

From J. D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2009).
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Foreword

How does one best characterize and commend *Discovering Church Planting: The Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting*—one of the finest books on church planting to appear in recent years? The breadth of treatment it embraces is made clear by simply perusing the table of contents. The depth of research it displays is made apparent by examining the bibliography. The extensive experience it reflects is made evident by reading the author's preface. What, then, remains other than wholeheartedly to commend Professor Payne's book to the reading and study of every serious teacher, student, and practitioner of church planting—indeed, to the reading of every lover of the Christian Church and every supporter of Christian mission?

That is what I propose to do here. In doing so I will take a clue from the likes of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson who propounded the “three-selves” of the indigenous church and also from John Nevius who advanced nine principles of what we now know as the “Nevius Method” of church planting. Though more could be said in commending *Discovering Church Planting*, I will point to five sound and solid reasons for concluding that this book should be one of the very first books of recent vintage that missionaries, church planters, and all mission-minded Christians should access immediately and study carefully.

First, from the first word of the text (“understanding”) to its last words (“lizard churches”) this book has to do with what the Great Commission is actually all about—the proclamation of the gospel and the planting of “responsible churches” (Peter Beyerhaus's phrase). Looking at the title, such a statement may seem to be redundant and completely unnecessary. But even if the former proposition be true, the latter does not necessarily follow. By sometimes curious alchemies, Christian mission has often become “any *good* thing Christians ought to do” (Donald McGavran's complaint) or just “*every* thing” Christians may decide to do. That's too bad because it flies in the face of the Gospel Mandate. More than that, “When mission becomes *everything*, mission becomes *nothing*” (Stephen Neill's assertion).

Second, from start to finish, this book is anchored in the authority and veracity of Sacred Scripture. Obviously, I do not mean to say that every proposition emanates from the Bible or that this book contains “only truth, all the truth, and nothing but the truth.” Of course not. *Discovering Church Planting* is replete with the ideas of literally scores of very human scholars and practitioners, to say nothing of the fact that their ideas are filtered through Payne's personal, mental exertions and field involvements. Dr. Payne offers much more than the results of human cogitation, however. He reminds his readers that the Bible is the divine *magnum opus* on church planting as well as on all matters of faith and conduct. He examines church planting proposals in the light of Scripture and urges his readers to do the same. And he explores the rudiments of biblical theology in order to bring theological principles and implications to bear on the church planting task. In this book church planting is informed by ecclesiology—by a study of the nature and functions of the church as revealed in the Word of God. Here Kingdom theology and ethics find their rightful place in Great Commission mission without preempting the priority of evangelism and world evangelization. That is indeed commendable.

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Third, *Discovering Church Planting* is both comprehensive and contemporary—amazingly so! Professor Payne is extremely well informed. His bibliography is extensive and impressive, but it is more than that. It is a *working* bibliography. His text exudes familiarity with a whole range of relevant literature. It reaches into the past in order to bring to light the best thinking of faithful missiological forebears who labored hard and long to extend both the geographical and intellectual frontiers of church growth. At the same time, Payne is by no means captive to the past. He ranges over the whole gamut of relevant current literature. In fact, and in a profound sense, his thinking is more up-to-date than a good deal of current literature because he does not get hung up on this or that new model or novel strategy purported to be *the* key to church planting and growth. He is more concerned with timeless principles than with either the traditional or the trendy. This is important because, if it is possible to be mired in the past, it is also possible to follow new rabbit trails or wind up in side eddies. Payne is familiar with most digressions of this kind, but is diverted by none of them.

Fourth is the matter of student and classroom friendliness. This book is not a difficult read, but neither is it an easy read. It does not purport to be. After all, it grows out of a deep concern for the future of church and mission. For that reason it deals with abiding questions having to do with the biblical text and its interpretation and contextualization; with the histories of Moravian, Methodist, and Baptist evangelism and church development and their implications; with proposals of past and present missiologists and their relevance. In the process it also deals with concepts and terms that, while familiar to some, will not be familiar to all—*pneumatology*, *paternalism*, *pragmatism*, *spiritual warfare*, *oikos*, and, yes, *lizard churches*, to name just a few. It is one thing to *read* a book like this. It is something else to *understand* it, *learn* from it, and *practice* it. Professor Payne is a classroom lecturer and teacher. He knows all of this. Accordingly, at the close of each chapter he provides a summary of the content, questions for group discussion, and a list of terms for personal review. Teachers and students will appreciate this greatly.

Finally, at the risk of being misunderstood, I want to suggest that this book is made more commendable by the fact that it grows out of a Southern Baptist ethos. All will be aware that the Southern Baptist denomination is the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. Many will know that its overseas mission is one of the largest of our Protestant missions. Both of these facts are noteworthy, but I have something else in mind here. Down through the years Southern Baptist churches, theological institutions, missions, and organizations have gone through significant struggles of various kinds. Nevertheless, overall, no other single denomination or organization that approaches their size can match Southern Baptists when it comes to a combination of ecclesiastical leadership, theological education, evangelical advocacy, literature production, and evangelistic involvement. Speaking very personally, I believe that before they finish a reading of *Discovery Church Planting*, the majority of readers will come to appreciate the richness that accrues to the fact that its author has been informed by his roles as student, pastor, church planter, and elder in various Southern Baptists contexts in the United States and Canada, and, most recently, as professor in one of its finest seminaries.

With that I rest my case in the assurance that all who become acquainted with this book will greatly profit from it; with a prayer that the Lord of the Church will use it to the

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glory of his Name and the extension of his Kingdom; and with an expression of thanks to the author and all who aided him for the writing and publication of one of the foremost works on church planting available today.

David J. Hesselgrave, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus of Mission
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Deerfield, Illinois