

The Kingdom of God and the Future of the Church

THE HIDDEN TREASURE



by John Everett Millais 1864 (1829-1896)
British

THE CALLING OF PETER AND ANDREW



by James Tissot French (1836-1902)

An End in Itself



A Growing Gap



A Different Language

- Build, extend, promote, establish
- Receive, enter, seek, inherit

Functional Atheists

- "the belief that ultimate responsibility for everything rests with us. This is the unconscious, unexamined conviction that if anything decent is going to happen here, we are the ones who must make it happen—a conviction held even by people who talk a good game about God."

What do we mean by future?

- An extension of the present?
- Something that comes to us?
- A hope both personal and societal

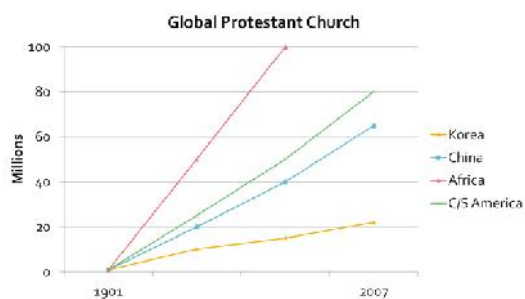
Predicting the Future?

- The horse and the car
- The movies and the theater
- The railway

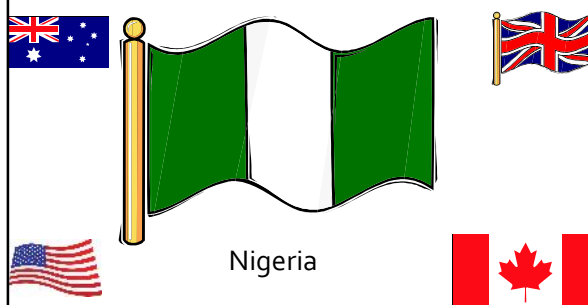
Some Present Trends: The Global Church



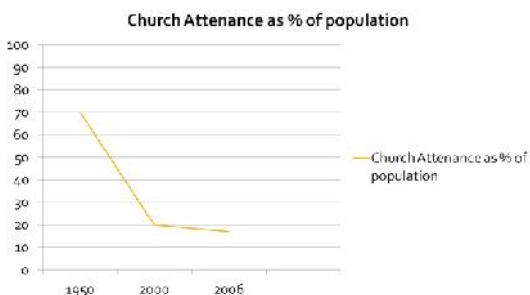
The Global Church



Global Church



Canadian Protestant Church



Is There Anything to Learn from the Global Church?

1. Visionary leaders who have an expectant spirit

5 Key Elements

2. A deep commitment to faith formation

5 Key Elements

3. A decentralized ministry

5 Key Elements

■ 4. Combining spirituality and social transformation (Soul care and social care)

5 Key Elements

■ A loose network rather than a highly structured institutional model

II. Trends in the N.A. Church



A: The Emergent Church

■ "...a new church emerging from the compost of Christendom."



Key Ideas

- "If the emergent church has anything rare, or even unique, it's this nexus of theory and praxis, of innovative theology and innovative practice. These twin impulses of rethinking theology and rethinking church are driving the nascent growth of emergent Christianity."

Key Characteristics

- Late 1990's
- Come from conventional Christian upbringing
- Urban, educated, young
- Avg. age 32-33

As Relevant as the Pay Phone

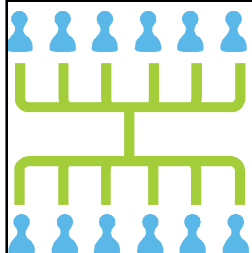
The 21st
Century
Church



Key Problems with the Church



Key Problems with the Church



Dispatches from the Frontier



1. A Generous Orthodoxy

- *"Emergents find little importance in the discrete difference between the various flavours of Christianity. Instead, they practice a generous orthodoxy that appreciates the contributions of all Christian movements."*

2. Openness to the Spirit

- *The gospel is like the lava: no matter how much crust has formed over it, it will always find a weak point and burst through.*
- *Reactionary.....revolutionary.....*
revolutionary
- *Substituted methods to openness to the Spirit*

3. An end to sacred/secular divide

- *Emergents see God's activity in all aspects of culture and reject the sacred-secular divide.*
- *Evangelicals have spiritualized the world; liberals have become secular humanists. Both create an unhealthy divide.*

4. Contextual Theology

- *Emergents believe that theology is local, conversational, and temporary. To be faithful to the theological giants of the past, emergents endeavor to continue their theological dialogue.*

A Contextual Theology

- Small communities vs. large ones
- Coffee shops, pubs, living rooms
- Desire input from others
- Not identified with a building but a group
- Quick and light on its feet

5. A Call to Humility

- *Emergents believe that awareness of our relative position to God, to one another, and to history breed biblical humility, not relativistic apathy*

6. An Eschatological Focus

- *Emergents hold to a hope-filled eschatology: it was good news when Jesus came the first time, and it will be good news when he returns*

7. The End to Clergy Dominance

- Emergents downplay-or outright reject the difference between clergy and laity.
- In the emergent church people are invited to participate in worship by sharing their talents or telling their stories or sharing their own insights.

What it Looks Like in Practice

- View the YouTube video
"The Emergent Church Movement Documentary on PBS"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf79xW6RAh4>

What can we learn from the Emergent Church?

- To consider their critique: has crust formed over the lava?
- How do we proclaim the gospel without always demanding the last word
- An openness to fresh expressions if we really do want to meet people where they are
- Reconsider the role of clergy from professional to equipper

B: The Missional Church

- A movement away from focusing on the church to focusing on God's mission in the world.

Missional Church Simple

- View the YouTube video
"The Missional Church... Simple"
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arxfLK_sd68

The Attractional Church

- Church is primarily about an event that happens on Sunday morning
- A chief goal is to get people to attend this event
- Those who come expect that certain needs will be met in terms of spiritual goods and services
- The church speaks to their spiritual lives but doesn't really comment on the rest.

The Missional Church

- 1. God is missional in God's nature

The Missional Church

- 2. There is no template for what the church must look like.

The Missional Church

- 3. The church and culture are not congruent.

The Missional Church

- 4. The missional church is eschatological

The Missional Church

- 5. The formation of the future will not happen by planning but by journeying.

They Ask Different Questions

- (A) "What do we need to do to attract people to our churches?"
- (M) "What are the **ways we need to change** in order to engage the people in our community who no longer consider church a part of their lives?"

They Understand Mission Differently

- (A) Mission is one more of many programs
- (M) Mission is not something the church does; it is something the church is.
- Not the same as the emergent church

Starting with Different Questions

- Not "How do we get more people into church?" but "What is God doing in this world? What does God want to do in our world?"

6 Wrong Questions

- How do we do church better?
- Tough Question: How do we deconvert from Churchianity to Christianity?

A different focus

- In North America the invitation to become a Christian is an invitation to convert to the church.
- , "It has lost its influence because it has lost its identity. It has lost its identity because it has lost its mission."

6 Wrong Questions

- How do we get them to come to us?
- Tough Question: How do we transform our community?

6 Wrong Questions

- How do we turn members into ministers?
- Tough question: How do we turn members into missionaries?

6 Wrong Questions

- How do we develop church members?
- Tough Questions: How do we develop followers of Jesus?

6 Wrong Questions

- "How did people grow in their discipleship in the last year?" This would drastically change congregational annual reports.

6 Wrong Questions

- How do we plan for the future?
- Tough Question: How do we prepare for the future

6 Wrong Questions

- How do we develop leaders for church work?
- Tough Question: How do we develop apostolic leaders.

Summary

- The pastoral parish asks, 'How many visits are being made?'
- The missional parish asks, 'How many disciples are being made?'
- The pastoral parish asks, 'We have to be faithful to our past.'

Summary

- The missional parish says, 'We have to be faithful to our future.'
- The pastoral parish thinks about how to save the church.
- The mission parish thinks about how to save the world.

What can we learn from the missional church?

- No longer pretend to live in a culture that doesn't exist
- Perhaps the best is yet to come
- Take our focus off of the church and onto faithful living
- Change our view of ministry
- Recognize, equip and liberate the ministry of the laity

Part IV Ways Forward



More than strategy

- It is not simply a question about strategies
- "the problem is much more deeply rooted. It has to do with who we are and what we are for. The real issues in the current crises of the Christian church are spiritual and theological."
- The Leadership Diamond

Reframing Questions

- In order to change at a deeper level we need to change the questions we ask.

Getting the Questions in the Right Order

- The focal point in most conversations around change looks for an answer. It makes the assumption that we already know the right questions.

How do you do it?

- This question assumes that what needs to be done is just around the corner and all I need is a little more information or a new methodology or new technique.

Compared to: What really matters to me?

- Rushing to the 'how' question runs the danger of not examining what really fundamentally matters?
- It means asking 'What do I really want to say 'no' to?'

62 - see notes

How Long Will it Take?

- This questions implies that we expect change to occur in a reasonably short amount of time: weeks, months, but not years.

What Commitment Am I Willing to Make?

- Courage is required whenever the context is uncertain. The greater the uncertainty, the greater the commitment required.

63 - see notes

64 - see notes

How Much Does it Cost?

- If this question comes too early, we may end up avoiding what we value most because the issue of cost takes precedence.

What is the price I am willing to pay?

- "Acting on what we choose costs us something and this is what gives it value."

65 - see notes

How Do You Get Those People to Change?

- This question assumes the real challenge is to change the other: if only they would be....
- "People resist coercion much more strenuously than they resist change."
- "What is the transformation in me that is required?"

67 - see notes

How Am I Contributing to the Problem I Am Concerned With?

- This is the willingness to assume that I have had something to do with where we are at present.
- "What keeps us stuck is the belief that someone or something else needs to change before we can move forward."

68 - see notes

How Do We Measure It?

- This question arises from our culture that says, 'unless you can measure it, it doesn't count'.

69 - see notes

What measurement would have meaning to me?

- This allows me to move into a world of imagination and creativity rather than predictability and control.

How Have Other People Done It Successfully?

- This question assumes that because something is working somewhere else that my context is the same and therefore it can be transplanted successfully.

71 - see notes

What Do We Want to Create Together?

- The significance of this question is 'we'.

Bonus Question: What is the Crossroad I Am At?

- This question forces us to ask "Is what has made us successful in the past, still suitable for the future?"
- One of the greatest obstacles to change is success.
- Tradition as an anchor or as a rudder

73 - see notes

Striking a Balance

- The goal is to balance a life that works with a life that counts but we have to start by identifying the life that counts.

74 - see notes

Understanding Change

- In order to change we need to reflect on change.
- At the root of any significant change lies passion.
- It can be created by crisis or vision or usually both, but renewed passion is key.
- We have to reconsider what is at the center of our love: (buildings, structures, traditions, or growing as disciples in the world) (e.g. dad)

Is it possible to change?

- "The only people who like change are those who are in charge of it." So it demands we all take charge.
- Play the following YouTube video...

"Be the change that you want to see in this world"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGyutkBvN2s>

In the Future Church

- The key question will not be about functions of ministry or organizations of congregations but identity and purpose

Futuer Faith Churches

- *The church is a gathered crowd around Jesus. A faithful church, now and into the twenty-first century, knows its identity, and in the deepest religious sense we are merely a crowd gathered around Jesus. We come as a crowd with our brokenness and handicaps, looking for God's healing touch. We come praising Jesus' name for making us well. However organized we might be, however prestigious we might feel, we are nothing more sophisticated than a crowd hungering for wholeness."*

The Future Church

- Engage the culture not to adopt it but to provide a hearing for the gospel
- Who is this for?
- Will require knowing who we are, where we are (context), and when we are (culturally alert)
- What time is it?

The Future Church

- Leadership will be far more fluid and more focus will be on the ministry of the laity

The Future Church

- There will be less divide between the secular and the sacred and all of life will be seen as a place of worship and witness.

The Future Church

- Future faith churches will demonstrate greater flexibility and greater variety of expressions

Future Denominations

- Will require a different understanding of endings.
- An opportunity for legacy pointing back as well as into the future

Future Churches

- A generous orthodoxy rooted in Christology.

The Future Church

- Will be shaped by post-modernity
- Leonard Sweet: EPIC
- Experiential
- Participatory
- Image driven
- Connected

Future Churches

- Will witness with respect and sensitivity to others

Future Churches

- Will be churches that have developed a spiritual life and maturity that includes perseverance, courage and faith.

Future Churches will embrace uncertainty

- They will experiment, seeking to follow even though the way is not always clear.

Summary

- Future faith churches will embrace their family album noting it is filled with people who faced challenging times far more than comforting time.
- John Wesley

Two Realities

THE KINGDOM OF GOD



THE CALL OF THE CHURCH

