do with the way we do our missional research?

When we reflect on what we’ve been doing, in some ways, we can say we’ve done pretty well. I could cite our third slide as a taste of these actions, amid scores of others I haven’t there mentioned. But I could also point to even a dozen leading ministries and mission agencies which increasingly embody a newer form of research which points in the direction which these previous eight or nine shifts seem to direct us. Am thinking here of groups like:

- The Seed Company, with their projects to reduce biblical illiteracy in tribes around the world (a subset of SIL/WBT): <https://theseedcompany.org/> (or contact Gilles Gravelle)
- Tear Fund’s Light Wheel tool: <https://jiliflc.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/LIGHT-Wheel-Introduction-2-1.pdf>
- On a more relational, less research-oriented way: Ed Silvoso’s *Transform our World* ministries <https://transformourworld.org/>
- Darrow Miller’s *Discipling Nations Alliance* <https://www.disciplenations.org/>
- Jun Vencer’s leadership training institutes, mainly about DNA (see later slide)

But my summary at this point, is that it seems, even this stellar group of visionaries and researchers, that almost no-one seems to be actually asking the questions and getting answers for a task which is about obedient nations.

A New Kind of Research

So, as this stage, I would like to propose a new kind of research. That is a bold, maybe brazen term, just given who we have in this meeting hall. And, obviously, my caveat here will be two things: First, I know that I'm not half the researcher that so many of you are in this meeting—or certainly the ones I personally know who have called this meeting together in the first place! So I make this claim from a very humble position. Second, though, even though I'm a good global citizen in many ways, and try to read widely, I am certain that there are many out there at present, who are already doing much of what I'm calling "new," who could improve on my topic greatly, both by their content as well as by their case-studies of what they've already done in these areas. I tip my hat to them, and certainly welcome them into this conversation!

With those caveats, I'd like to propose, still, a new kind of research with three primary descriptors.

First, we're dealing increasingly, with **a different, long-term objective** in our missional activities. I summarize it on our teaching slide as "transformation, kingdom-values, and obedient nations." There's likely a growing popularity in the sequence of those terms. I know that since Luis Bush did an extensive survey at the beginning of this millennium, I was part of that survey among a group of his colleagues in Manila, Philippines, likely around 2001. And I do know that one of his primary conclusions of that truly global survey of missional-types, was that *transformation* was a central term to describe where and how many, or most of key leaders say the future of the global church and its mission. He was not alone; he was preceded and followed by many others. Think of George Otis' popular videos put out in the 1990's, called "Transformation." And I have a little library at my office that likely has a dozen book titles all with the word "Transformation" in them, and almost all of them put out in the past decade or two. Kingdom values are growing in popularity, as has the whole commitment to the Kingdom of God. For me, it is an easy qualifier for what I call simply 'obedient nations,' nations or peoples which have embraced an ever-growing number of the values of the Kingdom of God.

I see "obedient nations" as an indicator of the passions of God for all the nations, from Genesis to Revelation, and that, as a corporate reality, it encompasses so much of what we're committed to individually, but also extends far beyond our personal lives, to the health and vitality of our entire societies, and then, their relationship to other nations. That objective will call for a wide array of new fields and outcomes in our missional research.

Secondly, I point to **wider data sources**. If we are pushing for data at levels which will, in the end, indicate to us whether our nations, our peoples, our mega-cities or our major tribes are increasingly embracing the values of the Kingdom or are showing obedience to the actual commands of Christ, then where we get our data will be far beyond the enclaves of our typical harvest force data, whether that's evangelism rates, pastor-training, churches-planted, languages spoken in church, etc. It's the almost infinite listing of the arenas of life that we live each day, far outside the four walls of our churches. It's certainly taking more seriously the data coming out of the UN offices and the national census bureaus. It will seek ways to inform not only the 7 mountains of life, but also from current data concerning our care for our environment, whether that's ultra-local or national and beyond. It will take data from other streams in the global body of Christ. BAM, for instance, represents a wide range of consultations, organizations, and efforts which are almost entirely separate from churchly or denominational activities, but have so much to do with the thriving of our societies, as well as real efforts to impregnate the marketplace with the values of the Kingdom of God, especially as it has to do with leadership and ethics in the work-place. Our data sources will uncover profound societal needs, corruption, even spiritual darkenses, but also health and wholeness in domains as varied as media, education, politics, business, family life, religion and arts/entertainment. But these sources will also extend from the very local to the entire people group, or national and, in some cases, transnational.

Lastly, a new kind of research will produce **fresh means of sharing data**. First, given the incredible rates of change in our internet-of-things world, it's evident to all of us that some of these shifts are not just a passing fad, mainly for the younger generation. It does seem realistic to see that, for instance, the fact that most young people have a very short attention-span, so that our media must become more visually driven and messages

packed into ever shorter sound-bites... What's really at stake is that a farmer in rural Zimbabwe, whom I got to know well, who has no running water or electricity, is still able, with his smart-phone, to get on the Internet, and call his donor in the States, asking questions about his little orphanage, or about a medical emergency his wife has. And his home is not even located on *any* road or street address.

But with this fresh means of sharing data, I loved what Hans Rosling has done to basic demographics, in that he might be dealing with six points of data: a year, a country, a continent, a population and two distinct social data-points...like mortality rates (y-axis) and children per mother(x-axis). He plots these on a graph, with the year embedded in large print at the back of the entire graph. Countries are in bubbles on the graph (you can have all 200 countries on a large graph), population is indicated by the size of the bubble; and the continents color the bubbles of each country by yellow for Latin America, etc. The genius of his data-sharing, though, is that he's entered data for every year—on all those countries, from 1960 to the present. So his program is able to flow from 1960 to the present and show where all the countries have moved, in terms of number of children (size of families) to length of life (mortality—y-axis). I think that program should be standard fare for any and all data-sharers of church-growth type information. But it's likely been at least a couple decades since I began trying to plot on 2-D graphs a comparison between “Christian presence” of some type—as the x-axis, whether that's church-to-population or # of Evangelicals to population, compared with, on the y-axis, some indicator of societal health—for the same nation. If we did this regionally, or even globally, we'd be developing powerful tools, *if*, again, our objective, long-term, is obedient nations.

How Do We Measure...toward Obedient Nations?

Before heading into my last series of definitive slides on this question, it seems evident that if we're expanding our fields of inquiry, in pursuit of something as massive as obedient nations, then we'll need to silence the old bifurcation of reality into the proclamation vs. social action. Many in our age have helped us get over that classic modernity argument. I would point to an old boss of mine, Dr. Jun Vencer: a lawyer, the leader of the Evangelical churches in the Philippines for many years, and eventually over the entire World Evangelical Fellowship. I taught in his leadership institute which he especially designed for heads of Evangelical fellowships around the world. He had one display which seemed to capture much of this disciplined nations outlook. In the center he places a Christian presence. As the head of the DAWN committee in the Philippines they had overseen the planting of tens of thousands of churches in about a twenty-year span of time. And it was a truly popular movement. But he also knew that quantity is not the sole solution to discipling nations. He inserted four other measurable factors which he felt must all be fully embraced and pursued *if* the nation will truly be disciplined. It was economic sufficiency, social peace, public justice and national righteousness. Being a theologian, a lawyer, a pastor and a world Christian, he did his homework and he's continued to apply these things at the local and regional level, starting in his homeland. It's been an honor to get to know scores of other men and women who embody this embrace of "teaching the nations to observe all that I've commanded you."

As we come to our final lay-out of *how* we actually do this level of research—and believe me, this is merely a beginning to a much longer conversation—I'll just point to an outcome which we are *not* after, and that is that kingdom impact is a very nebulous term, but some word-crafters could, if you imagine it, create a column in a report, three years down the road, which insists that kingdom impact is somehow what you were after, so the box on the right is checked off. "We did it!" I'm sure, since most of you in this room are researchers, that for multiple reasons, there are times when we often take hard-to-define terms and give them lofty meaning or report them 'evangelistically.' So we are simply saying at this point that we are exploding the myths associated with just one more 'reaching' effort, in the interests of what the specifics of our larger task actually is, best summarized in the simple phrase, "obedient nations." This is not to disparage or criticize what those interested in reaching the unreached are about. I think they're doing noble and necessary work—and it's often difficult. But, I resist the notion being put forward by many these days that *that* particular task is what we call 'finishing the task.' It's simply untrue.

So that's why we need a new *kind* of research.

I have eight specific answers to the question: **How** do we measure *toward* obedient nations? These are not steps to selecting or even identifying obedient nations. They are simply larger research steps we need to take *if* we will ever be successful in beginning to quantify or qualify actual nations/people groups which are showing signs of embracing the values of the kingdom of God or, actually, obeying Christ. These are not comprehensive; just part of a longer conversation we'll need to have, if this task-thesis is correct. The first three are simply the good shoulders we have to stand on, so they will not be enumerated with the more substantial five steps to follow.

- ❖ As we approach nations or people groups, we will always understand that the first steps are 'pioneer' or frontier missiology. They have to do with, as Piper said, crossing cultures, learning languages, dealing with orality, pre-evangelism, culture studies, anthropology, that host of things by which any new culture is first engaged with the message God has for humanity. Of course, we've all had to relearn many times, that the omnipresent Holy Spirit has been in that culture from its birth, so this is not as frontier as it feels.
- ❖ Second, though, in places where the culture has been entered, and there is some church-planting movement, or even a whole-nation DAWN-type process going on, we will honor that, and seek to come along those leading these efforts to strengthen what they're about. This means all the way from the UPGs who are being adopted and prayed for, through to the national, DAWN-type projects, we want to cheer forward those who are involved in "planting the Presence in every place!" I for one do not see this as a fixed sequence—in terms of "you have to plant the church *before* you can deal with societal health." It is often the case that, certainly with the history of the DAWN movement, generally there has been faltering steps of "saturation church planting" before transformation language has come into being, in many places.

❖ Lastly, a final preliminary step in this process is to understand what is going on, in terms of community-level transformation in this nation or people group. There could easily be isolated ministries doing wonderful, transformative things in one province or even one village. The struggle I have with almost all of the great, transformational tools available to us these days, is that they still seem to be centered on bottom-up strategies, and very few people, in that transformation crowd are dealing with the systems of life by which whole nations operate and thrive. It's not just politics; it's all of life, and it's so often national in flavor and application. If we can help these ministries, often the ones who are doing model work at surveying the population and implementing fantastic schemes of transformational development and sustainability, to think and apply their communal work at the provincial, state and national levels, so that, in the end, actions are taken by the central government and many other key influencers in the society, to insure that this great, communal level transformation is made properly available to everyone in the nation, then we'll begin to see national obedience to Christ.

1. From that last point, we come to that wonderful phrase: 7 Mountains. They trace back to three influential evangelical leaders of the last quarter of the 20th century. In 1975, Loren Cunningham, founder of YWAM, apparently had a dream or a vision in which it seemed God said, "If you want to reach the nations, you've got to address, or deal with these 7 mountains: Arts/Entertainment, Business, Education, Family, Government, Media and Religion. He met the next day with Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, and Bill apparently had an almost identical list in his pocket, and they had full agreement on this message from the Lord. At a later date, they apparently found a voice of ratification from a well-known Christian philosopher/apologist at the time, Dr. Francis Schaeffer.

This theme has been treated by many in recent years, and it's not without its controversy, but the terms have seemed to stick, in terms of a broader understanding of our missional task. Some critics feel that they are far too triumphalistic, even users-of-force when they talk about "taking back" for the Lord what's been lost in the past. Obviously, this would be a militaristic version of that vision, but I know that its inner essence has become popular in many corners of the world as one way of seeking to qualify and quantify what is actually happening in terms of the influence of the Kingdom of God on human kingdoms—and this is usually and carefully without that militaristic option.

My point here is certainly to stand in support of this effort, but one complaint I've had for many years in this mission enterprise is that, even in the same country or people group, so often people who are focused on maybe one of these mountains of society like arts/entertainment, almost never communicate what they are doing within other realms of life in that same people group or nation. If we are serious about discipling whole nations, our successes and our failings need to be heard. I believe that applies even where security is a concern. The price for teaching the nations obedience to Christ will not be low-lying fruit. It would well mean more persecution, even martyrdom at times.... But in a day when the Body of Christ is more national, more integrated, more crossing of all barriers, and when our approach to full-on totalitarian regimes will have to be bold enough to declare, as did the OT prophets, "You, sir/mam, will answer one day to the King of kings," said in the midst of honest measures to bless the leaders and the nation, God will bless those measures—as has already been recorded by many to date.

The day will soon come when many nations or peoples will ***have some kind of leadership team, maybe a fluid committee, but they'll represent not just leadership of the church, but members from each of these (and more) mountains of society, and they'll meet each month or each quarter to brainstorm, think, plan and pray for the fullest, and integrated, discipling of their nation...routinely.***

2. How do we measure...toward obedient nations? ***WHO is dealing with the kings, the queens, the mayors, the governors, the influencers, the pop-stars, movie-makers, musicians, etc. of this nation...*** the ones whose influence is felt deeply in the teenager's bedroom or in the gang warfare, or on the manufacturing floor of the local clothing industry? If Jesus is the King of kings—whom we worship almost weekly this way, then who really prays for and targets—with not just "the conscience of the nation" but also with hands of blessing, real listening, maybe even a shoulder to cry on. If Hunter is right, that history shows cultures changing from the top-down, then is it any surprise that the leading cultures of the West these days are as

bad off as they are, just given the type, life-style and posture that most popular people have in our ever-present media and dominating other major domains of our lives?

3. If we're actually discipling nations or peoples, there are, usually **several glaring evils** which stand tall over nations, which make them, at some point, infamous. I found out a couple years ago that I'd been in the Bangkok airport over 80 times. I love the food and the people are usually warm and gracious. But everyone in the traveling world knows that Thailand is infamous for its sex-slave industry. It is huge and affects a large segment of so many rural families, even way up north in the jungles bordering Myanmar. If we're actually discipling the nation or the Thai people, this must be addressed. Parenthetically, as an Evangelical, I do know how readily we are to point out the sins of whole nations. But if much of what we're laboring for, in the fullest discipling of all the nations, is captured by John in his final chapters of Revelation, then we must exercise less of the "conscience of the community," as needed as that will be in things like a rampant sex trade. And, we must learn more how to **celebrate the glory and splendor of our nations**, to be the first in line to celebrate grand holidays, lead the way in great architecture, cuisine and dance.
4. We will also need to **encourage existing movements like BAM and insider movements**, as these are clearly openings to not only the good news of a redeeming Christ, but also creative ways of crossing cultural and other societal bridges which may have not been crossed, hardly ever in our church's history. Often people in these movements, because they are in some ways outside of the norms of Christendom, feel like outsiders, or are often misunderstood. I personally sense that they represent some of the greatest aspects of that coming future harvest which is so often nebulous when celebrated. I would certainly recommend the one reader which helped many, recently, to better understand "insider movements."^{xxiv}
5. Both of those movements—BAM and insider movements—are also indicators that **we have a quiet revolution going on in our ecclesiology, which is closely related to our training institutions**. We in Dawn Ministries certainly tracked, as we followed harvest force data, the records of the Bible Schools and seminaries in countries where the Dawn strategy was being implemented. And in the past couple decades, there have been major movements like TOPIC which have sought to insure basic pastoral training for the couple million church pastors in the developing world which have no formal training at all. But, the revolution of which I speak could be best expressed and explained by Alan Hirsch (co-author with Tim Catchin) in a book by that name: *The Permanent Revolution*.^{xxv} It's really a prophetic calling of the global church to get out of its fixation on the pastor-only role of leadership in most churches, and resuscitate the five-fold ministry laid out by Paul in Ephesians 4. If caught on, it will be truly revolutionary in the global Body of Christ. I highly recommend it as a place to start, on a very long journey. And, for the casual reader, the appendix on the "how this happened" could be worth the price of the book.

I am also convinced that, unless our seminaries and colleges change, in their understanding of the ennoblement of all vocations—for ministry—then our research on the careers associated with the people of God will simply have to move on to wherever and however people are trained to be vocational cogs in the grand machine of the advent of the kingdom of God in our nations and on this planet.

Any take-aways?

I have a small handful of personal challenges for you who make a career out of missional research, in light of this discussion of our task and our research. The challenge is based in large part on the shifting sand upon which we all stand at the beginning of the new millennium. There will be significant shifts in our ecclesiology, our eschatology, and for some of us, even our understanding of other religions. I, for one, have pretty much given up on the idea that counting us as members of a Christian religion will ever be helpful, any more. Apologies to Todd Johnson and the rest of those who give countless hours to demarcating the lines between “us” and “them.” This last statement weighs heavily on the advances being made in certain corners—at least within the three major non-Christian religions, not just with insider movements, but in any clear missiological guidance. Christ obviously did not come, in our beginnings, to start a Christian religion. Many would simply say, that’s the lesser of two evils. But that is where I beg to differ. So much of our ecclesiology, if we left behind our Christianity and simply stuck to following Jesus passionately, could find radically new demographic *borders* for our faith.

There have been huge errors which we have rather blinked at over time. We all know that ‘church’ and ‘building’ for most outsiders are almost synonymous. At the same time, we know that Jesus was almost executed for the things he said against *the Jewish* church, the temple. Stephen certainly was ready to die for what he said about the temple versus the tabernacle. But it’s not just cosmetics; it does have to do with how we view leadership, and the fact that in so many ways, Jesus is not King in even his church. Many people worship him as God, but few people actually obey what he commanded. And here is where, if we actually do teach the nations to obey Christ, we, first of all, must know him as our King, our master.

In terms of your take-aways, I would say, the *Task*, your *Team*, and your research *Tactics*, will all experience pretty profound changes if you go forward with this:

1. Understanding that the missional **task** is much larger, deeper and broader than has normally been stated will have obvious ramifications on your research *modus operandi*.
2. As you go home, your research **team** may already be very small. I’ve been in that research boat long enough to know how much funding and generic administrative support it usually gets—or doesn’t get—in our Christian circles. But now, through creative means, I will recommend that whatever research team you have, needs to become likely double or triple its size as it is presently. This does not mean hiring that many people; it’s really just a cheerleading call to extend your borders into various corners that, until now, have never been considered *researchers* for the Kingdom. Some may not yet know the King; others may be technicians in other industries or could be researchers for major corporations. Build a larger team, of people far wider than you can even presently imagine, but whose sources of data will be much wider and more generous than what you’ve experienced so far.
3. As for research **tactics**, our way of operating (or *m.o.*) will be much wider. If you’re researching not just the growth and presence of the church in your corner of the world, but how government, education, media, arts/entertainment, family—even religion is being affected, positively or negatively—by the values of the Kingdom, then you’ll need more paper, more computer screens, more meetings....
Secondly, you will certainly employ more audio/visual and social media in this pursuit of a much wider field of knowledge. And you’ll use all those both in gathering the data **and** in presenting it!
And, as suggested elsewhere, you’ll become a master at taking the great stories of transformation at the village level and moving it up, up, up to the broadest applications in your whole society, so that more and more, your listeners will become adept at seeing the transforming power of God breathing through the very life of your whole nation. Then, you’ll be able to ask questions like, “Can *this nation* love?”

Where are you, in this process? Can you envision yourself, giving the rest of your life, your working relationships, your mentoring (both those you mentor and those mentoring you), your research *m.o.*, your entire purpose—to this thing. This “thing” is glorifying God, being part of the answer to the Lord’s prayer, **and** his great commission, seeing his will being done, seeing his rulership come to earth, and your **whole nation**, with its rulers, and its glory and splendor, ready for their day, to march into the city of God?

* * * * *

Post-script: Over the years I have developed several ways of giving graphic portrayal of some of the complexities of this whole-nation-discipling effort. I may insert a couple of these into the end of my PPT presentation, just by way of example on thinking the issues through with this bigger picture.

I will also include at the end of this text a simple Bibliography, pointing the way toward other help in several related fields of interest: theology/missiology, economics, case studies, the spiritualistic dimension, etc.



Steve Spaulding was born a missionary kid in Japan and was raised on three continents. After college, he migrated to California for inner-city work, and later youth ministry in San Jose, where he married Marna in 1987. At Fuller Seminary, he received an MA in missiology, then joined Dawn Ministries. They moved to Manila as S.E. Asia coordinator for DAWN. Steve founded SEANET, a global network focused on reaching Buddhists. After a head injury and Dawn's folding in 2007, Steve joined O.C. International as their resident missiologist. They have three grown children: Grace, Peter and Katie and live in Colorado Springs, CO.

Bibliography

Biblical support

- Bos, Pieter. *The Nations Called: A Theology of the Nations and their Redemption*. Kent, England: Sovereign World, Ltd., 2002.
- Cope, Landa. *The Old Testament Template: Rediscovering God's Principles for Discipling all Nations*. Burtigny, Switzerland: The Template Institute Press, 2006.
- Goerner, H. Cornell. *All Nations in God's Purpose: What the Bible Teaches About Missions*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1979.
- Hayes, J. Daniel. *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical theology of Race*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003.
- Mouw, Richard. *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002.
- Wright, Christopher. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006.
- Wright, N.T. *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2012.

Eschatology (just touching on this)

- Eberle, Harold R. & Trench, Martin. *Victorious Eschatology: a Partial Preterist View*. Yakima, WA: Worldcast Publishing, 2006.
- Wright, N.T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection and the Mission of the Church*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2008.

Ecclesiology (just touching on this)

- John, Abraham. *The Power and Authority of the Church: Equipping the Saints to Administer God's Kingdom on Earth*. Littleton, CO: Maximum Impact Ministries, 2016.
- Simson, Wolfgang. *Houses that Change the World: the Return of House Churches*. Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Publishing, 1998.

Practical Theology & Missiology

- Colson, Charles. *God & Government (revised & updated Kingdoms in Conflict): An Insider's View on the Boundaries between Faith and Politics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.
- Mangalwadi, Vishal. *The Book that Changed Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011.
- Talman, Harley & Travis, John Jay, eds. *Understanding Insider Movements: Disciples of Jesus Within Diverse Religious Communities*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015.

Overall treatment of reaching nations/peoples

- Brooks, Rice. *Every Nation in our Generation: Recovering the Apostolic Mandate*, Lake Mary, FL: Creation House Press, 2002.
- Cunningham, Loren. *The Book that Transforms Nations: The Power of the Bible to Change any Country*. Seattle WA: YWAM Publishing, 2007.
- Enlow, Johnny. *The Seven Mountains Prophecy: Unveiling the Coming Elijah Revolution*. Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2008.
- Layton, Douglas. *Our Father's Kingdom: the Church and the Nations*. Nashville, TN: World Impact Press, Inc., 2000.
- Mangalwadi, Vishal. *Truth and Transformation: A Manifesto for Ailing Nations*. Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 2009.
- Miller, Darrow. *Discipling Nations: The Power of Truth to Transform Cultures*. Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, n.d.

- Moffitt, Bob. *If Jesus were Mayor: How God can Use Your Church to Transform Your Community*. n.l.: Harvest Foundation, 2006.
- Montgomery, Jim & McGavran, Donald. *The Discipling of a Nation*. Santa Clara, CA: Global Church Growth Bulletin, 1980.
- Montgomery, Jim. *DAWN 2000: 7 million churches to go*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1989.
- Murrell, Steve. *100 Years from Now: Sustaining a Movement for Generations*. Nashville, TN: Dunham Books, 2013.
- Silvoso, Ed. *Ekklesia: Rediscovering God's Instrument for Global Transformation*. Minneapolis, MN: Chosen Books of Baker Publishing Group, 2014/2017.
- Silvoso, Ed. *Transformation: Change the Marketplace and You Change the World*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007.
- Stier, Jim, ed. *His Kingdom Come: An Integrated Approach to Discipling the Nations and Fulfilling the Great Commission*. Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 2008.

Cultural Transformation

- Crouch, Andy. *Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling & Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008 & 2013 respectively.
- Hunter, James Davidson. *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy and Possibility of Christianity in the late Modern World*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Tickle, Phyllis. *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008.

Spiritualistic Dimensions

- Moreau, Scott, et al. eds. *Deliver us from Evil: An Uneasy Frontier in Christian Mission*. Monrovia, CA: MARC books, 2002.
- Otis, Jr., George. *The Twilight Labyrinth: Why does Spiritual Darkness Linger Where it Does?* Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books of Baker Book House, 1997.
- Wink, Walter. *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992.

Economy (again, just touching on this)

- Collier, Paul. *The Bottom Billion: why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Elred, Ken. *God is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2005.
- Johnson, Neal. *Business as Mission: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009.
- Polak, Paul. *Out of Poverty: What Works When Traditional Approaches Fail*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008.
- Sedladek, Tomas. *Economics of Good and Evil: The Quest for Economic Meaning From Gilgamesh to Wall Street*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Repentance/Reconciliation of National evils

- Dawson, John. *Healing America's Wounds*. Ventura, CA.: Regal Books, 1994.
- Dawson, John. *Taking our Cities for God: How to Break Spiritual Strongholds*. Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 1989.
- Mills, Brian & Mitchell, Roger. *Sins of the Fathers: How National Repentance Removes Obstacles for Revival*. Kent, England: Sovereign World Ltd., 1999.

History (just touching on this)

- Cahill, Thomas. *How the Irish Saved Civilization: the Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1995.
- Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*. Princeton, NJ: Harper San Francisco, 1997.
- Walls, Andrew. *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.

Case Studies:

- Adelaja, Sunday. *Church Shift*. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2008.
- Jeff Hammond. *Changing the Destiny of Nations: Indonesia for Christ*. Indonesia: Self-published, "Untuk Kalangan Sendiri," 1998.
- Mangalwadi, Vishal and Ruth. *William Carey & the Regeneration of India*. (Nividet Good Books Distributors), 3rd edition, Scottsdale, AZ: Food for the Hungry, 1997.
- Sawka, Ronald. *From Goat Nation to Sheep Nation: a prayer guide for confronting the spirit behind Shinto*. Tochigi-ken, Japan: CI Asia Publications, 2001.

This bibliography is in no way comprehensive. Here I am simply seeking to point you toward resources which have been helpful to me in the process of developing a more solid, "obedient nations" posture to my understanding of the great commission. While I do feel somewhat isolated in this task, each of these authors has, in their own way, or in one 'field of knowledge or expertise' enlightened my path. I've chosen to divide them into smaller, specific categories.

This bibliography is only a start. At the outset, most of these authors do not share my move toward obedient nations. I use them with the proviso that I believe their thesis does support it at some level. On the other hand, there are a significant number of them which are today my personal friends (or former mentors) and we've been able to have solid conversations of this thesis—and, we are all in process.

I realize that even when it comes to any delineation between nations as countries vs. nations as peoples/tribes, my propensity here has been toward literature that is dealing with countries. But I have also followed pretty closely the reaching of whole tribes and it has rather a literature of its own for sure. There are some dimensions of ethno-linguistic peoples which, in some ways, simplify the 'discipling of the whole nation,' for usually there is not a set of codified laws, no supreme court, often no governing king/queen, no formal 'education system,' etc., but most of these factors still exist with these people, although in many cases many of these categories do overlap with the national/country system which has this group under their governance. This is a matter for further study and respect for each people's/nation's distinctive, ruling features.

References Cited

ⁱ https://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_shows_the_best_stats_you_ve_ever_seen#t-1172094

ⁱⁱ https://www.ted.com/talks/stephen_wolfram_computing_a_theory_of_everything_a_great_introduction_to_his_thinking_&_products

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fbvquHSPJU> is an awarded full-length film, “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” which, especially in light of 9/11 and the economic crash of 2008, highlights aspects of the dying of the Western empire, and some inherent problems within our global village, especially in light of global economics, terror (and wars/violence), continuing systemic poverty, versus the conspicuous growth of the world’s large, wealthy segment and the systems which keep all of these things extant.

^{iv} https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/681eef_3f3bec8f49046a59aadc711feff9b43.pdf This was a paper I taught on around the year 2000, but it spoke to the growing unity of the Protestant church even a half-generation ago—worldwide.

^v John 13:35

^{vi} It was especially Ralph Winter and others in the Fuller School of World Mission, about a generation ago, who pointed out these two structures of God’s mission, evident in the book of Acts, in which the ‘modalities’ were the churchly, local structures, from which were sent ‘second-decision’ teams of missionaries, who comprised a different, cross-cultural entity, the sodalities of mission, which could readily be traced in various forms throughout the history of the church. Certainly, in the 20th century the sodalities exploded in number—with the term ‘mission agencies’ but also NGOs and “para-church” organizations growing into the thousands world-wide.

^{vii} Mt. 18:20

^{viii} Think of groups like Joshua Project, the similar branch of the IMB, but also groups like *Finishing the Task* and others seeking closure to their form of the great commission—essentially being what John Piper posted on his blog sight, about essentially penetrating all peoples which are under 2% evangelical with a solid CP process. There are a couple of current articles in the latest IJFM (Jan-Mar 18) journal, about ongoing misunderstandings surrounding the whole UPG and frontier peoples movements. A very important read.

^{ix} <https://gcpn.info/> The Global Church Planting Network is one of several CP-networks, possibly the most inclusive at this point, and its leadership are essentially direct descendants of the work of Dawn Ministries and the legacy of Jim Montgomery.

^x The starting point and strongest mandate for this kind of activity is actually the familiar Matthew 28:18-20.

^{xi} <https://www.transform-world.net/> <https://transformourworld.org/> <http://www.7culturalmountains.org/> <https://www.disciplenations.org/> These web-sites are all pretty self-explanatory and will lead you to the stories they’re telling these days.

^{xii} <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-much-is-left-to-do-in-the-great-commission>

^{xiii} “Future-perfect thinking,” if I’m properly informed, arose through the work in NASA several decades ago. At one point, they commandeered a group of their smartest astro-physicists, astronomers, various technical geniuses and gathered them into a war-room, with the following, mild proposal: “We have just sent a manned spacecraft to Mars and back in one month. Please tell us how we did it!” They were painting an impossible, future picture to those who were creative and innovative—likely in the extreme, but locked them into a room with the mandate to start with that future, perfect scenario, and work themselves back to the present, where NASA had current technologies to do the things they’d been doing to this point. I’ve been told that was the context in which the ‘future-perfect’ thinking came from. It’s since been widely used in planning theory.

^{xiv} Phil. 3:5

^{xv} Acts 13:46; 18:5-6

^{xvi} Acts 25:11

^{xvii} Phil. 4:22

^{xviii} I have elsewhere done a more extensive study of the many times in our text in which “nations” are used interchangeably or as synonyms with “kingdoms.” This would be another point of contention I have with those who draw a clear distinction between today’s countries and the *ethne* throughout the biblical text. I believe the lines a bit fuzzy in those areas of distinction, and that there are features of today’s countries which are more similar to the *ethne* of biblical times than are the strict “ethno-linguistic groups” of the whole unreached people group movement. That is only to say that I believe both categories are workable and applicable to the listing of nations throughout Scripture. Yes, I understand that Jesus used *ethne* with multiple meanings, and it was a term in 1st Century Judaism which was variously interpreted, but I sense a strong push, certainly by a writer who overtly stressed the kingship of Christ and his main message of God’s rulership, as well as Satan’s showing Jesus in an instant all the ‘kingdoms’ of this world, in all of their splendor—right before his ministry, and how Jesus’ final words were a direct mandate back to these larger families of the nations, to disciple them all the way through this current era—obviously and only by his authority—which was a direct contradiction to Satan’s claims to their authority in that original temptation. Compare Mt. 4:8 and Luke 4:5-7 about the “splendor of the kingdoms,” of the earth, with all of Matthew’s concentration on the Kingdom, his Gospel’s closing verses, capped off by John’s reference to, at the end of our age, with the “glory and splendor” of the nations, marching into the city of God (Rev. 21:24-26).

^{xix} Michael Heiser has done biblical students a great service in better uncovering from ancient languages, including but well beyond the O.T. text, that the 1st Century Jewish worldview was much more informed by the “counsel of God” and the punishment of the high beings of Genesis 6:1-4 as a greater part of the evil of our world than standard Biblical thinking has been among most Christian students, for a long time. See *The Unseen Realm: recovering the supernatural worldview of the Bible*. Lexham Press, Bellingham, WA. 2015.

^{xx} Centurion Cornelius, “...you and all your household.” (Acts 11:14); Lydia, and “the members of her household...baptized....”(Acts 16:15); Philippian jailer “you will be saved, you and your household” “...he and his whole family believed in Jesus” (Acts 16:31, 34); Crispus, the synagogue ruler “and his entire household” believed in the Lord (Acts 18:8).

^{xxi} See Jeremiah 18:5-10 as another sample of the “obedient nations” posture in the language of God over the nations in the time of the prophets.

^{xxii} Pieter Bos, *The Nations Called: A Theology of the Nations and Their Redemption*. Sovereign World Ltd., Kent, England. 2002.

^{xxiii} James Davidson Hunter, *To Change the World*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2010, p. 41.

^{iv} <https://www.amazon.com/Understanding-Insider-Movements-Disciples-Communities/dp/0878080414?SubscriptionId=AKIAJ2F6RDUSIYCWMFQ&tag=sa-b2c-new-20&linkCode=sm2&camp=2025&creative=165953&creativeASIN=0878080414>

^{xxv} Alan Hirsch & Tim Catchin, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church*. Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Imprint. San Francisco, CA. 2012.