MIRACLE-GROW FOR CHURCH PLANTING:
A THEOLOGICAL CASE FOR HUMANITARIAN AID IN MISSIONS

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The Evangelical Renaissance of Social Justice

Social action has enjoyed a kind of renaissance among evangelicals lately. This activity would include helping the poor, advocating for the oppressed, defending the helpless, reforming a secular institution, and other worthwhile causes. According to recent research, evangelical churches have become increasingly involved in issues of social justice.[1] Nearly 68 percent of younger evangelical Christians affirm that the best way to address social evils is to "practice your ideals in everyday life."[2] They increasingly see the church as a counterculture, whose mission is neither to integrate itself with culture nor baptize culture, but to become a mission to culture, "calling people to come under the reign of God through Jesus Christ."[3] These surveys demonstrate that younger evangelical Christians consistently oppose abortion like their forebears, but refuse to engage in cultural warfare or partisan politics. Instead, they eagerly "employ their faith publicly to fight against global poverty and sex trafficking or for creation

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[1] Bradley R.E. Wright, Christians Are Hate-Filled Hypocrites . . . and Other Lies You've Been Told (Minneapolis, MN: BethanyHouse, 2010), 37.

[2] Ibid., 49.

[3] Robert C. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2002), 132.

care and immigration reform."[4] Consequently, a *New York Times* opinion columnist labels this younger generation of evangelicals the "new internationalists."[5]

This renaissance of social action isn't limited to the young, however. For every one dollar given by evangelicals to political organizations, the same group has invested twelve dollars in foreign missions and international aid. Six of the seven largest evangelical mission organizations have relief and development as their primary focus.[6] Furthermore, the "missional church movement" sees social action as a natural expression of the church, at least on a local level. In the words of Robert Webber:

> The postmodern church invites people in its neighborhood into the new alternative community of people who embody the kingdom, and it promises them an experience of the kingdom that is to come. . . .
>
> This is what makes the missional church "effective in bringing people to Christ." It is not "having" a mission, but "being" God's mission, God's alternative people who signify God's reign over all that lies at the heart of the missional church.[7]

Ed Stetzer and David Putnam further explain that a missional church is not "a certain form, expression, model, type, or category of church," but "a church that seeks to understand its context and come to express that understanding by contextualizing the gospel in its community."[8] Put simply, a missional church seeks to address the most pressing needs of its

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[4] David King, "The New Internationalists: World Vision and the Revival of American Evangelical Humanitarianism, 1950-2010," *Religions* 3, no. 4 (2012): 923.

[5] Nicholas D. Kristof, "Following God Abroad," *The New York Times*, 21 May 2002. http://www.nytimes.com/2002/05/21/opinion/following-god-abroad.html.

[6] King, "The New Internationalists," 924.

[7] Robert C. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 121–22.

[8] Ed Stetzer and David Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 187–88.

surrounding community, which would include the social and economic difficulties that challenge people within the congregation and the community at-large.

The Social Gospel and the "Great Reversal"

While this renaissance represents a positive shift in evangelical practice, evangelicals find themselves struggling to reconcile social action with what they have come to accept as sound theology. Sadly, their theology suffers undue influence of events that took place more than a century ago, namely, the rise of the Social Gospel and its counter-revolution, what David O. Moberg calls "the Great Reversal."[9]

In 1907, Walter Rauschenbusch published his watershed work, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, and it became the nucleus around which a movement formed. As the American industrial revolution gathered steam, the law of nature ruled capitalism and a gulf of unprecedented width formed between the barons of commerce and a desperately poor working class. In response, Christian prophets emerged to champion social justice. Some Christian business leaders, like Richard Ely, sought to leverage politics to press a progressivist agenda. Some evangelicals, like Josiah Strong, hoped to Christianize America so the country would become more like the kingdom of God. Clergymen, like Washington Gladden took active roles in community leadership and even politics to address social wrongs from a Christian perspective. But these disparate leaders and groups failed to turn social justice into a credible movement. Indeed, political and economic forces—often in collusion—impeded the progress of social justice in the United States.

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[9] David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism versus Social Concern* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972).

Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist pastor serving in the notorious working-class immigrant slum of New York's "Hell's Kitchen," hoped his book would align these incongruent Christian reformers behind a single manifesto, providing them an identity, a vocabulary, a rallying cry, and a challenge. He stated, "The conscience of Christendom is halting and groping, perplexed by contradicting voices, still poorly informed on essential questions, justly reluctant to part with the treasured maxims of the past, and yet conscious of the imperious call of the future. This book is to serve as a contribution to this discussion."[10]

Unfortunately, his book failed to provide a suitable banner for the charge against social injustice. Instead of rallying Christendom, it further divided an American Protestant church already fractured by modernist controversies. He based his theological arguments on biblical history, tracing the theme of social justice through the Old and New Testaments, but his use of the Historical-Critical Method alienated conservative theologians. He repulsed wealthy segments of the church by calling them "antagonistic to the fundamental principles of Christianity"[11] and "a parasitic class who live in idleness and splendor by converting to their own use some kind of entrusted wealth or delegated power."[12] He placed Christianity on the side of political progressives and made the Social Gospel the enemy of capitalism, stating "one of the greatest services which Christianity could render to humanity in the throes of the present

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[10] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1907), xiii.

[11] Ibid.,, 341.

[12] Ibid.,, 383.

transition would be to aid those social forces which are making for the increase of communism."[13]

By 1917, when Rauschenbusch published *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, old fractures had become fully formed schisms. The modernist controversies devolved into an ugly trench war, with each camp defining "authentic Christianity" in ways that excluded the other. Conservative Christians identified "five fundamentals" of genuine Christian belief. Liberal Christians took up positions behind the Social Gospel, which they used as a litmus test of true faith in Christ and His kingdom.

Prior to this time, battle lines did not exist or had not been clearly drawn. Many notable evangelicals engaged in social action, leading campaigns to meet the physical needs of the poor, advocate for the oppressed, defend the helpless, or reform secular institutions. Earl Cairns, in *The Christian in Society,* highlights the contributions of evangelical Christians in the abolition of slavery, the improved treatment of the mentally ill, reforms in labor laws, and prison reform.[14] Some would even suggest that the entire field of social work owes its existence to evangelical Christians in England who pioneered societal reforms and social work during the Victorian Age.[15] According to Norris Magnuson, many late nineteenth century premillennial evangelists urged social reform "in large part because their commitment to ministry to the poor

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[13] Ibid., 398.

[14] Earle E. Cairns, *The Christian in Society* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973).

[15] Kathleen Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal of Their Social Work in the Victorian Era* (London: Geoffrey Blis, 1962).

in the central cities required physical proximity and the opportunity to understand the social and environmental causes of poverty and social deviance."[16]

Even so, it would also be a mistake to suggest that evangelical resistance to social action didn't exist before the rise of the Social Gospel. Decades before Rauschenbusch wrote anything, Dwight L. Moody—even while caring for the poor in Chicago—stated,

> I look on this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a life-boat, and said to me, "Moody, save all you can." God will come in judgment and burn up this world, but the children of God don't belong to this world; they are in it, but not of it, like a ship in the water. This world is getting darker and darker; its ruin is coming nearer and nearer . . . Christ will save his church, but he will save them finally by taking them out of the world.[17]

The two bestsellers penned by Walter Rauschenbusch did not invent or establish the Social Gospel, and the books were not the cause of all resistance to social action by fundamentalists and their theological descendants, evangelical Christians. However, this literature did contribute much to forming a watershed in history. They galvanized disparate groups devoted to social reform, giving them a voice, a vocabulary, a mission, and an identity. The books also gave evangelical leaders the perfect opportunity to say, "I told you so." The Baptist pastor-turned-seminary-professor stated his intention to win conservatives to the Social Gospel cause, writing, "My aim is to win the benevolent and serious attention of conservative readers for the discussions that are to follow."[18] However, having stated his desire to win conservative support, he then rejected the inerrancy of Scripture and jettisoned critical doctrines,

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[16] Donald Dayton, "Social and Political Conservatism of Modern American Evangelicalism: A Preliminary Search for the Reasons," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* (1977, Vol. 2, Issue 2), 79.

[17] Dwight L. Moody in W. H. Daniels, *Moody: His Words, Work and Workers* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1877), 475-476.

[18] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 23.

such as the Fall and resulting depravity of humanity, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, and the need for personal salvation. In fact, he rejected the entirety of what he called "traditional theology."

> Instead of being an aid in the development of the social gospel, systematic theology has often been a real clog. When a minister speaks to his people about child labor or the exploitation of the lowly by the strong; when he insists on adequate food, education, recreation, and a really human opportunity for all, there is response. People are moved by plain human feeling and by the instinctive convictions which they have learned from Jesus Christ. But at once there are doubting and dissenting voices.[19]

Rauschenbusch itemized at least five evangelical objections to the Social Gospel, no doubt heard many times in the ten years since publishing *Christianity and the Social Crisis*. In his words, these objections are:

1. We are told that environment has no saving power, regeneration is what humans need.
2. We cannot have a regenerate society without regenerate individuals.
3. We do not live for the world but for the life to come.
4. It is not the function of the church to deal with economic questions.
5. Any effort to change the social order before the coming of the Lord is foredoomed to failure.[20]

Instead of answering these objections, or demonstrating that social action, per se, does not contravene "traditional theology," Rauschenbusch repudiated core evangelical doctrines. He declared, "These objections all issue from the theological consciousness created by traditional church teaching. These half-truths are the proper product of a half-way system of theology in which there is no room for social redemption."[21] Despite his stated agenda,

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[19] Ibid., 7–8.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

Rauschenbusch used *A Theology for the Social Gospel* to define the Social Gospel as everything *not* evangelical. To each of the above objections, the Social Gospel countered:

1. Regeneration is *not* what humans need; Jesus preached a gospel of *social* redemption.
2. We *can* have a regenerate society because sin is societal and individual selfishness, not the outworking of personal depravity.
3. "Belief in a future life is not essential to religious faith."[22]
4. It *is* the function of the church to urge governments to deal with economic questions, and communism offers the best means of societal reform.
5. We *can* change the social order before the coming of the Lord because it is His will to do so.

Sadly, conservative Christians reacted through a "great reversal," rejecting social action along with the doctrinal errors of the Social Gospel. As liberal Christians pursued the Social Gospel agenda, conservative Christians chose an equal and opposite reaction, devoting their energy to evangelism exclusively while criticizing the theology of Rauschenbusch and other champions of the Social Gospel. Concern for the poor gradually, but quickly, came to be seen as a slippery slope toward the Social Gospel.

The False Dichotomy

When conservative Christians rejected the Social Gospel and its defining doctrines, they also disengaged from social action and began to treat with suspicion anyone who continued. Moreover, this liberal-conservative split in the Protestant church—the Social Gospel and the resulting Great Reversal—set the Great Commission (disciple-making) and the Great Commandment (compassion) into separate categories of Christian faith and practice, either consciously or unconsciously. Indeed, both factions of the Protestant church helped create a

[22] Ibid., 228.

"false dichotomy" with liberal mainline denominations sacrificing gospel proclamation in favor of social action, and conservative fundamentalists taking the opposite stance.

For the purposes of this paper, the "false dichotomy paradigm" is defined as the conscious or unconscious division of the Great Commission (disciple-making) and the Great Commandment (compassion ministry) into distinct categories; as activities that tend to exist in tension, or as competing priorities that vie for resources and potentially diminish one another.

Today, a century after the publication of *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, false dichotomy paradigm persists. When evangelicals are asked about meeting the physical and/or social needs of people, nearly all agree that Christians have a divine mandate to give assistance to the poor and to advocate for the helpless. Few deny this call of Scripture. These same believers struggle, however, when the question includes the qualification, "as a priority of the local church." Showing kindness to the needy and championing social reform is all well and good, as long as it does not distract from soul-winning activities, which they identify as "proclamation." (Narrowly defined, proclamation is a clear, compelling presentation of the plan of salvation which demands a response. More broadly, proclamation is the preaching and teaching of divine truth from the Scriptures leading to discipleship.)

At an eschatology conference held on the campus of Dallas Theological Seminary on February 27, 2017, a pastor of a South Dallas church asked a revealing question during one of the breakout sessions titled, "A Ministry of Hope: A Pastor's Perspective on the Need for Eschatology." He asked, "When allocating [church] resources, how do you balance the need for sharing the gospel with the practical needs of the community you minister to?" His question presupposed a tension, which framed the debate within the false dichotomy paradigm. Naturally,

the ensuing discussion created more division than consensus. Having begun with a flawed paradigm, the debate ended predictably.

In James MacDonald's video series, *Elephant Room*, several high-profile, evangelical preachers squared off to debate issues facing the twenty-first century church. Session 3 bears the title, "Compassion Amplifies the Gospel vs. Compassion Distorts the Gospel."[23] (Note the presupposed categories.) While all parties agreed that compassion should remain an essential activity of the church, and need not detract from the verbal proclamation of the gospel, all appeared to be unaware of how the debate had been framed by the false dichotomy paradigm or how the presupposed categories unconsciously influenced their arguments. For example, when moderating the discussion, MacDonald transitioned from David Platt's comments on compassion ministry, saying, "Okay, [that was] the case for compassion. Let's hear the case for proclamation."[24]

Throughout the thirty-minute debate, each participant affirmed the absolute supremacy of the Great Commission (primarily defined as proclaiming a succinct offer of salvation from sin and the promise of eternal life) while affirming the absolute necessity of compassion ministry. In other words, they unconsciously argued against the false dichotomy paradigm while defending their particular positions *within* the false dichotomy paradigm. Consequently, each participant simultaneously argued for, and against, his own position, which made for a very confusing exchange. Their struggle to find clarity demonstrates that when one remains true to Scripture, he or she cannot maintain the false dichotomy paradigm.

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[23] Walk in the Word, *Elephant Room Round 1 DVD Boxed Set*, (Elgin, IL: Walk in the Word, 2010).

[24] James MacDonald, "Compassion Amplifies the Gospel vs. Compassion Distorts the Gospel," Walk in the Word, *Elephant Room Round 1 DVD Boxed Set*, (Elgin, IL: Walk in the Word, 2010).

In truth, the Great Commission and the Great Commandment cannot exist in tension. Any paradigm or perspective that views these directives as competing interests suffers a fatal flaw in logic. God is not doubleminded. He would never ask His people to choose which of the Ten Commandments to uphold, or ask which is more permissible to violate, "You shall not murder" or "You shall not commit adultery." Each of the Ten Commandments stands as an absolute dictate of its own. To borrow language from the Council of Chalcedon, these mandates of the New Testament exist "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of mandates being in no way annulled by the union." Like the two natures of Christ, perfectly united in one person, these two mandates should find unified expression in His body, the church. Any attempt to emphasize one over the other, or confuse one for the other, or sacrifice one for the other is to advance a theological error.

Professionalism, Evangelism, and Mission-Drift

To be fair, the past one hundred years of history have done much to perpetuate and reinforce the false dichotomy paradigm, which in turn acts like a wedge between evangelistic ministries and social justice ministries. The false dichotomy paradigm encourages evangelicals to take up positions behind one commandment of God or the other—the Great Commission versus the Great Commandment—and then lead their respective organizations to institutionalize their preference. Church leaders feel the need to protect the primacy of the Great Commission from what they see as mission-drift and inevitable secularization. Social justice ministries, as they scale to meet the world's problems, must recruit more professionals not trained in seminaries in

order to carry out the Great Commandment effectively, and thereby pay less attention to evangelism.

During the *Elephant Room* dialogs, each of the participating church leaders, compelled by the evidence of Scripture, would have preferred to break out of the false dichotomy paradigm, but fear of repeating history prompted them to reinforce the categories. In their minds, meeting the physical needs of people necessarily exposes any ministry to the same "slippery slope" danger that doomed the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, and World Vision International to evangelistic irrelevancy. James MacDonald challenged David Platt's position for compassion ministry, saying, "I want to hear you to tell me how afraid you are that what you have written about compassion is going to, in your lifetime or beyond, be distorted into a compassion-only message, and that the very thing that's a treasure to you is going to end up being reduced to an unimportant, exterior, second thought."[25] He asked in essence, "What will keep evangelical ministries from sliding down the same slippery slope as the mainline denominations?"

As Perry Noble highlighted this fear, he essentially offered the false dichotomy paradigm as a solution, saying,

> The biggest thing that sticks out to me about the Matthew 25 passage is, I think it's been hijacked by what I would call social justice ministries. Jesus was saying that to the *church*. He established the *church* in Matthew 16; by the time He gets to Matthew 25, He didn't say, "And I want to start the parachurch." I'm a big believer in the *church* should be the compassion organization that takes the gospel to the world. But my fear is that we allow that ministry to turn into social justice, which rescues people from hell on earth but damns them to hell for eternity because they do not share the gospel. (Emphasis mine.) [26]

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[25] James MacDonald, "Compassion Amplifies the Gospel vs. Compassion Distorts the Gospel."

[26] Perry Noble, "Compassion Amplifies the Gospel vs. Compassion Distorts the Gospel."

One has to wonder what Noble considers "the church." To uphold gospel proclamation as a priority, he not only reinforced the false dichotomy paradigm, he created an unnatural division in the invisible church, the ἐκκλησία, to exclude Christian parachurch ministries. The imprecision of his ecclesiology probably stems from his disappointment with the trajectory toward secularism taken by many "social justice ministries" as they grow. In the minds of many church leaders, the remedy is simple: evangelical social justice ministries must redouble their commitment to gospel "proclamation" to avoid mission-drift. However, a more careful look at the evangelical renaissance of social justice will yield more useful insights. A focus on the evolution of World Vision International will be helpful as other evangelical ministries appear to follow the same trajectory.

In 1950, Youth for Christ evangelist, Bob Pierce, founded World Vision International to "to meet immediate physical needs while avoiding the liberals' language of 'structural sin' and 'social salvation.'"[27] Over the next twenty years, as more evangelicals engaged in social action and more organizations began operations overseas, pastors began to worry about the pull of secularization and its effect on world evangelism. Indeed, in 1967 Bob Pierce resigned from the organization he founded over fears "that professionalization, government funds, and technical advances would lead World Vision to temper its evangelical mission."[28] He did not fear this without cause.

At the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, delegates approved a statement on the need for Christians to address issues of poverty and

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[27] King, "The New Internationalists," 928.

[28] Ibid., 933.

oppression, yet omitted any direct statement on how social action and evangelism should relate.[29] Nature abhors a vacuum, and theology is no less tolerant of ambiguity. With no positive statement to unite social action and evangelism within a single doctrinal framework, the longstanding schism persisted. By 1982, the growing rift called for a "Lausanne Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility" (CRESR), which met in Grand Rapids. Evangelists and humanitarian aid leaders agreed that both, social action and proclamation, were necessary parts of missionary work, but still could not define exactly how. Instead, they described the relationship as "two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird,"[30] essentially formalizing the false dichotomy paradigm with compelling, poetic imagery. Meanwhile, World Vision began using vocabulary that referred to "social structures" and described development in terms that sounded reminiscent of Rauschenbusch and contemporary secular organizations. They also engaged in bilateral projects with the United Nations, USAID, and Church World Service.[31] By 1990, World Vision incorporated UN initiatives into its own work, became a full member of the World Economic Forum in Davos, and initiated aid programs with the World Bank.[32]

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[29] Ibid., 931.

[30] "Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment," Lausanne Occasional Paper 21, 1982, https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-21 (accessed 04/02/2017).

[31] King, "The New Internationalists," 935.

[32] Graeme Irvine, *Best Things in the Worst Times: An Insider's View of World Vision* (Wilsonville: BookPartners, 1996), 116–117.

While American Christians gave four billion dollars to overseas ministries, an increase of fifty percent over the previous decade,[33] the proportion given to evangelism ministries did not keep pace with World Vision and its cousins. In 1984, the famine in Ethiopia prompted an eighty percent increase in World Vision's income in one year.[34] In sub-Saharan Africa, fully fifty percent of education and health services were provided by faith-based organizations by 2000.[35] From 1995 to 2008, World Vision's budget grew from 300 million to 2.6 billion dollars.[36]

Obviously the sheer volume of help needed—and aid supplied—vastly outpaced the capacity of any one church, or even groups of churches represented by missions agencies. As the work of relief and development increased, the need for technical professionals increased proportionally. Churches and mission agencies do not appear willing to hire teams of logistics professionals to navigate the complex world of international shipping with its innumerable details and petty corruptions. Missionaries lack the necessary training to handle large-scale distributions of aid or participate in the complex diplomacy and politics that inevitably result. Consequently, ministries like World Vision, while originally motivated by evangelism, had to recruit staff with degrees not earned at seminaries. As operations grew, they were forced to engage foreign cultures alongside governments and secular aid organizations such that issues of logistics and politics inevitably pushed aside evangelism and church planting—disciplines that

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[33] Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 1.

[34] King, "The New Internationalists," 937.

[35] "Faith-Based Organizations and International Development: An Overview," in *Development, Civil Society and Faith-based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*, G. Clarke and M. Jennings, eds. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan), 17–45.

[36] World Vision International Annual Reports, 1995–2008 (WVI Central Records).

require their own professionals with specialized training. So, it should be no surprise that evangelical social action ministries at least appear less evangelistic and, indeed, do experience mission-drift as they scale. Unfortunately, the admonition to reemphasize the Great Commission is overly simplistic, prompting leaders of social action ministries to organize mass-evangelism events that produce little lasting change.

Κοινωνία and Church Growth

Any hope of unifying the efforts of missionaries and humanitarians must begin with a perspective of Christian faith and practice that integrates the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. A good place to start would be an examination of Luke's use of κοινωνία in Acts 2:42–47, which establishes a useful framework for the integration of compassionate action with other functions of a local church. A thorough understanding of this deeply significant term will help evangelicals (and other Protestant faith tribes) change their paradigm to integrate these divine directives, and then build humanitarian aid and church multiplication strategies in harmony. Then, perhaps mission-drift will cease to be the slippery slope Christian leaders fear.

> [42]And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. [43]And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. [44]And all who believed were together and had all things in common. [45]And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. [46]And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, [47]praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42–47 ESV)

In Acts 2:42–47, Luke describes the organic growth of the first church congregation and highlights the activities that contributed to their success. Unfortunately, the false-dichotomy paradigm has obscured the true significance of κοινωνία, a deeply meaningful concept for the first Christians. Over time, evangelicals have elevated διδαχή and προσευχή as primary, and

have celebrated τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου as sacred symbolism, but have lost touch with the richness of κοινωνία.

The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* suggests that κοινωνία is not an activity, per se, but merely metonymy for the Lord's Supper, love feasts, and prayer. Toussaint writes, "The omission of 'and' between 'fellowship' and 'to the breaking of bread and to prayer' indicates the last two activities are appositional to fellowship. Perhaps the breaking of bread included both the Lord's Table and a common meal."[37] But Hebrews 12:22 uses a similar construction; both passages follow the pattern: [dative object] καὶ [dative object] [dative object] καὶ [dative object].

> "Σιὼν ὄρει καὶ πόλει θεοῦ ζῶντος, Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἐπουρανίῳ, καὶ μυριάσιν ἀγγέλων, πανηγύρει"
>
> "to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God the heavenly Jerusalem and to innumerable angels in festal gathering"
>
> "τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς"
>
> "to the teaching of the apostles and the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers"

In Hebrews 12:22, "Mount Zion" and "city of the living God" are clearly parallel references to the same object, as are the other two dative phrases, "the heavenly Jerusalem" and "innumerable angels in festal gathering." Wallace states, "There are no absolute structural clues for determining whether a case is appositional or parallel; a determination needs to be made on grounds other than syntactical."[38] The writer's use of καὶ in Acts 2:42 tempts us to form pairs of

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[37] Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 360.

[38] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Zondervan Publishing House and Galaxie Software, 1996), 153.

dative phrases, and then perhaps place those pairs in parallel, but the same construction in Hebrews 12:22 presents the phrases as a simple list of parallel objects to the verb, προσεληλύθατε ("you have come"). The simplest, least troubling rendering of Acts 2:42, therefore, would be to present the dative phrases as a simple list of activities to which the congregation "devoted themselves." The apostles, Jesus' other followers, and "about three thousand souls" (v. 41) devoted themselves to:

- the apostles' teaching
- the fellowship
- the breaking of bread
- the prayers.

The term of greatest interest to this study, and arguably the most neglected by churches in affluent cultures, is τῇ κοινωνίᾳ (the fellowship). Like the other terms, this instance of κοινωνία is articular, which can be confusing when rendered into English and its rather limited use of the article. In English, the article identifies nouns as either definite or indefinite. So, "the fellowship" in English might suggest that the author has the congregation itself in mind, or perhaps their shared identity within the New Covenant. But Hauck argues against this usage.

> In Ac. 2:42 κοινωνία does not denote the concrete community or society of Christians which, while it had not yet separated itself legally and cultically from the Jewish community, already represented a circle of the closest fellowship. Nor can it signify the community of goods (cf. v. 44: εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινά). It is rather an abstract and spiritual term for the fellowship of brotherly concord established and expressed in the life of the community.[39]

[39] Friedrich Hauck, "Κοινός, Κοινωνός, Κοινωνέω, Κοινωνία, Συγκοινωνός, Συγκοινωνέω, Κοινωνικός, Κοινόω," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 809.

In Koine, it is the "ability to conceptualize that seems to be the basic force of the article."[40] In this context, the first congregation devoted themselves to the concept of κοινωνία, a term for which "no single English word is adequate to its meaning".[41] The common, secular use of κοινωνία and its cognates is that of a special kind of partnership, "a relation between individuals which involves common and mutual interest and participation in a common object."[42] This participation is one that involves interdependence such that sacrifices and benefits are shared in common toward a mutually shared outcome. For example, Aristotle uses κοινωνία in setting the requisite elements of a *polis*, which is more than people sharing common geography; common interests in art, music, or leisure; or even common need for defense or commerce. A true city must involve interdependent people investing in, and benefiting from, a self-sufficient community. "It is not that *koinōnia* means fellowship; it is rather that a *polis* is a *koinōnia* in which fellowship may take place."[43]

Luke 5:1–11 offers helpful insight as it uses κοινωνός and its nearest alternative, μέτοχος, to depict the business associations of James, John, and Simon. Whereas μετόχοις refers to those who might be described as day-laborers helping with the day's fishing (v. 5), κοινωνοὶ, shows James and John as full partners in the fishing business with Simon (v. 10). It would be a mistake to make the distinction too rigid, but the general use of these terms throughout Greek

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[40] Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*, 209.

[41] Lionel Spencer Thorton, *The Common Life in the Body of Christ* (Westminster [London]: Dacre Press, 1942), 5.

[42] Ibid., 74–75.

[43] Stuart Dickson Currie, "Koinonia in Christian Literature to 200 A.D." (Emory University, 1962), 7–8.

literature shows a strong emphasis on a quality of mutuality in κοινωνός that's barely present in μέτοχος.

Some have suggested that κοινωνία, especially in the Septuagint, can mean "an intimate fellowship in respect of a spiritual benefit,"[44] involving an inward, emotional connection akin to the sense of comradeship shared by brothers-in-arms. None of these sources, however, furnish any evidence to support the claim.[45] While the Septuagint does make use of κοινωνός to render the Hebrew term,חָבֵר, which does carry a sense of emotional or philosophical comradeship, κοινωνός is by no means preferred over μέτοχος (cf. Ps. 44:8; 118:63; 121:31; Hosea 4:17).[46] Therefore, the first congregation's devotion to κοινωνία was not, primarily, nurturing an emotional sense of comradery. In other words, their *esprit de corps* developed as a consequence of their behavior, not the other way around.[47]

One particularly influential source states that κοινωνία is "almost equivalent to almsgiving"[48] because many instances within the New Testament are associated with individuals and congregations giving money to help suffering believers. But this suggestion unnecessarily limits the term as it is commonly employed in secular Greek and the Septuagint. Moreover, this rendering overlooks the many, more appropriate word choices available to New Testament

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[44] George V. Jourdan, "*koinōnia* in I Corinthians 10:16," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 67, Pt. II, 1948, 112.

[45] J.Y. (John Young) Campbell, "ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ and Its Cognates in the New Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51, no. 4 (December 1932), 374–375.

[46] Currie, "Koinonia in Christian Literature to 200 A.D.", 18–19.

[47] Campbell, "ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ and Its Cognates in the New Testament," 353f.

[48] Kirsopp Lake and Foakes Jackson, eds., *The Acts of the Apostles, The Beginnings of Christianity*, Pt. I, Vol. IV (London: Macmillan, 1920), 27.

writers, ἐλεημοσύνη being the most obvious. It can be said that almsgiving is sometimes motivated by κοινωνία, or that almsgiving is an expression of κοινωνία, but using κοινωνία as metonymy for "almsgiving" doesn't align with its usage anywhere outside the New Testament.

While it can be argued that κοινωνία gains additional religious significance in Paul's literature,[49] the term in Luke's literature—and other New Testament writers—is simply "life in common."[50] Even so, given the unusual circumstances surrounding this first Christian congregation, given their shared cultural and religious bond as Jews, and given their developing identity as the kingdom of God, it is fair to say that their particular brand of κοινωνία does have strong Old Testament kingdom overtones. The Old Testament kingdom arose from God's covenants with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:18–21), the nation of Israel (Deut. 29:1–29; 30:1–10), and with David (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chr. 17:11–14; 2 Chr. 6:16). The Old Testament kingdom of God was geographic, social, economic, legal, and spiritual, encompassing every sphere of human community. God established the Hebrew nation in the Promised Land with a covenant that encompassed all aspects of life-in-common partnership. Their failure to uphold social justice—a key point of contention for the prophets—was not merely an abstract moral lapse, but a violation of His covenant and the unraveling of their social fabric. Therefore, as this congregation of Jewish followers of Messiah bonded, it is quite reasonable to suggest that Old Testament kingdom features naturally carried over to the New.

Luke observes how the first Christian congregation expressed κοινωνία in Acts 2:44–45. "All who believed were together and had all things in common [κοινός]. And they were

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[49] Stuart Dickson Currie, "Koinonia in Christian Literature to 200 A.D." (Emory University, 1962), 4; Heinrich Seesemann, *Der Begriff Koinonia im Neuen Testament*, (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1933), 49f.

[50] Campbell, "ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ and Its Cognates in the New Testament," 363.

selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need." While the first Christians undoubtedly—and appropriately—expected the Son of Man to return in their lifetime to establish His worldwide kingdom (Dan. 7:14), and this influenced their individual and communal decisions, the motivation for their κοινός had more to do with their identity as the kingdom of God than eschatological expectation.

Jesus' followers, expecting a certain continuity with the Old Testament kingdom, initially struggled to understand how the New Covenant and the new kingdom of God would advance after the Lord's resurrection. They asked, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). To which He answered, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:7–8). He then fulfilled the promise for power at Pentecost, setting aside the question of timing as extraneous. Consequently, the new congregation of God's people began to behave like the Old Testament nation of Israel should have behaved.

> The new *koinōnia* also had continuity with the past. At its centre was a body of men who had been in close fellowship with Jesus. . . . Loyalty to the apostolic fellowship involved allegiance not only to Jesus as the Messiah but also to the God of Israel, and conformity to the institutions of the old covenant. To this picture of the original Christian community one further feature is added in the story. The first Christians "had all things common" (*koina*).[51]

Κοινωνία, life-in-common partnership, is an essential feature of the ἐκκλησία. This is true of the worldwide congregation of believers united in the Holy Spirit, and no less true for a local, visible congregation of believers. If we take Acts at face value, a local ἐκκλησία is fully

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[51] Thorton, *The Common Life in the Body of Christ*, 6–7.

formed and completely functional when the community devotes themselves to the apostles' teaching (scriptural instruction), the celebration of the Lord's Supper,[52] the spiritual discipline of praying, and to κοινωνία, life-in-common partnership. Omitting any one of these elements doesn't invalidate a local ἐκκλησία, but one could reasonably argue that it is not fully formed, that the congregation is developmentally deficient.

Many American churches offer superb biblical instruction, as well as opportunities for authentic worship and fervent prayer, yet struggle to understand and then enter κοινωνία, perhaps because affluence removes the need for the kind of sharing experienced by the first congregation. In first century Jerusalem, daily subsistence did not come easily and could not be expected. Affluent cultures, on the other hand, can reasonably expect the next meal to be a few steps or a few moments away. Their shared needs, therefore, tend to be emotional, social, or educational rather than physical. In affluent cultures, κοινωνία—if it exists—will take less obvious, less tangible forms.

Some affluent churches, however, do recognize less tangible needs and then enter life-in-common partnership to meet them. In one particular church in the Plano, Texas area, the predominantly Vietnamese congregation shared a need for passing along their cultural identity to the next generation. They pooled their time, expertise, and financial resources to create a program that taught Vietnamese language and culture. The program became one expression of κοινωνία, the sharing and meeting of practical needs among members of the congregation. So, this is not to argue that κοινωνία cannot or does not exist in affluent contexts; only to suggest

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[52] See comments on "breaking bread" (vv. 42 and 46) in Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 17, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 111, 113.

that the partnerships are less tangible, and arguably less intentional. This, too, can reinforce the false-dichotomy paradigm. As needs become less tangible and less obvious in affluent cultures, the Great Commandment can appear less crucial compared to the Great Commission.

Regardless of what form the shared needs take, Acts 2:42–47 demonstrates that when individual members combine their resources to meet their shared needs, the results are predictable. In the case of the first Christian congregation in Jerusalem, the ἐκκλησία was 'having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). This is undoubtedly the first church-growth model, and arguably the only growth model to stand the test of time. Furthermore, it is the only truly universal model, suitable for any cultural milieu in any era. The first congregation didn't struggle with the false-dichotomy paradigm; therefore, they grew strong as a body and eventually multiplied.

Κοινωνία and Church Multiplication

When a local, visible ἐκκλησία takes the next logical step of extending κοινωνία—"life-in-common partnership"—to the community in which it resides, the church can be legitimately described as "missional." Indeed, to become missional, church leaders decide to engage the broader community in life-in-common partnership by assessing its needs, considering what resources the ἐκκλησία has to offer, and then taking action to meet those needs. Missional churches do not extend κοινωνία merely to improve their image or even to create the opportunity for evangelism—at least in the transactional sense of the term—but to establish a meaningful relationship with their communities. These missional leaders understand that the twenty-first century church has much more in common with the first-century ἐκκλησία than it does the churches of our recent past. As Rod MacIlvaine states, "North American culture has changed

radically in the past twenty-five years. The Christendom model, which suggested that the church was the chaplain to society, lasted in the West from roughly 313 A.D. into the late twentieth century. As the Christendom model has crumbled steadily, church leaders have sensed their marginalized status acutely."[53]

To help churches take the first step in becoming "God's missionary presence," Ed Stetzer and David Putnam point to Paul's missionary and church-planting ministry. "Throughout the book of Acts, Paul approached Jews and Gentiles differently—based on their culture and level of understanding of gospel truths."[54] In other words, the apostle examined each community to discover the residents' shared spiritual and physical needs, and then formulated a strategy to meet their needs on their terms. In MacIlvaine's summary of Will Mancini's method,[55] he identifies three discussion-starting questions church leaders should ask.

1. A local culture question: What are the unique needs and opportunities in the local context where God has placed us—especially our city?
2. A church culture question: What are the unique resources and capabilities that God brings together in us as a church body?
3. An apostolic question: What particular focus most energizes and animates the leadership team in our church, both paid and lay leaders?

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[53] Rod MacIlvaine, "Selected Case Studies in How Senior Leaders Cultivate Missional Change in Contemporary Churches," (Ph.D. Diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2009), 41.

[54] Ed Stetzer and David Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 182–83.

[55] See Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

Where those three overlapping circles intersect is the church's unique opportunity to be "truly missional."[56]

Unfortunately, the shift to a missional mindset does not occur automatically or even naturally, particularly in affluent contexts where needs tend to be less obvious. As Andy Stanley notes, it is the nature of people and their communities to become inwardly focused. "Over time you find yourself inclined to completely disregard the concerned voices of those positioned on the outside."[57] In the case of the local church, this tendency can become acute as the church "challenges the idolatrous story of the culture with an alternative way of life shaped by the kingdom."[58] As this cultural tension mounts, communities tend to turn inward for self-preservation and then develop a sense of self-righteousness to justify their alienation.

MacIlvaine offers credible evidence that "church leaders, who cultivate missional change, do not generally make a strategic decision to do so. Rather, missional change is precipitated by a significant crisis encountered by the church."[59] While many missional texts acknowledge that crises play a tangential or possibly mitigating role in prompting missional change, MacIlvaine shows that churches rarely, if ever, turn their inward focus outward unless a significant crisis prompts the shift. He asserts, "crisis is most likely the key that God uses to

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[56] MacIlvaine, "Selected Case Studies in How Senior Leaders Cultivate Missional Change in Contemporary Churches," 47.

[57] Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones, *7 Practices of Effective Ministry* (Sisters, Oreg.: Multnomah, 2004), 140.

[58] Michael W. Goheen, "As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You: J.E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Utrecht, 2000), 423-424.

[59] MacIlvaine, "Selected Case Studies in How Senior Leaders Cultivate Missional Change in Contemporary Churches," 1.

spark missional change,"[60] and then goes on to identify several kinds of crises that may prompt church leaders to think missionally.[61] Even so, he readily admits, "the presence of a crisis does not automatically guarantee leaders will make missional changes. For missional change to take place, a certain kind of learning environment must also be present within the crucible."[62]

If the crisis is "situational," that is, a readily identifiable problem or need, the church will likely respond missionally. At least, that is the observation of churches in countries where humanitarian crises have occurred. Several humanitarian aid researchers note that "local faith communities are often first responders in humanitarian crises. They respond quickly, but are also often approached by affected populations in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, sought out for both material and spiritual support, as well as for updated information."[63] Furthermore, "faith communities are actually uniquely positioned to liaise between affected communities and aid organizations, due to their continual presence in areas where a humanitarian response is taking place; this continuity and dependability can help ensure mutual trust.[64] This, in essence, is κοινωνία extended to the community.

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[60] Ibid., 6.

[61] Ibid., 32–34.

[62] Ibid., 39.

[63] Jean-Christophe Gaillard and Pauline Texier, "Religions, Natural Hazards, and Disasters: An Introduction", *Religion*, Vol. 40, No. 2, (2010), 82; Ben Wisner, "Untapped Potential of the World's Religious Communities for Disaster Reduction in an Age of Accelerated Climate Change: An Epilogue and Prologue", *Religion*, Vol. 40, No. 2, (2010), 129; Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Alastair Ager, *Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Humanitarian Situations: A Scoping Study*, Working Paper Series No. 90, (Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford, 2013), 4.

[64] K. Kraft, "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response: Lessons from Lebanese Evangelical Churches Providing Food Aid," *International Review of the Red Cross* 97, no. 897–898 (2015): 403.

Rodney Stark offers compelling historical evidence to show that the dramatic expansion of the ἐκκλησία in the first three centuries was driven primarily by the κοινωνία shared within local bodies who then extended life-in-common partnership to others.[65] To illustrate, Stark points to the contrast between pagan and Christian reactions to the plagues of 165 and 251 A.D., which drove rich pagans into panicked retreat to private estates and prompted ordinary pagans to expel sick family members. "When their first symptom appeared, victims were thrown into the streets by their own families to join the piles of dead and dying. But this was not how the Christians responded. Neither wealthy Christians nor the clergy fled, but took part in efforts to nurse the sick, not only their own kind, but many pagans as well."[66] While advancing the thesis that "Christianity served as a revitalization movement in response to the misery, chaos, fear, and brutality of life in the urban Greco-Roman world," Stark states:

> Christianity revitalized life in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with many urgent urban problems. To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fires, and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services. . . . Once Christianity did appear, its superior capacity for meeting these chronic problems soon became evident and played a major role in its ultimate triumph.[67]

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[65] Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity: How the Jesus Movement Became the World's Largest Religion*, Reprint Edition (New York: HarperOne, 2012).

[66] Rodney Stark, *Discovering God: The Origins of the Great Religions and the Evolution of Belief* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 318.

[67] Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 161–62.

What Stark describes in recounting the rise of the ἐκκλησία is a dynamic that begins with members of local, visible bodies of believers taking care of their own, engaging κοινωνία in response to "situational" crises, and then extending this life-in-common partnership to their neighbors. It is this dynamic that thought-leaders in the missional church movement wish to recapture in the twenty-first century. This dynamic, however, involves more than merely providing services or meeting needs; a missional church seeks to extend fellowship—κοινωνία in its fullest biblical meaning—to the community in which it resides. Stark further summarizes the effect of this dynamic.

> [Christianity] grew because Christians constituted an intense community, able to generate the "invincible obstinacy" that so offended the younger Pliny but yielded immense religious rewards. And the primary means of its growth was through the united and motivated efforts of the growing numbers of Christian believers, who invited their friends, relatives, and neighbors to share the "good news."[68]

For these early missional churches, κοινωνία and disciple-making were distinct yet complementary activities that, each in its own way, contributed to the growth and multiplication of churches. Because these early church communities didn't suffer the false-dichotomy paradigm, κοινωνία and disciple-making didn't compete for resources. Christian communities offered compassionate service to the suffering and good news proclamation to the lost *as was appropriate to the circumstance*. They fed bodies and nourished souls within the context of relationship, guided by a central, undivided motivation: love. As the first Jerusalem congregation—the model for other first-century congregations—grew in numbers and "was having favor with all the people," the call to conversion did not highlight a individualistic

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[68] Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 208.

transaction but an invitation to commit oneself to the Messiah and the kingdom community He established, which He called the ἐκκλησία.

Κοινωνία and Missions (Evangelism)

Evangelical apologists for compassion ministries and their detractors have struggled for decades to determine where to place the Great Commandment within Christian faith and practice. Some overtly relegated social action to the periphery of church priorities, believing that social remedies wasted valuable resources on the treatment of symptoms while neglecting the curative power of proclamation. Dwight L. Moody, one of America's most influential evangelists, summarized this perspective vividly, exclaiming, "I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, 'Moody, save all you can.'"[69] Of course, he said this while actively engaged in helping the poor of Chicago. Nevertheless, as the modernist controversies and the Social Gospel prompted a "Great Reversal" among fundamentalist and evangelical Christians, Moody's words resonated broadly. These evangelicals advocated evangelism *instead of* social action.

Some Christian leaders in the twentieth century began to suggest that social action was itself a form of evangelism. For example, Thomas G. Nees in *Compassion Evangelism: Meeting Human Needs* writes, "The people [in Jesus' time] were soon to learn that spreading the Good News meant healing, feeding, teaching, and forgiving. The gospel was proclaimed in deeds as well as words. The weak and unfortunate were touched at the point of their need with the compassion of Jesus and were invited to become followers of Jesus."[70] While Nees called for the

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[69] Quoted in David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 318.

[70] Thomas G. Nees, *Compassion Evangelism: Meeting Human Needs* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1996), 21.

church to give priority to both, compassion and proclamation, he and others came perilously close to *equating* compassion with evangelism. "I've thought of evangelism and compassion as two circles essential to the Christian faith. When our faith is in focus, it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish one from the other."[71] Consciously or unconsciously, many believers began to advocate social action *as* evangelism. This perspective gave rise to a popular aphorism mistakenly credited to Saint Francis of Assisi: "Preach the gospel always; if necessary, use words."

Still others justified Great Commandment activities by making them a *means of* fulfilling the Great Commission. Most of the participants in MacDonald's *Elephant Room* discussion officially promote one or more social action ministries, yet offered conflicting and confusing perspectives that reflect their unconscious false-dichotomy paradigm. They eventually found common ground by advocating social action *alongside* evangelism, a perspective summarized by James MacDonald.

> Here is what I believe. I do believe that our responsibility is, first and foremost, to our brothers and sisters in Christ. "Let us do good to all men, but especially those of the household of faith." That is why Mark [Driscoll] and I started Churches Helping Churches. That's why we're on the ground in Haiti, seven days after it happened, raising several million dollars to rebuild the church in Haiti. That's why Perry [Noble] called me on the phone a couple of weeks ago, taking up an offering. [Steven] Furtick calls me on the phone, "We're sending $50,000 to Churches Helping Churches." The mission is right. It's not a refutable point. We're responsible to help the church as our first priority. In addition to that, wherever we go, loving on, and meeting the practical, physical needs of lost people is an extension of the gospel itself. . . . Both of them are an end in themselves. Both of them matter greatly. One shows the reality of Christ in me, and the other one helps me extend that to the lives of others."[72]

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[71] Ibid., 28.

[72] James MacDonald, "Compassion Amplifies the Gospel vs. Compassion Distorts the Gospel."

MacDonald's final comment offers a promising step in the right direction. A more recent evangelical trend among pastors and theologians—albeit small but growing—is to uphold proclamation and compassion as activities having merit of their own, each requiring no additional justification. MacDonald's statement reflects the unspoken attitude of rank-and-file evangelicals who support their local churches *and* send billions of dollars to evangelical humanitarian aid organizations, despite the mild love-hate relationship that exists between these interests. As MacDonald and other Christian leaders no longer feel the need to justify or sanctify social action with an evangelistic rationale, evangelicals will break free of the false-dichotomy paradigm and cultivate a more helpful perspective.

While proclamation and social action are—to borrow again from the Council of Chalcedon—activities the ἐκκλησία must engage "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of the mandates being in no way annulled by the union," we need not keep them separated. Like the two natures of Christ, the Great Commission and the Great Commandment find harmonious expression through the ἐκκλησία as Christ loves the world through His body of believers. Both proclamation and social action are expressions of Christ's love, each administered as relationships create opportunities to nurture κοινωνία. When we encounter a person or group suffering hunger or exposure, love dictates that we offer food and clothing. When, in the context of a relationship, a person or group has the right frame of mind to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, love mandates that we explain the reason for the hope that is in us with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15). As the world exists today, we find ample opportunity to engage the lost physically and spiritually at home and abroad.

When missionaries discuss "the mission field," they usually have foreign missions in mind, and most of those locations continually suffer under "situational crises." They lack food

security, access to clean water, basic healthcare, clothing, shoes, and other items needed to maintain a reasonable quality of life. If humanitarian aid organizations don't already have ongoing operations in these countries, affected populations cannot get help because political, cultural, or logistical barriers prevent access. Despite the opportunities presented by these situational crises, most missionary church-planting models give little or no attention to social action or compassion ministries. The most common church replication models offer superb guidance on launching biblical instruction and leading corporate worship while neglecting κοινωνία as depicted in Acts 2:42–47. If affluence erodes κοινωνία, we should not be surprised to see this element missing from strategies originating in economically developed countries.

Indigenous evangelists and church-planters in majority-world countries, however, do appreciate the vital role of κοινωνία because their constituents live in perpetual situational crises. Consequently, these indigenous leaders often augment these church-planting models with a home-grown missional church strategy. Because their training doesn't include humanitarian aid best practices, the results vary widely, depending upon the pastor's education, experience, ingenuity, and entrepreneurial spirit.

Humanitarian Aid and Missions

The evangelical renaissance in social justice is, quite simply, a very good trend. It represents a return to a way of thinking that honored the Great Commandment and the Great Commission without confusion or conflict. Like all positive trends, however, this renaissance presents evangelical leaders with a number of risks and opportunities. The primary risk is the perpetuation and exacerbation of the false-dichotomy paradigm, which threatens to force a wedge between social action activists and pastors, between humanitarian aid organizations and

missionaries, between compassion and evangelism. The false-dichotomy paradigm is, literally, nonsense that must be named, identified, condemned, and purged from evangelical conversation. This will require a paradigm shift, beginning with a clearly articulated theology of compassion and evangelism. The current statements merely codify the false-dichotomy paradigm.

Shifting away from the false-dichotomy paradigm will require more than a carefully crafted statement. Evangelical believers must translate the recovered, historic paradigm into new missions and evangelism strategies that enhance the mutual benefits of proclamation and social action. Moreover, this must become a concerted, conspicuous effort. Fortunately, this prospect offers some exciting opportunities.

A more effective model for church planting, especially in majority world contexts, is to plant *missional* churches. That is, establish congregations that are missional-minded from the outset. In addition to the current focus on worship and instruction, missionaries and church planters should encourage and catalyze κοινωνία among its members, and then seek to extend κοινωνία to the church's community. Church-planting models should include κοινωνία as one of its four pillars alongside biblical instruction, worship, and prayer—just like the first church that grew out of the Pentecost experience in Jerusalem.

Humanitarian aid organizations should use its expertise to equip these missional church plants through training and strategy coaching, and then use local churches as the primary means of aid distribution. As pastor, Rick Warren, writes, "I believe the proper role for all the great parachurch and relief organizations is to serve local churches in a supportive role, offering

their expertise and knowledge, but allowing the local churches around the world to be the central focus and the distribution centers."[73]

While Warren's perspective is correct, we must acknowledge that implementing this new paradigm of "compassionate evangelism" will require a wholesale operational change for both churches and humanitarian aid organizations. At present, churches and church leaders are not equipped and trained to handle the sheer volume of resources flowing out of affluent church cultures. The front line field staff currently employed by humanitarian aid organizations do not typically have sufficient training to deal with the complex spiritual dimensions of ministry in majority world contexts. Combining the efforts of social activists and missionaries will require cross-training, at the very least. Then, the legion of specialists currently engaged in majority world cultures—humanitarians and evangelists alike—will have to learn through trial-and-error what strategies and tactics work best in each context.

The shift in paradigm and the change in operation cannot and will not occur quickly. Even so, the opportunities for humanitarians and evangelists are too significant to ignore. As the old proverb goes, "The best time to plant a tree is ten years ago; the next best time is today."

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[73] Rick Warren, Sermon quoted in *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 173–74.

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