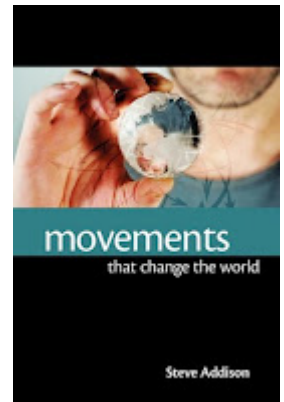


Review: Movements That Change the World

I'm heartened to learn that there is an overlap between my own reading pile and that of Richard Condie. I recently read Steve Addison's *Movements That Change the World*.



I appreciate Addison's consideration of the characteristics of the great movements of mission and ministry that have welled up at various points in Christian history. His opening story of St. Patrick is just one example and Addison uses it to set the success of these movements not on human endeavour but firmly and squarely on the sovereignty of God.

"God takes the initiative and chooses unlikely people, far from the center of ecclesiastical power. He works to remake them from the inside out. He inspires innovative insights regarding his mission and how it is to be carried out. Biblical truths and practices are rediscovered. A growing band of ordinary people emerges who have a heartfelt faith and missionary zeal that knows no bounds. Despite opposition from powerful forces within society and the existing church, the gospel spreads into unreached fields. The existing church is renewed, and society is transformed. Eventually every movement declines as it discovers that its treasure is buried in this world rather than the next. Meanwhile God goes looking for another lonely shepherd boy who is cold, hungry, and a long way from home." (Page 22)

Addison expresses five key characteristics of movements that change the world (Pages 22-24)

1. White-hot faith
2. Commitment to a cause
3. Contagious relationships
4. Rapid mobilization
5. Adaptive methods

Sometimes these characteristics seem a bit reactive to institution rather than independently indicative of a missional reality. And I'm not sure if they are characteristics that can be forced into existence – you have to let them happen – and so the “what do I do about” question is not easily answered.

But the characteristics are helpful nonetheless and allow some useful exhortations concerning, for instance, church leadership...

“...great leaders grow leaders. They reject the arrogant notion that their ministry is primary. Like Jesus, great leaders create opportunities that equip and mobilize others.” (Page 101)

...and the rejection of a silver bullet approach.

“The truly great companies do not make their best moves by brilliant and complex strategic planning. What they do is “try a lot of stuff and see what works.” Remain true to your cause and find different ways to pursue it, then test the fruit and multiply what is effective.” (Page 113)

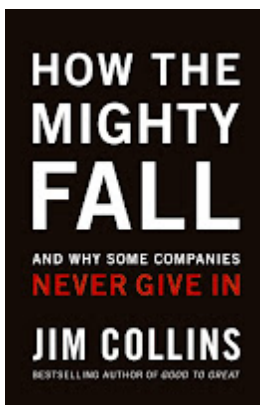
The frustration of this book for me personally is the sense it engenders that I've already missed the boat by becoming engrained in the institutional church. I am, for instance, the leader of a “fully funded church plant” – an, apparently “unsustainable church planting strategy” (Page 112). What should I do – give up the money or break up the structure in which the church plant exists? Or invest further into the

structure, seeking to breathe life into it's DNA so that it can be renewed in what already exists and proficient at giving birth to more new things? This is the unanswered "so what" question.

What this book does is help define the "DNA" that needs to be embraced. It encourages us as leaders to get the important things right and keep the secondary institutional things secondary. Above all, it stirs us to humility – that fruit comes not from a striving for success but from an attention to our Saviour, a zeal directed towards him, and a true love for his people and his world.



Review: How the Mighty Fall



I sometimes read books that are from a different "field" than my own. This includes books from the world of corporate management and capitalist technique – an area I tend to avoid due to excessive buzzword compliance and a lingering suspicion that the author has perfectly polished teeth and has dictated the book while wearing a Kylie-mic. I forget who or what recommended Jim Collins' *How the Mighty Fall and why some Companies Never Give In* to me – and why it was recommended. But I read it, and found it informative and useful.

The basic premise that Collins works from is to reverse his normal endeavour of analysing why some companies go from good to great in order to understand why some great companies have somewhat inexplicably crashed and burned. He considers companies such as Ames, Bank of America, HP, Motorola and compares them with success stories in the same field – e.g. Wal-Mart, Wells Fargo, Texas Instruments. (The complete list is tabulated on Page 141). It's an intriguing analysis as it demonstrates that "normal" causes of failure – passivity, complacency, lack of innovation etc. – were not evident. The stories he shares are often ones of a "spectacular fall *despite... revolutionary fervour.*" (Page 11).

Rather, his analysis identified "five stages of decline" that were more or less evident across the examples of fallen companies. (See chart on Page 20).

1. "Hubris Born of Success"
2. "Undisciplined Pursuit of More"
3. "Denial of Risk and Peril"
4. "Grasping for Salvation"
5. "Capitulation to Irrelevance or Death"

Within each stage he offers examples and some decent considerations of the leadership and management principles that would have helped reverse the death-ward journey. It is here that I found the most relevance. If we are looking at the "mighty fallen" then the institutional church at least fits that bill *prima facie*. The gems of advice are worthwhile. And they are certainly assisting me in how I think about the current review of my Parish.

For instance, the importance of inquisitiveness of a leader that constantly asks "why, why, why?" (Page 39) does much to alleviate the arrogance that characterises the first stage of decline. Collins further unpacks the problem:

"The rhetoric of success ("We're successful because we do

these specific things") replaces understanding and insight ("We're successful because we understand why we do these specific things and under what conditions they would no longer work.")." (Page 43)

Similarly, he talks about manage of people and teams. One particular example interacts with the institutional church's tendency to fall back to bureaucracy when things need doing or when things go wrong:

"When bureaucratic rules erode an ethic of freedom and responsibility within a framework of core values and demanding standards, you've become infected with the disease of mediocrity." (Page 56)

In other words, bureaucracy results when you put the wrong people in the wrong place and take away the freedoms of the good people.

In the era of internet preaching personalities, his view of team leadership needs to be strongly heeded by Christian leaders:

"The best leaders we've studied had a peculiar genius for seeing themselves as not all that important, recognizing the need to build an executive team and to craft a culture based on core values that do not depend upon a single heroic leader." (Page 62)

If we can correlate this analysis to the state of the church it's probably appropriate to look towards the later stages of decline. Here there is another piece of advice worth heeding – "Stage 4 begins when an organization reacts to a downturn by lurching for a silver bullet... they go for a quick, big solution or bold stroke to jump-start a recovery, rather than embark on the more pedestrian, arduous process of rebuilding long-term momentum." (Page 89). Church leadership is very

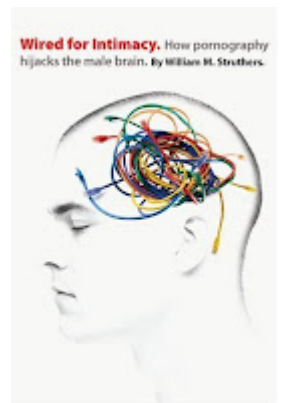
rarely about thunderbolts – it is about decent, ongoing shepherding – the teaching of the word, the bringing of it in and out of season and doing the work of an evangelist. It's about getting the basics right and being committed to slogging it out for Jesus.

I think this book applies to the church because in the end it is not so much an analysis of business but a consideration of corporate human psychology intent on avoiding failure and embracing fear. Here is some common sense, some earthly wisdom, and a decent call to both boldness and humility. We can learn from this.



Review: Wired for Intimacy

William Struthers' *Wired for Intimacy: How pornography hijacks the male brain* is one of those books that can only be reviewed in comparison. In this case to Allan Meyer's *From Good Man to Valiant Man*. Both books deal with the topic of sexual integrity in men. Both books take a holistic approach – dealing with pornography and sexual addiction as a combined spiritual, psychological, and *neurological* issue. This approach, in both books, is a very helpful one as it allows men to get a handle on the real value and tangible outcome of what it means to discipline oneself and take every thought captive.



Struthers is better than Meyers' in a number of areas. As a professor of psychology and a lecturer in behavioural neuroscience he is certainly more qualified when it comes to

unpacking how negative neurological pathways are built up and then reinforced by pornographic habits.

"This is how a pornography addiction and sexual compulsion is built from scratch. It involves the visual system.. the motor system... the sensory system... and neurological effects of orgasm (sexual euphoria from opiates, addictive dopamine in the nucleus accumbens and reduced fear in the amygdale). They have now begun to store this pattern as a reinforced neurological habit." (Page 99)

His applied theology is also better. His chapters on masculinity ("Made male in God's image" and "Masculinity") are a more helpful exploration than Meyer's eisegetic four-faces ox-lion-eagle-man imagery.

But when it comes down to the "so what do I do with it?" question – this is where Struthers is weak and where Meyers' pastoral and discipling heart shows its strength. For instance Struthers' dealing with masturbation begins with the pastoral equivalent of "don't do it or you'll go blind"

"Men who compulsively masturbate (more than 2-3 times a week) can suffer from depression, memory problems, lack of focus, concentration problems, fatigue, back pain, decreased erections, premature ejaculation, and pelvic or testicular pain" (Page 169) [I wonder if the same is said of men who have sex more than 2-3 times per week?]

And while he does move beyond this it is mostly description rather than prescription of help. This is typical throughout the book.

So in the end, go to Struthers for a better understanding, go to Meyers for some thoughts as to how to help someone (or yourself). Would love to see the book that merges the strengths of both.

