

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.

