

DAWSON TROTMAN'S THEOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY
OF DISCIPLE-MAKING IN LIGHT OF NEW TESTAMENT
DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLES

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Introduction

In the opening words to the introduction for the 20th anniversary edition of *Jesus Christ, Disciplemaker*, Bill Hull writes, “I am the master of the obvious, so I will say it again twenty years later. Jesus hasn’t changed his mind and neither have I; He commanded us to make disciples and remains our best model. Why is our discipleship only in-house and nonreproductive?”¹ Making the statement that disciple-making should be one of the key purposes of the church might appear to be a restatement of the obvious.² However, much recent research and my own personal experience of nearly ten years of pastoral ministry indicate that disciple-making is often critically ignored in much of the contemporary church.³

¹Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ, Disciplemaker*, 20th Anniversary Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 9.

²For the purposes of this dissertation, the terms “church” and “contemporary church,” unless otherwise noted, will refer only to the body of Christ as expressed among the evangelical and Protestant denominations of the United States, in its expression in the both the local congregation and as a universal body, and particularly at the present time. No attempt will be made to expand the scope of this study to include non-evangelical churches.

³See, for example, *The Religious and Other Beliefs of Americans*, Harris Poll #119, November 29, 2007 [on-line], accessed 27 March 2010, available from <http://news.harrisinteractive.com/profiles/investor/ResLibraryView.asp?ResLibraryID=34489&GoTopage=2&Category=1777&BzID=1963&t=9>; Internet; George Barna, *The Barna Report: What Americans Believe: An Annual Survey of Values and Religious Views in the United States* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2001). See also, George Barna, *The Barna Report 2009: Year in Review Perspective* [on-line], accessed 26 April 2010, available from <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality>; Internet.

Within just the past decade, interest in disciple-making appears to be increasing. Several writers and consultants involved in the study of the contemporary church have drawn significant attention to the connection between evangelism, churches and discipleship.⁴ One of America's largest churches, Willow Creek Community Church, recently announced a "huge shift" of emphasis, changing the focus of its main weekend worship services toward "helping mature believers grow in their faith."⁵

In the passage of Scripture commonly referred to as the Great Commission, Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:18-20, ESV). Churches in the evangelical traditions have emphasized the importance of the Great Commission,⁶ but

⁴See, for example, Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005); Gene A. Getz, *The Measure of a Healthy Church: How God Defines Greatness in a Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1995); William R. Hoyt, *Effectiveness by the Numbers: Counting what Counts in the Church* (Abingdon: Nashville, 2007); Ralph Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: Ten Traits of a Vital Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999); Brad J. Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2008).

⁵Matt Branaugh, "Willow Creek's 'Huge Shift': Influential Megachurch Moves Away from Seeker-Sensitive Services," *Christianity Today*, June 2008, 13.

⁶A recent Google search on the term "great commission" returned nearly 47 million "hits." See, Google search, "great commission" [on-line], accessed 13 April 2010, available from http://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8#hl=en&source=hp&q=great+commission&rlz=1R2GGLL_en&aq=f&aqi=g10&aql=&oq=&gs_rfai=&fp=467c3568f2eec009; Internet. Similarly, a WorldCat search on the same term returned 69,249 books in print that deal with this subject. See, WorldCat search, "great commission" [on-line], accessed 13 April 2010, available from <http://ezproxy.sbts.edu:2051/WebZ/FSQUERY?format=BI:next=html/records.html:bad=html/records.html:numrecs=10:sessionid=fsapp1-52060-g807f1jg-pubml7:entitypagenum=2:0:searchtype=advanced; Internet>.

literature on this topic often reduces this passage to arguments over evangelistic methodologies, Trinitarian formulations, and interpretations of the imperatival force of participles.⁷

As will be noted below, much of the literature related to the Great Commission and much other recent research recognize that something is seriously wrong with, or lacking in, the practices of the contemporary church with respect to its methodologies for disciple-making.⁸ There appears to be a growing conviction that many of the contemporary models and methodologies of disciple-making are failing to actually make disciples.

Statement of the Problem

While few people would deny that “making disciples” is a key element of fulfilling the Great Commission, there is no broad-based consensus on what this phrase means or on how this command is to be fulfilled. In recent years, however, there does appear to be a growing awareness on the part of Christian leaders that it is *not* being fulfilled.

Research conducted by the Harris Poll, the Barna Research Group, and LifeWay Research⁹ all indicate a serious crisis in the discipleship of Christians in the

⁷See, for example, Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, Vol. 22 of The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 431. Blomberg notes, “The main command of Christ’s commission is ‘make disciples.’” He argues that “too much and too little have often been made of this observation.” He explains that “too much is made of it when ‘going’ is overly subordinated,” and that “too little is made of it when all attention is centered on the command to ‘go.’” However, his entire discussion barely mentions what “make disciples” means, or how it is to be done.

⁸See, *Statement of the Problem*, p. 3 of this dissertation.

⁹Harris Poll #119; Barna, *The Barna Report*; LifeWay Research Group, “Manual for Administration of The Bible and You [A Test of Factual Knowledge about the Bible]” (Nashville: Sunday School Board, n.d.).

contemporary church. The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the work of one individual who made a significant contribution in the area of personal disciple-making.

Dawson Trotman, the founder of The Navigators, has been one of the most influential Christian figures of the past century.¹⁰ Echoes of his theology of disciple-making can be found in many of the discipleship materials of the contemporary church,¹¹ even though his methodology has never been fully embraced by much of the church. There are at least three reasons why his methodology has not gained a wide acceptance. A first proposed reason is that his methodology is essentially sound, but it represents a call to radical obedience in an age of easy-believism, and hence is simply unpalatable. A second proposed reason is that his methodology is fundamentally flawed, and therefore it has been tacitly rejected. A third proposed reason is that because he had no published writings that gained wide attention, most believers, including most pastors, have never heard of him.

The present research will attempt to answer one central thesis question: what are the significant strengths and weaknesses of Dawson Trotman's theology and methodology of disciple-making when they are analyzed in light of New Testament

¹⁰As will be explored in more detail in chapter 2 of this dissertation, Trotman's influence extends to this day through the organization he created (The Navigators), the publishing company (NavPress) which grew out of The Navigators and which still focuses primarily on discipleship-related books and tools, his role in creating and directing the follow-up efforts of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and the men who went into influential positions in Christian ministry after sitting under his discipleship.

¹¹Some of the people who acknowledge Trotman's influence on their own disciple-making methodology include Arthur Glasser, Dan Fuller, and Ralph Winter of Fuller Seminary and the Fuller School of World Missions, Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ, and Avery Willis of the Southern Baptist Convention. See, Robert Walter Felts, "A Critical Analysis of Dawson Trotman's Methodology of Discipleship for Contemporary Mission Strategy among North American Evangelical Mission Agencies" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), 1989, 161-74.

disciple-making principles? In attempting to answer this one question, this dissertation will examine five secondary questions:

1. What are Dawson Trotman's theology and methodology of disciple-making?
2. What are the principles of disciple-making as seen in the New Testament?
3. How do the disciple-making theology and methodology of Dawson Trotman agree with, complement, or support the disciple-making principles of the New Testament?
4. How do the disciple-making theology and methodology of Dawson Trotman disagree with, contradict, or supersede the disciple-making principles of the New Testament?
5. What are the implications of this analysis for the application of Dawson Trotman's theology and methodology of disciple-making within the context of the contemporary church?

From my preliminary study of the work of Dawson Trotman and other Navigators, I hypothesize that a detailed analysis of Trotman's theology and methodology of disciple-making in light of New Testament principles will show that his theology is sound in most respects, but that the problematic elements of his theology lead to flaws in his methodology in three important areas. In particular, I believe that the research and analysis will reveal that his insistence on one-to-one mentoring ignores significant "group dynamics" present in the discipleship principles of the New Testament, his methodology of disciple-making process creates the mistaken idea that sanctification and maturity are the inevitable result of the proper application of specific tools and processes, and his "low ecclesiology" leads to the mistaken idea that disciples can be created entirely outside of the context of the local church. However, I also believe that Trotman's methodology can reach a wider acceptance within the contemporary church, with a resulting improvement in the disciple-making practices of the church, if these three errors can be adequately addressed.

Background

The study of Dawson Trotman presents some challenges. The first challenge is the brevity of his public ministry. He was involved in public ministry for less than three

decades, and his ministry changed directions several times during those few years. In his first decade (roughly speaking, the late 1920s through the early 1930s), his ministry was small and local, consisting mainly of doing personal evangelism, leading small Bible study groups, and working with youth groups and children's programs. During the next decade (from the mid 1930s to 1943), he began expanding the scope of his ministry by personally discipling sailors in the larger region near his home. From the incorporation of The Navigators in 1943 to his death at age 50 in 1956, he was constantly changing his methodology in an effort to work more effectively and more efficiently in making disciples. It is primarily these latter dozen or so years, when his theology and methodology had come to their full maturity and expression, that will absorb the main focus of this research.

A second challenge in the study of Trotman is that he wrote little during his years of ministry, and he left behind no published body of primary source materials. While a substantial body of primary source material is held in the archives of The Navigators at Glen Eyrie in Colorado Springs, Colorado, this work has never been cataloged and is simply piled into cardboard boxes stacked on shelves in a storage closet. I have already had an opportunity to examine these materials in depth, and I will work with the new Navigator historian to identify all of Trotman's writings related to his theology and methodology of disciple-making.

A third challenge in the study of Trotman is that no scholarly work has specifically addressed his theology. Only two dissertations have been written that deal directly with his life and work, one focused primarily on missiology,¹² and the other focused primarily on history.¹³ In addition to these dissertations, two biographies have

¹²Felts, "A Critical Analysis of Dawson Trotman's Methodology."

¹³David Buckelew Hunsicker, "The Rise of the Parachurch Movement in American Protestant Christianity during the 1930s and 1940s: A Detailed Study of the Beginnings of The Navigators, Young Life, and Youth for Christ International

been written about Trotman, but each of these books reads more like hagiographies, and each work relies at least as heavily upon anecdotal information as upon in-depth analysis of primary sources.¹⁴ Other than these few works, there are no sources of information available for use in this study.

Personal Interest

My personal interest in Trotman developed out of my own early Christian experience and my exposure to him in the academic setting of a doctoral seminar. As I have become more familiar with his life and ministry, I have found that I share a close personal affinity for his consuming passion to make disciples.

Personal experience. I came to faith in Christ as an adult at the age of 33. I had no prior Christian background or experience, having been raised in a secular Jewish household. In my earliest days as a Christian, and extending over the first few years of my walk with Christ, I had heavy exposure to Navigator influences, although I had never heard of either Dawson Trotman or The Navigators.

The man who helped lead me to faith in Christ had himself been heavily influenced by Navigator methodology. Within moments of my first coming to saving faith, he immediately encouraged me to begin systematically reading through the Bible, memorizing Scripture, and starting on a series of Bible studies produced by NavPress. Under his guidance, and with his ongoing support and encouragement, over the next three months I read through the entire Bible three times in three different translations, memorized all 64 of the *Navigator Topical Memory System*¹⁵ verses, and completed more

(Fundamentalism)” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School), 1998.

¹⁴Betty Lee Skinner, *Daws: A Man Who Trusted God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1974); Robert D. Foster, *The Navigator* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1983).

¹⁵*Topical Memory System* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1969).

than a dozen Bible study booklets, mainly out of the Navigator *LifeChange*¹⁶ series. He also encouraged me to begin the process of sharing my faith on a regular basis, and I had the opportunity to see several other men come to faith in Christ, in part through my own personal witnessing.

At the same time that this man was intensively discipling me, another individual began helping me to assemble a small library of books, many of which were written by Navigators. Some of the books that were influential in my early Christian days included *Transforming Grace*, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, *Disciples are Made – Not Born*, and *The Timothy Principle*.¹⁷

I was living in Eastern Colorado when I came to faith in Christ, and two years later I moved to Colorado Springs, where I was baptized in and joined a Southern Baptist church (Calvary Baptist Church). Over the next three years, I began serving at that church, first as a Sunday school teacher, and later as discipleship director.

Near the end of that time I married, had two children, began working on a M.Div. at the Rocky Mountain Campus of Golden Gate Theological Seminary, and bought a house. The house that my wife and I purchased had been owned for many years by a retired couple who were members at another Southern Baptist church in Colorado Springs. The husband had been a deacon at that church for many years, and had also been a Navigator during World War II, settling in Colorado Springs after the war and working for a few years with The Navigator ministry at Glen Eyrie. He had developed Alzheimer's, and his wife was no longer able to maintain the house. When she learned

¹⁶*LifeChange* Bible Study Series, 30 volumes (Colorado Springs: NavPress).

¹⁷Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace: Living Confidently in God's Unfailing Love* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991); Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1978); Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples are Made – Not Born* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1977); Roy Robertson, *The Timothy Principle* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1986).

that I was a student at a Southern Baptist seminary and that I was on staff at a Southern Baptist church, she left me her husband's entire library of over one thousand books as a "house-warming" gift. Many of those books were written by Navigators or represented Navigator thought. The following year, I began working for one of the parachurch organizations located in Colorado Springs and learned for the first time of The Navigators, but I still had little knowledge of who they were or what they did.

After I completed my M.Div. at Golden Gate, my family and I moved to the Louisville area so that I could pursue a Ph.D. at Southern Seminary. During my second semester of Ph.D. work, in spring 2008, I enrolled in an evangelism seminar. One of the requirements was to complete a research paper on a significant American evangelist. The course syllabus included a list of names of people from which we were to choose, and beside each name was a brief phrase describing why that person was significant. Next to the name Dawson Trotman, the syllabus noted his involvement in follow-up and discipleship, and mentioned The Navigators. Since I had at least heard of the group and knew that they were based out of Colorado Springs, and since I had a personal interest in follow-up and discipleship, I chose to do my research paper on Dawson Trotman.

Academic exposure. My first research paper on Dawson Trotman was challenging. As noted above, Trotman left practically no published legacy. An on-line resource, Discipleship Library, provided links to seven of Trotman's recorded messages, three of which were different versions of the same message (there are now a total of ten messages available, three of which are still different versions of the same message).¹⁸ My primary sources for that first research paper were those seven recorded messages, the two published biographies produced by Skinner and Foster, and a small assortment of pamphlets and photocopies of other materials provided upon request by The Navigators

¹⁸*Discipleship Library* [on-line], accessed 4 March 2008; available from http://www.discipleshiplibrary.com/dawson_trotman.php; Internet.

staff in Colorado Springs.

This brief first exposure to Dawson Trotman, however, sparked my interest in his thought and in his work. In the fall 2008 semester, I did research papers on Trotman for two seminars. For a second seminar on evangelism, I studied Navigator soteriology, as seen through the published writings of Navigators other than Trotman, and for a seminar on soteriology I compared and contrasted the “active” sanctification of Navigator thought with the “passive” sanctification of Keswick thought.

Personal affinity. From my first exposure to Dawson Trotman’s work, I found a kindred mind and spirit. Trotman was frustrated with the status quo of “getting people saved” but then leaving them to grow or not to grow, seemingly at their own will or inclination. He was passionate about fulfilling the Great Commission through the process of spiritual multiplication rather than spiritual addition, and he was determined to use all of his time, all of his talent, and all of his gifting toward that end.

My personal salvation experience as a “radical overhaul” by God’s grace, and my own intensive early discipleship had created in me a similar sense of profound dissatisfaction with the way disciples generally are (or are not) produced in the churches that I have come to know. I am distressed by the low level of Christian maturity which most people seem to accept as normative, and my other seminary studies have convinced me that the only sure path to improving church health is to improve both evangelism and follow-up discipleship.

My early studies convinced me of Trotman’s passion for making disciples. My early studies also convinced me that the theology and methodology of Trotman appeared to be worth studying on a dissertation level. I was shocked to discover that no one had yet done so. Trotman appeared to be a significant enough figure to be deserving of dissertation work. The problem, however, was that there were few primary sources available for the level of research a dissertation would demand.

Literature Review

During the spring of 2008, as I was trying to track down other sources of primary source materials on Trotman, I learned that The Navigators had “boxes” of his writings. Trotman kept a daily journal from at least 1933 through his death in 1956. He also wrote weekly letters to Navigator staff throughout the world (as time and other duties allowed), many of which contained lengthy discourses on expositions of Scripture and methodology. All of these materials were kept in cardboard “bankers’ boxes” in a storage closet at The Navigators headquarters building in Glen Eyrie.

In the summer of 2008, my family and I made an extended mission trip to Colorado and Idaho, and I was invited to spend a day at Glen Eyrie, meet with Navigator staff, and take a glance at the materials in their storage closet. My few hours on the grounds of The Glen and my brief glance through the materials stored there convinced me that sufficient materials were available to support a dissertation.

Dissertations and theses. In the more than half-century since Trotman’s death, only two dissertations have been written dealing specifically with him or with The Navigators. Neither one deals directly with Trotman’s methodology of disciple-making from a theological perspective.

The dissertation by Robert Walter Felts is missiological in nature.¹⁹ Felts specifically studies Trotman’s one-to-one discipleship methodology in hopes of determining its suitability for cross-cultural application in mission work. I have read this dissertation, and in light of what I have already learned about Trotman, Felts appears to have over-generalized Trotman’s relationship to Fundamentalism in general, glossed over the issues of Trotman’s low ecclesiology, and assumed the very point of one-to-one discipling that he purports to be assessing. He concludes, “Research indicates Trotman’s concepts of follow-up and spiritual reproduction are appropriate strategies for

¹⁹Felts, “A Critical Analysis of Dawson Trotman’s Methodology.”

contemporary missiology,” but only when “appropriately modified and adapted” so as to avoid “abuses and distortions of Trotman's methodology.”²⁰ In failing to adequately undertake a theological analysis of Trotman’s methodology, Felts ultimately argues no more than that spiritual multiplication and evangelism follow-up are both good.

The dissertation by David Buckelew Hunsicker is primarily historical in its focus.²¹ I have also read this dissertation, in which Hunsicker traces the historical development of The Navigators, Young Life, and Youth for Christ as the first three major “parachurch” organizations. His stated intention is “to ascertain the goals of the original founders” of these three groups and “[to give] these men a voice as to their own motives, desires and dreams and [view] the structures which developed out of these visions within the context of historic Protestantism.”²² From an examination of Trotman’s own writings, it is problematic at best to attempt to determine what “goals” he may or may not have had with respect to founding a “parachurch movement.” Regardless of imputed goals and motives, this dissertation offers little critical theological examination of Trotman’s basic methodology.

Secondary sources. Abundant secondary sources are available from Navigators other than Trotman. More than a dozen key Navigator staff people who worked directly with Trotman eventually published book-length treatments of discipleship methodology. The *Discipleship Library* web site provides links to hundreds of taped messages by early Navigators. It is always problematic to try to derive one person’s thought from a second person’s writings, but in the wealth of materials provided by these secondary sources, a consistent pattern of discipleship emerges, and a general

²⁰Ibid., Abstract.

²¹ Hunsicker, “The Rise of the Parachurch Movement.”

²²Ibid., Abstract.

trend of philosophy can be discerned. This dissertation will explore some of these secondary sources, especially as they relate to Trotman directly, but clearly the best source of information about Trotman must ultimately be Trotman himself.

Primary sources. In February 2010, I had the opportunity to visit Glen Eyrie for a week, and was graciously given full access to everything in The Navigator archives. The Navigators have only recently hired a full-time historian, whose primary responsibility is to catalog and preserve all of the physical materials in storage from the early years of The Navigator ministry. This archivist and the senior staff of The Navigators are excited by my interest in the life and ministry of the organization's founder. At this present time, another Ph.D. student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School is also working on a dissertation related to Trotman. His work will be primarily historical in nature, and will focus on "trying to locate Trotman within the larger framework of Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism."²³

In the archives of The Navigators, I found an abundance of primary source materials from Trotman. These sources include the following: copies of every booklet, pamphlet, or journal article that Trotman wrote; files filled with personal correspondence and memorabilia; all of Trotman's personal journals from 1933 through 1951; numerous bound volumes of "general circulation" letters and memoranda that Trotman wrote to Navigator personnel throughout the world to instruct them in doctrine and methodology and to motivate them to stay focused on the organization's primary purposes; complete Bible studies on Romans and the Gospel of John; and *Faithful Men*, an unpublished monograph in development in 1948 that Trotman intended to publish eventually as a full and mature treatment of Navigator theology and methodology.²⁴

²³Doug Hankins, private correspondence, February 11, 2010.

²⁴A full listing of the primary sources identified and examined for this dissertation is included in the bibliography.

Methodology

As much as possible, this research will attempt to examine Trotman's theology and methodology of disciple-making through a study of primary sources. Preliminary research in the archives at Glen Eyrie shows promise for answering the research question posed in this dissertation. I will make a second visit to Glen Eyrie this summer, at which time I hope to complete the primary-source research phase of this study.

Research Methodology

I will go through five major steps in conducting my research for this dissertation. First, I will examine the primary sources located in the archives at Glen Eyrie. As noted above, I have already spent one full week reading through much of the material located there, and have gathered a wealth of material to begin this research. I am planning on spending the entire month of July 2010 in Colorado Springs, and have already made arrangements to live and work at the Glen conducting more detailed research on whatever topics need closer attention. It is my intention to read the following sources in their entirety: Trotman's personal journals; the many versions and titles of newsletters and other periodic correspondence between Trotman and Navigator staff worldwide; the unpublished monograph, *Faithful Men*; all journal articles and other published materials that Trotman wrote. It is also my intention to listen to all of the recordings of Trotman's sermons and messages and to complete the process already started by Navigator staff of making transcripts of these messages.

In the second step of my research, I will do an exegesis of the key biblical passages that Trotman used in his primary messages on disciple-making. It will, of course, not be possible to exegete every passage that Trotman mentioned in every message, letter, or journal entry, but all of the key passages will receive close scrutiny.

In the third step, I will survey secondary sources of literature produced by other Navigators, paying close attention to those people who were contemporaries of

Trotman, and giving special attention to those people Trotman personally disciplined. This phase of the research will make use of a collection of “oral histories” that The Navigators has begun assembling over the past few years. Trotman’s son still lives in the Colorado Springs area and may be available for a personal interview, although he has become estranged from The Navigators in recent years. Other surviving family and early Navigators will be contacted as necessary and appropriate. My aims in this phase of the research are to both “fill in the gaps” as much as may be possible regarding Navigator theology and methodology, and to balance my personal observations of Trotman’s views against what can be gleaned from people who knew him personally.

In the fourth step of my research, I will conduct a brief survey of scholarly writings related to the New Testament theology of discipleship and disciple-making. My aim in this phase of the research will be to derive general biblical principles with respect to a New Testament theology and methodology of discipleship.

In the last step of my research, I will analyze Trotman’s theology of disciple-making in light of exegesis of the relevant New Testament texts, and I will also analyze Trotman’s methodology in light of New Testament discipleship principles derived from both exegesis and the study of contemporary disciple-making practices. My primary analysis will be based on Scripture, but this analysis will also take into account specific aspects of Trotman’s methodology in areas not explicitly described in Scripture. My goal will be to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Trotman’s theology and methodology, and to draw conclusions regarding the fruitfulness of applying his practices within the context of the contemporary church.

Definitions

Many terms will need to be defined during the course of this research. At the present time, it is impossible to state with certainty the full range of terms that will require specific definition, but a partial list seems obvious even at this early stage.

Church, contemporary church. For the purposes of this dissertation, these terms will be used interchangeably to refer to the broad group of Western evangelical churches with which Trotman largely interacted and within which most of his ministry took place. These terms will also refer to similar churches of the present day. It is likely that these terms will require more clarification as the research progresses.

Disciple. For the purposes of this dissertation, this term will refer to any person who has made a profession of saving faith in, and who claims to now be a follower of, Jesus Christ. The dissertation will need to spell out what Trotman meant by this term, and will need to compare and contrast Trotman's understanding of this term with definitions given by New Testament scholars.

Discipleship. This term will be used in a broad and general way to refer to all of the aspects of being a disciple, including both the process of disciple-making (as defined below) and the attributes of being a disciple (as defined above).

Disciple-making. This term will be used to refer specifically to the processes and methodologies involved in teaching an individual to become and to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Evangelism (as defined below) is included as a necessary starting point in this process.

Evangelism. This dissertation will use the definition of evangelism given in article 4 of the Lausanne Covenant: "To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny

themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world.”²⁵

Follow-up. This term will be used to describe the initial actions taken to try to ensure that a newly-converted individual is given the best opportunity to begin the process of discipleship.

Limitations and Delimitations

This dissertation will be limited by the lack of precedent literature in the field of Trotman studies. There is no prior base of research upon which to build, and therefore no specific avenues for study which prior research might have suggested, and little to no basis for a comparison of conclusions between this dissertation and other scholarly works. Hence, this work will of necessity be original and unique.

This dissertation will also be limited to a select group of New Testament passages in the exegesis section. It will be impossible to examine every Bible verse that Trotman used in his writings. Limitations of length will necessitate choosing those Scripture passages which best represent the thought of Trotman, and which he used with the greatest frequency or with the most significance.

This dissertation will be delimited to the “contemporary church” as defined above. It will not be possible to generalize this study to include all churches of all of the denominations, or in all of the nations, with which Trotman worked. While The Navigator ministry extended into many lands and crossed many denominational boundaries, Trotman’s personal theology and methodology were shaped by the Christian culture and heritage in which he was brought to faith in Christ and within which the

²⁵The Lausanne Covenant [on-line], accessed 13 April 2010; available from <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant>; Internet.

greatest proportion of his ministry transpired. This, as identified above, will be generally described as “the church” or “the contemporary church,” and will be delimited to the broad middle-ground of the Western evangelical church traditions of the latter half of the 20th century.

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 - Experiential Influences
 - Core Theological Beliefs Regarding Disciple-Making
 - Summary of Trotman’s Theology of Disciple-Making

4. Trotman's Methodology of Disciple-Making (40-50 pages)

Basis of Trotman's Methodology

Interpretation and Application of Key Biblical Passages

Personal Experience

Pragmatics and Flexibility in Methods

Core Methods of Trotman's Disciple-Making

Summary of Trotman's Methodology of Disciple-Making

5. Survey of New Testament Disciple-Making Principles (40-60 pages)

New Testament Discipleship Terminology

Exegesis of New Testament Discipleship Passages

Key New Testament Disciple-Making Principles

Context for training

Personal Holiness

Service and Ministry

Knowledge of Scripture and Doctrine

Multiplication

Others (as revealed by research)

6. Critical Analysis of Trotman's Theology and Methodology (40-60 pages)

Strengths of Trotman's Theology and Methodology

Weaknesses of Trotman's Theology and Methodology

7. Conclusions (15-20 pages)

Summary of Analysis

Implications of Analysis

Avenues for Further Research

Total: 210-290 pages

In the first chapter of the dissertation, I will introduce the research question.

This chapter will include an introduction to the dissertation, a statement of the problem,

and a brief description of the background for this research, intended to illustrate both the importance of the thesis and my own interest in the field. The chapter will demonstrate that there are few effective models of discipleship in the contemporary church, and that there is no consensus with respect to a theology or methodology of disciple-making. The chapter will conclude by introducing Dawson Trotman as a significant contributor of ideas related to this field. Much of this chapter will rely upon contemporary research in the areas of church health and discipleship.

The second chapter will survey Trotman's life, ministry, and legacy. This chapter will include sections providing a general biography, an overview of the impact of his teachings on other Christian organizations, and a brief discussion of the ways in which his teachings were spread throughout the contemporary church. This chapter will rely heavily upon information found in the published Trotman biographies, oral histories and interviews, and supplemental material in The Navigator archives.

The third chapter will examine Trotman's theology of disciple-making. This chapter will utilize primary sources as much as possible to present the most significant biblical passages that Trotman used. This chapter will also examine other sources of influence on Trotman's theology, including his cultural and historical setting and his experiences in ministry and at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA). From these sources, his core principles related to a theology of disciple-making will be derived. A final section will summarize the findings of this chapter.

The fourth chapter will examine Trotman's methodology of disciple-making. This chapter will utilize primary sources as much as possible to present his interpretation and application of specific biblical passages related to his disciple-making methodology. This chapter will also look at other sources of influence on his methodology, including relevant personal experiences and the appropriation of the practices of other Christians. From this examination, the primary aspects of Trotman's methodology of disciple-making will be identified. A final section will summarize the findings of this chapter.

The fifth chapter will survey New Testament scholarship related to the principles of disciple-making. The first section will examine key New Testament terminology related to discipleship. The second section will provide exegesis of key New Testament passages related to discipleship. From these two sections, a third section will summarize primary New Testament discipleship principles as revealed by the survey and exegesis. This chapter will rely heavily upon secondary sources in the areas of exegesis, Christian education and disciple-making, and the history and functions of parachurch groups.

The sixth chapter will analyze and critique Trotman's theology and methodology of disciple-making in light of the survey of New Testament scholarship and the exegesis of key texts. This chapter will include evaluations of the way that Trotman used particular New Testament passages with respect to discipleship, and it may identify New Testament passages related to discipleship that Trotman did not refer to in articulating his theology or methodology. The purpose of this chapter will be to identify significant strengths and weaknesses of Trotman's methodology from a theological perspective.

The final chapter will summarize the research, present conclusions, and offer insight regarding the implications of this study. The researcher will offer specific recommendations regarding the application of Trotman's methodology in the contemporary church. The study will conclude with suggestions for further research in Trotman studies.

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