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A NEW ERA OF GLOBAL MISSION:
CITIES, THE LEAST REACHED,
AND MARKETPLACE WORK

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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December 2015

APPROVAL SHEET

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To my father.

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PREFACE

Throughout my youth, I had the privilege of learning from a string of godly disciplers. Firstly, I would like to thank my father, a man whose faithfulness to Christ lived out in love for his family and service to the church while working day and night (1 Thess 2:9) will forever impact me. I would like to thank Lenny Correll, a young youth pastor whose influence set me on a course to be passionate for the global good of the gospel of Christ. I also would like to thank Shannon Hurley, whose discipleship in my college years gave me a first-hand look at a life poured out for the nations.

I also have been graced with good friends who share a passion for Christ and the church's mission in the world. I would like to say thank you to Nathan Keith and Jonathan Holmes, two men who give counsel and love towards me such that I am in a debt I can never repay. I am also thankful for my brother Eric Zeller, my long-time partner-in-crime (and/or global mission). Hours of conversation with my friend Jon Freeman gave birth to many of the initial thoughts leading to this thesis; I am very thankful for his insights and observations.

To "A," I am daily discovering new reasons to be thankful for God's gift to me of you as my wife. Thank you for your loving companionship to me.

Scott Emerson Zeller

Arabian Peninsula

December 2015

CHAPTER 1

YOUR WORK, GOD’S MISSION

As Jason¹ showed me a picture of his friends, it was immediately apparent that he both stuck out from the group and, at the same time, looked right at home. In his mid-twenties and single, when the opportunity came up to work in a major city of North Africa for his US-based company, Jason jumped at the chance. When he arrived, he quickly connected with other young professionals. Different by ethnicity and background, but united by the stresses and joys of life in the city, before long, Jason was welcomed in as family. This group of friends began eating together regularly, taking weekend trips together, and in the midst of it, began sharing their hopes, dreams, and faith with one another. As we looked over the photo together, Jason soberly shared, “As far as I can tell, I am the only Christian single in the city. I moved here for work, but now I realize I am uniquely positioned to share the gospel with this group—my friends—in a way no one else is.” Jason shared this revelation with no pride, but only the weighty burden of the opportunity to be used by the Lord to lead others to saving relationships with Jesus Christ.

A couple of years ago, another friend, Norah, took a posting in the Middle East with her job in the oil and gas industry. Upon arriving, she was surprised to find healthy churches thriving in the city even though it ran under Sharia law. Not only was she able to continue to grow in her own faith and be encouraged by attending, through the church she began discipling new members and attendees, inviting her coworkers to church with

¹All names have been changed and personally identifiable information removed from all stories. Stories I tell in this thesis represent accurate realities that I have personally witnessed or heard first-hand; however, due to the privacy concerns many have, I have chosen to obscure identities.

her, and hosting Bible studies in her apartment. “I was worried I would not meet anyone in this strange city,” she told me, “I had no idea this would be the most fruitful season of ministry in my life!”

The experiences Jason and Norah are having reflects a new reality: never before has the potential for all kinds of Christians to go to all kinds of places to impact all kinds of people been greater, because never before has the friction in global transitions been lower.

Traditional missionaries have been going all kinds of places for quite some time, and the recent past has been a fruitful time for traditional missions. By all accounts, the last century saw the most dramatic rise in Christian missionary activity in the history of the church. In 1980, there were 70,000 evangelical missionaries in the world.² Today, there are over 400,000 missionaries who have been sent out to every country on earth.³

While this reality of earnest missions activity is something to celebrate, there also remains the challenging knowledge that there are some 6,000 people groups in the world who remain unreached by the gospel.⁴ We must see that exciting and ambitious Great Commission work remains to be done. Missionaries have been rising to the occasion for the need of the gospel, but circumstances seem to be coming together that lead to another group joining the cause. Could it be that the missionary force of the last

²Throughout this thesis, I am most often referring to a “missionary” in the sense of one who is set apart for full-time ministerial work in a cross-cultural setting.

³Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, “Christianity in its Global Context, 1970–2020: Society, Religion, and Mission,” accessed July 20, 2015, www.globalchristianity.org/globalcontext/.

⁴The Joshua Project, “Global Statistics,” accessed April 14, 2014, http://joshuaproject.net/global_statistics/. For today’s missiological purposes, Winter and Koch have outlined four approaches to what defines a “people group”: (1) major cultural blocs, (2) ethnolinguistic peoples, (3) sociopeoples, and (4) unimax peoples. The use of “people groups” throughout this paper makes use of the “ethnolinguistic” definition; which reflects the most common use in the missions vernacular of local churches in America. Winter and Koch define this group as “an ethnic group distinguished by its self-identity with traditions of common descent, history, customs and language” (Ralph Winter and Bruce Koch, “Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne [Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2004], 512.).

generation was a forerunner of an exponentially larger force for the global advance of the gospel in our day?

I believe so. I believe that in our day we could see increasing movement of God's grace in the accomplishment of his mission in the world.⁵ The way to mobilize this advance will be by going beyond the old way of only calling people to quit their jobs and move to the nations as missionaries. The way of this advance will be calling many believers to remain in their professions, realize their mission, and consider moving to the nations. Instead of coming out of the marketplace to enter the mission, I am arguing for engaging in mission *through* the marketplace.

Engaging through the marketplace is a key strategic priority for the global advance of the gospel in today's unique world. Throughout the world, places that are becoming harder to access and be effective as a traditional missionary often are the very places with great opportunities to be effective for the gospel as a professional.⁶ More and more, leading missiologists are calling for this approach of engaging the marketplace in the pioneer fields of mission. Zane Pratt, Director of Global Theological Education for the International Mission Board, recently said, "Recognize that most parts of the world that are most in need of fresh gospel witness are places that will only be reached by people with real-world secular skills. The cutting edge of the missionary force is going to be the ordinary people in the pews."⁷ Church planter and pastor J. D. Payne writes in

⁵Chris Wright helpfully defines "mission" as "a long-term purpose or goal that is to be achieved through proximate objectives and planned actions" (Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006], 26). Luke 24:45-47 provides one of the most succinct statements on the mission of God in Scripture (cf. Acts 26:22-23) – namely, that Jesus Christ, on account of his work on the cross, is the name by which humanity can be saved, and this message is to be proclaimed in all nations.

⁶Throughout this thesis, I am using terms like "marketplace professional" and "professional" to refer to those engaged in daily work for non-religious entities. I realize that individuals in full-time ministry could be adequately described as "professionals" at what they do. However, I am leaning on the more common use of the term that sees "professionals" as one engaged in a non-ministerial job rather than those being set apart unto full-time spiritual ministry.

⁷Mark Dever and Zane Pratt, "Global Missions Today," 9Marks.org Podcast, March 31, 2013, accessed July 11, 2015, <http://9marks.org/interview/global-missions-today/>.

Pressure Points: Twelve Global Issues Shaping the Face of the Church, “Since globalization has opened many markets across the world, followers of Jesus need to consider how to best position themselves in the global marketplace. There is a great need for church-planting teams to *work* among the nations as they labor in the marketplace each day.”⁸ By emphasizing the biblical pattern of God’s mission guiding every good vocation and the deploying of marketplace professionals in that mission, the church can rise to this challenge.

The Danger and Opportunity of Specialization

The industrial economy that has shaped modern times is one that favors vocational specialization. Writing in *Harvard Business Review*, Malone, Laucher, and Johns argue that we currently live in an age of “hyperspecialization” where we are increasingly seeing “work previously done by one person [being broken] into more-specialized pieces done by several people.”⁹ Professionals of today have been trained to focus on the task they have at hand and assume that other work is being done by people better suited to that work. Why should the programmer care what the marketing team is doing? Why should the facilities manager bother with software used in the accounting department? So in the Christian community, some may ask, “Why should the ‘senders’ get involved in what the ‘goers’ do?”

Specialization may lead to more productive Fortune 500 companies. However, when we bring this mentality into our view of the church and its mission things can go haywire. The lay-people in the church, the marketplace professionals, make the faulty assumption that they are to leave the “real ministry” to those paid to do that job. The

⁸J. D. Payne, *Pressure Points: Twelve Global Issues Shaping the Face of the Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 83.

⁹Thomas W. Malone, Robert Laubacher, and Tammy Johns, “The Big Idea: The Age of Hyperspecialization,” *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2011, accessed July 11, 2015, <https://hbr.org/2011/07/the-big-idea-the-age-of-hyperspecialization/ar/1>.

church has subtly, and sometimes explicitly, communicated to the body of Christ to leave missions to “the specialists” — those commissioned and paid to accomplish the task.

There certainly is a place for setting apart some for vocational cross-cultural ministry (1 Tim 5:17; 1 Cor 9:3-11; 3 John 5-8). However, the marketplace professional in the church can easily feel they are being told that if they can just give their money, the cross-culturally savvy can get it done. With a project as grand as the global advance of the gospel, such an approach is insufficient.

Instead of assuming the work of missions is done because one kind of professional was sent, the church must now reshape its mentality to seeing *mission* as the banner under which, for believers, all professional vocations must find their identity. When that takes place, some in the church will realize that although they are not a traditional “missionary,” they too can strategically leverage their work for the advance of the gospel in all nations. Michael Oh, CEO of Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, agrees. As he wrote to Americans recently,

There’s hardly a job or profession that you can have in America that you can’t do in the mission field . . . missions is simply doing what the Lord has gifted and called you to do—where there are few or no Christians—so that those who cannot be saved without believing in the gospel would hear the life-giving good news of Jesus through you.¹⁰

In other words, there is not only one specialization that is part of missions work. The mission of God’s glory going to the ends of the earth by making disciples of all nations is not one that can be accomplished by just one kind of person. It takes the whole church to go with the whole gospel to the whole world.

Our Moment in History

The world of today is one of dramatic shifts. The exploding population connecting in cities and by the internet is increasingly sharing fears, goals, and

¹⁰Michael Oh, “Come Be a Nobody for Christ,” *Desiring God*, August 26, 2011, accessed July 23, 2015, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/come-be-a-nobody-for-christ>.

experiences. These global urbanites are tearing down cultural and traditional walls of division and forming rich communities. Because of these developments, most professionals entering the workforce today actually assume their job will take them overseas during their career.¹¹ The world is changing, and trending towards global connectedness and community. For the disciple of Jesus Christ, nothing could be more exciting. God’s gospel is a message that yearns for a global hearing—and not just through a Facebook status, but through the relational conversation of life lived together. By placing themselves strategically in the least-reached cities of today, marketplace professionals can be having those conversations with those who need to hear it most.

Actively engaging in global missions now for over half my life, I have traveled to dozens of nations and lived in two of the largest and most influential cities of Asia. Those wonderful experiences afford the privilege of hearing amazing stories of the advance of the gospel in the world. What I write here is based on my personal observations of the tremendous need in the global cities of today for making disciples and the opportunity my brothers and sisters who have jobs in the marketplace have to engage through their work. I believe the story of the next few decades will be the story of accountants, artists, engineers, gym-owners, and so many other working professionals going to the white fields of the global cities and seeing great harvest for Christ as they live and share the gospel there.

¹¹A recent study by Price Waterhouse Coopers notes that “Millennials have a strong appetite for working overseas and 71% expect and want to do an overseas assignment during their career.” From “Millennials at Work: Reshaping the Workplace,” Price Waterhouse Coopers, accessed July 27, 2015, https://www.pwc.com/en_M1/m1/services/consulting/documents/millennials-at-work.pdf/.

CHAPTER 2

WORK, MISSION, AND THE GLORY OF GOD

It is the time of the year for Pastor Joe to preach the annual missions sermon, and he revels in the task. For an hour he delivers a stirring talk filled with the needs around the world, stories of missionaries who left everything for the call to the nations, and ends with the declaration to “go, send, or disobey.” In the pews, a young couple, Reid and Sally, both professionals on great career tracks, are riveted to their seats as they feel Pastor Joe speaking right to their hearts. They consider their options: either continue in their jobs and “send” (which they think means “give money,” but maybe there is more to it), or they can quit their jobs and “go” to the nations. On Monday, Reid emails Pastor Joe and asks to meet so the three of them can digest this together.

The lunch with Reid and Sally kicks off a great discussion and immediately afterwards Pastor Joe dives into research as he starts to help this young couple think about options for missions agencies they could apply to. With this exciting prospect of sending out their first missionaries as a church, combined with regular pastoral counseling and other duties, it is Thursday before Pastor Joe glances at the sermon calendar and sees that it will be “Faith and Work Sunday.”

The church has never done “Faith and Work Sunday” before, but Pastor Joe had scheduled the day at the suggestion of a group of local pastors sharing ideas about reaching out to workaholics in the area. Not having much time to prepare, Pastor Joe downloads some outlines from the web and prayerfully looks everything over. While he does not feel great about the message, he feels ideas are starting to click for him and hopes that the church will be edified and that some of those business people from the community might show up for his message.

As he stands in the pulpit that Sunday morning, he begins with some prose that came to him over his cereal that morning, “From creation, in spite of the curse, renewed by the crosswork of Christ, and carried into eternity, we continually find that the vocations of humanity exist for the mission of God unto the glory of God and the mission of God is carried out by the vocations of humanity unto the glory of God.” Almost surprised at how nice that came out, Pastor Joe really feels the hand of God guiding him. He continues through the message and draws the people in showing them how all work is part of God’s mission to see his glory go to the ends of the earth. With more messages like that, he thinks to himself, perhaps some rich guys might stay around and fund these new missionaries.

When he gets to the office on Monday, he is surprised to see another email from Reid and Sally saying they need to meet urgently. When they sit down in his office later that day, he can tell they are confused. “Pastor Joe, we need help. Last week, we were sure that the Lord was calling us to be missionaries. But yesterday as you spoke about vocation being the means the Lord uses for his mission, we realized that we really like our jobs! We love the work we get to do every day, feel gifted to do it, and enjoy the relationships we have in the workplace. But we feel guilty about it now that we have our heart stirred for the nations like you preached so powerfully about. What are we supposed to do?”

Frankly, Pastor Joe had no idea. His first thought was only to tell them they could support missionaries financially, but something made him pause. “Let me get back to you,” he said, “I’ve got some studying to do.”

Missions, Work, and Putting the Two Together

On the one hand, we are in the golden era of Protestant global mission effort. The last two centuries contain incalculable numbers of stories of heroic gospel advance in

the darkest corners of the world and missionaries continue to be sent out in droves.¹

Today in the U.S., some of the most well-known evangelical preachers like John Piper and David Platt are out-spoken advocates for global missions.²

Another encouraging sign in the church today is that perhaps not since the Reformation have we seen such theologically sound resources being produced on integrating faith and work.³ *Business for the Glory of God* by Wayne Grudem stirringly challenges believers to see work as fundamentally something that is morally good and through which we can worship the Lord as we emulate his creative work. *Every Good Endeavor* by Tim Keller also stirringly calls all believers to see the meaning and purpose in their jobs the Lord has given them to do. Books, conferences, and video series along these lines are encouraging professionals in the pew to think of their jobs in ways that challenge the idea of work only being a burden.

While both of these realities are exciting in their own right, we may be on the verge of the biggest development yet: that those two steams of thought in the church today are building towards one unique movement. What if the professionals in the pew looking for meaning in their work represent a force poised to join in the global advance of the gospel in our day? Could God’s global mission inform the meaning of work and guide the path of our work in ways we have not considered fully? The church must reevaluate whether or not it has allowed subtle divisions to emerge in how it talks about missions and how it talks about work. When we view the story of the Bible as whole, we realize that there are not divisions between God’s global purposes and his specific

¹Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, “Christianity in its Global Context, 1970–2020: Society, Religion, and Mission,” accessed July 20, 2015, www.globalchristianity.org/globalcontext.

²See John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2010); David Platt *Radical* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2010).

³See Wayne Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God* (Chicago: Crossway, 2003); Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor* (New York: Dutton, 2012); R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

callings to his people. Instead, the Bible presents all vocations flowing out of the mission of God; humanity as his worshipping image-bearers are to spread his glory to all the earth by the work he gives each of them to do. Work is not mission, but the mission of spreading God's glory from shore to shore happens through the means of the various vocations of mankind.

What we are in pursuit of is theological vision, the ability to perceive a dynamic of life through the lens of what God designed it for. The theological vision needed by the church today is one that brings together its passion for global missions and its increasing clarity on the integration of faith and their work.

On Theological Vision

We must develop this theological vision by entering first into the world of the Bible's story and from there learning how to live well in this world. The Bible was composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and thus necessarily communicates a unified story containing all we need for life and godliness. And what we see when looking at the overall story of the Bible as relates to the current topic is a vision for the people of God engaging in the mission of God unto the glory of God through a variety of occupations.

That flow is important to the theological vision: God's people, on God's mission, for God's glory, through a variety of occupations. As an evangelical, I am assuming agreement on the Reformation solas—namely, that all things are unto the glory of God alone. I am also assuming the essential need for gospel proclamation, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a message that must be spoken to the lost in order for them to come to a saving knowledge of God. From that starting point, I am moving quickly to the thesis that the means by which we live for the glory of God is by being on his mission through the varied vocations we are given which provide contexts for interpersonal gospel proclamation. The pursuit of God's glory leads to engagement in his mission via

vocational faithfulness. This to say, neither mission or vocation are ultimate: God's glory is ultimate. But we live for his glory by embracing his mission through our vocations.

I am emphasizing this point because in the past, mission and vocation have been treated as separate theological discussions. Instead of holding the thread from glory to mission to work, we have gone out from glory to mission for some and to work for others. So, in this thinking, missionaries pursue God's glory by engaging in his mission to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth and marketplace professionals pursue God's glory by vocational faithfulness. Occasionally, one will dabble in the other: the missionary might do some business to get a visa, the professional might do some evangelism on his lunch break. However, by and large the two paths are treated just that way: as two paths.⁴

The theological vision I am looking towards does not allow for this polarity. Rather, when we begin to see that all of God's people are called unto mission and all God's people are enabled to work unto that mission, we also start to see exciting opportunities to engage all of God's people in the global advance of the gospel, through their work, unto the glory of God.⁵ Additionally, I believe the specific opportunities of the world we live in today will allow for many professionals who catch this vision for their work as connected to God's mission to follow that through to actually strategically placing themselves via their work among the nations to proclaim Christ there. This pattern of the mission being accomplished through the occupational work of God's

⁴ Speaking to this same unnecessary separation between business and missions, Rundle and Steffen use the example of a false hierarchy of vocations that Christians tend to passively believe which places missionaries at the top and business people at the bottom. As they point out, "The only problem with this view is that there is no biblical support for it" (Steve Rundle, and Tom Steffen, *Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011], 16-17).

⁵ A recent article published by the International Mission Board agrees, stating, "We believe that many of the next generation of missionaries (at least those coming from the Western World) will ride on the wings of business" (Sebastian Traeger, and J. D. Greear, "The Next Wave of Missions", accessed online November 22, 2015, <http://media1.imbresources.org/files/178/17860/17860-99398.pdf/>).

people is established in creation, frustrated by the fall, fulfilled by the crosswork of Christ, and given purpose by the promises of eternity.

Mission and Work Established in Creation: The Work of God and the Mandate to Humanity

God's mission and human work are often thought of as having come about as the unplanned but necessary results of the fall of Adam into sin, rather than being intentionally designed aspects of creation. This misunderstanding of the creation story can lead to thinking of work as a punishment and mission arising as a backup plan to give us hope of some other existence than this one. In fact, the design and order of the Garden of Eden reveals it from the start as a launching pad to accomplish God's global purposes through his chosen agents, Adam and Eve, who were given roles and a commission unto that end. Before the fall, God had a mission for humanity that included work.

Even before Adam comes on the scene, by observing God's own behavior in the starting chapters of Scripture, we see him working with purpose unto a preconceived mission.⁶ As the Genesis 1-2 narrative walks us through the seven days of creation, it speaks of God acting with intention, design, process, and creativity.⁷ Tim Keller observes, "In the beginning, then, God worked. Work was not a necessary evil that came into the picture later, or something human beings were created to do but that was beneath the great God himself. No, God worked for the sheer joy of it. Work could not have a more exalted inauguration."⁸ God's conduct in the opening story of the Bible sets a

⁶Prov 8 poetically speaks of how intimately wisdom was present in creation as God worked according to his plan. Col 1:15-19 also explicitly speaks to the design of creation being unto the glory of Christ who would ultimately "make peace by the blood of his cross" and be in authority over all things.

⁷Old Testament scholar Victor Hamilton writes, "God's creative activity is described twice as *his work*. The OT has two words for 'labor.' The second word emphasized labor that is raw and unskilled. The first – and the one used [in Gen 1-2] – designates skilled labor, work that is preformed by a craftsman or an artisan. Such is the measure of the finesse and professional skills of God's work." V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-7* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 142.

⁸ Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 35.

framework for the idea of his glory going out through a planned mission implemented by work.

We also see in creation God's two-fold means by which he accomplishes his mission on earth. He directly accomplishes his will by his creation and care of creation, and he indirectly accomplishes his will through the agency of the people he created.⁹ Humanity was to be uniquely placed in Creation to accomplish God's will as the *imago dei*. This Latin term, meaning "image of God," comes from Gen 1:26 when the Lord says "Let us make man in our own image."¹⁰ Wayne Grudem explains, "The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God."¹¹ In creating man (and subsequently, woman) in this way, God establishes them as his representatives who are to do his will on earth and return to him the glory he is due.

The Cultural Mandate

This first *imago dei* created by God is named "Adam," and he is immediately given a partner in Eve and they are together given a commission. The commission at first appears similar to the blessing given to the animals, in that both are told to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:23, 28). However, Adam and Eve are uniquely commissioned with the charge to "subdue (the earth) and have dominion over it" (Gen 1:28). Therefore, for humanity, the mandate on their lives is one of procreation and of vocation.¹² They are to join together to multiply more and more image-bearers throughout the earth. They are also to actively work according to the abilities given them by God to effect his plan and

⁹Albert Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basis for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 16.

¹⁰All Scripture quotations from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

¹¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 442.

¹²Gregg Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), loc. 12200, Kindle.

purposes. Nancy Pearcey illuminates these two facets of the mandate to humanity, commenting, “The first phrase, ‘be fruitful and multiply,’ means to develop the social world: build families, churches, schools, cities, governments, laws. The second phrase, ‘subdue the earth,’ means to harness the natural world: plant crops, build bridges, design computers, and compose music. This passage is sometimes called the Cultural Mandate because it tells us that our original purpose was to create cultures, build civilizations—nothing less.”¹³

The implications of the cultural mandate are staggering. God’s call to Adam and Eve was to not only be in the world but to act as the Lord’s delegated authority (or “vice-regent”) in executing his plans and purposes unto his glory. Humanity was given the divine imperative to take meaningful ownership of the world in which they live. They are not to be passive recipients of a static habitat, but active agents of a spreading kingdom. In the cultural mandate, right here at the beginning of God’s dealing with humanity, we find the pattern established that God’s mission is to be accomplished through the efforts of men and women on earth.

While the cultural mandate sets humanity on a course to be engaged in the outworking of God’s purposes and plan to expand his kingdom throughout the world, the pattern being established from God’s dealings with Adam and Eve in the beginning chapters of Genesis does not stop there. After receiving the exciting call to be about God’s purposes in the world, Adam is given a surprisingly mundane instruction: to be a gardener. Genesis 2:15 says, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” As is true with much in the Old Testament, there is a layer of implication to Genesis 2:15 that is imminently practical and a secondary layer of implication that foreshadows glorious Christ-centered truths to be revealed later.

¹³Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 47.

The practical outworking of Genesis 2:15 is rather evident. The means by which Adam and Eve would be on God's mission, bringing about his glorious presence throughout the earth would be through work. As image-bearers of God, the way in which we participate in his mission is working because he works (Heb 1:10; Ps 143:5). Additionally, the work in Eden was to take place in the context of obedience to God's commands (Gen 2:17-18). The magnitude of the purpose (bringing glory to the Creator God) elevates the seemingly simple role of gardening to being nothing short of a priestly activity.¹⁴ For the professional of today, this truth ought to be a very encouraging realization. Working and keeping a garden was God's big idea for how Adam would fulfill his grand mission expressed in the cultural mandate. If this is true, every working professional should take heart that their job too could be God's means for them to engage in his mission.¹⁵

As image-bearers, we long to worship God and give him the glory he is due. By his grace and for his greater glory, the worship of him leads us to image him by extending his glory throughout the earth, which is his mission. The means by which we engage in that mission is through the work of our hands in accordance with God's commands. Startlingly, this is all in place before the fall of humanity into sin. Worship, mission, work; these things are not the fallout of human rebellion. They are part of God's original creation design for all people. In light of this, foundational to our theological vision for work must be that taking the raw resources of the world, of cultures, and

¹⁴G. K. Beale and Mitchel Kim more than adequately show this connection of Adam as a priest in the Garden-temple in *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 17-28.

¹⁵The idea that the cultural mandate bears some application to our mission as NT believers is not without detractors. For example, Gilbert and DeYoung specifically argue, "The role of picking up Adam's failed mandate and completing it is *not* ours" (*What is the Mission of the Church?* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011], 211, emphasis theirs). However, my primary point is not to debate the broad applicability of the Cultural Mandate to today, but rather to suggest that the cultural mandate establishes a pattern of mission guiding vocation that we see again in the Great Commission.

technology, and applying our God-given skills and thinking to them is a fundamentally integrated into our worship of God and participation in his mission. If we see our work as a distraction to our primary hope of sharing the message of Christ around the world, we are leaving aside what God has shown to be instrumental in that mission. As we have seen from the beginning, what God was doing in Eden was not giving humanity a playground to rest in but a context to work in. As one writer quipped, “Remember that Paradise wasn’t a vacation—it was a vocation.”¹⁶

**Mission and Work Frustrated, Mission and Work
Fulfilled: The Effects of the Curse and the
Promise of the Cross**

Sadly, Adam and Eve quickly fail at the work the Lord has given them to do. They do not obey God’s commands but eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Rather than take responsibility for their sin, Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the snake (Gen 3:12-13). The result of this is the fall of all mankind from their state of innocence under God’s care to an inherited nature of rebellion placing them under God’s wrath (Rom 5:12-14). Immediately following the fall, God pronounces a curse upon the snake and upon humanity. The snake’s fate is to be at odds with humankind for all time, bruising it with evil but ultimately being conquered by a man (Gen 3:15). The fate of Adam and Eve and their children would be death (Gen 3:19) – and a frustrated life.

In spite of the catastrophic change wrought by the curse, we also are able to observe the continuity of God’s plan and purposes. Remarkably, the pronouncement of a frustrated life mirrors the categories of the cultural mandate and commission given to man before the fall: multiplication and dominion accomplished by work. As man and woman went about being fruitful and multiplying, woman would now experience great pain in childbearing and struggle in her efforts to help her husband (Gen 3:16). As both

¹⁶Stuart Briscoe, *Choices for a Lifetime* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1995), 142.

of them went about their vocational callings (Gen 1:28) working and keeping in the created world of the Lord, the labor would no longer be wholly pleasant but involve vexation, toil, and feelings of purposelessness (Gen 3:17-19). Both tenets of the original mandate are reasserted by the language of the curse, although clearly shown to be severely hampered. The fall did not revoke the original purposes of humanity or the calling that the Lord gave to them, instead God reaffirms his design and pattern for Adam and Eve by echoing the good principles he established pre-fall in the new realities for life in a cursed world.

The Mandate Fulfilled in Jesus Christ

Fortunately, Gen 3 is not all bad news. The frustration of humanity's ability to engage in the mandate comes alongside the promise that a certain man in the future would be the one who conquers the snake (Gen 3:15). We now know that man to be Jesus Christ. When Christ came and completed his work by his death and resurrection, it was then clear how the primary threat of sin (death) could be conquered (forgiveness of sins through repentance and faith in Christ). The decisive battle against Satan was won, and God's people were released to accomplish what they could never do on their own, but fully do in Christ.¹⁷

The cultural mandate and call to obedience given to Adam and Eve is brought to its glorious realization in Christ. Christ was obedient to the Father and brought life to the world, where Adam's disobedience had brought death (Rom 5:12-17). In the person and work of Christ, the means by which that mandate will be accomplished is revealed. It is Christ who possesses dominion over every living thing (Col 1:16) and through whom

¹⁷In *Creation Regained*, Wolters gives the helpful illustration of how in World War II, the Allies won the decisive battle with the invasion of Normandy on D-Day in June of 1944. However, their ultimate victory on VE-Day did not happen until a year later. In the interim, they fought the Germans throughout Europe extensively as they anticipated the final victory to come. Likewise, as Christians we know the decisive battle has been won, but we continue to march on in anticipation of the final victory to come (Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 83-86).

the ultimate work has been done to the glory of God (1:19-20). As Christ's servants, our labors are not in vain, but engaged in with the confidence that Christ has already won God's favor on our behalf.

Summary

In Genesis 1-3 God established the ways by which his glory would go to all the earth. He commissioned humanity to spread over all the earth and have dominion by their obedient work, but they immediately entered a posture of rebellion against God and separation from him. In his grace, the Lord frustrated the work of their hands to show him that without the Lord, life and work are meaningless. And then at the right time, God sent his Son to spread his glory all over the earth and have dominion. Instead of leaving humanity behind, God amazingly made a way for reconciliation through his son who did not rebel but instead submitted his will to the Father. Jesus did not sin by eating of the forbidden tree, but hung on a tree as if he was due the penalty for all humanity's sin. He then was resurrected from the dead, proving his supreme authority. In Genesis 1-3, humankind failed the mission, but in Christ, God is accomplishing his mission. What this means for the daily work of all believers is that in the biblical pattern: work flows from mandate. Christ was God's son on God's mission and accomplished his work¹⁸ so that we might work on God's mission as his adopted sons and daughters. We have too often separated those two and made working a job one option and mission another. To correctly follow what we see from creation and the work of Christ, all work (and thus all vocations) are only properly engaged in as means by which to live out God's grand purposes for the world to resound in worship to His name.

¹⁸See John 5:17, in which Jesus describes his activity on earth as "work" which reflects the ongoing work the Father is doing at all times.

Mission and Work with the Hope of Eternity

In the New Testament we continue to see the pattern of the original mandate shaping human work as part of redeemed life in Christ. The apostles did not see Genesis 1–2 as for the forgotten “could have beens” of history but as the very foundation for the nature of Christ’s work and the life we now have in the church.

The pattern affirmed. Before the fall the Lord had in mind his mission (1 Pet 1:20), which was to magnify the sacrificial death of Christ on behalf of unrighteous sinners and fashion the universe such that God and humanity can dwell together for eternity. God’s mandate and call to Adam and Eve was not issued in ignorance of future sin, but rather to establish the categories by which God would relate to them in his plan. Additionally, his mandate and call to Adam and Eve was not merely to foreshadow the accomplishment of the second Adam but to serve as a model for all mankind to live by. Peter picks up this idea in 1 Peter 2, wherein he calls the church to be a “holy priesthood” who offer “spiritual sacrifices” through the surprisingly mundane work of being faithful in good deeds and submitting to their employers (1 Pet 2:5, 12, 18). This is significant, because in light of the crosswork of Christ that he so beautifully articulates throughout his writings (1 Pet 1:18-21; 2:21-25; 3:18), Peter is still pointing back to Genesis 1–2 and calling the people of God to manifest their desire to give glory to him by being on his mission (1 Pet 2:9) via their good work done in obedience to him. Clearly, Peter sees a biblical-theological thread being weaved from Genesis to the people of God in the Old Testament, then to the work of Christ, and now to what the New Testament church is called to.

The mission clarified. The Lord always knew the plans he had for humanity and the way in which his mission would be carried out. However, that plan involved progressive revelation of the mission. Adam is not informed of everything the Lord expects the New Testament church to be doing. The Old Testament saints do not fully

know why they are being called to do the things they are called to do. Why? Because much must take place before they can adequately appreciate the glory of the redeeming God allowing his people to work for his mission. Paul refers to the law in the Old Testament as a “schoolmaster” or “tutor” that had a function of helping the people of God at that time be prepared for what they would find fulfilled in Christ (Gal 3:24). Likewise, the cultural mandate and God’s command to Adam to be about his work were preparatory for the work of Christ and the instructions given by Christ.

The mission given to Adam and Eve was to “multiply and have dominion” and the duty (or vocation) flowing out of that was to “work and keep” the garden. The mission given to the disciples in the Great Commission (Matt 28:12-20) was to “multiply” (make disciples) and have dominion by teaching them and baptizing them. The Great Commission differs from the original cultural mandate in its particular call but it does not replace it. As Gregg Allison notes, “Christ-followers are, first, human beings who are obligated to fulfill the cultural mandate ... [and they] have an added dimension of responsibility that goes well beyond the divinely given cultural mandate.”¹⁹ That added dimension of responsibility is the Great Commandment to love one another (Matt 22:37-38) and the Great Commission. As Christians, the work we do on God’s mission in light of the cultural mandate is to be done in love and with purpose towards spreading his gospel from shore to shore.

There is a need here to be careful to not fall back into the division between mission and work. I am not saying that the Great Commission is accomplished when a scientific experiment goes well or an accountant files an honest tax return. It is also not accomplished when we lovingly provide care to a neighbor or donate to a charity. These accomplishments and actions are great applications of cultural mandate effort and Great

¹⁹Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, locs. 12236-37, 12248-49.

Commandment love. However, the Great Commission is explicit in its objective being to speak gospel truth to the nations. There is proclamation of Christ that must take place and the ambition is for it to take place among the nations. The devoted follower of Christ must follow the trajectory of theological pattern from the cultural mandate to the Great Commission seeing that all the work of Christians is to be oriented around that mission. Great Commission potential does not come from defining your job as the Great Commission, but defining your job in connection to the Great Commission. Or to put it another way, you do not have to be called to the vocation of “missionary” to be called to reach the nations with the gospel through your vocation.

The work elevated. “Really?” some may say. How can all work have these kind of grand spiritual realities and gospel-advancing goals? Is there not a difference between selling shoes in the mall and making disciples as a pastor? It turns out, who we work as and what we work looking towards makes all the difference.

When I was dating my wife, and became convinced I wanted to ask her to marry me, there was one thing in the way of making my proposal. It was a small thing, but an expensive thing: an engagement ring. Suddenly, my work as a call-center customer service agent took on a whole new mission and meaning. With every call from an irate customer, with every report I drafted, I was building towards a glorious end — purchasing a ring for my beloved and beyond that being together for as long as we both should live. A funny thing happened: I got much better at my job. People started to notice and rolled their eyes saying, “He’s working for his lady!” Although I was still a customer service agent, I had fully embraced the identity of Future Husband and it changed who I worked as and what I worked for.

Similarly, the gospel changes who we are and what we work for. As discussed above, in Christ all believers enter into the holy priesthood of God (1 Pet 2:9). Like the priests of the Old Testament, Christians are to facilitate the worship of the nations by

being on mission to draw them to God. Christian baristas are not just low-paid employees who sling coffee and danishes, but priests who by their excellent latte art, respect they give coworkers, money they earn by hard work, and godward lives, show a passion for God's glory in all the earth that starts with their espresso and ends up in their daily conversations. Instead of working for that minute of the day they can punch the clock and leave, believer-priests live and work for eternity.

Eternity does not negate the need for work, but rather encourages it. Volf says the purpose of a theology of work is to provide the basis for participating in “reshaping the world of work in the light of the promised new creation.”²⁰ Believer-priests are so heavenly-minded that they are of great earthly good. One day we will stand in the new creation of Christ, surrounded by those from every nation that our Great Commission work contributed to being there, and we will give praise to Christ for the work he did and return back to him the glory we received for the work we did on his mission.²¹

Paul: Missional Professional?

Before leaving the study of how the Bible develops a theological vision for our marketplace work flowing from our participation in God's mission, I want to point to an example of a person in the Bible who seemed to live this out: the apostle Paul.

Miraculously converted on his way to persecute Christians in Damascus, Paul became the apostle to the Gentiles. In this unique role, it was Paul through whom the Lord radically expanded the church from its Jewish base into Gentile communities. Paul was a trained religious authority (Phil 3:5-7) and was verbally called by Jesus to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Paul's writings are esteemed by the church, with

²⁰Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 25.

²¹The idea of the coming rewards on account of good deeds done in the name of Christ is a repeated theme in the NT, see 1 Cor 9:24-25; Rom 2:6; Gal 6:9; Eph 6:8; 2 Tim 4:6-8; 1 Thess 2:19; Phil 4:1.

thirteen of his letters included in the NT Scriptures. What is less well known about Paul is that he also intentionally integrated into his gospel mission a profession he knew was capable of paying for his needs.

With such a significant contribution to the early church ministry, we often only think of Paul in terms of his ministry. Pastors seek to model his passion for teaching and discipleship. Missionaries want to model his faith-filled journeying to many lands. Theologians are inspired by Paul's deep reflections on the cross of Christ rooted in Old Testament teachings. Church planters find their impetus in his instructions to Timothy and Titus along with his letters to the churches in Ephesus and Colossae, and all these are valid inspirations from Paul as he was such a uniquely gifted minister of Christ. However, Paul also models the theological vision of this thesis by acting as a church-planting missionary theologian while working as a marketplace professional. Throughout all his years of evangelism, training, and church-planting, he worked "day and night" to provide for himself (1 Thess 2:9; Phil 4:15-16) with the seemingly lowly job of making tents (Acts 18:3).

In our modern era, we tend to expect productive ministry only from those set-apart to that work "full-time." We expect to "get what we pay for." If we pay a mechanic we expect a working engine. If we pay a minister we expect the spread of the gospel. But with Paul, people paid him for a well-stitched tent and got not only the shelter but the radical advance of the church throughout the Gentile world. Paul did not depend on a salary from any of the churches that he planted.²² He did not sell his letters to the churches and reap the rewards from the royalties. He did not live off the honorariums from his speaking engagements in the synagogues and amphitheatres. He worked a

²²See 1 Cor 9:1-18 where Paul asserts that while ministers of the gospel have the right to receive financial help, he did not avail of that right in their case. According to 2 Cor 11:8-9 Paul did at times accept donations from churches, but Phil 4:15-16 would seem to clarify that gifts from churches were not the norm and not what he expected or depended on.

normal job and faced the tensions of someone seeking to live out their faith in a world where you need finances to get by.²³ Paul presents for us, right at the start of the New Testament church, with a trajectory of theological vision that does not divide between marketplace work and gospel advance, but seeks to put them together seeing all work in service of God’s global mission.

Pastor Joe: “Go” Does Not Have to Mean “Quit”

Back with Pastor Joe, we find him in his study. This situation with Reid and Sally has him struggling to connect the dots. He earnestly desires for them to go to the nations, but last week’s study about all vocations giving God glory makes him pause about encouraging them to quit their jobs.

He reaches for that classic book he read in seminary on missions by John Piper. “All of history is moving toward one great goal,” Piper proclaims, “The white-hot worship of God and his Son among all the peoples of the earth. Missions is not that goal. It is the means.”²⁴ Amen, thinks Pastor Joe. That’s what I want for Reid and Sally: to be part of God’s mission to see worshippers from all the people of the earth.

Then Pastor Joe picks up the book they handed out at that gathering of local pastors, this one by Tom Nelson, who writes in less grand, but no less profound terms: “Vocation is integral, not incidental, to the mission of God.”²⁵ If vocation is integral to the mission of God, Pastor Joe reflects, then is it not true that vocation is integral to missions?

²³See chap. 5 for more ways Paul’s model helps us thing through these things.

²⁴John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), locs. 593-95, Kindle.

²⁵Tom Nelson, summarized by Stephen Garber, accessed July 11, 2015, <http://qideas.org/articles/vocation-needs-no-justification/>

For the next hour Pastor Joe works to connect the dots, and then there's a knock at the door. Reid and Sally are back for their follow-up visit "Hey guys," welcomes Pastor Joe, "Come on in. Let's get right to it. I've got some things to share with you that I think are really exciting. We may have to get creative with how we work this out, but I do think there's a big idea that will help you. Basically, I do not think you need to walk away from the jobs you love in order to be part of the mission to the least-reached of the world." The young couple beams with eagerness and leans in to hear more.

Pastor Joe continues, "The big idea is that more and more I see the Bible communicating that all work is to be done in connection with God's mission. And I see that in our day, there are ways for you to connect your work and God's mission in amazing ways. Just like Adam was given the mandate to multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it with Eve's help, we see that now in the church, we are given the commission as Christ's bride to multiply disciples on the earth as we go about the work the Lord gives us to do. And think of how Paul, the first missionary went about his efforts. The expansion of the gospel happened in concert with his personal vocational faithfulness. For example, Acts 18 tells the anecdote of Paul meeting the refugees Aquila and Priscilla because they were 'of the same trade' (Acts 18:3), and through Paul's being 'occupied with the word' (18:5) the two are transformed from mere colleagues into co-advocates for the gospel (18:26)." At this point he pauses to see if Reid and Sally are still with him, and seeing they are, he gets to the punchline. "Reid, Sally, what I think I'm saying to you is that rather than laying aside the skills you have in business and the zeal the Lord has given you to work in those fields, why don't you see your jobs as something you can integrate into your calling to the nations?"

The Mission and Its Work

Just as in our story of Pastor Joe, Reid, and Sally, there is tremendous opportunity in the church today to integrate a strong emphasis on global missions with

strong teaching on the dignity of marketplace work. Instead of setting these up as two separate disciplines, the Bible presents the pattern of all vocations flowing out of the mission of God: for humanity as his worshipping image-bearers to spread his glory to all the earth by the work he gives them to do.

CHAPTER 3

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MISSION

We stand in a unique moment in history. The next act in the story of the Christian mission to the world may prove to be the most thrilling yet. To most clearly see the way forward, we must know where we came from. Without understanding the development of how the church has engaged in the global spread of the gospel, we may assume current manifestations of that mission are “the way its always been.”

The “missionary” is one of those concepts in the church today that we might think is more or less settled. A traditional missionary devotes themselves full-time to gospel work in a foreign land. They secure association with a missions agency, determine a target destination, raise recurring financial support from their friends and various local churches, and are dispatched to that target destination to be called back for a report every three or four years. Variations on that theme include missionaries that never leave their home country and missionaries that receive their salary from an agency that raises funds on their behalf. However, the idea of the traditional missionary does not often (or ever) include a Christian engineer being transferred from Tulsa to Tokyo.

Yet as we look through the story of the church, marketplace professionals engaging in gospel ministry is not a new idea. There certainly have been times, such as in the medieval era, when the separation of the clergy and laity became so stark as to almost restrict professionals from ministry. Even so, when the fresh winds of reformation theology came along, so did a resurgence of interest in all vocations being part of God’s mission.

As we look at church history, we can sense an encouraging momentum building to the advance the gospel around the world. Let us consider how the church has

engaged in its mission and how marketplace professionals have been involved, from the early church through the beginning of the modern missionary movement.

Pre-Reformation

The trajectories set in the book of Acts make an exciting set-up to what we would expect to be phenomenal gospel advance. With Paul's passion for the unreached Gentiles, the steady expansion of the gospel in the cities, and churches starting to mature, the setting is ripe for God's people to be spreading the gospel throughout the world.

And indeed they do, with exciting stories like a pioneering gospel work in what is now northern Ethiopia. Church history reports that two Roman youths were taken hostage around 300 A.D. when the boat they were traveling on had to anchor near the kingdom of Axum. The youth were spared and, like Joseph before them, entered into the service of their captor and rose in rank to high level advisors of the king. Later, as they gained respect from the king because of their excellent work on his behalf, "they were then helped by Christian merchants trading in Ethiopia" to set up churches and other ministry activities. After their release from slavery, one of them, Frumentius, was ordained by Athanasius and sent back to Ethiopia to extend the "missionary influence exercised by Christian merchants trading beyond the frontiers of the Empire."¹ While the Roman church had already begun its theological trend towards elevating the clergy at the expense of the ministry potential for laymen,² we do see examples like that of Frumentius who saw whatever work the Lord had given them to do as strategic for the mission of God to the nations.

¹William H. C. Frend, "The Church of the Roman Empire," in *The Layman in Christian History*, ed. Stephen Charles Neill and Hans-Ruedi Weber (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 67.

²Hugh Wheelchel, *How Then Should We Work? Rediscovering the Biblical Doctrine of Work* (Bloomington, IL: WestBow, 2012), 62.

The gospel continues to spread from the early church through medieval times. There is not, however, a strong history of outreach to the nations that continues the combined work of the church and those in the marketplace. The gospel appears to extend to other groups primarily by them invading lands where the church is and, as a result, hearing of redemption found in Christ.³ Monks were one means of proactive gospel spreading, as they moved about regions establishing monasteries and preaching. However, their ambitions were not so much to live among the people and embody Christ's teaching to them, as marketplace professionals are able to, but rather they often lived as beggars and separately from others.

By the mid fifteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church dominated global Christianity. The corruption, doctrinal drift, and loss of gospel mission were evident.⁴ There was a need for reformation.

Theological Reformation

The German monk Martin Luther remains one of the most well known of the Reformers. Luther was a priest and university professor who, in 1517, led the charge of the Reformation by publicly posting his ninety-five theses against Catholic Church dogma. Along with the other Reformers, Luther brought about critical correction by speaking with clarity and conviction against the way the church had begun preaching justification by works rather than the biblical gospel of justification by faith.

However, what few people realize is that while the Reformation was certainly about justification, the Reformers also recovered the doctrine of vocation. In *The*

³For a sketch of gospel advance in the pre-Reformation church, see Ralph D. Winter, "The Kingdom Strikes Back: Ten Epochs of Redemptive History," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Stephen C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 195-213.

⁴For a brief but withering critique of the status of the Roman church pre-Reformation, see Michael Reeves, *The Unquenchable Flame: Discovering the Heart of the Reformation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 16-35.

Babylonian Captivity of the Church, Luther emphasized the dignity and sacredness of all work as being in the sight of God, even as important as the work of a priest. Luther writes: “The entire world is full of service to God, not only the churches but also the home, the kitchen, the cellar, the workshop, and the field of the townsfolk and farmers.”⁵ To suppose that the work of the farm was equally capable of bringing glory to God as the work of the ministry was a thought completely foreign to the population at that time.

The Roman Catholic Church had taught that the church itself was the entirety of the kingdom of God on earth. Therefore, only work done for the church could truly matter in God’s eyes. Other work was a peripheral necessity, more of a distraction than a benefit to humanity.⁶ The Reformers spoke against this idea. They reminded the church of the priesthood of all believers and proclaimed all work from government jobs to the labors of cobblers and milkmaids as work done unto the Lord for his purposes on earth. The Reformation was a turning point in the history of the church as the gospel itself and the essential doctrine of vocation were recovered.

Unfortunately, the Reformation did not directly spark a resurgence of effort to reach all nations with the gospel. In fact, the Reformers largely taught that the Great Commission had been accomplished during the time of Christ and that there was no need for foreign missions.⁷ Calvin demonstrated strong evangelistic and mission zeal regionally, as he actively engaged in training up and dispatching church planters throughout Europe.⁸ After Calvin though, his disciples quickly distorted his teachings

⁵Luther as quoted in Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999), 388. A primary excursion from Luther on the dignity of work can be found in *On The Freedom of the Christian* (accessed August 15, 2015, <http://www.theologynetwork.org/unquenchable-flame/luther/the-freedom-of-the-christian.htm>), in which Luther argues that being justified by faith apart from works necessarily frees man to work for the good of others with joy.

⁶Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 569.

⁷A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), s.v. “Great Commission”.

⁸Michael A. G Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson Sr., *To the Ends of the Earth: Calvin’s Missional Vision and Legacy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 65-70.

into hyper-Calvinism, which takes Calvin's biblical teaching on God's sovereignty in all things and goes a step further by saying that "missionary activity, since it involved human initiative, was an affront to the sovereign predestination of God."⁹

Revealing how entrenched the hyper-Calvinist theology became, in 1651, the faculty of the University at Wittenberg (the city where Luther nailed his theses to the church door and sparked the Reformation over a century beforehand) issued a statement about the Great Commission. The Lutheran faculty laid out three points: (1) First, only the apostles were privileged to fulfill the Great Commission; (2) No person is excused before God because of ignorance of the gospel; and (3) Rulers are responsible to propagate the gospel in their own territories alone.¹⁰ All three points of this statement explicitly detract from the idea that the church had obligation to the nations. Since the people in those distant lands had rejected the gospel when it was preached to them by the apostles, the church after the apostles did not need to carry responsibility to go and preach to them again. So for 275 years from the Reformation to William Carey, the record of Protestant missionary activity is thin.¹¹

Although the Reformers themselves did not manifest mission zeal, and distortions such as hyper-Calvinism took some hold, the theology that drove that explosion of missionary effort two hundred years later in the eighteenth century actually did come directly from the Reformation. By reasserting the centrality of the gospel of grace, by empowering all of the members of the church unto the study of God's word and

⁹Kenneth B. Mulholland, "From Luther to Carey: Pietism and the Modern Missionary Movement," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 (January-March, 1999): 86-87.

¹⁰James A. Scherer, *Justinian Welz: Essays by an Early Prophet of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 28.

¹¹Interestingly, this same period is something of a golden age of Roman Catholic missionary activity. Kenneth Mulholland reports that "one of the apologists of the Roman Catholic Church, Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), used to argue that the Roman Catholic Church is the true church because it sends missionaries and the Protestants do not" (Mulholland, "From Luther To Carey," 93) Additionally, others have noted that perhaps in over-reaction to the Roman Catholic church, the Reformers "minimized the term and concept of the missionary" (*Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. "Missionary").

ministry through their vocations, and by lifting up God as sovereign and worthy of worship, the Reformers laid all the theological foundations for the next developments in the church. Samuel Zwemer, the famous missionary to Arabia who served in the early 1900s, proclaimed, “The very principles on which the modern missionary movement had its origin are to be found in Calvin’s theology.”¹² Those developments come over time and they would center around the applicability of the Great Commission to all believers.

Evangelistic Rumbblings

Into this void of Great Commission passion for every believer to work for the glory of God among the nations stepped another German, Justinian Von Welz. This young man’s spiritual passion to live for God among the nations made him a forerunner of the modern missions movement.

In 1664 (still 130 years ahead of William Carey), a decade after the faculty at Wittenberg denounced the Great Commission, Von Welz had a different point of view. He published pamphlets asking key questions, calling Christians to global mission, and calling the church to form societies for sending missionaries.¹³ His proposals were not well received. After being denied ordination by the German church, Von Welz sought to model his own teaching by leaving for South America. Sadly he died there of tropical disease within two years. So Von Welz proved not to be the man who would return the church to its Great Commission mandate.

And yet, even while the movement had not truly started to stir, stories of missionary activities over the next decades do exist. In England and in North America, the Puritans’ Reformed theology was also leading them to guide all believers unto God’s heart for men to be saved. British Puritan Richard Sibbes wrote in the early seventeenth

¹²*Evangelical Dictionary of Global Missions*, s.v. “Reformed Missions”.

¹³Mulholland, “From Luther to Carey,” 90.

century that “Every Christian has a divine appointment to spread the gospel . . . Not only ministers, but all are to be the happy instruments to win others.”¹⁴ Jonathan Edwards, famous for his theological mind, personally engaged himself in the mission to the American Indians, living and working among them for seven years at the end of his ministry.¹⁵ Of the Puritans, Sidney Rooy writes, “In an age when Protestant eyes were generally dimmed to white harvest fields in other lands, here was a truly biblical and evangelical call for every Christian to witness in his place.”¹⁶ While the Puritans did not appear to champion foreign missions, they did continue to develop the missionary trajectory of Reformation theology by connecting the mission potential of every believer to be about the spread of the gospel through their work.

In the early eighteenth century, the Moravians were a remarkable movement of Christians led by Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. From their base in Germany, the Moravian church sent out two hundred missionaries over a period of two decades--a number that was more than all the Protestant churches had sent in the prior two centuries.¹⁷ Interestingly, the Moravians expected their missionaries to be able to support themselves through business enterprise.¹⁸ They wanted to make sure missionaries understood the dignity of labor and modeled to the people they would reach the need to care for their own needs. The first two Moravian missionaries were a potter and a carpenter, and the next two were gravediggers!¹⁹ Like the Puritans before them, the

¹⁴Sidney H. Rooy, *Theology of Missions in the Puritan Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 42.

¹⁵*Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. “Edwards, Jonathan.”

¹⁶Rooy, *Theology of Missions in the Puritan Tradition*, 315.

¹⁷Charles H. Robinson, *History of Christian Missions* (New York: Scribners, 1915), 49.

¹⁸Mark L. Russell. *The Missional Entrepreneur: Principles and Practices for Business as Mission* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 2009), locs. 1846-1847, Kindle.

¹⁹David Eung-Yul Ryoo, “The Moravian Missions Strategy: Christ-Centered, Spirit-Driven, Mission-Minded,” *Haddington House Journal 2010*: 35-50.

Moravians were not the ones the Lord chose to ignite passion for the Great Commission throughout the Protestant church. However, their testimony of professionals going out on missions to work their jobs while they spread the gospel pictures the very work I am calling for today.

Missiological Reformation

The situation was ripe in the late 1700s in England for the launch of the modern missions movement. From the Americas, to Africa, to India, and many other locales, Great Britain had been extending its influence around the world for generations. It would be impossible to grow up in England and not be aware of other countries when a nation as vast as India was ruled from an office building in central London.²⁰ Spiritually, there was also renewal taking place in the church as Pietism had given birth to Puritanism and both emphasized the enjoyment of God in all of life and need for his gospel to be spread.

Into this context stepped William Carey, who sparked the missionary movement of the last two and a half centuries by making two great contributions at the right time. One was a doctrinal corrective from an issue persisting from the Reformation. The second was a logistical innovation that filled a void.

“The use of means.” Those four words in the title of a short book William Carey published in 1792 fundamentally shock the doctrinal foundations of the Baptist church of England and represented his essential doctrinal corrective.²¹ The full title was *An Enquiry into the Use of Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. The controversy about “the use of means” was connected to the hyper-Calvinism then prevalent. The

²⁰By 1661, “East India House” on Leadenhall Street was the headquarters of The East India Company, which ruled much of India.

²¹William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, ed. John L. Pretlove (1792; repr., Dallas: Criswell, 1988).

church in England at that time remained entrenched in the idea that God's accomplishment of the salvation of humanity was to happen without any human agency. As Carey began to speak about these issues, he was famously shouted down by a church leader, "Young man, when the Lord pleases to convert the heathen, he will do so without consulting you or me." Thankfully, Carey continued on and was able to convince the church that God could remain sovereign and yet orchestrate the efforts of humanity in such a way to bring about the salvation of others. Without Carey's forceful rebuke of hyper-Calvinism and showing the way by himself going to India, the momentum begun by Von Welz, the Puritans, and groups like the Moravians may have fizzled out.

The second great contribution by Carey was the employment of the joint-stock company concept as the basis for mission sending.²² A "joint-stock company" is simply an organization into which stakeholders all put investments (thus jointly hold stock) to enable a greater enterprise to take place than they could support on their own. The model example from Carey's day was The East India Company, one of the first successful joint-stock companies, which returned to its shareholders great amounts of wealth from 1693 well into Carey's lifetime.²³ This kind of model is so commonplace in business and mission today that we fail to remember that in Carey's time to combine corporate structures and spiritual endeavors in this way was quite an innovation. Carey's goal was not to return material increase to his investors, but to enable the mission through a group of investors who would together enjoy the reward of the knowledge of those who came to Christ.

²²In his *Enquiry* sec 5, Carey likens his proposed supporting organization to chartered trading (or joint-stock) company, specifically mentioning the East India Company. A similar observation about Carey being inspired by the joint-stock model is made by William H. Brackney, "The Baptist Missionary Society in Proper Context: Some Reflections on the Larger Voluntary Religious Tradition," *Baptist Quarterly* 24:8 (October, 1992): 364-77.

²³For more information on the East India Company and how fundamentally it shaped Western corporations that followed, see Nick Robbins, *The Corporation That Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational* (London: Pluto, 2006).

While Carey's doctrinal contribution was essential, his business concept was also a paradigm shift enabling the modern missions movement. In the history of the church, there had never been a reproducible model that allowed sending of missionaries to take place at scale. The early church was hampered by persecution, the monastic efforts of the church of Christendom were ineffective and dismantled by the vocational theology of Luther, and by how quickly it rose and dissipated, the Moravian effort seems more like a unique work of the Spirit than a sustainable pattern. But Carey's idea that Christians in wealthy nations could pool their resources to defray the costs of missionary activity in poorer nations exploded the potential for the global advance of the gospel.

Surprisingly, Carey himself actually never fully relied on the mission society for financial support. Along with his team in India, they made doing business part of their mission work. In fact, they even rejected salaries when offered them by the mission society in England writing in their decline, "Is it unreasonable that we should subsist by our own labor, and after that contribute a mite to the cause of God?"²⁴ In the later years of his ministry, the mission agency that Carey had started eventually became so burdensome for him with requests for reports that he resigned and continued on his ministry without it.²⁵

The innovation of the joint-stock company as a structural model laid the groundwork for the mission agencies so prominent today that facilitate full-time missionary work. Therefore, it is very interesting that Carey's use of the model was to merely provide some assistance with the transportation to the country and capital costs of

²⁴John Clark Marshman. *The Story of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: The Serampore Missionaries* (London: Stahan, 1864), 92. There is even record of Ward's writing a scathing letter to the mission agency back in England admonishing them for attempting to give some financial support to his mother, such was the level of his desire to privately support himself amidst his mission endeavors (ibid, 133).

²⁵Dwight P. Baker, "William Carey and the Business Model for Mission," in *Between Past and Future: Evangelical Mission Entering the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Jon Bonk (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2003), 168-202.

the ministry there, while the missionaries themselves provided for their own needs through jobs.

Conclusions

The following three observations can be seen from this study of history.

Throughout history, the right questions have been essential. What if Luther did not start to wonder why “the just shall live by faith” did not mean we are actually saved by faith? What if Von Welz did not start to ask why we should not be fulfilling the Great Commission? What if Carey had not questioned the theology of his day and asked what instruments were available to get him to the nations?

Like these men used by God so mightily in the past, we must also ask the right questions. What are the needs being presented today that should fill us with passion like they were? What are the elements of the corporate world and the culture at large that can lead us to making the best strategic decisions like Carey did? And what is the theology that should drive the answers to these questions?

Carey’s doctrine is essential, but his methods are not. William Carey is rightfully known as the “Father of Modern Missions.” It was through Carey that the Lord initiated the dramatic movement to missions that has continued from the mid-1700s to the present day. Carey’s rebuke of hyper-Calvinism was an essential catalyst in the thinking of the Western church. It could not have come at a better time. With the rise of the industrial age followed by the age of technology, the economic prosperity of the Western middle class had no historical precedent. Carey removed theological barriers to mission at the exact time the Western church became able to fund missions, and the result is the explosion of missionary endeavors witnessed in the last one hundred and fifty years.

However, the means by which Carey went about his mission in the 1700s and even what worked for folks just a generation back does not mean it must work now. The

joint-stock company model that Carey initiated has been practiced so widely since that time that believers can be lulled into thinking missions societies have always existed and that is simply the way missions is done.

For missions to thrive in the new world we live in, we ought to receive from Carey not his exact model of mission agency (that he himself abandoned) but receive from him the insight to leverage the commercial dynamics of the day to advance the gospel.

History is building up. While no age of the church has been perfect, through the grace of God the gospel of Jesus Christ has never been lost. And yet we cannot look at history without seeing a grand progression of growth in the missional understanding of the church and the understanding of the place of work within that mission. The Reformation recovered the dignity of work, but largely left aside the mission of the church. The modern mission movement took off strong but tended to leave behind those not called to full-time cross-cultural work. Because the mission agency model for missions quickly transformed into dependency on those with good jobs staying home and funding the work, there was not much thought given to encouraging those same professionals to consider the possibilities of them joining the work themselves.

We now live in a church age where there is widespread joy in the cause of global missions and there is an increasingly globally-aware and connected laity ready to be commissioned unto that end. It is an exciting time. In fact, we may have already crossed the tipping point into a new era of missions in which the key players will be marketplace professionals, discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

CURRENT DYNAMICS FOR MISSION

Having assessed theologically and historically a missional theology of work that elevates non-vocational ministry, we will examine more specifically how daily work in the marketplace can contribute to today's most pressing global needs. In fact, those who are called to marketplace work are increasingly essential partners on the front lines of the global advance of the gospel.

What about the world today is creating this context in which believers must consider marketplace work among the nations? What factors lead to the need for not just preachers but also painters, podiatrists, and programmers to place themselves strategically among the unreached?

Three Eras?

In 1981, the noted missiologist Ralph Winter published a seminal article, "The Long Look, Eras of Mission History." In that article Winter proposes that the modern mission movement since Carey has been composed of "Three Eras."¹

First era. Starting with William Carey in 1792, Winter presents an era of missions dominated by European leadership that had a geographic strategy of reaching the coastlands. Missionaries in this era followed the colonial explorers and merchants who landed on the coasts of Africa and Asia.

¹Republished as "Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions," in *Perspectives on The World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Stephen C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 253-61.

Second era. From 1865, Winter traces a transition to a second era that emphasized moving mission efforts inland. For example, Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission in 1865 after observing so little missionary work happening beyond the coastal areas. This era, that lasted into the late 1900s, largely ran on American leadership.

Third era. Beginning in the mid-1900s with Cameron Townsend (the founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators, which focused on linguistic groups) and Donald McGavran (who focused on ethnic groups), the third era of the modern mission movement brought a focus on unreached people groups (UPGs). This era demonstrates increasingly non-Western leadership and continues into the present day.

Through Winter's observations we can see how the complexity of global missions has become increasingly clear. As missionaries established works on the coasts, they realized there were needs inland. As they moved inland, they saw the cultural dynamics leading to the need to identify and reach UPGs. We also see the shift of leadership from Europe, to America, to the non-Western nations as the modern missions movement has progressed.

My contention is that we are now transitioning into a fourth era of the modern missionary movement. In this new era, the focus is urban and the leadership is both global and not bound by vocation. But before we get further into that, let us explore the third era and what a focus on UPGs meant, so we better understand the context for today.

Unreached People Strategy

While Ralph Winter did not include himself among those leading the third era that focused on people groups, almost all missiologists today would identify him as *the* key voice that led that transition. In 1974, Winter gave a presentation at the Lausanne

Congress on World Evangelization that would change the course of international missions strategy.² What Winter did was point out the “people blindness” that characterized Western missionary strategies. While many were celebrating that the gospel had gone out to every country in the world, Winter demonstrated the insufficiency of distinguishing unreached peoples based on political and territorial borders. The real barriers to the gospel, he explained, were cultural and linguistic, not those of man-made national boundaries. Seeing geo-political nations as an incorrect interpretation of the biblical concept (Hebrew, *goy*; Greek, *ethnos*) of “nation,” Winter defined a “nation,” or “people group” as “an ethnic group distinguished by its self-identity with traditions of common descent, history, customs and language.”³ Pastor-theologian and author John Piper became a champion of this idea and commented, “Winter’s message was a powerful call for the church of Christ to reorient its thinking so that missions would be seen as the task of evangelizing unreached peoples, not the task of merely evangelizing more territories.”⁴

The resulting push to focus not on countries but UPGs exploded on the scene of missionary strategy. Instead of a nearly accomplished mission to reach the roughly 194 countries of the world, the mission was now to reach each and every one of the people groups. Depending on how researchers count, these can number over 6,800 unreached groups in the world!⁵ Suddenly, there was recognition of much more work to do.

²A brief piece by Steve Shadrach on the impact of Winter’s famous presentation can be found at “The Legacy of Lausanne 1974,” *Center for Mission Mobilization Blog*, September 15, 2014, accessed July 21, 2015, <http://www.mobilization.org/blog/the-legacy-of-lausanne-1974/>.

³Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, “Finishing the Task,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 509-524.

⁴John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), loc. 3536, Kindle.

⁵“Global Research: IMB Connecting,” accessed August 10, 2015, <http://public.imb.org/globalresearch/Pages/default.aspx>.

The biblical rationale behind Winter’s approach is certainly compelling in many ways. From the covenant to Abram (Gen 12:1-3) to John’s vision of the throne room of heaven (Rev 5:9-10), the target of God’s mission is presented as the nations: every tribe, tongue, and people on earth. Piper explains, “The final goal of God in redemption is not to obliterate the distinctions of the peoples but to gather them all into one diverse but unified assembly of peoples.”⁶ This biblical emphasis on peoples as the target of God’s mission helps churches, and people within churches, to understand their place. They are redeemed persons, gathered into a new people, to participate in God’s mission to reach all peoples.

Winter’s observations brought about a dramatic shift in how missions was conceived, where mission dollars were spent, and where missionaries were sent. However, decades later, we still struggle to reach the unreached.

Today, people groups are increasingly not static, insular, sectarian, isolated tribes but instead are integrated, co-mingling, participants in urban communities. Discerning ethnolinguistic people groups becomes a challenge when many groups mix together in cities.

For mission in the new era, what matters is increasingly not what language people speak and where their ethnic origin is, but what people do and where people are. What will bring together tomorrow’s communities will not be their heart language or motherland,⁷ but their personal interests and vocations that draw them together into close-knit communities existing co-geographically with other communities in cities. Does this

⁶Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!*, loc. 4093-4094.

⁷Consider the phenomenon of “Singlish” in Singapore. As the city has exploded in prosperity and diversity over the last fifty years, rather than hold onto the native language of Malay, citizens have embraced Singlish. This unique vernacular is a mix of English and Malay at its core, with vocabulary and influences also coming from a variety of Chinese and Indian languages. In this case, the city of Singapore has literally created a new heart language in the last generation to accommodate its urban population coming from a diverse set of homelands (“The rise of Singlish,” accessed August 10, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33809914>).

mean a people group focus is unnecessary? Of course not. What it does mean is that to continue to convey a compelling witness to the majority of the world's peoples, we need to be where they are (cities) and doing what they do (working).

The Fourth Era: The Age of Urbanization

The increasing size of cities in recent decades is staggering. *The Economist* reports, "One hundred years ago only two out of ten of the world's population were living in urban areas. By the middle of the twenty first century, seven out of ten people will be living in cities . . . Standard population projections show that virtually all global growth over the next 30 years will be in urban areas."⁸ And these cities are not just big, but powerful. According to Neal Peirce, "Great metropolitan regions—not cities, not states, not even nation states—are starting to emerge as the world's most influential players."⁹ These massive and influential cities are here to stay.

Who is flocking to these cities? Everyone. Urban centers do not tend to become massive ghettos of the majority ethnicity of their host country. Rather, the global cities of today are connecting the world in phenomenal ways. The telephone made it possible to speak with someone across the world. Air travel made it possible to visit with someone across the world. Internet-based video calls such as Skype and social networks like Facebook make it easy to connect with someone across the world. Urbanization (and its cousin, globalization) benefits from all of these developments as it forms city-hubs around the world acting as connected bases for movement from one to the other. While all cities have their own unique cultures and dominant cultures, they share much in

⁸"Hot Spots 2025: Benchmarking the future competitiveness of cities," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, 2013, accessed August 1, 2015, <http://www.citigroup.com/citi/citiforcities/pdfs/hotspots2025.pdf/>.

⁹Neal Peirce, "The 'Citistates' Are on the Rise, and the Competition Is Fierce," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 26, 1993, A11, quoted in Harvie M. Conn, *The American City and the Evangelical Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 182.

common with other cities due to these global means of connection. The resulting cities are both increasingly diverse and increasingly tolerant and accepting of others.

If UPGs are the “who” of missions, then urbanization is increasingly shaping the “where” of missions.¹⁰ Urbanization has created portals into broader impact that did not exist a generation ago. For example, in the first global city in which my wife and I lived overseas, we were surprised to realize our neighbor was from a well-known and difficult to reach UPG. We had come to this city to train leaders there to go out into the villages to reach the unreached. But because of the nature of cities, the UPGs were already waiting with chai and biscuits to welcome their new neighbor—us.

The term “unreached people group” can make us think of tribes in the mountains, unreached because they are inaccessible. It is true that the hardest to reach peoples fall into that category. But thousands of UPGs are in the global cities where most Christian professionals could find work.

What we see today in the transition from the third era’s UPG focus to the fourth era’s urban focus is that we are actually turning full-circle back to the strategy Paul himself employed. Initially as the gospel spread through Paul’s missionary journeys, Christianity was largely an urban phenomenon.¹¹ As Paul went from city to city, he planted churches in the cities and left them to reach their surrounding rural areas as he went on to the next city. John Stott wrote, “It seems to have been Paul’s deliberate policy to move purposefully from one strategic city-centre to the next.”¹² Whether it was in Ephesus, Thessalonica, or even Rome, Paul almost exclusively planted churches in the biggest city of a given region and then left.

¹⁰Tim Keller has been very helpful in his writings on reaching cities with the gospel. See Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

¹¹For more on Early Christianity being primarily urban, see Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

¹²John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Book of Acts: The Spirit, the Church, and the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 293.

What Makes Cities Strategic?

Beyond the number of people in them, what about cities makes them strategic locations for the expansion of the gospel?¹³ Tim Keller has pointed out three key aspects of cities that result in them being dynamic centers of influence and potential: the personal, cultural, and global.

Personal aspect. Cities are fast-paced and chaotic. They are diverse and intense. To survive in the city, citizens have to be adaptable and understanding as they interact with people very different from them on a daily basis. Villages, on the other hand, create a context that emphasizes sameness and consistency. The pace is slow and the ways are set. When people move from the village to the city, it naturally challenges their assumptions, beliefs, and ways of life. Living among others very different from themselves makes people more open to new ideas and thus, to the gospel.

I live with my family in a large Asian city. The apartment building we live in is home to over a dozen different nationalities. My children ride the elevators with young girls their age in full Islamic dress, an experience they would never have in the American towns we grew up in. The city affords these opportunities to discover that true identity comes not from where one may be from, who their family is, or what they wear. The city puts people on a journey where they can discover that true identity comes from God who adopts us into his family, promises a new homeland, and dresses us in Christ's righteousness.

Cultural aspect. Cities are the regional centers for influence. As believers seek "do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10), the cities

¹³Timothy J. Keller, "Our New Global Culture: Ministry in Urban Centers," *Redeemer City to City*, 2010, accessed April 13, 2014, http://www.copgny.org/files/Movement%20Day/Ministry_In_Urban_Centers.pdf/.

provide the context to do that on the broadest scale possible. As Keller illustrates, “In the village, one or two lawyers may be reached for Christ. But reaching the legal profession as a whole is attained by going to the city where the law schools are located, the law journals are published, and the top law firms are located.”¹⁴ People in the city are no more worthy of gospel witness than people in the villages, but gospel witness in the cities will spread more rapidly and pervasively than in the villages.

Global aspect. As already discussed, in the city there is the potential to engage not just one people group, but dozens or hundreds of groups, communities, and layers of society from one strategic base. In a village, that one group can be reached that lives there. But in a city, many groups can be reached as they live together. In our global city the international church where my wife and I are members sees over fifty nationalities gathering each week for worship. They represent everyone from maids and tutors to high-level government employees and executives. By being in a strategic city, our church is having a gospel witness regionally and even globally.

For the average real estate agent or retail manager in the pew on a Sunday in the U.S., to hear these grand ideas of city influence may be yet another opportunity for them to assume the job is better left to missionaries. All this strategy and influence and mission—better leave it to those who went to seminary to study such things. And yet, we must remind them that the call to mission is ultimately a call to people. Missions exists to see people become worshippers of God through Jesus Christ. So we go to the cities primarily because we long to see the people of the cities become disciples of Jesus, and because we know making disciples is a calling he has given to the entire church.

¹⁴Keller, “Our New Global Culture,” 18.

Cities: Difficult for Missionaries, Made for Professionals

In fact, while the strategic nature of cities creates opportunities to think deeply about mission strategy, those same exciting dynamics of the city can also present stressful pressures for traditional missionaries. Professionals are built for the city in a way that most missionaries are not.

Cities tend to be disorienting to traditional missionary goals. It can be difficult to identify a clear group to which to reach out (a goal to accomplish). There tends to be national or international churches already established. This creates a need for missionaries to either partner with, or explain why they are not partnering with, Christian work already taking place. Cities are also expensive. Rather than going from rich nations to poor nations, missionaries are often attempting to raise support to live in bigger cities and more expensive housing than their supporters do “back home.” These and other stresses can make global cities difficult for traditional missionaries.

Professionals on the other hand, embody what the city is made for: productive men and women who are ready to work for the good of others in the city and be compensated according to their work. The city can also be stressful for professionals: even with good salaries, the cost of living can be high. And the fast pace of life is not for everyone. But fundamentally, the city is made for the professional. It is made for the artisan, the accountant, the architect, the baker, the biotech engineer, and the bellman. The church can and must rethink how to effectively deploy missionaries to global cities. But alongside that, why not deploy those naturally able to thrive in the city: professionals who understand their work as connected to the mission of God and are eager to impact the nations.

Because of the nature of the city and how it lends itself towards the leadership and initiative of the marketplace professional, it is my contention that increasingly the modern mission movement will see leadership not just from global voices but from professionals with theological vision. In the third era of the modern missionary

movement, we saw non-Western leaders take a seat at the table in guiding the global Christian conversation. While the church should always model diversity in the leaders it lifts up, I believe the fourth era will not focus so much on the ethnic origin of the leadership but on marketplace professionals being seated at the table as well.

Uptown or Utopia?

“The whole world can be found in this city” mused journalist Joseph Berger of his native New York City.¹⁵ The modern city of New York has always been a confluence of the nations, and while New York has historically been a leading global city ahead of the times, the other cities of the world are catching up to becoming both massive and diverse. About New York’s neighborhoods, Berger observes that the ones in which no ethnic or racial group dominate represent a sort of “utopian vision” of what a city could be.¹⁶ A city can be a hub of peoples from many places, who, because of their common commitment to work for the good of one another, live in harmony.

As believers in Christ, we know that such a city in which all the ethnicities (or people groups) of the world live together is not an unrealistic utopia, but a promised reality to come. New York and New Delhi and thousands of other cities are simply beginning to look more and more like the New Jerusalem to come. We are not yet in that city where all tribes and tongues are worshipping the Lord because of the work he did on their behalf, but for now, we have the joy of pointing the many tribes and tongues gathering and connecting in the cities of today to the gospel of Christ. As we enter this new era of missions history it is exciting to think about how believers from all vocations can contribute to the global advance of the gospel in cities.

¹⁵Joseph Berger, *The World in a City: Traveling the Globe through the Neighborhoods of the New New York* (New York: Ballantine, 2007), viii.

¹⁶Berger, *ibid*, ix.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL CHURCH

Recently, a recent major study was done of professionals who are trying to use business as a strategy for mission. Topping the key findings was that nearly all surveyed were self-recruited to those endeavors.¹ Making the connections between their work and the advance of the gospel to the nations was something they had to come to on their own. After reaching these conclusions, they also had to piece together a way to make it work. Contrast this with over 4,000 mission sending agencies recruiting and sending the over 400,000 evangelical missionaries in the world today, of which less than one percent are specifically identified as those with business experience that they are currently leveraging for the mission.² Clearly, the sending of missionaries is big business. Equally clear is that we are not big on sending business people to mission.

The answer is not to create another 4,000 agencies to send out business people. In fact, perhaps we do not even need one more agency. The need of the day is for the church to embrace its role as the only sending entity specifically envisioned by Scripture.³ It is through the church that biblical vision for mission and vocation can be taught, through the church that men and women of all professional backgrounds can be

¹*Recruiting, Training and Deployment of BAM: Practitioners: Successes and Challenges*, (report by Business as Mission Global Think Tank, July 2015), 3, accessed July 16, 2015, <http://bamthinktank.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BMTT-IG-BAM-Recruiting-Training-and-Deployment-Final-Report-July-2015.pdf>.

²“Accelerating the Fulfillment of the Great Commission in our Generation,” Global Network of Mission Structures (2010), accessed July 16, 2015, <http://www.gnms.net/envisioning.html>

³I would argue that while Paul formed ad hoc bands of traveling mission partners, he did not have in mind the setting up of perpetuating structures outside of the authority of the church for the purpose of facilitating the mission.

equipped, and through the church that these brothers and sisters can be commissioned unto the nations.

In this chapter, I will mention some current efforts to integrate business and missions, focusing on some of the struggles that missionaries have when trying to do business. Then, I will explore practical issues faced by local churches and professionals who are ready to embrace the idea that there is a void to be filled by marketplace professionals ready to use their vocation in God's global mission. For any that see the work of all believers as flowing from and in service to God's mission, and for any that are ready to encourage more than just vocational ministers to consider the nations, we are about to dive into the nuts and bolts of what that looks like.

Missionary Struggles: Sacrificing Vocation on the Altar of a Visa

So far, this thesis has been advocating for marketplace professionals of all vocations to embrace their calling unto mission by considering taking their job overseas. Some readers may be wondering if a wiser approach would be to convince those already overseas doing cross-cultural ministry to add business. If there are great advantages to being in the marketplace around the world, why not convince missionaries to be there? Would not the easiest way to integrate business and missions be to get missionaries to do business?

Traditional missionaries are a key part of God's mission in the world. For a vocational minister to be enabled to focus full-time on a ministry in a foreign country is a wonderful way the body of Christ can advance the gospel. One way in which the churches of the world can steward the resources given to them is to provide for some of their number to "go out for the sake of the Name" (3 John 7) as evangelists, church planters, educators, Bible translators, and other worthy endeavors. There is a nobility in supporting them as they go and providing for their needs (3 John; 1 Cor 9). Thus the full-

time cross-cultural worker⁴ or missionary is a good calling for the church to encourage among its membership.

The issue comes when the dynamics of the mission begin to rob the missionaries of their ability to fulfill their calling. If the mission (the target location or people) requires things that make it impossible for someone called to vocational ministry to thrive, we ought to consider not to sending them there. In today's mission fields, the dynamic of a need to do business is often that pressure that makes it difficult for missionary to live out their calling.

Why Missionaries Try (and Struggle) to Do Business

Because missionaries are often trying to go places where the receiving governments are not eager for missionary activity, there is often a need to get creative about visas. Business visas often rise to the top because they are for the type of people governments want but also having flexibility in what they mean. If one secures a student visa, there will be the corresponding requirement to enroll and take classes. But a businessperson? He or she often has great flexibility as far as what is defined as "business." Thus, throughout the world today, there are many missionaries that are on business visas and therefore, to keep appearances, are "doing business."

Beyond access itself, Mark Russell points out a few related motivations for missionaries to do business in their countries of service.⁵

Making contacts. Doing business can help a missionary moving into town get a set of contacts in the community. To rent an office, buy furniture, register the

⁴While some "missionaries" do work in their country of origin, the focus of this thesis the definition of "missionary" that leans on the dynamic of it being a cross-cultural profession.

⁵Mark Russell, "Motivations and Mind-Set," in *The Missional Entrepreneur: Principles and Practices for Business as Mission* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope 2010), locs.1814-2511, Kindle.

company—all these things require relational contacts that every missionary would want to develop regardless. A business provides a context to meet others.

Legal legitimacy. Even when “missionary visas” are offered by governments, missionaries can be skeptical and whisper about the possibility of this being an avenue for the government to be notified about their true intentions in entering the country. Identifying oneself that way invites scrutiny and tracking that could jeopardize the mission, many say. But what governments often *do* want is presumably rich foreigners who will pay for goods and services in the country and generate jobs. So the business visa often immediately rises to the top for missionaries.

Persona. Beyond legal legitimacy, missionaries also like to have a “reason for being there” that feels better to say than “I am here to convert you.” When approached by neighbors, missionaries want to have a smooth path to relationship that a marketplace job title affords.

Relationship development. Beyond just making contacts, the environment of a workplace creates a context for developing relationships with the same set of people over time.

These are overall healthy motivations and, in fact, represent some of the same reasons that I am arguing for marketplace professionals to take their jobs overseas. However, a key difference between missionaries and marketplace professionals is that missionaries struggle to follow-through on these motivations.

How?

The frustration of the time issue. “40 to 50,” I told my new friend exploring ministry opportunities in the overseas country I lived in. “I’d plan at least 40 to 50 hours a week of honest effort . . . at least initially.” Since a business visa was what he needed, I sought to lay out the reality that to do honest business would take time. I could tell he

was shocked. Kevin wanted to come to the country to reach the unreached, so how could he spend 40 to 50 hours a week working? He was hoping to hear me say that after getting the visa, he could get by without really doing any business. “But if I spend all that time doing work, I will not be able to do what I really came here for!” he lamented.

Kevin’s dilemma is one faced by nearly everyone on occasion. All people struggle to balance their various commitments to ensure they are giving adequate time to their priorities. Missionaries feel this tension acutely, especially when it comes to doing business. The reason is not a bad one, but most missionaries are not called to do business. Their abilities and passions tend to align more with pastoral or evangelistic efforts, and working in the marketplace feels like not just a distraction from that aim, but treasonous to it.

Additionally, missionaries “sell” their need for financial support to people in their home country in connection with their vision for ministry. They cannot fill their prayer letters with reports of business deals. I asked one missionary in a restricted-access country what he tells his supporters about the business he is doing. “I just do not mention it really,” he replied, “They would not understand, so why bother them with it?” This missionary has been in the country working on the business for years. And yet the financial supporters paying his bills do not even have an honest view of what is happening. Regardless of the integrity issues, the felt pressure is real to either avoid or obscure engagement in business is real for the missionary.

The missionary frustration with giving too much time to the business efforts required for their visa’s legitimacy can result from an under-appreciation of the strategic nature of the marketplace in God’s global mission. Perhaps many who consider themselves missionaries could actually thrive in a marketplace setting if they embraced the theological basis for all work being for God’s mission. However, that frustration can also arise simply from the true reality that their calling does not match their visa.

They almost never make enough money to justify their business. As I write this, I just received another email letting me know of missionaries returning to their home country because the business they started overseas to justify their visa was simply not making enough money to satisfy host government requirements. They had put an honest effort into their business of selling handicrafts made by local artisans to supporters in the USA, but amidst pastoral duties and other ministry projects, they just could not get the momentum required to sustain the business and report sufficient cash-flow to the government. Because their visas were tied to the business, all of what they were doing had to come to an end.

These friends actually represent the minority of business visa-holding missionaries, the ones who actually put a strong degree of effort into their business. Many missionaries take the approach of opening up shop as consultants, but really never end up consulting on much beyond spiritual issues. Others are travel agents, but planning anything beyond the next short term mission trip from their sending church would go beyond their normal activity. Coffee shops are popular, but the difficulty of actually putting together a cafe in a foreign country (when there are often dozens already opened by locals) leads to abandoned efforts. In the end, the money is not coming in and even if the government never notices, the neighbors do.

They end up losing credibility. A missionary can only say they are “still struggling with permits” before opening their new coffee shop for so long before their neighbors start to wonder how they are paying for that upper middle-class lifestyle. They seem to make enough money to get a car, put their kids in school, and host gatherings of friends regularly at their nice apartment, but if the business is not taking off and it has been a year or two, suspicion starts to rise. Even in the church, they have to admit to others that the business they told them they were starting is really a lie to get them in the

country. While the missionary may have constructed a mental justification for claiming to be doing business without really doing it, their credibility is undermined.

They compromise their integrity. When someone is living a lie, they get used to lying. As Mark Russell writes, “What can happen is that the missionary becomes careless about truth telling in general.”⁶ Telling themselves that the lie is a means that is justified by the end of them being able to be there to share the gospel, what these missionaries do not see is that their conscience is slowly eroding. Christians are called to be people of integrity, and daily misleading people about your work simply cannot be an effective witness in the long run and many times leads to moral failure in other areas.

This all may seem like an overly pessimistic view of missionary engagement in business, but sadly it is too often reality. Every paragraph of the above section draws from stories I have witnessed over and over again on the mission field. Traditional missionaries play an essential role in the global advance of the gospel. However, in the common situation where they are forcing themselves into faking business roles for a visa, they are ultimately often detracting from the mission of Christ rather than advancing it. The church can serve her missionaries by guiding them towards vocational faithfulness in the ministry they have been called to, rather than pushing them to vocational frustration through trying to incorporate business they are not able to do.

Business As Mission: An Encouraging Conversation

The “business as mission” (BAM) conversation arose in the mid-twentieth century largely because of the need for missionaries to enter countries that restricted access for clergy/evangelists. BAM is now a wide-ranging discussion touching on all aspects of global engagement. Patrick Lai’s *Tentmaking: The Life and Work of Business*

⁶Russell, *The Missional Entrepreneur*, locs. 2154-55. C.f Patrick Lai, *Tentmaking: The Life and Work of Business as Mission* (Colorado Springs: Authentic, 2005), 349-352..

as *Mission*,⁷ and the collection of essays edited by Jonathan Lewis and published as *Working Your Way to the Nations: A Guide to Effective Tentmaking*,⁸ are both examples of practitioners distilling lessons from decades of on-field efforts to leverage marketplace work in global ministry. Both works helpfully address the tensions those engaged in missions feel when trying to incorporate marketplace work into that vision. Their contributions manifest the effort of the missions community to consider business. The BAM conversation has also launched conferences such as the Global Congress on Business as Mission held in Thailand in April, 2013, a gathering that has spawned a series of helpful papers from the various working groups that assembled. Additionally, works like Steve Rundle and Tom Steffen's *Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions*⁹ are helping those considering cross-cultural work to consider business as a vehicle for their calling. The BAM discussion is encouraging and is developing helpful resources for the church.

However, the BAM conversation is still confined primarily to a relatively small niche of missionaries. My interest is not in developing business as another option for those called to vocational ministry. My argument is that all vocations find their true purpose in being connected to the global mission of God. Therefore, the issue is not whether business is a good visa vehicle for those already called to vocational global ministry; the issue is if all believers see their vocational capacity for engaging in the nations coming to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

⁷Lai, *Tentmaking*.

⁸Jonathan Lewis, ed., *Working Your Way to the Nations: A Guide to Effective Tentmaking* (Wheaton, IL: IntVarsity, 1996).

⁹Rundle and Steffen, *Great Commission Companies*.

Marketplace Professionals: Key Partners in Global Mission

Marketplace professionals can connect their work to God's global mission. In Chapter 2, a biblical-theological vision displayed how all vocations proceed from God's mission and thus all work can and should be leveraged for the spread of his glory to all the earth. In the succeeding chapters, both history and current dynamics lead us to anticipate an explosion of Christians from all vocational lines of work taking their work to the nations to be salt and light for Jesus Christ among the unreached. While there are some signs of encouragement from current efforts to integrate business and mission, there remains much struggle for missionaries seeking to do business.

The big idea we are operating under is that we have entered a fourth era of the modern mission movement, an era in which cities are the focus and global marketplace professionals take initiative to guide the discussion. David Platt, President of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, underlines this kind of thinking when he says, "I think about, with the globalization of today's marketplace, the opportunities that students, men, women, retirees from churches here in North America have to go around the world for the spread of the gospel. I'm praying God would awaken the Church to see the opportunities he's given for us around the world so we might see limitless numbers of people who are actually leveraging job opportunities... over there instead of the default to work here."¹⁰ More and more, today's mission leaders are seeing the value of marketplace professionals in global mission.

Marketplace Professionals: What Good Are They?

But what *is* the value of marketplace professionals in global missions? What can professionals actually *do* that benefits the advance of the gospel among the nations?

¹⁰David Platt, interview by Aaron Cline Hanbury, "Should We Change How We Think About Missions?" *Relevant Magazine*, June 25, 2015, accessed July 16, 2015, <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/worldview/change-way-you-think-about-missions/>.

Part of the answer can be found in the following seven ways that any believing professional working among the least reached of the world can do to advance the cause of Christ.

Professionals on mission testify to the reality that all Christians are called to gospel living and proclamation. At some point along the line, the work of cross-cultural ministry was seen to so embody the aim of God’s global mission that somebody decided to make it a vocation unto itself. However, “missionary” is no more a job title found in the Bible than “model” or “meteorologist.” We took the calling to global concern for all believers and made it an exclusive job title for a few believers. All vocations fall under the banner of God’s global mission. It is biblically unfaithful to privilege one vocation as *the one* able to get the job done. When a professional intentionally works out the reality that their vocation can be an instrument of God’s mission to the world, that professional becomes a living testimony to one of the most exciting realities that all believers can grasp.

Missiologists Steffan and Douglas write, “A missionary can be a male or a female believer from any generation or geographical area who is called, gifted, impassioned, and sent with authority by the Holy Spirit and local churches to accomplish some aspect of missions.”¹¹ With this definition, all Christians are missionaries. So the question is not “should I be a missionary?” Rather, the question is, “how can I best live out my missionary calling through my vocation?” When today’s professionals ask that question in light of the opportunity to live and work among the least reached nations of the world gathering in cities, we will see great numbers strategically placing themselves in those cities.

¹¹Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas, *Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for Intercultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 34.

Not everyone is called to ministry, but everyone is called to the mission to live for Christ in and through their daily work. So when professionals are faithful in their work, ready to serve, and eager to speak of the gospel to all, they live a model testimony from which they can join Paul in calling others to “imitate me, as I imitate Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).

Professionals on mission serve as a rebuke to the prosperity gospel. One of the most prevalent anti-gospel movements in global Christianity in the last generation has been the emergence of the prosperity gospel. Rather than championing the cause of Christ by calling all to repentance and faith, the prosperity gospel proclaims that the Lord desires everyone to personally prosper. The culture of connecting earthly prosperity with God’s blessing leads to church cultures in which those who can display the most wealth are seen as the most spiritual. And, perhaps most damaging, the “pastors” of these flocks are often the most guilty offenders as they elevate their own appearance of spiritual power by using the income from the church to pad their accounts. The true gospel is lost in a fog of gold, investments, private jets, and double-breasted suits.

With this kind of teaching as brazen as it is, most evangelicals have no problem agreeing with an assessment like that of David Jones of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary: “In light of Scripture, the prosperity gospel is fundamentally flawed.”¹² But apart from lobbying theological disagreement from their own pulpits, what can evangelicals do to counter this heresy that is affecting so many and maligning the name of Christ? One idea is, we can go to those communities so under attack by this false teaching and model a different way.

A marketplace professional who enters a community covering his own expenses is free to give the gospel away for free. It is not wrong to be paid for gospel

¹²David, W. Jones, “Errors of the Prosperity Gospel,” *9Marks*, January 15, 2014, accessed August 2, 2015, <http://9marks.org/article/journalerrors-prosperity-gospel/>.

ministry, but there is freedom in not being paid. Like the apostle Paul told the Corinthian church, by not making use of his right, his reward was that “in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge” (1 Cor 9:15-18). In a world where so many are abusing that right in extreme ways, there is a tremendous need for those who would lay down their right completely. Simply taking a paycheck from a business and living within those means while one shares the gospel faithfully with friends can combat heresy in some parts of the world in a way that a blogposts and sermons can not.

Professionals on mission form some of the best relationships. Pastors can give a word of advice or comfort when business people confide in them, but powerful opportunities can emerge to speak to business people by those who inhabit their world. A co-worker who has formed relational trust through working side-by-side each day will gain a hearing to speak truth in rich ways to those around them.

Many bemoan the difficulties of balancing work and life because they feel their job is disconnected from their life and a distraction from their life. Christian marketplace professionals who understand their job as their means to participate in God’s mission for his glory will be focused instead on their work/life blend. They will be asking the question: How can I bring life to my workplace? How can I truly love and serve those I work with? How can I be a voice of redemption when the business gets personal and people are struggling? The marketplace professional on mission will realize that the workplace presents rich opportunities for redemptive relationships.

This is also true in cross-cultural contexts. Even in an office with people from vastly different cultures, the mutual experience of the workplace gives the employees a depth of connection. Regardless if someone is from Indiana or India, they can have a common enemy in the office printer that never works, and that is often enough to spark a friendship into which to speak the gospel.

Professionals on mission are able to move in many social classes. The workplace is a natural context in which one is able to engage people from many layers of society. Christianity must take hold not in just one slice of the population, but amidst all people. And all people connect via the marketplace. In a normal day in the life of virtually any business professional, there are natural ways to interact with both the rich and the less rich.

Paul seems to have transcended social classes by his chosen line of work. As a highly educated Roman citizen, he could have easily traveled exclusively in the upper echelons of society. But as a tentmaker, he provided for his needs and opened for himself an opportunity to interact with laborers and likely slaves as part of his daily work. Intentionally placing himself amidst a variety of social classes through his work, Paul was able to spread the gospel throughout the social groupings of a city.

The ability to connect with people throughout the social classes of the city is essential in our day when so few around the world have even met a Christian. For example, in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region that is a major focus for business development, studies show merely ten percent of the population has ever met a Christian, much less had a relationship with one.¹³ The professional who secures an expat assignment in MENA can make a tangible difference in that statistic, and possible eternal difference in the lives it represents.

Professionals on mission are able to support the ministry. By excelling in their work and living wisely, the result can often be that believers have margin in their resources that can be used for the good of gospel ministry. Paul seemed to make more than enough in his tent-making trade to not only cover his expenses but that of the team

¹³*Christianity in Its Global Context, 1970-2020*, report by Center for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, June 2013, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.gordonconwell.com/netcommunity/CSGCResources/ChristianityinitsGlobalContext.pdf/>.

that traveled with him (Acts 20:34). Wayne Grudem has argued persuasively that making money is a morally positive activity that “results in multiplying our resources while helping other people.”¹⁴ Not only does the work itself help people, but marketplace professionals can help people with the money and resources they earn from their work.

Tim is a skilled executive who works for a distribution company in a global city outside of his home country. Over the years, he had a growing desire to start his own company so that he could make more money to steward to the Lord’s work and provide jobs for people in the church that needed them. At first he was fearful though because he did not have the money to leave his job start this new company. But because of his faithfulness and excellence in his work over the years, when Tim approached his boss and told him he was going to start another company, the boss said, “That is fine, as long as you keep working for me!” By God’s grace, Tim was able to start this new company while still paying his own bills through his job.

Tim is managing his time well and excelling on all fronts. His start-up company is winning remarkable contracts for its size and has provided more resources to steward for the kingdom. One of his employees is a church planter who is able to make the money he and his wife need to live and, because of Tim’s flexibility, work a unique schedule allowing him to lead evangelistic Bible studies several nights a week. Tim is not only providing for his own needs, but also for many who work alongside him in the church and in local ministry.

Professionals who are making money and running a business (where possible) are huge benefits to local churches and the advance of the gospel. What a tremendous gift it would be to church planters in global cities to have professionals surrounding them, supporting the ministry of the gospel in their work and by their work.

¹⁴Wayne Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 45.

Professionals on mission are able to avoid issues related to missionary support. “Wow, your house is soooooo nice!” After the first ten people said the same thing walking in to our new home in India, we stopped feeling complimented and started to realize the reality: to them, our house *was* so nice. According to the standards we were used to in the US, the home represented frugality and the lower limits of acceptable construction quality. However, compared to the lifestyle of many in the local church we were entering, it was a large step up. We were experiencing the problem of the affluent missionary.¹⁵ We entered the community showing a financial strength that put us above many and left us open to critique.

Were we wrong to rent a dilapidated two-bedroom apartment in one of the oldest parts of town? No. Perhaps it was unsafe, but morally, it was not a wrong decision. The many friends we did make would confide in us that they often spoke of how much our possessions might be worth. When I once expressed a financial limitation to a local friend, he looked surprised and replied, “Can’t you just raise more money?” Being on missionary support creates relational issues on the field of service. They can be overcome, but they are always present.

Beyond the issue of local perception, many missionaries find difficulty and stress in maintaining contact with supporters back home. Reports have to be made, trips taken to check in, and additional funds raised when people withdraw support. All of that can consume significant amounts of time.

There are great benefits to the enabling sacrificial support of missionaries by so many, but there are also issues that go along with it. Marketplace professional avoid these issues and are able to devote their attention to the job at hand, using both their time at work and any additional time for local ministry.

¹⁵For a critical look at missionaries and money, see Jonathan Bonk, ed., *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem... Revisited* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006).

Professionals on mission build a reputation that gives them a platform to teach others. When Paul lists the qualification for elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 he lays out with several different words the idea that a man should have a good reputation to be an elder. Paul says the man must be:

1. “Above reproach:” He is known by others and no charge can stand against him.
2. “Sober-minded:” He is a clear thinker.
3. “Self-controlled:” He does not lose his temper in arguments or spend money on ridiculous hobbies.
4. “Respectable:” He is trustworthy and held in high regard.
5. “Hospitable:” He opens up his home to strangers.

All of these point to the fact that this man is known by others and thought well of. Additionally, Paul mentions the requirement that he be “able to teach” (3:2). At least five dynamics are listed for this individual being known for his character, and one mention of his ability to teach others. In the media-driven age that we live in, we often put that priority in reverse. We listen to a lot of teachers that we do not know at all. We have no idea if they are hospitable or respectable, but we think they teach well, so we listen.

It seems to be that Paul was not a great preacher. He mentions that he was not “a trained speaker” (2 Cor 11:6) and that his message did not come “with wise and persuasive words” (1 Cor 2:4). Paul sounds like he was simply “able to teach”—not great at it, but able. By working day and night with the people that he would then teach, he earned their respect and their hearing. This should provide great hope for the marketplace professional that does not feel called to be a teacher of the Bible. The authority that can be built by proving oneself to be a person of character throughout daily life can lead to being a profound teacher of God’s truth to others, even if ability differs from what one might hear on a podcast.

Marketplace Professionals: What Can They Do?

Given these benefits of marketplace professionals engaging in mission, let's consider three primary roles professionals could meaningfully play in the mission work of a city.

Professionals on mission can be pioneers. As we discussed, many places in the world that are most problematic for traditional missionaries to gain access to are places very willing to have legitimate business take place by professionals. They can go to places where traditional missionaries can not. By taking a job or launching a business in a city without current gospel work taking place, professionals can be pioneers. Pioneering a new gospel work while working a job is not for everyone. But, as we assess the efforts of Paul, who worked while pioneering, we realize that he was able to establish these beachheads for the gospel without feeling the burden to do everything. Paul would come in to a new city, stitch tents, and start preaching and teaching at every opportunity he had. In some places he stayed months, in others years, but enough was usually accomplished that the seed of a church was starting to sprout. Paul emphasizes to the Corinthians that his work depended on the later work of others to come along (1 Cor 1:10-17), and he even relates to Titus that he left the church in a bit of disarray on Crete and requested that Titus sort it out (Titus 1:5). By embracing the reality that while they may not be able to do everything, professionals will be able to start something that could become a movement for the gospel in a new place.

Professionals on mission can be partners. What could be done is to create a truly missionary team where a variety of vocations are represented—for example, an evangelist, a church planter, and marketplace professionals all joining together. By strategically aligning themselves together, their team could benefit one another. One church in America sent a group of couples together to a European country to start a

business with the eye towards a church plant. By working together in their varied gifts, they are able to accomplish more on both the business and the church plant fronts.

Additionally, professionals could be sent as partners to existing missionary endeavors. It discourages missionaries when the whole of the mission is put on their shoulders. What a season of refreshment would come to the global force already deployed if they became confident that people of different abilities and vocations were coming to find local jobs and join together with them to advance the mission to the nations together.

Professionals on mission can be parishioners. In considering how to lift up and build healthy local churches, it becomes self-evident that this cannot be done outside of having healthy members of those churches who work in the marketplace. After all, a healthy church is not composed only of those called to ministry, but of believers reflecting the various vocational callings the Lord provides. However, the church in the West only tends to send those with the one kind of vocation: ministry. To effectively build up healthy churches in the global cities of the world, there is a need for greater variety in the vocations that are sent out.

Most global cities around the world have some presence of the Christian church. In some cases, the churches there represent the presence of Christianity in that land for many many years. The gospel came to India, where my wife and I lived for some years, during the lifetime of Paul. Local legend says the apostle Thomas went to South India and preached there, leaving behind a small but consistent Christian witness. The church in India has never been able to thrive, overwhelmed by the majority Hindu population and the incredibly complex linguistic culture of India, with over fourteen official languages and thousands of dialects within the borders. However, the church is there and it is seeking to be faithful.

A group of pastors recently visited me from the major city where they serve in India. As they spoke of the great needs in the area, I asked, “What if you were sent some church members? Just faithful people working a job in the city that love your church, serve on Sundays, maybe lead a community group, reach out to their coworkers and neighbors. What would you say to that?” They immediately brightened up and said, “We’d love that!” They knew the great needs they saw in the city could be met by a healthy church making disciples, for which believing marketplace professionals are essential.

There is tremendous need around the world for faithful traditional missionaries, but there is also a tremendous need for healthy church members. Professionals are not only positioned well to reach the unreached filling office buildings, schools, malls, and Starbucks around the world. Professionals are well suited to be the healthy church members that every pastor in a global city dreams to have in their fledgling church.

Churches Encouraging Professionals to the Nations

For the church that is ready to engage all of their members in the possibilities of integrating their vocation with God’s mission in the world, there are a few ways to integrate this in the regular ministry of the church.

Getting Used to the Idea

The first thing churches need to do is acquaint their people with the truths discussed in chapter two, the history of chapter three, and the current context outlined in chapter four of this thesis. These foundational ideas lead naturally to marketplace professionals throughout the church considering their possibilities among the nations. Churches can consider sermon series, small group studies, and discipleship tracks that consider the implications of the calling to mission that is given to all believers.

These series and studies first must challenge marketplace professionals to see the dignity and goodness of the work they are already doing. The effort is not to drive a wedge between their work and a calling to the nations, but rather to help them see their work as the good means by which the nations might be impacted. In order to do this, they will need to see their ministry as to “serve others through useful goods and services and to infuse each personal interaction with the fragrance of Christ,” as CEO Ken Eldred puts it.¹⁶ A professional who is lazy at work and idle in gospel witness in relationships will not suddenly change his ways by changing country of residence. On the contrary, believers ought to be encouraged to excel in their labors even as they grow in their passion to see God’s glory extend to all the earth.

A practical way that a believer beginning to catch a vision may begin to explore whether they may be called to the nations is through donating their extra time to a global cause. Perhaps there is a missionary supported by the church whose ministry could benefit from coaching in the area in which this professional is an expert. One friend, Matthew, has spent much of his career on the phone as an insurance sales agent and then as a claims adjuster. When a small mission agency asked him if he would be willing to help out, Matthew eagerly accepted the opportunity to save this organization thousands of dollars by giving his time to follow up with donors when they have issues with their financial support set-ups. Matthew is contributing to the global advance of the gospel by giving his skills to the work in a real and tangible way. Opportunities like this are great ways for professionals to see the needs of the gospel around the world.

Similar to this but on a greater scale of commitment would be seeking employment at a business that has gospel-oriented ambitions on a global scale. Often, this may not require relocating at all, but rather identifying a work going on overseas that

¹⁶Ken Eldred, *God is at Work: Transforming People and Nations through Business* (Montrose, CO: Manna Ventures, 2005), 22.

could use a representative or office staff in the U.S. When Hannah saw that a couple sent out by her church had begun a business in Thailand to sell handicrafts made by the disabled, she sought to get involved. With experience planning events for her church and in retail sales, she understood what it would take to get people together, for them to understand the products, and for them to make a purchase. Because of her efforts in leading the business from the U.S. side, the company is now not only paying her more than she made in retail, but able to employ many otherwise un-employable Thai. By their words and the way they manage the business, they are a gospel light to their community. There are many opportunities like this for partnership to take place between those who are sent to the nations to do business and those who remain.

Lastly, as others acquaint themselves with their work being in service of God's mission, they will be able to integrate that perspective into the natural life of their business. A plumbing service company on the East Coast is owned by two Christians who have committed to donating a portion of the proceeds of the business to global mission. They told me that their accountant is bewildered by how much money they are giving away instead of pouring back into the business or their own pockets. But God has blessed their efforts and in the over eight years they have been operating, they have grown every year. Whether one owns a business or is simply an employee, a change should take place in how we manage resources when we realize that the work we did to earn those resources is part of God's mission for his global glory.

Some professionals may never go beyond growing in their understanding of their work and the mission of God and participating as they can from their home-country. There is no problem with that. Their calling is to remain where they are and work for the mission of God in their city. But by connecting with these realities, their work will be positively impacted as they see afresh how it integrates with God's glory among the nations

Getting Engaged

Other marketplace professionals will realize that they may be one of those who is positioned well to directly engage in the global advance of the gospel. As they realize that they are already sent on God's mission, they may consider whether they are able to re-position themselves to another location to be used in even greater ways for the spread of the gospel to all peoples.

While living in St. Louis and members at a local church, Cade and Sarah desired to do something more with their lives and decided that God was calling them to move overseas. However, they did not know what that meant. Neither of them were seminary trained; Cade was an artist and Sarah an elementary school teacher. Sarah soon heard of an opening for a position in one of the most gospel-resistant countries in the world. Her new job is not only paying their bills but putting her in daily interaction with young people from an unreached people group. Cade and Sarah serve faithfully in a local church while reaching out to their neighbors and students.

Even if believers do not take their current job overseas, perhaps there is a new career waiting for them in a global city. There are entire communities of people connecting online who pursue a lifestyle of being "location independent." These are individuals who have chosen to perpetually travel the world. They make their money via online businesses they manage just a few hours a week, or by getting odd jobs wherever they are. For the Christian, there are certainly some dynamics of that lifestyle that may be unhealthy. But, if simply the motivation to "see the world" is enough to get some people to find creative ways to live among the nations, should not helping the world to see Christ be of greater motivation for the Christian? There is great interest in young professionals to have careers that look different than a solid job in the same place for life.¹⁷ The church

¹⁷"Three Trends on Faith, Work and Calling," *Barna Group*, February 11, 2014, accessed August 2, 2015, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/649-three-major-faith-and-culture-trends-for-2014#.U1fkjvldUwB>.

today has the opportunity to capture that enthusiasm and direct it towards entrepreneurial effort that aligns with God's mission in the world.

Another way may be for professionals to launch their own new global business. Nations around the world are eager for new businesses and small companies are often successful in emerging markets. A business could be anything from setting up a call center to exporting local artisanal products to opening up a gym. There is opportunity today to integrate the openness to business seen in many nations around the world and the interest brimming for entrepreneurship among young professionals. A well functioning business is not only desired by governments, it provides a credible identity in the community, compliance with laws, and allows for sustainability as the income from the business provides for the needs of those working.

The idea of starting a new business in a foreign country may be intimidating. But when William Carey went out, the idea of starting a mission society was intimidating. The church can motivate its professionals to dream of new ideas for how they as a church might be positioned to impact the nations for Christ. Maybe connections would emerge in the church. Two different professionals that meet at a "Your Work and the Nations" event might see they have compatible and complimentary skills and decide to launch a business in a country where the church has already sent a missionary. They could partner with that missionary to hire faithful people from the ministry.

Conclusion

As the local church in our day takes the baton of responsibility, the commission to take the gospel to all nations, the potential for professionals of all vocational backgrounds to participate in that effort is phenomenal. The rise of unreached peoples in the very cities where these professionals are primed to thrive creates dynamic contexts for gospel advance. Local churches are positioned well to take the reigns of the

missionary sending role in global Christianity and empower all their member-missionaries unto global Christian work.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

I love reading stories of those who have left their home, their “comfort zones” and gone out into the world for the cause of Jesus Christ. One of my favorite stories is that of Hudson Taylor, the humble British medical worker who was used tremendously for the spread of the gospel in China. In his writings, we find his reflections on the very moment he made the decision to go to China. He shares,

On Sunday, June 25th, 1865, unable to bear the sight of a congregation of a thousand or more Christian people rejoicing in their own security, I wandered out on the sands alone, in great spiritual agony; and there the Lord conquered my unbelief, and I surrendered myself to God for this service. I told Him that all the responsibility as to issues and consequences must rest with Him; that as His servant, it was mine to obey and follow Him- His, to direct, to care for, and to guide me and those who might labor with me.¹

Adoniram Judson is another well known pioneer of cross-cultural ministry, one of the first to leave from North America to go overseas in pursuit of sharing the gospel with those who had never heard. Fifty years before Taylor had his moment of decision, Judson was facing similar mental anguish leading him to go to the nations. In 1811, he asked,

How do Christians discharge this trust committed to them? They let three fourths of the world sleep the sleep of death, ignorant of the simple truth that a Savior died for them. Content if they can be useful in the little circle of their acquaintances, they quietly sit and see whole nations perish for lack of knowledge.²

¹J. Hudson Taylor, “The Call to Service,” in *A Retrospect* (Wholesome Words, 2005), accessed July 23, 2015, <http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/biotaylor6.pdf>.

²Courtney Anderson, *To The Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1989) 63-64.

As we have looked in this thesis at the significant need that remains in the world for people to hear and believe in Jesus Christ, I pray that all who read would be stirred by that reality.

I also pray that Christians of many different vocational backgrounds will see that remaining in their vocation may be the most strategic way they can discharge this trust committed to them. As Christian professionals engage in the need of the nations to hear the gospel through their marketplace work, a transformative change can take place in today's global cities by the many citizens of those cities that come to trust in Christ for salvation.

From Eden to the Ends of the Earth

Around six hundred years before Christ, God's people were in a disaster. Their kingdom was divided and the Babylonians had all but conquered them, having taken several large groups captive back to Babylon. These groups of captives numbered in the thousands or tens of thousands. As strangers in a strange land, they faced significant challenges. Would they ever be able to return home? How could they live out their days as aliens in a place that was so corrupt? And what benefit would their daily work be if the benefit was just going to the foreign king who captured them?

Today, many people are facing similar questions. While they may not have been captured and forced to march to a different land, they feel the tension of their Christian identity as "sojourners and exiles" (1 Pet 2:11). The writer of Hebrews also encourages the believers in the New Testament to remember the faith of those who came before them, who "acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on earth" (Heb 11:13). As citizens of heaven, believers ought always to feel like foreigners on earth, always feel counter-cultural and often struggling with how to go about daily life and work.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote to the Israelites while they were in captivity. A letter from Jeremiah at that moment may have not been received with the same gladness as hearing from a friend from home. More likely, when the people heard Jeremiah had written to them, they might have assumed he wrote to say, “I told you so.” From early in his ministry, Jeremiah had warned the people of Israel to return to the Lord or to face continued judgment. For example, he pointed to trials they were experiencing and asked, “Have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the Lord your God, when he led you in the way?” (Jer 2:17). But for those who read the letter, they found something very different.

Jeremiah beckoned the people to remember where they came from. Not referring to the land of Israel a few months or years back, he pointed back to creation, to the garden, and to their original cultural mandate to fill the earth and subdue it: “Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer 29:6-7).

In these verses, the linguistic connection to Eden and the cultural mandate are very strong. A garden, a helper, multiplying and filling the earth, and working for the good of those around you. Jeremiah encourages the captives with words of hope rooted in what God called them to in Eden. By living out their original mandate as God’s people, they would find encouragement in realizing that their work is not actually for the king of Babylon but is for the mission of the King of Kings, the Creator Lord.

We live in a day where the same encouragement is ours. Unlike the first Adam who failed at his mandate, the second Adam (Jesus) is extending God’s glory from shore to shore as he works with his bride (the church) to multiply (disciples), who, by exercising the work the Lord has given to each one of them, show their obedience to him

and lead others to worship him. May all believers in Jesus Christ see that their vocational callings, every good endeavor that they find to do, finds its rightful place when done in light of God's mission for his glory in the world. May all believers work for the welfare of the cities where they are in exile, so that many of its residents will also one day be neighbors in the New City to come.

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ABSTRACT

A NEW ERA OF GLOBAL MISSION: CITIES, THE LEAST REACHED, AND MARKETPLACE WORK

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This thesis argues for the mobilization of marketplace professionals into global missions, particularly in the cities of the world where the least reached peoples are gathering.

Chapter 1 sets the stage by describing the potential for marketplace professionals to engage in global missions.

Chapter 2 argues for a theological basis - that the cultural mandate and the Great Commission both display the pattern of God's glory being pursued through his mission being accomplished through the vocations of his people.

Chapter 3 and 4 sketches a history from the early church through the modern era. I introduce the idea that we are currently in transition to a new era of missions where the context for reaching the least reached will be urban and the leaders will be marketplace professionals.

Chapter 5 and 6 draw implications from this proposal, identifying benefits to marketplace professionals engaging in global missions and charting a path forward for interested parties.

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