

## “Word, Work and Wonder”

### What Kind of Church; Discipling Nations Matrices;

Segment B April 19-30, 2004

MM Lopez Development Center, Antipolo City, Philippines

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*NOTE: the structure of this paper is not clearly linear or scholarly, but rather designed in tandem with PowerPoint visuals of a lecture. The views expressed here are those of the author.*

HARVEST, HEALTH and HOLISM: while the discussion below related initially to the Filipino church, it has application on a larger scale to the DAWN movement at the turn of the millennium. It is a response to the pressing question – amidst a genuine success of the DAWN movement in the Philippines over the past 25 years – What KIND of churches are we planting?

**What kind of churches?**

**Harvest Churches**

**Priority: getting the Gospel OUT**

**Key Issues: CPMs, UPGs & Missions mmt.**

**Capitalizing on the gains of DAWN**

**New forms: House-, youth-, city-church**

**Expressions: JP, DAWN, Harvest Ev, many**

**Frontier & deinstitutionalized ecclesiology**

Stephen M. Spaulding, Dawn Ministries, 2000

#### **SLIDE 1: What kind of churches? Harvest**

HARVEST churches speak to the gains made by the DAWN2000 movement to date in the Philippines and the yet-to-be-addressed issues pending. Much is to be celebrated in the establishment of 50,000 plus congregations around the country, and indeed, so many of the other prominent steps taken by the church in this country have their heritage in the considerable growth of the number of congregations across the evangelical spectrum throughout the past three decades. This is a unique moment in our history! And this also presents us with a golden

opportunity, a “quorum” of thousands of relatively young fellowships ready to do the will of God. What then still needs to be addressed in terms of harvest?

1. The issue of Unreached People Groups, so vital to the missionary penetration and establishment of initial movement to Christ among the least-reached of our nation, has unfortunately been left out of most of the DAWN agenda (even though the DAWN movement here has for most of its life contained a clear missionary sending goal parallel to church planting), so that other groups like Philippine Missions Association and Asia Missions NETWORK have felt the necessity to highlight it outside of the DAWN mainstream. These could still be merged into one common mission to reach the unreached, whether they are unchurched barangays or fully unreached ethno-linguistic whole populations. Certainly the most resistant and unreached populations constitute the largest blocs of unchurched barangays, and their homogeneity constitutes a cultural, linguistic, religious or worldview barrier which will not be automatically crossed by a mere plan to church unchurched barangays. The missiological dimension has been missing from much of the DAWN terminology. This can be remedied especially through denominational and other growth programs which isolate, identify, adopt and provide the necessary resources, training and strategic partnerships for the reaching and

churching of these peoples, whether they are Maguindanao, Maranao or a dozen others. It would also have to be given more air time in DAWN-identified publications and venues. (Since initial writing, much more has been achieved in this area than is reflected only as ideals here).

2. The definition of *church* and the idea of “viability” need to be once again addressed, partly due to the unnecessary bifurcation mentioned in #1. For us to reach the most “neglected” or “resistant” populations, our definition of church is going to have to be reviewed in the interests of maintaining biblical, minimalist and reproductive/rapidly reproducing models of church. This is occurring in many other similar settings around the world, both in the urbanized West/Pacific Rim as well as in the most heavily persecuted regions of North Africa, Central, West and East Asia. House church, youth church, other forms of cell church, servant church...are all coming to the fore as examples of a kind of post-institutional interest in church effectiveness in harvesting the field outside our four walls (‘walls’ still belying our truncated/institutionalized bent in ecclesiological thinking).

3. We must also consider the clear need for closure in relation to unchurched communities. This continues to be a need with or without the reaching of a particular number of congregations nationally (i.e. 50,000 by AD2000). But on that note, we now know that the projection of population growth in the early 1970’s was almost exactly 50% off. By the year 2000 the population in the country, which had been the baseline for setting the goal of 50,000 churches (one per 1000 population) was actually 75 million, fully 25 million above the projected total! Had this projection been more accurate, the goal would have been fully 25,000 churches greater!

But if we imagine that we have in some sense reached our original (unaltered in the interim – for whatever reason) numeric goal, we positively know that we did not reach the church-per-barangay goal. This (per-barangay goal) was called by some the ‘strategic’ component of the more palpable numeric goal of 50,000. It certainly was the more accurate to assess and difficult to achieve. This again is partly due to the issue raised in #1, that a merely geo-political division of the task does not in itself point out the nuances of cultural, religious, geographic and other historic barriers to the gospel which whole peoples express and robustly maintain.

One other observation from 20-20 hindsight. When the Davao DAWN congress of the year 1999(?) was celebrating the progress of the movement in the south of the country, at least one province was now, for the first time, announcing the fulfillment of the strategic goal of a church: one per barangay. The glaring but unannounced reality of this otherwise happy news was that in order for this province to reach the point of saturation, the *average* number of churches per barangay was not one (of course) but SIX. This rather disturbing discovery would have enormous ramifications for the overall national strategy if in fact the strategic goal was to continue to be a focus of the movement, as I certainly believe it should.

These and many other issues, which can only come to the fore as a result of decades of material we now have access to as a fruit of the overall movement, must be addressed by leaders who are still committed to harvest as a fundamental feature of a healthy church in Filipino society. Let’s do more thorough analysis of the GREAT research data which our co-laborers have gathered throughout the decades of the DAWN movement and discover the multiple reasons for the persistence of all remaining unchurched regions, then systematically discuss, adopt and plant relevant, contextual, obedient and rapidly reproducing congregations among them.

This type of church is a response to: the unfinished task of churching the nation(s)

Its primary values: Urgency/equal opportunity(?)

The guardian against internal excesses: Longevity

At stake? Vision: 'Lift up your eyes...'

Truthfully, with the outsized growth of the whole Charismatic/Pentecostal/Full-Gospel movement in the past half-century, this harvest category is really the province of this group.

### **SLIDE 2: What kind of churches? Healthy**

HEALTHY Church speaks to the current interest in and need for church health, especially at the local level. Tools have recently been developed around the world which point to ways and means of actually qualifying and quantifying local church health. Most prominent among these tools is the fairly elaborate Natural Church Development resource from Christian Schwartz of Germany. This model needs demonstrable application and adaptation within the Filipino (and similar emerging world) context(s) to be of value for a larger body of churches, but the interest remains high: that our churches must address their weak-links, shore up those areas of greatest vulnerability and provide the world with the best representation of the Bride and Body of Christ as we prepare for the marriage supper of the Lamb. While some might pit quantity against quality in church growth and life, most would maintain that neither ought to be at the expense of the other. This certainly seems to be the NCD perspective, with extensive global study (of 1000 churches in 32 countries) to substantiate its indicators of loosely normative church health.

Healthy church is in some ways the Epistle-ine or Pauline dimension of the life of the church. Many have observed a fundamental silence within the Pauline and pastoral epistles on issues of growth, mission, and evangelism. The argument has been well made that these were givens in the life of the early church and were not institutionalized to require separate discussion. Another point could be made that Paul and the other writers are concerned in their specific letters for time-bound, immanent issues in the internal life of these city congregations, while manifesting passing concern for things they were obviously equally committed to (I.e. cross-cultural mission). The epistles were certainly not (individually) once-for-all curricula offered systematically for the application of these bodies. The church must always be taking inventory of its internal corporate life, examining its 'passionate spirituality' 'effective structures' 'servant-leadership' and other epistolarian themes for conscientious witness before a watching/inquiring world and to the greater glory of God "in/through the church."

While the temptation may always be there to become ingrown in the process, the equal danger lurks that the church can be so passionately engaged in outward focus that it becomes irresponsible with its members' growth and health of the overall body (as seemed to have been partly the case with the scenario of Acts 6)

Response to: crisis of church growth without depth and fundamental disciple-making vacuum

Balance is the value(?);

**What kind of churches?**

**Healthy Churches**

**Priority: getting the Gospel THROUGH**

**Key Issues: Structural effectiveness,  
organic growth & balance,  
biblical leadership & genuine community**

**– Expression: Natural Church Development  
& 8 signs of vitality  
Reformation(?) ecclesiology**

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Stephen M. Spaulding, *Down Mountain*, 2000

“Church for others” is the guardian against internal excesses.

Priorities are at stake: ??

When thinking of the three primary streams we discussed earlier, it seems clear that the conservative traditions have a kind of lion’s share of this category of church: a concern for depth in the Word, in discipleship and quality and accountability of leadership.

**What kind of churches?**

**Holistic Churches**

**Priority: getting the Gospel IN**

**Key Issues: Community impact; Is. 58**

**– Gospel of the KINGDOM, salt/light**

**– Local & societal shalom, jubilee**

**– Expression: Samaritan Strategy**

**Incarnational, trinitarian ecclesiology**

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*Stephen M. Spaulding, Dawn Ministries, 2009*

### **SLIDE 3: What kind of churches? Holistic**

HOLISTIC church, against the nervousness of some with the term, speaks to the simple idea that Christ commands a whole-gospel to be both declared to and lived before a suffering and sinful world. The prophetic, servant models of church have often been missing in our more aggressive attempts to reach out in the increase of our numbers – getting the ‘gospel out.’ Discipling nations requires more than mere conversion-counts or church-counts for that matter.

We know of countries in which the church presence is very high but where church impact is

dismally low. In other words while the gospel has gotten OUT, it has not simultaneously gotten IN to the fabric of our churches and communities. We also know of situations where the church has been content to worship God safely, comfortably within the confines of the facility and make almost no impact whatsoever on its surrounding community’s health. In the name and following the example of Jesus, we know more is expected of us, but very few have modeled it adequately for us – besides the Lord himself. Holistic churches are simply those which, by the leading of the Spirit and the example of Jesus, are ministering supernaturally and prophetically to the spiritual, physical, social, psychological needs of their communities and nations. One helpful model has been developed internationally through the work of Food for the Hungry International, in which local churches have learned obedience to the commands of Christ for the whole of life and have found ways to bless their communities and nations through prophetic, miraculous and servant roles. Other models abound in other corners of the globe. Let’s find, follow or create many – thousands – here in this city, this society!

Response to the credibility gap which the world identifies between Christ and Christianity:

Obedience Compassion & Justice are the values;

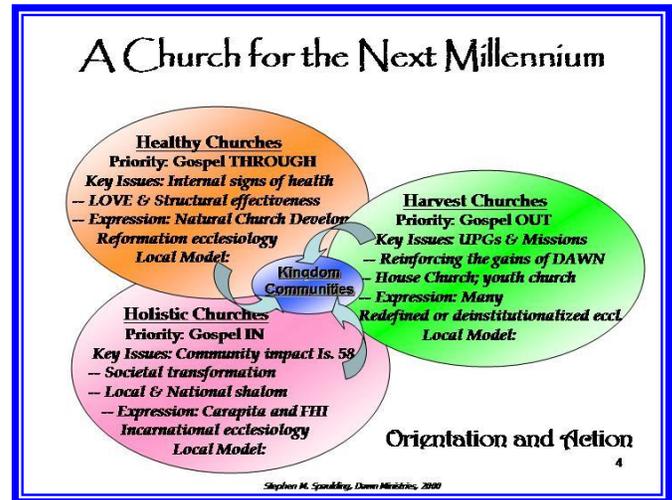
“Charisma” is the guardian against excesses

Lifestyle is at stake: “Hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches”

The church stream which seems best to reflect this emphasis is the same tradition which has camped out in the ‘Work’ dimension of love, holism and the incarnational elements of Christology and ecclesiology.

**SLIDE 4: A Church for the Next Millennium**

The reason for the diagram is simple: no one should ever have to choose between Harvest, Health or Holism. After all, each one reflects a fundamental biblical value for the church universal. Our downfall has often been that we rely too much on one model or sphere of action. What if we were to strive diligently to fill this nation with churches (of all relevant sizes, shapes, & types) committed to an ever-increasing harvest, to the vital signs of internal health and wholeness, while refusing to run from the thornier and often more labor-intensive needs and wrongs of our surrounding communities, municipalities, provinces and nation? What if we were to see an intentional, rapid multiplication of not “just churches” but Kingdom communities which thoughtfully, carefully and prophetically live out the full life, power, beauty, compassion, message and truth of Jesus? Let’s not expect deep transformation overnight. Let’s take a generation, teaching our children the difference between the religious, institutional evangelicalism – RELIGION--of the past and a radical, life-changing, Kingdom-coming and community-transforming RELATIONSHIP – the WAY.



This is a picture of a church gathered AND scattered, a new force in the earth, adaptable and incarnate-able in any and every environ...two or three gathered in my name...God’s alternative society, Jesus’ new social power base from which to enact Kingdom transformation without throwing up artificial ‘competitor religion’ barriers.

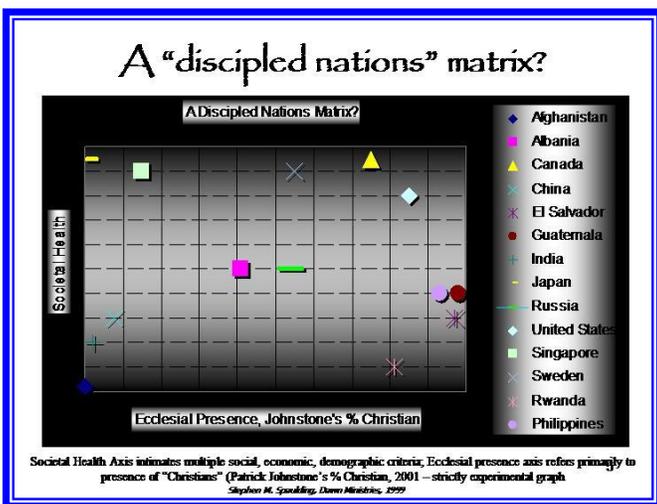
**SLIDE 5 “Discipling Nations” Matrix/Chart:**

Of course this is merely an attempt at the launch of a more serious discussion: Major caveat: no countries plotted represent any serious research; the chart begs for this. And this comes with the clear acknowledgement that nations could be, from a biblical mission standpoint, peoples, tribes, nation-states, languages, etc.

What are some criteria for each of the major axes?  
 “X” axis: Ecclesial presence or witness....

The point here is to highlight the presence of the church...whether life-giving? Or nominal? Or simply physical...would be major questions. What

about census-level presence? In which nations will vary greatly in their acknowledgement of the presence of Christians, or Christians will be politically motivated to either claim or disclaim their Christianity in context. There will be major difficulty, but not impossibility, in laying out a solid criteria for Christian presence, as long as the criteria is spelled out clearly and is part of the layout of the chart for discussion.



“Y” axis is possibly even more difficult: one could use several major points of Jun Vencer’s WEF-tenure description of “disciplined nations” beyond the assumed presence of the church:

1. Public Peace
2. Social Justice
3. Economic Sufficiency
4. National Righteousness

In his case, Vencer highlights four categories which might amalgamate into our one category of societal health, some indicators of which have been explored and quantified by groups like the WHO, various UN branches, WTO? As well as Christian outfits like WV, SBC, SIL, GMI, various NGO’s.

One could conceivably take a couple of baseline economic indicators (measuring not so much wealth as absence of destitution and opportunity for advancement), merge them with certain distinguishable lifestyle/living-standard minimums, combine with social and political indicators of safety/security, justice, rule of law, guarantees of basic human freedoms and rights (including religious), provision of basic services like public health/education, and intra-national and international freedom from conflict/war.

One thing driving this discussion is the knowledge within our global village of certain enviable standards of living and lifestyle maintained by almost completely pre-Christian or post-Christian societies on the one hand, and other corners of the globe which have experienced phenomenal church growth in the past half century yet which reflect some of the worst in societal standards of health or peace (whether it be through internal corruption, post-colonial fallout, devastating natural disasters, inter-tribal or inter-religious warfare, chronic poverty, environmental abuses and catastrophes, desertification). Certainly most of these latter societies have near-neighbors of lesser Christian presence experiencing the same types of unhealth but the clear question remains: should there not be evidence to a deeper degree of the presence of GOD among God’s people, his kingdom, his good rule, his blessing? And if not, are we back to the highly spiritualized, dualistic thinking of the past?

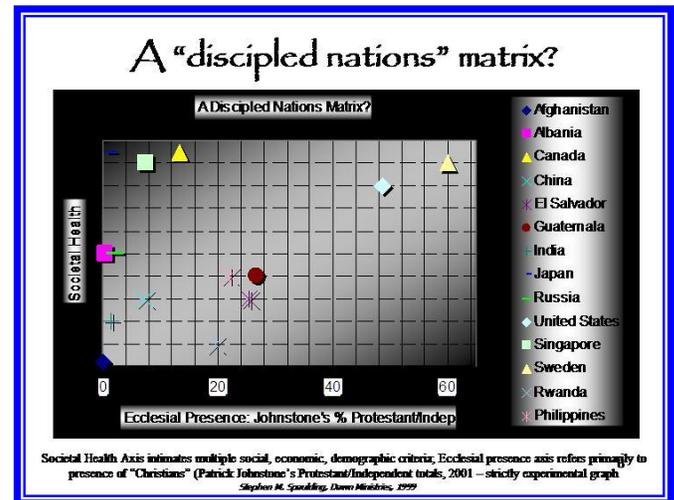
The reason this is called a “disciplined nations” matrix is that the issue seems to be one of the degree to which we accept the notion that nations, large groupings of society, cultures, clans, tribes, etc., are to be disciplined, brought into obedience to all the Jesus commanded, not only from an isolated passage in Matthew’s Gospel, but from others of Christ’s, Paul’s restatements (e.g. Rom. 16:25, 26) of the so-called Great Commission and its Kingdom underpinnings. If this notion is bogus, we might all go our merry way and continue business as usual. If the notion is not bogus, then we have much work to do in ‘disciplining the nations’ and teaching them to observe all... (Darrow Miller). On the other hand, we must also contend with simpler and plainer biblical themes of love for neighbor, blessing of enemies, prayer for ‘all men’ and ‘those in authority,’ the OT prophetic message of societal transformation and the list goes on.....

As one younger Filipino Christian leader confided in me several years ago, “I’m 42, and the country we live in today is completely unchanged from the time when I was a little boy.” In other words, we’ve had substantive preaching of the gospel and impressive church planting gains, which we must applaud and continue apace, but we must ask ourselves why the overall impact on our wicked and perverse generation has been negligible IN LIGHT OF THIS GOSPEL GROWTH.

(Parenthetically: eschatology is critical in this whole discussion; the issue quite simply might be when will Jesus answer the prayer “Thy kingdom come” and then to what extent?)

### SLIDE 6 “Discipling Nations” Matrix/Chart:

The criterion on the X-Axis of this graph is different from the previous in its main data point: a change from “Percentage Christian” to “percentage Protestant and Independent,” creating a significant shift in the category of nations which have a significant Christian/ecclesial presence but whose society health is dismal. Under this criterion, there seem to be no main countries (of those rather randomly chosen – or rather those chosen to represent major nations in key parts of the world) whose high church presence is matched by gross unhealth. Of course these are the ‘societal health’ y axis is completely a subjective judgment on my part. And the other disturbing category is with the three nations: Canada, Japan and Singapore, whose church presence very low in comparison to its relative societal health, re-posing the question “Can a nation be good without God?”



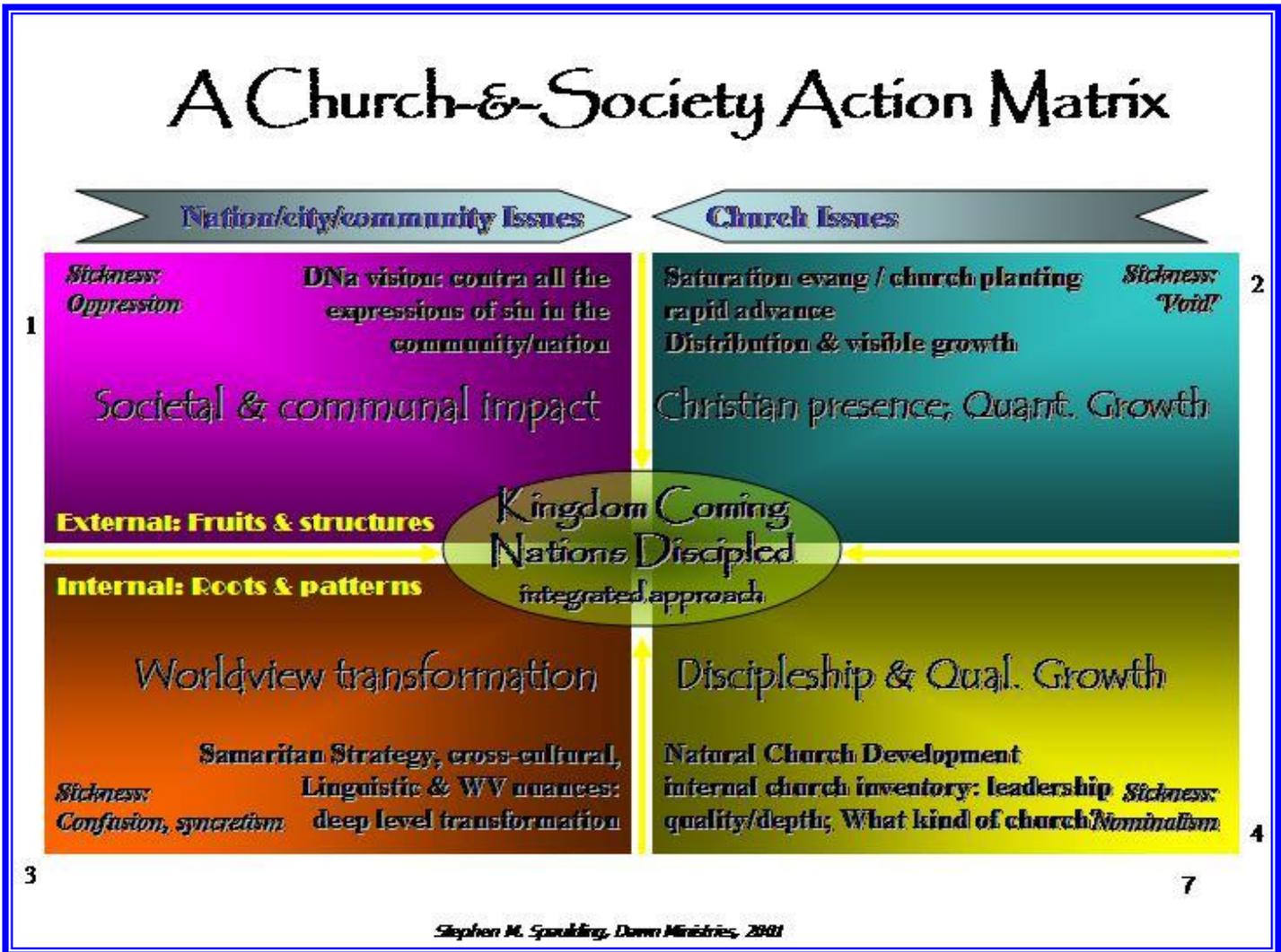
### SLIDE 7: A Church & Society Action Matrix (an extended integration)

This grid on a “Church & Society Action Matrix” comes as the result of months of ruminating on the issues of the current status of church multiplication movements around the world, the persisting critique of some of these movements that they’ve been in some cases – now famously – a mile wide and an inch deep. I am completely unconvinced that the pursuit of numerical growth – of itself – is the cause of this travesty (contra Engel, et. al.). I have never been impressed with the attempts to show that somehow quantity and quality in the life, growth and health of the church are either mutually exclusive or very rough-n-tumble bedfellows. And for those to whom numerical growth and its pursuit seems to be the enemy of “depth,” I would simply point to the multiplied millions of Christians globally who placidly sit within the profoundly non-growing traditions and embrace a religious experience – if at all – that is shallow in the extreme. Conversely there are multiplied cases of rapid advance and church growth in various corners which also convey a depth of experience and staying power which put much of the ‘mature’ churches to shame. Of course these are all citings which can be contradicted by cases which demonstrate the opposite. It is other ‘causes’ which are at the root of the problem in the discussion, it seems to me.

All this aside, there are demonstrable features and emphases in our ministries and local church expressions which tend us in certain directions over others. My ambition would be to always discover where it is that, at the local or affiliational level, we are unbalanced and to chart course-corrections for the future which will yield God the greatest glory and issue in the most fruitful and lasting harvest.

The quadrants here represent loosely a two-axis system, the x-axis representing ‘harvest field’ vs. ‘harvest force’ dynamics, although I don’t entirely care for this distinction any more. We’re

dealing with the issues which pertain mainly either to the larger community, city or nation (left) over against issues which pertain largely to the church as body and institution (right). The y-axis represents the difference between internal indicators (lower end) and the more visible, external or structural indicators (upper end) for both of these arenas.



For each quadrant there is a kind of life of its own, a set of standards of measurement or indicators of vitality vs. 'sickness' or 'excess.'

Quadrant II (upper right) is the one in which we find those who are advancing the structural growth of the church, the institutional multiplication, visible proliferation of the Body, in outreach and church-planting movements. Where this quadrant is weak or missing, the church has essentially vacated society; it is not even present. The society is completely pre- or post-Christian. Jesus Christ is not remotely accessible to people. The Kingdom cannot come without the church – in the long run. The most robust version of this, in my limited understanding of present-day mission effort, is the work of the SBC/IMB through their 'strategy coordinator/facilitator' function, hence the "SC" categorization.

Quadrant IV (lower right) is the more internal measurement of the church, the roots of its more visible or structural life...less quantifiable from a 'church growth' perspective. But it is here that the life of the church is measured in terms of viability, vitality, spiritual health and 'body life.' When this feature is weak or missing, the church may be 'present' in a society, but is itself weak, sickly, shallow or aberrant, and the long-term effect is widespread Christian religious nominalism – 'cultural' (wrongly named) or 'rice Christianity.' The most exciting manifestation of dealing with this quadrant in contemporary church-mission circles is in my thinking the model of Natural Church Development initiated by Christian Schwartz in Germany. It is certainly one of the more comprehensive 'church growth' and 'church health' surveys of the modern era and the genius of the model is its rewriting of the whole 'church growth' literature into a more 'biotic' rubric, away from the so-called technocratic approaches so apparent in the older CG literature and *m.o.* I abbreviate the quadrant, tongue in cheek, with "CS" for Christian Schwartz.

Quadrant I (upper left) is the more manifest life of the larger community, city or nation in which the church finds itself. When the church is living its life as 'salt and light' within its surrounding community, the issues of visible application of the Kingdom of God are brought to bear on society. Needs of the poor are being met; prisoners are visited, neighbors are loved, enemies are reconciled, corrupt regimes are rebuked, the afflicted have advocates. Where this feature is weak or missing, oppression is one of the more visible overarching summaries of the context. When the church is fully engaged at this visible level, the overt sins of society are being overcome by the Kingdom of love and righteousness/justice. One of the many exciting models dealing with this whole area of visible holism is the "Samaritan Strategy" ("S.S.") developed by Darrow Miller (Food for the Hungry International) and Bob Moffitt (Harvest International). They have established a modular re-education of the local church especially in the context of underdeveloped- or developing-world poverty in the interests of more balanced, Christ-like, biblical and holistic vitality, a Christian presence at multiple levels within the larger community. Addressing simple community issues like cleanliness, sewerage, drinking water, prostitution, local government misspending and childhood education, these fellowships have discovered a whole new place for the church in a community which otherwise often views them as 'religious fanatics' and little else.

Quadrant III (lower left) is the hidden life of the larger community, the governing metaphors and deepest worldview issues which drive the society to do as it does, to both function and malfunction as is manifest in Quadrant I. This is where the "cross-cultural" ("C-C") dimension of the gospel is most poignant and is often most clearly missed in the more aggressive and quick-result-oriented approaches of, say, people operating largely in Quadrant II. If worldview is not properly addressed, then all the fruits of society's internal lies will grow into a sick and oppressed realm in Quadrant I. Confusion within the larger society and syncretism within the church are the hallmarks of this arena when it is weak or left unaddressed. Linguistics, worldview, religious underpinnings, cosmology, demonology and a host of other deeper-level belief systems are at stake here. When the church-mission endeavor has properly addressed the issues within the society's deepest level of understanding of reality, truth, allegiance and beauty, then it is much more reasonable to expect that the overt manifestations of sin and oppression will be dealt with long-term and the church will have footing as both a counter-cultural and contextually relevant/consistent body. Very possibly the whole art of 'spiritual mapping' also enters into this quadrant, that is, the concern for spiritual breakthroughs and the proper addressing of basement

level or umbrella powers which seem to hold profound sway over community- or even city- or nation-wide life and death.

So what does this tell us about the mission of the church? Is it a broader and 'evener' portrayal of reality? Is it consistent with the context and approaches of Jesus and the early church?

Debate about whether mission is meant to be 'holistic' or not continues apace, as can be seen in current issues of such mainstream evangelical journals as EMQ and CT. Most, it seems, would agree that all of these things must be dealt with by Christians, but the main question is more one of prioritization and sequence (causality). Does one issue/quadrant take precedent over the other? Where does "discipling" come in – as central as it is to the Great Commission and the *modus operandi* of Jesus and the apostles? What about "evangelize?" What about "Preach?" What about "seeking the Kingdom" or "extending the Kingdom?"

Certainly this diagram has tremendous limits. It is not a full treatment in any sense of the NT commission of the church. What I have attempted to do is to sort out some distinguishable elements of reality when we talk about "harvest force" and "harvest field." For one thing, these are not two independent realms and they are both multidimensional. In each case there are indeed internal or root systems (the lower half of the diagram) which feed and manifest in more overt structures and visible systems (the upper half). Sometimes the church-mission enterprise has in either field sought to pursue more visible change (whether church growth or societal/community transformation) while not adequately dealing with the roots of these changes within the church's or society's members' profoundest reality maps.

For sure, this is not a "Quadrant II" idealization like the Stephen Covey matrix. Rather, choosing not to prioritize any one of these Quadrants (although roots – the lower half – could arguably be put ahead of fruits, the upper quadrants), I rather believe that what we sense intuitively is a need to move toward the center. We need to find out where we have put all of our emphasis and discover how to shore up the arenas of greatest neglect, so that both the roots and fruits of our ministry foci are vital, intentional and in both spheres of church and the world, God so loves and has come to redeem.

### So What? Practical ministry outcomes

- ❖ Symbolic post-denominational initiatives (Anglican/Bapt)
- ❖ Capitalizes on the regionalization of church: How many 'churches' are there in your city?
- ❖ Encourages deinstitutionalization of church & mission: helps us not to "program" holistic ministries
- ❖ Prescribes a much more serious pre-CPM consideration of the task: *What kind of church (ecclesiology: essence—text, relationships, context and functions)? What kind of audience/culture/gospel/evangelism & training?*
- ❖ Forcing us to think beyond the church (scattered) when we 'plant the church'

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- ❖ Forcing us to think beyond the church, hence "scattered," when we 'plant the church.'