

**FULFILLING THE APOSTOLIC MANDATE IN APOSTOLIC POWER:
SEEKING A SPIRIT-DRIVEN MISSIOLOGY AND PRAXIS**
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Today, I am honored to follow Dr. Johnson and Mark Hausfeld as the J. Philip Hogan Professor of World Mission. I seek to call the Church, the apostolic/missionary people of God, to a Spirit-driven missiology that recognizes our need for dependence on the Spirit for direction, for empowerment and for fruit in the missionary enterprise. A missiology that does not just give lip service to the Spirit's activity but depends on it in missional praxis, a missiology that seeks to fulfill the apostolic mandate in apostolic power.

Whenever in any period of the Church's history a little company has sprung up so surrendered to the Spirit and so filled with His presence as to furnish the pliant instruments of His will, then a new Pentecost has dawned in Christendom, and as a consequence the Great Commission has been republished; and following a fresh tarrying in Jerusalem for the endowment of power has been a fresh witnessing for Christ from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth.¹

A. J. Gordon in 1893

I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
Matthew 16:18b

In response to the call of God and at the invitation of several small independent congregations that had experienced a new Pentecost, on Christmas Eve 1929 missionary Ralph Darby Williams and his young family entered the city of Santa Ana, El Salvador. Immediately, he began to visit the various congregations and survey the country in order to develop a strategy to reach the entire nation. He detailed his plan in a letter to his supervisor, Noel Perkin, requesting five additional missionary couples in order to complete the task. He writes in his memoirs:

Brother Perkin's reply to my carefully worded letter was a disappointing answer at first reading. Although written with Brother Perkin's accustomed grace,

¹A. J. Gordon, *The Holy Spirit in Missions* (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1893), 52-53.

it declared, “We have no missionaries available for the field; furthermore, even if we had such men ready, we have no funds to support them. Beyond this we have no surety that we can keep *you* on the field and are trusting that we will not have to retrench.”

Could anything have seemed more discouraging in light of our prayers? Yet, I do not remember more than a passing regret over the letter. There was too much moving over the field and the Lord’s presence was working with us. Almost immediately, I found myself constantly saying, “Our missionaries are already on the field. They are here; I see them every day for they are many. The Lord will use them and the devil cannot stop them.”

This was soon to be a great and visible miracle. The constant outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the fact that God was calling these untrained believers into his work and burdening them with the care of the rapidly growing groups was a blessing. It was a revival carried forward by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as the believers were more open to what the Bible said about their conduct.²

This brief narrative communicates some of the core values of a Spirit-driven missiology: —the Lord fulfills mission through His Church by the direction and power of the Holy Spirit, —all members of the Church are responsible for the apostolic mandate to reach all peoples with the good news of the kingdom, —leadership equips the Church by creating space for supernatural encounter that is held to the standard of the Word in contextually appropriate ways, —to be effective in missional praxis the church must paradoxically exert great effort while relying fully on the power of the Spirit, and to be reliant on the Spirit requires a commitment to prayer.

Although familiar with the writings of Roland Allen and others, the New Testament provided Williams with the model for missionary work. He identifies “Three Holy Spirit Principles. . . . The Lord carried this work forward by the Holy Spirit in perfect, practical harmony with the three principles of self-propagation, self-government, and self-support.”³ In the New Testament and the missiology of the indigenous church, Williams discovered God’s model for missions, a model that affirmed the need for contextualization in terms of forms and strategy and a model that was Spirit directed and dependent. Even in a context of extreme poverty with

²Lois Williams, *Hands That Dug the Well* (Springfield, MO: RDM, 1997), 41-42.

³*Ibid.*, 61.

little or no outside resources⁴ the church could be planted and grow, members could be equipped for ministry, and the gospel could be communicated in word and deed to those who had never heard—fulfilling the apostolic mandate.

Some might argue that Williams lived in a specific time and place, and that these “Holy Spirit Principles” are no longer applicable or that they would be ineffectual in another context. However, along with his missionary colleague Melvin Hodges, Williams heard these same arguments when advocating for a Spirit-driven missiology and praxis in the last century. What the Church knows today, evidenced by the spectacular growth of the Pentecostal movement around the world particularly in the Assemblies of God, is that an indigenous church can be planted. Paul and the apostles did it in the New Testament. Williams and Hodges did it in El Salvador and throughout Latin America. Other missionaries did it in Africa and areas of Asia. As Hodges, the missionary statesman and pioneer Assemblies of God missiologist, so clearly articulates, an indigenous church patterned after the New Testament church is “possible because the Gospel has not changed. We serve the same God and His Holy Spirit is with us as He was with the church in the New Testament times.”⁵ Hodges contended that converts empowered by the Spirit could carry on the work of the Church. The key was that the missionary “must have faith in the power of the gospel to do for others what it has done for us.”⁶

The question is, do we, the apostolic/missionary people of God, truly believe that what God has done for us, he can do in others—and even greater things? Will we seek and depend on Spirit direction and empowerment? Will we ask, not only what is our task, but the theological question, where does the power for ministry and missions come from? Williams planted an

⁴Ibid., 176. The Assemblies of God in El Salvador was birthed during the Great Depression. Rather than the national church borrowing from the missionary, Williams observes, “Many times I borrowed from a national brother to meet unavoidable household needs.”

⁵Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1953), 14.

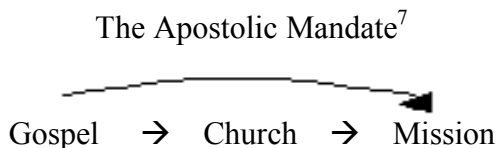
⁶Ibid., 14, 21.

indigenous church out of conviction but also out of necessity. Will missionaries today work out of that same conviction when there is an abundance of resources? Will we resist and refuse the seductive powers of a donor driven, a market driven, a "ministry" driven, a personality driven, a program driven, or a missionary driven missiology? Will the church fulfill the apostolic mandate in apostolic power?

The Apostolic Mandate

The mandate that Jesus gave to his disciples was to communicate the good news of the kingdom of God to every person of every nation. This good news was that through Jesus' life, death and resurrection the will of the Father came present, revealing and creating the possibility of reconciliation between God and humankind and between humans out of the impossibility of sin and alienation, the reconciliation of the universe in Christ (Eph. 1:10). The gospel centered in Christ, calls men and women into relationship with God and a renewed relationship with each other, the formation of a new people, the apostolic/missionary people of God.

Ray Anderson describes the apostolic mandate with the following diagram:



The gospel is God's agenda, God's ministry of revelation and reconciliation. Only the gospel thus defined is ministry.⁸ This gospel thrusts the church into the apostolic mandate as the purpose of ministry. The church is a people called for his purposes. Mission then becomes the continued ministry of Christ in the world in the power of the Spirit. In continuing Christ's ministry in form,

⁷Ray S. Anderson, *Minding God's Business* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 6.

⁸Ray S. Anderson, "A Theology of Ministry" in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, ed. Ray S. Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 6-21.

the Church's mission must be defined in terms of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection; its role in terms of prophet, priest, and king; and its function in apostolic, prophetic, pastoral, didactic, and evangelistic terms.

The apostolic mandate is to plant the Church because in the Church disciples are made as the missionary people of God go to the ends of the earth baptizing new converts and teaching them to obey all his instructions (Matt. 28:18-20). The apostolic mandate is the gospel of the kingdom communicated in word and deed by the Church to the world. The Church is central to the plan of God in mission and to the goal of missional endeavor. In love the community of God, the Church, gives witness to the world of its resurrected Lord and continues His ministry by the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8).

There exists a false dichotomy today between kingdom and Church, between incarnational ministry and representational ministry, between the missiology of Jesus and the missiology of Paul.⁹ As Scot McKnight asserts based on his study of the Gospels,

There is no kingdom without faith and attachment to Jesus Christ, and there is no kingdom without attachment to Jesus' followers. In other words, Jesus' kingdom vision is not that far from Paul's church vision. . . According to the New Testament, the kingdom vision of Jesus is, it seems, only implemented through the church.¹⁰

The apostolic community birthed at Pentecost is to be a signpost of the kingdom of God. The Church is not the kingdom, but when believers yield to Spirit direction and empowerment both individually and corporately, the rule of the King is manifested on earth. The purpose of the apostolic people of God is expressed in community in *koinonia*: "love one another," in *kerygma*: "Jesus is Lord," in *diakonia*: service to "the least of these my brethren," and in *martyria*: "you

⁹David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 141-165, 315-356.

¹⁰Scot McKnight, "McLaren Emerging," *Christianity Today* 52, no. 9 (September 2008): 6. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/september/38.59.html> (accessed October 1, 2008).

shall be my witnesses; be reconciled to God.”¹¹ Pentecostals resolve the tension between *missio Dei* the mission of God and *missiones ecclesiarum* the missions of the Church, by recognizing and affirming that the activity of the Church in missions proceeds out of the mission of God as directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit communicates the good news of the kingdom of God through the agency of the Church.

Hodges framed it by stating, “The Goal of Missions—a New Testament Church.”¹² This does not signify that the church is mired in the first century; rather, the characteristics—the signs by which the Church should be identified—should be the same: revelation and reconciliation. There is but one unchanging gospel, but it is communicated uniquely according to context. The Church is one Church, the body of Christ, but each local congregation is peculiar. The seed that is planted is always the same, but the distinct soils produce diverse expressions of the community of faith wherever planted. “The gospel has been designed by God himself, so it fills the need of the African, the Chinese, or the Indian. As a result, there is no place on earth where, if the gospel seed be properly planted, it will not produce and indigenous church.”¹³

Hodges identifies the relationship between mission, missions and the Church:

Missions refers to the carrying out of the redemptive purpose of God for [humankind] through human instrumentality, wherever [women and men are] found. Obviously, missions does not begin with the missionary or evangelist. The missionary is only the instrument. Moreover, [he/she] does not stand alone—[he/she are] a member of the Church and its representative. Hence, the importance of the study of ecclesiology in the study of missions.

What is the Church? What is the *mission* of the Church? The Church is not in itself the source of missions. We must go farther back. The Church is the result of God’s redemptive purpose and plan. The Church is the object of Christ’s love. The Church is the body of Christ through which the eternal purpose is carried out. The Church is of Christ and Christ is God’s (1 Corinthians 3:23).

¹¹Charles Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 87-99.

¹²Hodges, *The Indigenous Church*, 9.

¹³Ibid., 14.

The study of missions then becomes the study of the Church. *A weak theology of the Church will produce a weak sense of mission.* However, the study cannot begin with the Church. We must go back to the source—the plan and purpose of God. Missions takes us back to the heart of God.¹⁴

Every believer and every local congregation is responsible for the apostolic mandate. By definition the Church is to be the apostolic people of God. Even as missional praxis is not optional to the Church, neither is it possible outside of the Church. The objective of all missionary activity is to plant and nurture the Church. Local and national churches are essential in missions for they are tangible expressions of God’s community of the redeemed and His redeeming community.

The task of the missionary is not to produce seed or to shape the church that is birthed by the Spirit to the trellis of the sending church, but to prepare the soil, remove the rocks, nurture the church, and foment the development of leadership.¹⁵ The missionary’s most important competency is to be able to discern divine direction and obey in the power of the Spirit.¹⁶ The missionary’s role is as a pioneer planting the church among an unreached people or initiating innovative ministries in response to the needs of the national church. This requires incarnational ministry where the missionary commits to and unpacks for a lifetime of service, but is willing to follow divine direction to another people at a moment’s notice. “His work is to make Christ the permanent factor, and himself pass on to other pioneer tasks as quickly as he can. . . . The true measure of success is not that which the missionary accomplishes while on the field, but the work that still stands after he has gone.”¹⁷

¹⁴Melvin L. Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1977), 10.

¹⁵A key dynamic in both the writings of Allen and Hodges is the focus on leadership development.

¹⁶The second Hogan lecture will focus on developing leadership in a Spirit-driven missiology.

¹⁷Hodges, *The Indigenous Church*, 18.

According to Hodges, the characteristics of the New Testament church planted in Acts were to proclaim the gospel to the lost, gather new believers for worship and instruction, and choose leadership from among them in order that they could equip the membership for ministry and witness (in culturally appropriate ways).¹⁸ Stated in the language of Anderson, Venn, Nevius, Allen, Luce, the characteristics of the New Testament church are those of an indigenous church—a contextual self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting church.

The missiology of the indigenous church has been the standard for the Assemblies of God almost from the beginning. Alice Luce, Ralph William’s mentor, first outlined this philosophy in a series of articles in the *Pentecostal Evangel* in 1921.¹⁹ Donald Gee spelled it out for the Assemblies of God of Great Britain and Ireland in a booklet entitled *The Indigenous Principle: An Explanation of a Great Missionary Policy* in 1937.²⁰ It is advanced as the missiology of the Assemblies of God in our official documents and our popular publications, but what does it mean to the pastors of local sending churches? How do the leaders of fraternal assemblies around the world and missionaries define and practice it? I hear missionaries, mostly young but some seasoned, say many of the same things that were directed at Allen and Hodges. “It’s too idealistic. It doesn’t work in the real world.” “It may be appropriate for the Latin American or African context, but it doesn’t apply to my context.” “It’s what we’re told we are supposed to do, but nobody really does it.” “It’s what we preach, but it’s not what we do.”

Allow me to articulate what I believe to be the essence of the indigenous church. An indigenous church is a community of believers birthed in a specific context who are Spirit-driven

¹⁸Hodges added the critical element of contextualization to the principles of the indigenous church. Appendix B in the *The Indigenous Church* is the “Standard of Faith and Fellowship,” a contextual catechism for converts in El Salvador that defined what it meant to be a member of the church in that “soil.”

¹⁹Alice E. Luce, “Paul’s Missionary Methods,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 8, 1921, 6-7; January 22, 1921, 6-7; February 5, 1921, 6-7.

²⁰Donald Gee, *The Indigenous Principle: An Explanation of a Great Missionary Policy* (London, UK: Redemption Tidings, 1937).

(Spirit led and Spirit empowered) to accomplish God's purposes for and through that community. Like the various churches described in the New Testament, particularly in Acts, these local and national communities of faith are to be Spirit governed, Spirit supported and Spirit propagated. God by his Spirit calls and equips local leaders to disciple and mobilize believers in the faith and to guide them in discerning and fulfilling the will of God for their community.²¹ The indigenous church is a responsible community that turns to the unlimited resources of the Spirit for its sustenance so as not to depend on the missionary, institutions, ministries, or agencies. It is a community of faith whose members are impassioned and empowered by the Spirit to reach their neighbors, their nation, and their world with the gospel.

The Three-Self formula espoused by indigenous church proponents was never intended to create a "self"ish church as critics contend.²² Rather, it marked the fact that churches properly planted on the mission field should be independent of the missions that planted them and the missions stations that sought to control and fashion them in the image of the mission culture. Allen and Hodges alike affirmed the central role of the Holy Spirit to empower the Church and never separated method from Spirit direction and empowerment. Methods can inhibit the work of the Spirit, but they can never of themselves produce fruit. The missionary must seek methods through which the Spirit can flow and then trust the Spirit for the results.

Allen felt it was a grave error to create missionary dependence in place of Spirit dependence.²³ New believers in any land receive the Spirit of Jesus, which is the missionary Spirit which seeks the lost. When believers learn dependence on the Holy Spirit, the church

²¹Allen Tippett and others suggest that additional "self"s are critical to an indigenous church including self-image, self-functioning, self-determining, self-giving, self-theologizing, and self-missionizing. While these additional terms may nuance aspects of Spirit dependency, I believe they are sub-categories of the three-self formula; for example, self-theologizing is an expression of being Spirit governed.

²²Robert Reese, "The Surprising Relevance of the Three-Self Formula," *Mission Frontiers*, July-August 2007, 25-27. Reese provides a concise response to critics of the Three-Self formula.

²³Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 81.

reveals its true character and self-propagates.²⁴ Allen expresses a passionate belief in the power of the Holy Spirit in missions:

The Holy Ghost is given to Christians that He may guide them, and that they may learn His power to guide them, not that they may be stupidly obedient to the voice of authority. . . . The work of the missionary is education in this sense: it is the use of means to reveal to his converts a spiritual power which they actually possess and of which they are dimly conscious. As the converts exercise that power, as they yield themselves to the indwelling Spirit, they discover the greatness of the power and the grace of the Spirit, and in so doing they reveal it to their teacher. . . . The moment they are baptized they are the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost is power. They are not so incapable as we suppose. . . . The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of initiative. If they had no initiative without Christ, with Christ they should not fail to have it. That power is in them by the gift of the Holy Ghost.²⁵

The problem was not the converts; it was the missionaries. Allen argued that many missionaries desire growth but growth they could control.²⁶ “Such missionaries pray for the wind of the Spirit but not for a rushing mighty wind. I am writing because I believe in a rushing mighty wind, and desire its presence at all costs to our restrictions.”²⁷ The issue is power and control. When followers of Christ in any land or context are filled with the Spirit, they are empowered to give witness. Hodges observes,

On the mission field, the emphasis which Pentecostal people place on the necessity of each individual believer receiving a personal infilling of the Holy Spirit has produced believers and workers of unusual zeal and power. . . . The faith which Pentecostal people have in the ability of the Holy Spirit to give spiritual gifts and supernatural abilities to the common people . . . has raised up a host of lay preachers and leaders of unusual spiritual ability—not unlike the rugged fishermen who first followed the Lord.²⁸

The New Testament church was a dependent church, dependent on the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The relationship between the churches in Antioch, Jerusalem,

²⁴Ibid., 93-94.

²⁵Ibid., 145-146.

²⁶Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 5.

²⁷Ibid., 12.

²⁸Hodges, *The Indigenous Church*, 132.

and Rome was not one of dependence on one another or independence, but one of mutual dependence on the Spirit—one body with many members mutually reliant on the Head, Jesus Christ. Likewise, the relationship between the missionary and the indigenous church is not characterized by dependence one on the other or even characterized by interdependence—but by mutual dependence on the Spirit. As the Spirit leads, the members of the body meet each other’s needs and fulfill the task of reaching the lost.

Williams, Hodges, and a host of missionaries both from the United States and the majority world affirm that it can be done; an indigenous church can be planted, and the indigenous principles can be followed. Valerie and I personally adhere to these principles. In 1984 we were called to mobilize the Assemblies of God of El Salvador to missions.²⁹ The country suffered the ravages of a civil war; the economy was devastated. Yet I felt compelled to begin to preach and teach missions. Young people responded to the altar calls in numbers I never expected—so much so that there came a point in my preaching that I no longer wanted to make altar calls, because logistically the realization of that call seemed unlikely. A veteran missionary who I deeply respected publically challenged me, “Can you send missionaries to other countries on a budget of one dollar? That’s the only way we’ll be able to send missionaries from our countries.” His message was clear: It is impossible. These people do not have the resources to send missionaries, so stop encouraging them. The truth was he was correct. It was impossible. All I could respond was: “I don’t know how God will do it, but the Word says that it is the responsibility of every disciple to communicate the good news to the entire world. He did not say

²⁹I was called be a missionary at age 8 when missionary David Kensinger came and preached at the church my father was pastoring in Grafton, ND. That same year (1968) he prophetically challenged his fellow missionaries to redefine the indigenous church in order to develop national churches with world missions vision. He declared that “every Christian in every church throughout the world IS EQUALLY OBLIGATED to spread the gospel to the entire world either by going or by giving.” He asserted, “We are falling short in our concept of the indigenous church. That is on the point of emphasizing self propagation instead of world wide propagation.” The demand of the world’s unreached required that the missionary help national Christians to catch a vision of their responsibility to reach out to the whole world. If this could be done, “it could mean a whole new dimension in missions.”

“if you go” but “in your going make disciples.” I countered his challenge with, “I believe that if God calls a Salvadoran to be a missionary then he will make a way for that call to be fulfilled just like he did for this boy from North Dakota.”

I hold to that statement today, but I must admit that my youthful exuberance was tempered in the years that followed as I served as the Missions President for the Assemblies of God of El Salvador. Many times Salvadoran missionaries on extremely limited budgets in difficult places would call me and say, “Brother Rance if you don’t send money soon, my children are going to starve.” It kept me up at night. It forced me to my knees. If I would have had money in my account, I might have been tempted, but I didn’t. I went to the churches, the pastors, the members, and the leadership of the churches in El Salvador. I challenged them, “These are your missionaries, God can and does provide for them miraculously, but he wants to do it through you.” It took time to develop disciplined sacrificial giving, but today the churches of the Assemblies of God of El Salvador support over eighty missionaries serving in twenty-two nations of the world.³⁰ These missionaries believe in the indigenous church because they have seen it in practice. They boldly go out to the ends of the earth, because they know the resources needed to plant an indigenous church are made available by the Spirit. It can be done. The apostolic mandate can and will be fulfilled, but it can be done only in apostolic power. Jesus said, “I will build my church.”

Hear again the words of Hodges, “The Holy Spirit can work in one country as well as in another. To proceed on the assumption that the infant church in any land must always be cared for and provided for by the mother mission is an unconscious insult to the people that we

³⁰According to the annual report provided by the Foreign Missions Department of the Assemblies of God of El Salvador, the Assemblies of God churches of El Salvador gave \$341,596 to missions in 2007. “Together in Missions,” the network of Assemblies of God missions agencies for the Spanish speaking countries of Latin America and Spain report that a total of \$3,564,032 was given to support 832 missionaries serving in 72 countries.

endeavor to serve, and is evidence of the lack of faith in God and in the power of His gospel.”³¹

“Not only must the missionary have the right concept of his own ministry, but also he must have faith in the power of the gospel to do for others what it has done for us.”³² This statement is at the core of a Spirit-driven missiology and praxis. As missionaries we must trust the Spirit to empower others as He has empowered us and even to a greater degree.

An indigenous New Testament church does not just emerge. It is birthed by intentionally following the way of the cross in the power of the Spirit. The antidote to a donor driven, a market driven, a "ministry" driven, or a missionary driven missiology³³ is to surrender our rights to power, recognizing that it is not “my” ministry, it is God’s ministry. The Church must avoid being seduced by its own devices and fulfill His mandate in His power.

Apostolic Power

The fulfillment of the apostolic mandate requires apostolic power. Most often when Pentecostals speak about apostolic power it is in reference to “signs and wonders.” The growth of the Church around the world has certainly been characterized by the miraculous for “these signs shall follow...” The importance of spiritual warfare, power encounter and supernatural intervention cannot be minimized. It is the standard operating procedure of a New Testament/indigenous church. However, the more significant issue is whether the entire missional enterprise is Spirit-driven. Is the apostolic mandate fulfilled in apostolic power?

As Anderson correctly argues, to maintain Christ’s ministry as his own, the apostolic mandate alone is inadequate.³⁴ Just knowing the purpose for ministry is insufficient because ultimately, we, the apostolic people, will begin to rely on our own possibilities, —deviant

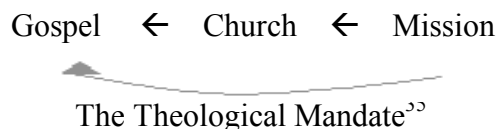
³¹Hodges, *The Indigenous Church*, 14.

³²Ibid., 21.

³³Contemporary missiological issues viewed through the lens of a Spirit-driven missiology will be the topic of the third Hogan lecture.

³⁴Anderson, *Minding God’s Business*, 7-8.

ministries created by our own hand in our own power. We must ask not only, what is our purpose? But: “Where does the power come from? Is Christ central? Is this Christ’s ministry? Is this missional action the creation of possibility out of impossibility by the Spirit?” These are questions that correspond to the oft-neglected theological mandate. Anderson illustrates with the following diagram:



The theological mandate throws those involved in missional action back on total dependence on God. Gospel and mission though often dichotomized cannot be separated in the mind of God. Revelation and reconciliation are one as illustrated by the incarnation. Christ’s ministry of revelation and reconciliation is the only true ministry of the Church. The apostolic and theological mandates cycle as the Church, the apostolic people of God, birthed in the gospel goes out into the world in missional praxis giving witness to the gospel by fulfilling mission in the power of the gospel.³⁶ Doing theology is a process of prayer which seeks to discern the will of God (the mind of Christ) for a given situation and in obedience acts according to that will as empowered by the Spirit.

Where does the power come from? Missional action is authenticated by its source of power. Many of the “signs” can be counterfeited by the enemy. New Agers speak in tongues and fall under the “spirit,” witchdoctors perform “miracles,” stadiums serve as cathedrals of public worship.

Valerie and I recently returned from Goa, India where we participated in a retreat with Latin American missionaries serving in that great country. One afternoon we toured Old Goa.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Anderson, “A Theology of Ministry,” 6-21.

We viewed the remains of St. Francis Xavier, noted the colonial imprint of the Portuguese, and visited a Hindu temple. I watched as a Hindu priest gave a woman holy water to drink and prayed blessings over other desperate seekers at the altar. He called me over for a blessing. I politely declined so he waved me over to the side of temple. In Indian English he gave me a history lesson on colonial oppression of Hinduism, and then quite unexpectedly he launched into what Pentecostals identify as a prophetic word. It certainly sounded like other prophetic words I have heard. “Your children will be blessed and have great success. After December, your wife will be fruitful.” My muddled mind was taken aback, I stammered something like, “You are kind. Thank you.” He nodded his head, and extended an open hand expecting compensation for such insight into my future. In that moment I realized he wasn’t trying to educate me or win me over to his faith. He was a capitalist! . . . I walked back to the bus with a heavy heart. In part because of the deep spiritual darkness that surrounded me, but more because so much that is done and said in the name of Christ finds its power in the same source that this priest found his, in human ingenuity and effort or even in the powers of deceit and darkness.

Where does the power for authentic ministry find its source? According to Paul the source is Christ’s resurrection power (Eph. 1: 17-23). Paul prays that the church might be strengthened with power through His Spirit, rooted and established in love (Eph. 3:14-19). “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph. 3:20-21).

God can and does use human ingenuity and effort if placed on the altar of surrender to His will. Our gifts, personalities, cultures, resources, and strategies are useful to Him in mission, but only as they are yielded to his rule. Historically, Assemblies of God missions leadership

affirmed that planning and spirituality could work in harmony when directed by the Holy Spirit, but that one without the other could jeopardize missionary work.³⁷ In the conclusion to Hodges' classic work he states:

A great revival can die out or become ineffective if it is not channeled in a scriptural course toward New Testament goals. Furthermore, even the best methods will produce nothing unless accompanied by the work of the Holy Spirit. What gasoline and spark are to the mechanism of a well-tuned motor, spiritual power is to indigenous church methods, for two essential factors combine to make the church a going concern. The mechanics of a successful church on the mission field are the New Testament methods: the dynamics are the power and ministries of the Holy Spirit. Either factor alone is incomplete and inadequate.³⁸

Hogan's leadership and missiology clearly illustrated the synergy between supernatural power and human effort, strategy and Spirit. Wilson makes the following observations, quoting Hogan:

Hogan from experience rejected reliance solely or primarily on impersonal, mechanical, and short-term approaches. "The most important factor in missions is not money, but men," he argued. "Where God can find dedicated, yielded men, there will be success I am convinced more than ever before that there is no adequate substitute for persons whose hearts are on fire and who will put forth the effort to learn a language, identify themselves with a foreign culture, and live among the lost in order to establish a witness for Jesus Christ."³⁹

These missionaries were not impersonal soldiers who just carried out assignments but unique individuals differentiated by gifts and callings, and by their responsiveness to the Spirit's leading. They were human beings with strengths and weakness who through surrender to divine empowerment, fulfilled Christ's purposes in building the Church.

Hogan, though strategic, rejected any reductionistic missiology that perceived church growth as mechanical. The local church, as an indigenous, self-renewing, organic entity made up

³⁷Gary B. McGee, *This Gospel Shall Be Preached: A History and Theology of the Assemblies of God Foreign Missions Since 1959*, vol. 2 (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 106.

³⁸Hodges, *The Indigenous Church*, 131.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 56-57.

of people, was a high priority and the ultimate goal of the missionary enterprise.⁴⁰ The missionaries' task was to empower the church even as they were empowered by the Spirit. Hogan adhered to a strategy of the Spirit. "In these days we must be strategic in all we do. God is moving and pouring out His Spirit in many parts of the world. We must move in the direction God is working, meeting needs as they arise and as he supplies."⁴¹ Hogan made the following significant missiological statements to the EFMA in 1970, as president of that association:

Make no mistake, the missionary venture of the church, no matter how well planned, how finely administered and finely supported, would fail like every other vast human enterprise, were it not that where human instrumentality leaves off, a blessed ally takes over. It is the Holy Spirit that calls, it is the Holy Spirit that inspires, it is the Holy Spirit that reveals, and it is the Holy Spirit that administers

I have long since ceased to be interested in meetings where mission leaders are called together to a room filled with charts, maps, graphs and statistics. All one needs to do to find plenteous harvest is simply to follow the leading of the Spirit The essential optimism of Christianity is that the Holy Spirit is a force capable of bursting into the hardest paganism, discomfiting the most rigid dogmatism, electrifying the most suffocating organization and bringing the glory of Pentecost.⁴²

Pentecostal optimism in fulfilling the apostolic mandate is base on his promise of apostolic power. Gee concludes,

And so, at the heart of it all, the success of our missionary endeavour to plant scriptural Assemblies of God in other lands by means of following the Indigenous Principle finally depends upon our whole Fellowship keeping filled with the Spirit and possessing the sacred Fire ever burning upon the altar of its heart. We welcome a missionary policy that constitutes such a sanctifying challenge. Let us be up, and doing.⁴³

The founders of the Pentecostal movement and the Assemblies of God relied on God to do the impossible through them by the power of his Holy Spirit. They were about "keeping filled" and

⁴⁰Ibid., 65.

⁴¹McGee, 106.

⁴²as quoted in Wilson, 136-137.

⁴³Gee, 16.

being “up, and doing.” The following two paragraphs summarize Assemblies of God missiology as it emerges from its historical narrative:

Based on the conviction that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh as a prelude to the second coming of Christ in order to empower the church to give witness to all nations, the founding members of the Assemblies of God committed themselves to the evangelization of the entire world. They believed they were a part of God’s cosmic eschatological design. Though the realization of the plan seemed improbable by human standards, these believers were grounded in the biblical truth that God’s glory is revealed in weakness. They were humbled and empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Every member of the body of Christ was responsible for the task, for every member was a temple of the Spirit of the living God.

Strategic planning, accountability and missional structures were to be submitted to the Spirit’s guidance. Personal experience and biblical truth were integrated in the life of the believer, the life of the church, and the missionary endeavor. In the New Testament narrative patterns were sought and adhered to on the conviction that biblical patterns were Spirit empowered patterns, missiological truth was to be biblical truth and the New Testament narrative was to be a contemporary narrative. The individuals and peoples of the world, according to Scripture, were condemned without Christ. Pentecost was the empowering agent of the church to communicate God’s plan of salvation to all in preparation for the coming of Christ and the final judgment.⁴⁴

What will be the summary statement of the apostolic/missionary people of God of this generation? Could it be that missionally we are as anemic as the lame beggar at the Beautiful Gate in Acts 3? Like him, we work hard, put in long hours for a good cause. We are strategically placed, but our missiology is trapped by a limited expectation. We play it safe relying on our own possibilities. We do good things, but good things can be done in disobedience. Good things may not be the best thing. The beggar sought money for a temporary respite to his problem. God through his emissaries gave him a new life. Because we follow Jesus’ loving example in revelation and reconciliation, the church must relieve temporary suffering. However, as Hodges

⁴⁴DeLonn L. Rance, *The Empowered Call: The Activity of the Holy Spirit in Salvadoran Assemblies of God Missionaries* (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest Information and Learning Company, 2004), 81.

notes, “We should avoid fixing up the pigpen or the prodigal son may be comfortable in the far-off country. Our task is to arouse in the prodigal a desire to return to his father’s house.”⁴⁵

Today much “good” is done in the name of missions, in the name of ministry, but unless it leads to revelation and reconciliation, to new life in Christ, it is not ministry; it is not missions. Are we willing to step out in faith in obedience to the voice of the Master and serve in the midst of the wind and the waves at the edge of missional chaos and allow the Holy Spirit to bring order, to make the impossible possible? “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.” (Ps. 127:1a). As my colleague Earl Creps noted, in Acts God by his Spirit did the unexplainable and the task of the church was to explain it by proclaiming the gospel.⁴⁶ The missionary people of God must create space for the actions of the God of the impossible. The greatest miracle of all is a sinner saved by God’s amazing grace. May this be the generation of the apostolic/missionary people of God that experiences the fulfillment of the apostolic mandate in apostolic power. It can happen. He promised it. (Matt. 24:14, Acts 1:8)

Conclusion: The Homeless Church of San Francisco

I would like to conclude this lecture with another narrative that illustrates a Spirit-driven missiology. A little over a year ago on Mother’s day, my wife received a call from our oldest daughter LaDawn. She had just finished celebrating a missions service in a park in downtown San Francisco with Pastor Evan Prossner and the Homeless Church. Several weeks earlier as a desperate Missionary in Training candidate, she was trying to book ten services a month in order to receive her salary. As she worked her way through the district directory of churches without much success, she came upon the number for the “Homeless Church.” Pastor Evan graciously

⁴⁵Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission*, 103.

⁴⁶Earl Creps, Sermon for the “Day of Renewal” at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO. January 24, 2008.

spoke with her on the phone but pointed out that the church met in a park and that the members had no money. LaDawn pleaded for an opportunity. He consented, noting that it might be good for his membership to hear from a missionary. They settled on Mother's Day since most other churches choose not to book missionaries on that holiday. LaDawn was well received; an offering of \$18 was collected, and Pastor Evan had prepared an honorarium of \$200. As LaDawn walked back to her park car, the tears flowed as she recounted the events of the day to her mother on the phone. Pastor Evan's wife had come up with the idea that if every member of the church brought four aluminum cans for recycling each week, the church could support LaDawn at ten dollars a week. The church accepted the challenge. Listen to what they have to say. (Video presentation: "Homeless Church: 'Diamonds in the Rough'.")⁴⁷

Pastor Evan Prossner responded to call of the Spirit to do the impossible, plant a church among the homeless of San Francisco. He used his God given leadership skills to disciple and empowered the indigenous church he serves. They participate in Communion, for they are the community of the redeemed, but they are also the redeeming community living out kingdom principles literally in the streets of San Francisco. Their vision is not limited by their circumstance, like the church of the New Testament Jesus has commissioned them to reach the world. Do the men and women interviewed understand the nuances of a theory of a Spirit-driven missiology? Probably not, but do they understand that their lives have been transformed by the power of the gospel. Do they understand that they have a responsibility to be obedient to the Word and the direction of God and their pastor? Do they believe that in Christ they, the dispossessed, the disempowered by the standards of the world, can impact the nations by their actions? The answer is an emphatic yes! There is no limit to what God can do through willing

⁴⁷Available from Assemblies of God World Missions Newsbreak video December 2007 at <http://www.wmm.ag.org/worldbeat.cfm> or to order call (417) 862-3420 or e-mail at worldbeat@ag.org. Also available in Spanish "La Iglesia Indigente: Diamantes en Bruto," January 2008.

people. By saying “yes” to Jesus in word and deed, they are empowering a young woman, who just happens to be my daughter, to take the love of Jesus to the marginalized of the Dominican Republic. That we are shocked and shamed by their example just illustrates how far the contemporary church has drifted from what it means to be the Church.

The indigenous church, the apostolic/missionary people of God who meet as the Homeless Church of San Francisco are practicing a Spirit-driven missiology. They are doing their part in obedience and allowing God to do his part, build the Church. God called pastor Prossener and his wife. God called LaDawn. God touched the lives of these men and women. In response they collect cans for the Kingdom. They pass out prayer cards and pray.

A few months after the service in the park, LaDawn spoke at a church nearby. After the evening service for security the pastor’s wife walked LaDawn to the train station. As they neared the station, a group of homeless people emerged from under station. At first both LaDawn and the pastor’s wife were apprehensive, but as group approached, they heard, “It’s our missionary. It’s our missionary. LaDawn, we need more prayer cards. We’ve passed them out to all of our homeless friends. We need more so we can pray for you.”

A Spirit-driven missiology begins by creating space for encounter with God in prayer. In prayer we discern his direction and are reminded that God can, we cannot. The power to fulfill mission must come from above. God’s answer to the challenge of the harvest is clear: Pray (Luke 10:2). When we pray, we yield to apostolic power. We become in reality what we are already by faith, the apostolic/missionary people of God fulfilling the apostolic mandate in apostolic power.

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