

Interaction with Steve Addison's *Movements that Change the World: Five Keys to Spreading the Gospel* (IVP, 2011).

In *Movements that Change the World*, Steve Addison argues that movements are the central force of change in world history, not institutions. Accordingly, he explains why movements matter and then offers a five-point description of them. His aim is to spur the church to adopt those attributes, goals, and best practices that facilitate emerging movements. The reader should take away a few key ideas.

First, movements occur when various streams of God's sovereign work converge on a given time and place. As illustrated in St. Patrick's story, a movement is a complex organism, mysterious produced. This point is not altogether clear from Addison's explicit remarks; however, the sheer size and quality of the movements he highlights demand we heed this point.

Second, Addison rightly stresses the importance of character and godly zeal over [though not instead of] methodology and structures. Given this priority, the reader is urged to pursue whatever spurs proper Christian affection (the heart), coming from right thinking, holy living (37). The reader should be warned against undue confidence in funding, personalities, or other resources.

Third, when the writer speaks about movements having a "common cause" (chapter 2), we are encouraged to take seriously the power of clear and specific vision. Too many ministries are unfocused or so general as to be unusable. Though Addison is a bit too anti-institutional, his comments remind us that the church's mission is more than mere existence. This is made tangible by the churches organize and plan what they do.

Fourth, the book highlights an overlooked truth: "The most reliable predictor of conversion is relationships . . . Conversion is a social phenomenon; it is often about accepting the

faith of one's friends" (75). This point should alter the strategic focus of church ministries. For example, congregants may not have the time to nurture relationships if so much is demanded of them by church leaders for the sake of the church's own benefit. A church may not need to reduplicate some social ministry that may already exist in the area. Instead, Christians can work hand in hand with non-believers in that particular service. In addition, teaching, seminars, and events can be planned that teach people practically *how to relate* and even how to have a conversation (a lost art in contemporary America).

Fifth, the reader ought to see the value of efficient mobilization. Addison however overstates his point. In *describing* "rapid" movements, he may err on the side of *prescription*. Efficient and fast are not synonyms. Sadly, Addison's tone often belittles formal theological training. Nevertheless, the reader should think through what is needed to best equip and mobilize leaders for a time when rapid growth may occur. He is correct that "the local church should be the 'seminary' that trains church planters and pastors" (100), yet this is an ideal we are far from reaching (and probably never will).

Sixth, as much as possible, simplify your vision, core values, and methods. Planting and pasturing churches is not always easy or simple; yet, as much as the most important ideas can be passed through the church, equipping people for ministry, this should be a goal. This is not always possible.

In some sense, there is little to evaluate in this short book. *Movements that Change the World* seems more aimed at casting a big vision for what is possible than it is a set of principles to follow. It is unclear at times whether Addison is being descriptive or prescriptive. Of course, he qualifies his remarks by saying that movements cannot be reduced to some formula (34); yet, at times, these characteristics of a movement are used to dictate what should or should not be

done; for example, in “rapid mobilization”, he apparently bemoans formal education as a hindrance that slows rapidity. He depicts theological education at its worst, all the while missing the ways that theological understanding may sustain and protect movements. As a guide, the book has little Scriptural analysis or practical tools to use. Applications are to be inferred from the whole. In missions-language, Addison’s appeal resembles that of a politician during election year. We see a number of lofty goals, but very little substance to direct our steps from here.

The anti-intellectual tone of the book is a serious negative. The writer seems to glorify lack of education as if it were a spiritual virtue. A missionary leader in Asia often says, “Everyone like to appeal to the *resume* of the disciples, but then point to the *results* of Paul.” Neither advanced education nor warm-hearted ignorance make or break a movement. In truth, untold persons shape movements, over many years; many movements lose strength because of the lack of creative problems solving or due to theological error. Although a number of his ideas are suggestive, Steve Addison, in order to cast vision and excited the masses, overlooks the long term needs of movements. It would be interesting to compare movements in the Global South with more recent movements in North America, like that Reformed church planting movement spawned on by Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Acts 29, and likeminded partners.

Addison's *Movements that Change the World* raises a few questions:

1. Is it wise to “reverse engineer”, moving from the end description to a prescribed path? What are the limitations of this approach? Is it constructive to cast any sort of methodological vision without substantial biblical reflection?
2. Do not the advocates for “movements” overlook the obvious fact that they and others have benefitted richly from theological training? What fuels such anti-intellectual bias?
3. Might withholding theological training actually maintain dependence on foreigners, rather than free nationals to lead themselves?
4. What are the dangers of emphasizing speed (“rapid”) as a virtue in the use of means? Are not movements (including their rapidity) supposed to be ends that God alone brings?
5. What does research show about these movements 5-10 years after their birth? What problems do they face? How could they have been prevented? How are leaders being developed to keep up with the biblical requirements for elders as listed in the epistles?
6. If movement advocates support the local control of church leaders and the decentralization of authority (like a missionary), then why have some proponents of CPMs actually increased the centralization of their mission organizations?
7. How would movement advocates practical implement theological training?