

Top Insights on “Movemental Intelligence” from the Motus Dei “MQ” Symposium - by Scott S

In May 2025, the second gathering of the [Motus Dei](#) research [network](#), held in Northern Cyprus, brought together movement leaders, theologians, and researchers from multiple silos in the Global South and North to pool diverse perspectives to increase the “movemental intelligence” (MQ) in the body of Christ.

Presentations over two full days and two half days included topics such as a taxonomy of movement intelligence, panel of movement leaders, a collaborative statement on movements, movemental DNA, leadership and structure in movements, the role of discovery, second-generation sustainability in movements, and assessing movements (in addition to a number of breakouts).

Below is a snapshot of the most valuable insights and implications which I personally gleaned from the presentations and conversations during and after the symposium. They synthesize many thoughts shared by others, integrated with my own interpretation and perspective regarding what I feel to be the most fruitful ways forward for understanding and practicing movements. (For brevity, I do not cite or support every claim below, though I cite throughout some of the people at the symposium from whom some of the insights emerged or were inspired.)

1. **Churches and movements of Jesus should not be centered on “church,” “missions,” or even “movements” – but on *Jesus Christ himself*.** Any movement needs a rallying cry, a cause to unite around. If any movement is to be an authentic movement of Jesus, then it must have the same center as his movement, which is *the message and the reality that Jesus is the crucified, risen, and reigning Lord of the cosmos* (A. Hirsch). In our world of branding, Christian organizations, and sub-kingdoms, each seek to carve out their own niche, values, and philosophy, at times competing for influence, personnel, and resources. However, an authentic church or movement of Jesus must not be *centered* on any sub-cause, whether numerical growth, a church brand, or even “movements” themselves (as good as these things may be). Authentic churches and movements of Jesus should be centered around *the cosmos-changing reality of the living, reigning Christ who died, rose, and is coming again*.
2. **Indigenous movement leaders talk about movements in ways which deepen, nuance, and enhance the understanding of movements we have encountered in Western movement authors and trainers.** For two decades, the primary perspective on movements came primarily from American authors and trainers (e.g., Garrison, Watson, Trousdale, etc.). Indigenous movement leaders themselves, however, have recently started writing and speaking, sharing their perspectives on their movements ([V. John](#), [A. Tasse](#), [Aychi B.R.](#)). Their missiology has a greater emphasis on prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit over technique (A. Parmar, Tsega B.R.).¹ It is a missiology of story, parable, and metaphor and less abstract, universal principles (A. Tasse, W. Watkins). It emphasizes greater flexibility and diversity of adaptation rather than the implementing a set formula (Aychi B.R., Watkins). It is less confrontational and more respectful toward existing church structures (Aychi B.R.). It is focused less on outside labels placed on movements and more on

¹ “We innovate in movements by following the lead of the Holy Spirit” (paraphrase, Tsega B.R.). “Are we in the business of directing God to do our will/task or listening to God and fulfilling his will/task?” (A. Parmar).

the perspective of simple faith and obedience of ordinary, everyday disciples who are loving, following, and sharing Jesus in their community (A. Tasse, C. Sah).

3. **Movements cannot be put in a box or a formula, and they do not grow at the same rate everywhere** (Aychi B.R.).² Though exceptions exist, movements have *generally speaking* gained more traction in the Global South rather than the Global North, in collectivistic rather than individualistic cultures, in rural rather than urban communities, and in places of natural population growth rather than decline (Hartman, Watkins). This does not mean that movement principles are not relevant or should not be pursued in urban, individualistic, and/or Global North contexts. It does mean, however, that we should not expect movements to look the same, or grow at the same rate, in all contexts. There is much more to be learned about how to adapt our practice in urbanizing contexts, for example.
4. **Movement thinking and practice is best understood and practiced as a “wisdom tradition” rather than a “law tradition.”** Biblical genres include both “law” (e.g., Leviticus, Deuteronomy, the Great Commandment) and “wisdom” (e.g., Proverbs, Ecclesiastes). “Law” articulates universal imperatives with an obligation to obey in any and every context. “Wisdom” articulates practical insights, learned through experience, which are true generally, but which must be applied – and sometimes deviated from – depending on time and place (inspired by convo with C.Hartman; implications my own). The biblical wisdom tradition is of course more than *simply* experiential insight; it also includes an overarching biblical framework. But misinterpreting wisdom as law risks creating unnecessary obligation/guilt, false expectations, and unwise practice (e.g., Prov. 26:4-5). Movements themselves have been observed at times to deviate from some of the assumed “laws” of movements. What has sometimes been understood as universal law (“do X or you will not get a movement”) is more properly understood as practical *wisdom* which has worked *generally* in *multiple* (but not all) contexts. This has important implications for how we understand, communicate, and apply movement principles & practices.
5. **We need to get behind the outsider labels and terminologies to see discipleship, churches, and movements through the eyes of the everyday believers who are falling in love with Jesus, obeying their Father, and bringing their family and communities to Jesus.** There is much discussion, debate, and dissension regarding the meaning, definition, and missiological value of various terms, concepts, and frameworks. While these terms and concepts have value and their place, we must not allow a fixation with specific terms or brands of movement practice to allow these outsider concepts to eclipse the insider perspective of ordinary believers loving Jesus, obeying their Father, and spreading good news in the spontaneous expansion of Christ’s church (A. Tasse, N. Cole).
6. **Reproduction is part of God’s design for creation and for kingdom expansion.** God designed his creation such that living things grow through reproduction. Healthy plants, animals, and human beings reproduce themselves. Every acorn contains the potential for a tree, and every tree contains the potential for a forest (A. Hirsch). Similarly, God designed the church to grow through reproduction—and every disciple and church has all that it needs to reproduce disciples and churches. Movemental discipleship involves discerning the “blockers” and “boosters” to the latent potential in every disciple and church, helping to nurture, unleash, and channel that potential toward healthy disciples making disciples and

² “One movement myth is putting it in a formula/box. Movement cannot be boxed” (paraphrase, Aychi B.R.)

churches planting churches (R. Robinson). Understanding disciple/church reproduction in light of natural reproduction in creation yields a rich metaphor, preferable to business or mechanistic metaphors, and better understood in the cultures in which we serve.

7. **Organic systems and structures that nurture vitality are needed in churches, organizations, and movements.** Institutionalization can stifle or miss out on the Spirit's movement, while anti-institutional thinking can fail to preserve a movement for the next generation (W. Watkins). A wise approach recognizes that movements require some structure, as is evident in several established movements (A. Tasse, V. John). This structure, however, should be simple (not bureaucratic/complicated), flexible (not frozen), and oriented toward nurturing/preserving the life-giving vitality of the Spirit in everyday disciples loving and following Jesus (not preserving the institution itself). The goal is an "organic system," in which the church organizes itself not like a corporation but like a living organism. A helpful metaphor is a human body, whose atoms and molecules are in constant change, and yet has physical and bodily systems that give it unity, identity, and integration, along with flexibility and mobility to live, move, and grow in the world. Rather than a rigid hierarchy, movemental structures are decentralized such that the outer edges of the network remain productive (A. Hirsch, R. Robinson). This understanding of organic systems has implications not only for our CPM vision but also for the organizations that we participate in.
8. **Discovery Bible Study is one pedagogical tool for inculcating Scripture's authority, sufficiency, and perspicuity. It teaches disciples to be (a) listeners to God, (b) doers of the Word, and (c) bearers of good news. DBS does not stand alone, however, but can and should be supplemented by other pedagogical activities to ensure healthy DNA (e.g., clarifying the gospel).** DBS is an influential tool which is understood and applied differently in different movement approaches. The underlying rationale and limits of DBS are sometimes not well understood, however. Some understand DBS to be "anti teaching" or to exist in a vacuum with no other pedagogical activity. However, DBS itself is a medium for teaching & learning (C. Hartman & New Gen.), and it should take place in the context of other pedagogical activities and relationships to guide, resource, and buttress a growing understanding of and response to the gospel, healthy discipleship, church, and leadership. This includes (among other things) close mentoring relationships with emerging indigenous leaders, training events with structured and guided study on critical topics, theological education for some leaders, and occasionally (in some movements) didactic teaching to supplement discovery studies.
9. **God's unconditional love in Christ and loving obedience to God must be rightly integrated in the DNA for healthy discipleship in movements.** Part of the power behind movements is found in the power of ordinary people actually and regularly obeying the word of God. Movement approaches counter a "gospel lite" which so emphasizes grace that obedience to God and taking up our cross is merely optional rather than the norm for disciples. Movement approaches counter this through forming community rhythms of loving accountability for applying Scripture (C. Hartman & New Gen.). This critical recovery of the power of obedience must be integrated, however, with a growing understanding of our identity as adopted sons and daughters loved unconditionally by the Father (A. Tasse). Healthy discipleship is built on the reality that our identity and status in Christ does not *depend upon* our obedience; rather, our obedience is a *response to* and *flows from* our identity in Christ and in his unconditional love and grace (cf. Rom. 12:1-3, Col. 3:1-5). As with the prodigal son, our Father loves and accepts us *in spite of* our failures to obey (Luke 15:11-32). This unconditional love of the Father does not excuse our

disobedience but itself motivates and obligates us to obey and please our Father – not as a mere option, but as the norm for children of God (A. Tasse, cf. John 15:9-10).

10. **Responsible, healthy assessment of disciples and churches can be a fruitful tool to encourage learning, coaching, and growth in fruitful practice in a growing movement.** Rather than gathering data simply for the sake of outsiders, the primary goal must be for the learning and growth of church/movement leaders (L. Corley & New Gen.). Many of us inhabit secular, late-modern cultures captivated by metaphors of “return on investment” and a will to control. Thus we should avoid misusing assessment practices to seek in any way to control, manufacture, or monetize the movement of God. If done wisely, however, assessment and evaluation can be a healthy expression of our God-given responsibility and opportunity to “know the condition of our flocks” (L. Corley), assisting us in knowing how to be faithful stewards and shepherds of those whom God has entrusted to us.
11. **A focus on the expansion of movements (*quantity*) must be combined with a focus on their sustainability (*quality*).** God grows his church not only through disciple reproduction but also through passing on the faith to the next *biological* generation – disciples making disciples of their children, passing on the faith to the youth (P. Brittenden, D. Garrison, Soroush). The church planting movements in the book of Acts were themselves susceptible to losing their first love (Rev. 2:4), forgetting the true gospel (Gal. 1:6), and spiritual decay (Rev. 3:1). This fact does not undermine the God-glorifying nature of the explosive expansion of the church (2 Thess 3:1, Col. 1:6), nor does it absolve us from laboring for maturity of disciples and churches (Col. 1:28-29). Rather than choosing/prioritizing one over the other (quality vs. quantity), how can we reject this false choice and pursue both simultaneously? The Moravians and the Methodist movements both had an impact in the mission of God; however, the Moravian movement no longer exists, while the Methodist movement continues in some form to this day. If we want to nurture movements that are wide (quantity), deep (quality), and long (enduring), how should that impact the way we make disciples right now? (D. Greenlee)
12. **The collective intelligence of the global body of Christ – men & women, Global South & North, elders and youth, Hindu and Muslim backgrounds, “DMM” and “T4T”, movemental and institutional churches, APEs (apostle/prophets/evangelists) and STs (shepherds/teachers) – are *all* needed to mature, deepen, and enhance our participation in the mission/movement of God** (A. Amberg, A. Parmar, D. Garrison).³ We experienced a glimpse of this at the consultation, as we pooled our unique perspectives and saw how they complemented, chastened, and sharpened one another. This is not always comfortable; sometimes truth needs to be spoken in love, perspectives need to be challenged, and confession needs to happen. But accepting one another as brothers and sisters in the body, a willingness to both receive and offer insight, and an ethos of love and mutual blessing, enables us to collectively help one another grow closer toward completeness in Christ in our faith and obedience (Eph. 4:11-13).

³ “Let’s not argue about who is right/wrong in legacy vs movement; let God decide who is right. Let us help each other, focusing on the Great Commission. We can do more together than apart” (paraphrase, A. Parmar).