



A Necessary But Not Sufficient Condition

Greg H. Parsons



Sometimes people become angry with us at the USCWM. Perhaps *angry* is too strong; at the very least, they disagree with us vigorously. Usually disagreement is fine, but occasionally I find these people are attributing to us positions that I don't agree with either! This means they either (1) don't understand what we are saying or (2) are creating a "straw man" to argue their point. (Of course, if they don't understand, it could be our fault for not communicating clearly.)

One argument relates to seeing churches (or, alternatively, "movements to Christ") established among every people. Some critics think this focus is dated; they're looking to the "next thing" in missions. Sometimes this stance stems from an American desire to come up with a new program to push in a church. But to others, it doesn't seem enough to focus on the establishment of fellowships among the unreached

because it doesn't seem to get to the core of the deep issues that we see in our world: AIDS, street kids, poverty, lack of clean water, and much more.

But ask yourself: which comes first – full-orbed ministries to address the needs of all kinds of individuals, or the presence of the church in each people? It's possible, for example, for ministry to the disabled to lead to fellowships or cell groups, but usually wider transformation doesn't begin until the emergence of viable fellowships of people seeking to be like Jesus within and beyond their respective cultures.

Seeing these movements to Christ (or, as Donald McGavran called them, "Christward Movements") among every people is a *necessary* but not *sufficient* condition toward the fulfillment of God's purposes. It is *necessary* in our strategic thinking because those movements become platforms for subsequent ministries. But it is also *necessary* because it points to the main thing Jesus said He would do *through* us. In Matthew 16:18 He said, "...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

That priority clearly imbeds the idea of the church on the move, advancing.

Yet this condition is not *sufficient* because we will never know all God wants to do until He declares it sufficient. We do know that He wants to build these "Jesus gatherings." We know that the Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed to all the nations, but I'm not sure we fully understand all that means. Because we see in the Scriptures the breadth of God's focus – from Genesis to Revelation – on the clans and *ethne* of the earth – we believe He is committed to all people groups or cultures.

So we can affirm all those called to work in a variety of ways among any culture. But others shouldn't get upset if some of us choose to focus, by God's power, to see fellowships start among peoples where there are none. Once they do start, many other ministries will flow until the End. 🌐

Rev. Greg Parsons is General Director of the U.S. Center for World Mission. He's been on staff at the USCWM for 22 years.



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