

MOMENTUM BUILDING IN GLOBAL MISSIONS

■ The complex details of the unfinished task have filled scores of pages in books and articles in the past two decades. Most of us desire someone to "sum it all up" so we can gain at least a basic understanding of frontier missions. In the next few pages find a cogent summation of God's plan for all peoples.

By Ralph D. Winter

Amazing developments took place during the 15-year period between the first International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974, and "Lausanne II" at Manila in 1989. We have begun to see more clearly than ever, for example, that we cannot merely focus upon the winning of individuals, but must, along with that fundamental effort, unlock the cultural puzzle of the *group* to which an individual belongs, so that a church movement can be planted within which that individual can grow and reach others in his group. And then it has been clarified that if groups must be taken into account we need to go on to ask what kinds and sizes of groups are to be dealt with, and can working with groups help us evaluate our progress in world evangelization? Then, finally, how can the global Christian movement, go about dividing up that all-important task?

Thus, it seems that we can now describe efficiently 1) the significant background of our present thinking, 2) the very nature of missionary endeavor, 3) the key definitions of the kinds of peoples which deserve highest priority, 4) the good and not-so-good methods for the measurement of progress toward our goals, and 5) a spectacular method for promoting the completion of the task. We can do this under the following points:

- 1) The Background of Current Thinking
- 2) The Method: Pioneer Church Planting
- 3) The Target: Unreached Peoples
- 4) Measurements of Progress
- 5) Promoting the Effort

1. The Background of Current Thinking

We'll first glance at the distant background of our discussion, and then specifically at the results of a very special Lausanne-sponsored meeting in 1982.

A. An Overview

1. *The Old Testament*. An important aspect of the development of the Unreached Peoples concept is portrayed centrally in the period of the Old Testament. We now have a new understanding of what the Bible has been talking about all along. The whole Bible talks of the peoples of the earth. At the very beginning, just beyond Genesis 1-11 (which constitutes a general introduction to the whole Bible), right in Genesis 12 we are introduced to the plan of the ages—the commissioning of Abraham through whom all the peoples of the earth will be blessed. This throbbing theme then unifies the Bible into a single book on planetary redemption, beginning in the promised land and moving out to the ends of the earth. We see this theme again and again all through the Old Testament.

It is crucial to note that the key word, *blessing*, refers foundationally to *family membership*—an interdependent, *obedient relationship* with the living God, our heavenly *Father*, not a worldly basket of personal, independence-creating blessings in the usual sense of the English word. It is a concept which not only links us with a Father in heaven but also with our fathers and brothers and sisters and children on earth, or surrogates thereof. This is not just an individual salvation, which is sometimes the reductionism of our wonderful Pietist heritage. It is somehow also the reclaiming of the

peoples of the earth.

2. *The New Testament and Beyond*. In the New Testament and in the history of the expansion of the Church following the events of the Bible, we have gained a new appreciation of what earlier missionary efforts have encountered, and how missionaries have reacted to the realities of actual mission field experience, the peoples of the earth to whom we are sent. The fascinating twists and turns of these experiences especially within the last century, have been treated in some detail in my chapter in the book *Unreached Peoples*, edited by Harvie Conn (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1983).

3. *From Lausanne I to Edinburgh 1980*. The World Consultation on Frontier Missions in 1980 was strictly a meeting of mission agencies and their delegates. On the world level no meeting of this kind had been held since the previous meeting in Edinburgh in 1910. This meeting drew delegates from more agencies than were represented in 1910, and vastly more from the third world, namely 88 delegates from 57 such agencies. While some "Two-Thirds World" agencies existed in 1910, their category was not clearly understood, and their leaders (such as Bishop Azariah, who founded two of them) came as the delegates of Western agencies! This meeting adopted as a "watchword" the slogan, "A Church for Every People by the Year 2000." It also provided promoted the concept of "A Hidden People" in terms of the presence or absence of a viable, indigenous, evangelizing church movement.

4. *From Edinburgh 1980 to Chicago 1982*. Events rapidly accelerated during the eight years between Lausanne '74

and a Lausanne-sponsored meeting in Chicago in March of 1982, the result of the initiative of Ed Dayton and the Lausanne Strategy Working Group. Many of those details are also in the Conn chapters just mentioned. In particular, there was the desire to blend the terminology of *Unreached Peoples*, having less than 20% believers, coming from the Strategy Working Group of the Lausanne Committee, and *Hidden Peoples*, having less than a viable church movement, coming from Edinburgh. This merger happened at the Chicago '82 meeting. Essentially the phrase from Lausanne, *Unreached Peoples*, was given the definition that had been attached to *Hidden Peoples*, at Edinburgh in 1980, and it was suggested that the latter phrase be dropped, its meaning continued under the other phrase. All this is described in detail in the Conn book mentioned above.

5. *From Chicago 1982 to Lausanne II, in 1989.* In the following seven years still further developments took place. This paper will concentrate on those seven years, which build on the solid foundation of that unique meeting of the minds at Chicago in 1982. Thus, it would seem logical to summarize briefly what was accomplished at that meeting before going on to describe what followed.

B. The Unreached Peoples Meeting of March 1982

A fine example of the catalytic power of the Lausanne movement was the timeliness and widely representative nature of the meeting in 1982. At no time before or since this meeting has as large or as representative a group gathered for two days to focus specifically upon the necessary definitions for a strategy to reach the unreached peoples. (The full document presenting the results, prepared by Edward Dayton, is published in the *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, Vol 2:1, January 1985).

Two basic definitions came from this meeting:

1. **A People Group** is "a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc. or combinations of these." For evangelistic purposes it is "the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering

barriers of understanding or acceptance."

(Note for later reference that the elements of "largest" or maximum sized and sufficiently "unified" to be without insuperable barriers, underlies the alternate name for this kind of group, namely, a **unimax** group. Note also that the first part of the definition is a basis of the phrase **sociopeople**.)

2. **An Unreached People Group** is "a people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group."

(Note for later reference: the word church does not appear here, giving rise to those who feel this must refer to church planting and those who feel it does not need to.)

The following additional terms were also agreed upon as a series of reasonable steps in the process of reaching a people group. I have added my own abbreviated descriptions.

1. **Reported**—a group is *reported* to exist.

2. **Verified**—a group is *verified* to exist.

3. **Evaluated**—that is, how large is the group; what previous evangelization? Etc.

4. **Selected** (or "targeted")—a group has been *selected* by a mission agency for later work.

5. **Supported** (or "adopted")—the necessary resources of prayer, manpower, and money have been pledged.

6. **Engaged**—work has begun on site or in specific "non-residential" endeavor.

7. **Reached**—the group has been *reached* by the the definition above.

Further on in this paper, I will refer to these terms in the process of dealing with the more pragmatic questions of the concept of "Closure," which defines the completion of the task, and the "Adopt-A-People" movement which seeks to bring implementation to the task.

Within a few weeks of the conclusion of the March, 1982 meeting, the Lausanne Strategy Working Group, in the attempt to make the *People Group* definition from March more useful, removed the phrase, "as a church planting movement." Furthermore, they chose not to accept the thought of most of those at the March meeting,

that the other definition, for an *Unreached People Group*, spoke of planting a church. The value of this was to open up two significant levels of mission strategy, the **Preliminary Evangelism** of groups that are not really ideal candidates for church planting (involving whole families), call them **sociopeoples**, and the standard **Church-Planting Evangelism** of the generally larger groups where it is impellingly appropriate to plant congregational life, call these groups **unimax** groups.

But before going on to deal with these two major strategies, and the two kinds of groups to which they relate, let us pause to take a look at a different approach, which correlates, but does not correlate perfectly, to the concept of planting the church in every group appropriate to that endeavor.

C. Barrett's Index of Evangelization

In 1983 the massive *World Christian Encyclopedia* (David Barrett, Editor, Oxford University Press) appeared. It was too close in time to the Chicago '82 meeting for those results to be reported, but it did present a fascinating new concept which Barrett described, in part, as "an index for measuring the extent or level of evangelization" of a given country, city, or other grouping. Since 1983 this concept has been intensively used in his own "World Evangelization Data Base," which is often quoted.

It would seem helpful right here to point out differences between Barrett's use of this Index and the concept of *reaching* which was so carefully defined by the group meeting in Chicago in 1982.

Barrett's index, which ranges from 1 to 100, and is often used to reflect the level of evangelization in a given country, is built out of a consideration of 206 factors, such as the percentage of "practicing Christians of all denominations," 22 "Background characteristics favouring evangelization," such as the existence of Bible distribution, Christian radio, etc., 23 "Hindrances to evangelization," such as conditions of oppression of Christianity, poverty, inflation, etc., 114 kinds of "Direct Contributions" to evangelization, 38 "Indirect Contributions," and 10 other factors, the final one being the possible presence of groups sealed off from the degree of evangelization in other communities in

the same country. If such populations constitute 15% of the country then the index cannot go higher than 85, etc.

This approach is an excellent method of reducing to a single index a welter of factors which reflect evangelizing energies in a given locality. It allows all of the countries of the world to be ranked by a single index. It is a good way to answer the question "how evangelized is such and such a country?" But it can be misunderstood. If a country has an index of 20, that does not necessarily mean that 20% of the people have been evangelized properly.

It could mean that all of the people have been evangelized inadequately. Two countries which have the same index, say 40, may have been pegged with that index due to strikingly different events or conditions in those two countries.

It is clear that if a country has an index of 40, or whatever, this does not necessarily reveal anything specific for any one sub-population within that country, especially an unreached people (as defined in 1982) which is, by definition, lacking many crucial conditions within it.

Finally, it must be understood that, if by this index Japan has an index of 70, and if people draw the conclusion or employ the terminology that "Japan is now 70% evangelized," this would be an improper conclusion, especially if it were understood to mean that 70% of the Japanese citizens had had an adequate opportunity to say "yes" to Jesus Christ. The index means exactly what it is defined to mean, and that is all. It is, in David Barrett's words a matter of "Comparative Demographic Evangelization." A country, first of all, is not a *people* of the type referred to by the March 1982 definition, and if it has a Barrett Index of 31, it is not necessarily reached by the March '82 definition. This will be discussed in further detail below.

2. The Method: Pioneer Church Planting

(Or, is winning individuals good enough?)

By the time of the huge meeting at Lausanne in 1974, a substantial consensus among mission scholars had been reached, mainly through the

influence of the teaching of Donald A. McGavran—namely, that merely evangelizing individuals is not a good enough mission strategy.

Winning people to personal obedience and allegiance to Jesus Christ is a concept that is absolutely basic in the entire evangelical movement. It is the foundational and unshakeable platform on which all other endeavors must be built. But in the last few decades, the Navigators, for example, have put great emphasis upon the need for "follow up." More recently an echoing emphasis upon discipleship is seen in our churches, recognizing that the initial decision is merely the beginning of a process as important as the first step. Proliferating evangelistic models in the last two decades all seem to stress the importance of what happens beyond the winning of persons, namely, the accountability between individuals in disciplined Bible studies or "support groups." Groups come into the picture.

With similar meaning, the overall goal for most mission agencies is nowadays most often stated as *the planting of the church*. McGavran's thinking has emphasized the fact that we cannot say that we have genuinely given a person an opportunity to accept Christ if that person does not have the

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opportunity to become incorporated into a warm, living, loving accountable fellowship of his own people, a structure which McGavran would prefer to call a "church."

This precise emphasis stood behind the wording of the definition of "reaching" a people that was hammered out by the Lausanne-sponsored meeting of March 1982, already mentioned, namely, An *unreached people group* is "a people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group,"

substantially the wording emerging from the World Consultation on Frontier Missions, in Edinburgh in 1980.

If properly to give a person the opportunity to "say yes" to Jesus Christ requires the planting of an accountable church fellowship, it is obvious that this requirement defines a fairly lofty goal for our evangelizing method. At the same time we must recognize that we can often approach this lofty goal most efficiently by going at it *indirectly* through an intermediate step we may call *preliminary evangelism*. This intermediate step will then introduce us to a another kind of group—one that is not really a candidate for the planting of a church movement, but nevertheless, whose penetration by *preliminary evangelism* may actually be a strategic pathway to a larger kind of group which IS a candidate for a full-blown church movement. And, under our next major point, we'll need to tussle with terminology to distinguish these two different kinds of groups.

A. Preliminary Evangelism—within "Sociopeoples"

The very best way to plant a church is often to begin a Bible study, a Navigator discipling relationship, or a small prayer group within some relatively small group of people with natural affinity for each other—such as

women washing at a stream, businessmen at lunch, college students living in dorms, new arrivals in the big city from a particular rural group, or military men separated from their families. Let's take three examples.

Two of the most celebrated examples of *church planting* flowing from evangelistic work typifying this kind of *preliminary evangelism* would certainly be found in the story of the amazing growth of Christianity in Korea. In Korea, as a providential supplement to direct, intentional church planting, there have been two powerful mechanisms exemplifying *preliminary evangelism*, each functioning, not directly but indirectly, in the planting of thousands of churches and the development of hundreds of thousands of wonderful Christians within those churches.

One example has been evangelism within the Korean military world, where virtually all of the male popula-

tion growing up is required to spend a certain transitional period of time. For at least 40 years, such military experience has brought young men from all over Korea into an environment where close to 50% of the people, including virtually all of the military leaders, have been fervent Christians! This factor is often given credit in discussions of the phenomenon of church growth in Korea.

A second, slightly less well known phenomenon, but with equally gargantuan impact on the runaway story of Christianity in Korea, is the existence of the so-called Bible Club Movement. This movement brought together young people in small towns and village settings in what we would call grade-school and high-school classes, all conducted in a high-quality Biblical and evangelistic environment. The movement (as with the early Sunday School movement in Britain) has been a type of Boy Scouts of America emphasizing fundamental education not just Bible studies (despite the name Bible Club Movement). Somehow the people of Korea acquired major motivation in the area of schooling, and even non-Christian parents encouraged their young people to be involved in a school/club movement like this, whether or not a Christian testimony would result. The social momentum of this movement has created thousands of schools, many of which have become stable, formal, notable institutions—a fact which may not be as important as the spiritual impact on the young people involved. Nationwide festivals involving close to a quarter of a million young people have taken place in the history of this movement.

In American history we see a third and somewhat similar phenomenon, only occasionally discussed by church growth enthusiasts, namely, the relatively sudden emergence of church-based youth fellowships in American church life, taken for granted today, but at the time something novel when compared to the form of Christianity inherited from Europe. In 1881, the first youth fellowship known to have been organized formally within a local congregation was started by a woman interested in imbuing young people with a missionary vision, herself the product of an equally amazing movement generating thousands of "Women's Missionary

Societies" in local congregations.

The youth phenomenon itself is a fantastic story. Within months, many other local congregations adopted the same youth fellowship pattern, and in ten years an interdenominational rally of young people associated with Christian Endeavor, as the movement was called, brought 30,000 together at the Madison Square Garden in New York City. Four years later 56,000 registered for a week of meetings in Boston, practically gridlocking the city for that period, overflowing into 25 auditoriums from tents that held 10,000. In a short time the movement not only planted 60,000 youth fellowships in the U.S. but an equal number overseas in a movement which today is still in 80 countries of the world, numbering over a million young people!

Thus, whether we consider the special sub-world of the military, village schools, or church-based youth fellowships, it is clear that *preliminary evangelism* of the kind that generates accountable Christian fellowship within affinity groups, while merely preliminary to church planting, is a nevertheless a highly strategic thing. Along this line, John Robb's little book, *The Power of People Group Thinking*, (MARC, 1989), is a marvelous exploration of the potent evangelistic value of accountable Christian fellowships established within social groupings of the type which are not usually to be considered candidates for full-blown church planting. It would be very unfortunate if this level of strategy—*preliminary evangelism* of sociologically defined groups—were unintentionally downplayed or in any way ignored by the concern for church planting, which is where preliminary evangelism can effectively lead.

B. Church Planting Evangelism—within "Unimax" peoples

On the other hand, we must uphold also the importance of going beyond such preliminary efforts. Most mission leaders agree that God intends that all of those who "Say Yes" to Jesus Christ should be introduced to something more than the mere "fellowship" of peers. The master image of salvation in the Bible, as we have already mentioned, is the re-creation of the family of God. The fellowship of the church must offer renewed and vital relationships within one's own biological

family, if at all possible, as the first priority of all evangelistic concern. But in addition, or, if necessary, as a second-best substitute, the church offers a surrogate family—a potentially marvelous *cluster of families* that edify and uphold one another. New believers must necessarily, not optionally, be involved in the process of re-establishing a Biblical relationship with both their earthly parents and their heavenly father. For new believers to have to settle for peer or vocational fellowship (however Christian and vital such things are as preliminary steps in an ongoing fellowship) must be considered a desperately incomplete answer.

Thus we must applaud and uphold the ultimate significance of church planting and all that phrase implies. At the same time, we must also recognize that *the planting of a church fellowship*, which heals and holds together both biological and surrogate family structures, is considerably more complicated than many forms of *preliminary evangelism*, even though church planting is basically quite natural and not difficult because of its divine design. Even so, the church family is a considerably more sophisticated vehicle for salvation than a vocational fellowship. Dr. McGavran may be right that unless an individual is able to "say yes" to Jesus Christ and become thereby incorporated into such a genuinely church fellowship, our missionary and evangelistic efforts have not offered that person the full gospel.

It is important to realize that such a "lofty" church-planting goal is one of the most essential concepts in world evangelization—especially as we will go on to ask ourselves just what is the *minimum mission achievement* (or "missiological breakthrough"). Dr. McGavran would go even further. He is not content with "a" congregation. He is not sure we have done our job unless within every society there is a fully indigenous church *movement* which others within that society (even outside of the church) acknowledge to belong to that society, because it is so fully indigenous. His now classical phrase for this kind of a goal is the establishment of a "people movement to Christ." It is likely that we should settle for nothing less, and that what he means by a *people movement* is what should be defined as the *minimum mission achievement*, e.g. the

"missiological breakthrough."

At least I personally am convinced that we must hold this concept of a *people movement* as the essential minimum achievement within a society in order to fulfill our obligation to make it possible for everyone in the world to say "yes" to Jesus Christ. Furthermore, I believe this is the concept that was intended by the phraseology of the Lausanne-sponsored meeting of March 1982, in which it was said that an unreached people can be defined as one in which a group does not yet have a community of believers able to evangelize its own people without outside help.

As soon as we emphasize *the family nature of the church*, it becomes clear that such a church movement is not immediately possible if all we are doing is what I have already referred to as the "preliminary evangelism within affinity groups (sociopeoples)." Thus it becomes clear that we need to spend a little time reflecting on the nature of, 1) those human groups which are candidates for a full-blown "people movement" by comparison to, 2) those groups which are merely potential bridges leading to the usually larger, all-ages groups, which are candidates for full blown church-planting efforts. [For the sake of reference, fellowships within the former, I (and others before me) have called *sodalities*; while fellowships within the latter I have (and no one else has) called *modalities*.]

3. The Target: Unreached Peoples

One of the landmark efforts since Lausanne 1974 is the book entitled *Clarifying the Task*, by Harvey Shreck and David Barrett. In this book, it becomes eminently clear that it is both feasible and important to target groups of both kinds. Those which are candidates for full-blown church movements are referred to as "ethno-linguistic peoples" while those which are merely candidates for affinity evangelism (or what I have here called *preliminary evangelism*) are called simply "people groups." It may in fact be hard to remember to make a distinction between "peoples" and "people groups," since there is nothing inherent in the two phrases that would tend to

indicate any particular difference. But the explanation in the book of the nature and relevance of both kinds of groups is both clear and impressive. That is, **the two concepts, by whatever name, are crucial.** (In one of my writings, for example, I flew the trial balloon of *people groups* and *bridge groups*, the latter being bridges to the former, within which a church movement is appropriate. For the moment let us speak of *sociopeoples* for "the taxi drivers of Taipei" and *ethnolinguistic peoples* for, say, the Colorado Indians of Ecuador.

1. *Sociopeoples: smaller, overlapping groups.* For one thing, these two different types of groups really are two radically different concepts. Affinity

If one would count every individual in the world separately in each and every group to which an individual belongs, he would end up with a huge number many times larger than the world's population. On the other hand it would also be possible to categorize each person in the world within the one group in which that person would appear most likely to be reachable...

groups typically overlap, such that it is readily possible, say, for a rural woman to be part of group that washes clothes at the river and also be involved in a group that produces a certain type of textiles. Or, an urban man can meet with one group at lunch and another group in an exercise program and still a third group in hunting expeditions.

Preliminary evangelism can exploit any one of these groups as the opportunity presents itself. Missionaries with special interests and vocation skills will find it only natural to pursue their particular skills and interests, and do so in *preliminary evangelism*. There are hundreds of thousands of potential avenues for this kind of *preliminary evangelism* in our world today. However, trying to count up such sociopeoples would not be easy, due to the degree of virtually omnipresent overlap.

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in the world separately in each and every group to which an individual belongs, he would end up with a huge number many times larger than the world's population. On the other hand it would also be possible to categorize each person in the world *within the one group in which that person would appear most likely to be reachable*, in which case you end up not only with exactly the world population of individuals, but with a discrete, countable number of non-overlapping groups in which all of the world's individuals are counted only once. Some have hazarded the guess there are hundreds of thousands of such groups.

2. *Ethno-linguistic peoples: larger, non-overlapping groups.* On the other hand, groups within which the family-life structure of the church can properly be born and flourish are much more likely to count people only once—although there are no doubt millions of individuals who find themselves halfway between two different ethno-linguistic groups and able to function as natives in either group.

But the more important question is whether or not a given group happens to be the kind appropriate for a full-blown, church-planting movement which could result in a "people movement." If so, such a group must then contain natural families involving all ages, and such a group will often tend to be larger than many of the overlapping sociopeoples, although not always. This is why the Lausanne meeting in March of '82 proposed in its terminology that this second kind of group is the "*Largest group within which it is possible for the gospel to spread as a church-planting movement without encountering barriers of acceptance or understanding.*" Note that this definition emphasized two things: 1) the potential for church planting (and the full-blown family relationships which that requires) and 2) the absence of barriers of understanding and acceptance. (Once again, since this definition points to groups which are the *maximum* in size still sufficiently *unified* to be reached with one missiological breakthrough, I suggested, at the IFMA meeting in the fall of 1982, that we might call these

groups *Unimax Groups*. Note also the phrase, *missiological breakthrough*—we'll be using that later.)

As we have seen, later on, in 1982, the Lausanne Strategy Working Group decided it would be helpful to launch a definition which did not emphasize the need for family relationships within evangelistic efforts but merely the absence of barriers of understanding and acceptance. This desire produced a definition which would apply to the generally smaller, overlapping, sociologically definable affinity groups as well as to the generally larger, mostly non-overlapping, ethno-linguistic groups. In order to deal with the smaller groups, the phrase "*as a church-planting movement*" was removed in order to accomplish this purpose and to implement the high strategy of what we have called here "preliminary evangelism" in sociologically defined groups. It is probably true that the majority of those gathered in March of '82 felt it more important to define the kind of group which is a *church-planting target* than the kind of group which is a *preliminary evangelism target*. But at this point in history, it is important to understand that both are highly strategic.

In any event, both definitions for both kinds of groups stress the fundamental importance of efficient communication within the group, undisrupted by barriers of acceptance or understanding. Groups are understood as, among other things, efficient "communication basins."

It is equally obvious that, depending upon which kind of group you are counting, you will arrive at radically different totals.

3. *Micro, mini, macro and mega "peoples."* A further strategic dimension involves the fact that once one group has been penetrated by a church planting movement, neighboring groups that are culturally very similar, even if highly antagonistic, may possibly be reachable by the same mission structure, e.g. expatriate missionaries, whether or not individuals from the first group may be willing to be involved in outreach to a similar but alienated group. This fact gives rise to the distinctions between E-1, E-2 and E-3 evangelism, and recognizes that "language families" like Cantonese, contain dozens of major dialects that are linguistically close cousins, but are suffi-

ciently different to be mutually unintelligible, some of them including millions of people.

It would be an underestimation of the remaining task to count the Cantonese as a single group, e.g. a single unimax group, needing a single missiological breakthrough. We can be glad that, as a matter of fact, every single one of the 26 major Cantonese groups now has within it an effective "people movement to Christ." Since Cantonese is not and never was a single unimax (barrierless) group we may do well to call the Cantonese as a whole a macropeople. If we want to include the Cantonese along with other major families of languages such as Mandarin, Swatow, Fukien, Minnan, etc, that is, if we want a term for the entire "Han Chinese" sphere, we can call that a megapeople. Having named the larger groups, it would seem reasonable to call Unimax groups minipeoples, and the still smaller, sociologically definable, "bridge" groups, micropeoples. Employing these terms, then, we could say that the Han Chinese are a megapeople, the Cantonese a macropeople, the Toishan Cantonese a minipeople, and then clans and secret societies within the Toishan would be micropeoples—the latter being excellent targets for preliminary evangelism but not themselves candidates for a full-blown people movement. In the case of India, for example, there could be 26,000 micropeoples, but perhaps only 2,000 remaining minipeoples, within which a full-blown people movement would be necessary, through which to reach all the rest.

Christian Keysser (*A People Reborn*, Wm Carey Library, 1975) tells of winning one tribal group in Papua New Guinea from within a larger group we have called a *macropeople*, and then attempting to win a second group within that same macropeople further up the same river valley, a group whose language and culture were very similar but which was walled off by intense antagonism and prejudice. He, as a missionary, was able to go to the second village even though the believers within the first village were angrily opposed to such efforts. Although it was relatively easy for him to adjust to the differing dialect, and for him, as an outsider to adjust to, what for him were equally strange people, it was relatively hard for the people in the first group to summon the Christian grace to reach out with blessing to centuries-old enemies, not merely due to their own attitudes, but especially due to their knowledge of the specific hatred the

other group had for them. But group after group up the river valley eventually yielded to Christ, and these formerly warring ethno-linguistic groups—all part of a single macropeople—eventually coalesced into a larger Christian fellowship within which even linguistic differences gradually dissolved! This kind of coalescing is the phenomenon that has reduced an estimated 60,000 ethno-linguistic groups in A.D. 100 to say 24,000 today.

This example of a tribal village that could be "understood" by the people up the river but not readily "accepted" by them helps us to understand the rationale for the inclusion of the word "acceptance" in the 1982 definition (of a missiologically significant people group), namely, "*a people group is the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.*"

4. *Geography again—and politics.* Interestingly, the 1982 definition of people groups makes no reference to geographical barriers or political boundaries, for the important reason that the missionary task is not strategically one of surmounting geographical or political borders but barriers sealing off peoples, which are barriers of "understanding or acceptance."

An illustration of the unimportance of geography is the case of the Oromo from Ethiopia who have settled both in Seattle and in Portland, Oregon. There are a number of Christians, pastors and congregations among the 1,000 or more who are in Seattle and there is an even larger *people movement to Christ* within the Oromo who are still in Ethiopia. But in Portland, at one point in time there were only 100 Oromo, and none of them were Christians, even though on Sundays Christians from the Seattle area went down to attempt to reach them.

What is important about this illustration is to note that the evangelistic efforts of the Christian Oromo in Seattle (or in Ethiopia) to reach their own people is distinctly easier due to the existence of a *people movement to Christ* already established within their ethno-linguistic group. This is true even though within a given geographical locality there may have been no Christians at all among a group of Oromo. That is, by the 1982 definition,

The Finishable Task!							
Year (A.D.)	Total World Population (Millions)	People who do not claim to be Christians (Millions)	People who call themselves Christians (Millions)	Great Commission Christians* (out of Col # 3) (Millions)	Non-Christians per Believer (Column #2 Divided by Column #4)	Unreached People Groups	Congregations per Unreached People Group (Col #6 divided by Col #4/100)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
100	181	180	1	0.5	360 to 1	60,000	1 to 12
1000	270	220	50	1	220 to 1	50,000	1 to 5
1500	425	344	81	5	69 to 1	44,000	1 to 1
1900	1,620	1,062	558	40	27 to 1	40,000	10 to 1
1950	2,504	1,650	854	80	21 to 1	24,000	33 to 1
1980	4,458	3,025	1,433	275	11 to 1	17,000	162 to 1
1989	5,160	3,438	1,722	500	7 to 1	12,000	416 to 1
2000	6,260	4,130	2,130	1000	?	0?	?

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*Great Commission Christians is a new phrase being employed by the LCWE Statistical Task Force to refer to those believers who take seriously the Great Commission.

Col 1-4: World Christian Encyclopedia, David Barrett; Col 5-7: R.D. Winter, 3/89 (Consultants: LCWE Statistical Task Force) V3.2

the small group of Oromos in Portland could not be considered an "unreached group" even though they were geographically at some distance from Christians within their own ethnolinguistic sphere. That is, a *missiological breakthrough* had already occurred for that group. And we count one group for the Oromo, whether they are in Ethiopia or in the United States. For that group the breakthrough has taken place! They are no longer an unreached people.

This concept of whether or not a "missiological breakthrough" has occurred is so all-important that, for me, the most important single strategic question in global missions is "How many *missiological breakthroughs* are still necessary?" This is the same as asking how much more distinctly pioneer or frontier mission work is necessary. Right away, of course, the question of measurement arises, which is our next major point.

4. Measurements of Progress

(And, the concept of closure)

"This Gospel must be published in all the world, as a testimony to all peoples, and then shall the end come," (Matt. 24:14).

The word "closure" refers simply to the idea of finishing. To finish is a happy concept. To finish a task God has asked us to do is even more exciting. But nothing could be more thrilling than to talk about finishing the Great

Commission, or finishing what Jesus described in this verse in Matthew as bringing us to the end of history, whether or not that great event transpires in A.D. 2000 or sooner, or later.

"To publish this Gospel...as a testimony to all peoples" is a phrase worth pondering. Everything we have talked about relates to it. The two phrases, "minimum essential mission achievement" and "missiological breakthrough," of which we have already spoken, are both simply attempts to suggest what this Bible passage talks about.

But within this verse there are several dimensions:

A. Factors in Closure

1. **Hard or easy?** Surely the precise kind of "testimony" of which Jesus speaks is intended to be adequate to allow individuals to respond properly to the saving Gospel of Christ. Surely, as we have seen, this is not some superficial, technical achievement. And, surely it is better to deal with a serious interpretation of this phrase than a simplistic one.

2. **Resolve all problems?** On the other hand it is probably unwise to assume that along with our efforts to publish the Gospel in such a way that it is "a testimony to all peoples," we must also solve all the problems of mankind, even though pioneer mission work has almost always been made possible by the very real concern of the missionary

for the real problems people have. This is the very credibility of love.

Those who respond will become part of a global, loving family, within which all problems will be more easily solved. Those who reject what God offers will remain mired in unsolvable problems. I do not think that this phrase requiring "a testimony to all peoples," or any other statement in scripture, allows us to think that God is waiting for human beings themselves, even with the help of missionaries, to eliminate all crime, injustice, and evil before Jesus returns. If so, then why does Revelation 21:4 declare that upon His return, "He shall wipe away every tear" and there would then be no more "mourning, or crying, or pain"?

3. Certainty of definition?

Neither can we lightly assume that our human, current definitions of completion are exactly what God has in mind. I don't believe we are interpreting scripture correctly if we assume that there is an *inevitable* linking between completion and His return, although this verse may mean that. I certainly do not feel we ought to try to predict the date of His return, even if we feel we can be certain what kind of work can be done by the year 2000. *It is very different to say that we can hope to plant a "people movement to Christ" within every unimax people group by the year 2000, than to say that we can predict that it will happen, or that Jesus will return on that date.*

4. Good basis for optimism.

However, it is our very profound privilege at this stage of history to reflect upon, and rejoice over, how much, how incredibly much, God has already accomplished by this time in history. Thus, we can talk realistically about closure only by taking into account the immense progress to date, and the bustling, burgeoning, accelerating momentum of the Christian movement right now across the world. But to measure this progress?

B. Measuring Progress toward Closure

1. **The number of Non-Christians versus the number of Believers.** Many people are overawed by "the population explosion," as if we are basically in a birthrate contest. The "new birth" is not a nine-month process. Even so, the expanding world population must be

taken into account in proportion to the rate of expansion of the committed Christian global community. One of the simplest measures, therefore, of the advancing Kingdom of Christ is to ask, for any given date in history, "How many people in the world at this date still do not consider themselves Christians?" and then evaluate that number with the question "In proportion to this number, how large is the number of committed Christians?"—is it 10%? is it 20%, etc.

All you need in order to do this is to have, for a given date in history, 1) an estimate of the number of people who do not claim to be Christians and 2) an estimate of the number of people who truly have a faith they can share—David Barrett has suggested these be called "Great Commission Christians," (not the total number of "Christians" in the world, which is a number over three times as large). In both cases these numbers are provided for us by David Barrett and the LCWE Statistics Task Force, and you can see those basic numbers in the table. In Column five, the drop from 11 to 7 (to 62%) from 1980 to 1989—in the last nine years—is equivalent to the drop from 360 to 220 (to 62%)—in the first nine hundred years! Note that even if any given number in the series could possibly be wrong by a fairly large margin, that would not disguising the overall trend, which is breathtaking.

2. Congregations per Unreached People Group. A second way to size up the remaining task is to go directly to one of the themes basic to this paper: *the Unreached Peoples way of looking at things*. Again, the statistics come from the LCWE Statistics Task Force. And, again, the trend is truly breathtaking—see the far column, No. 7—where the number of committed-Christian congregations is now over 400 times the number of unreached people groups still remaining. Even if only one tenth were aroused to mission, the task of planting a "people movement to Christ" within every unreached people would not be impossible by the year 2000. I have to confess that the two measurements (in the shaded columns), and the trends that they reveal, are two of the most hopeful insights I know of. And their significance is virtually irrefutable, in my opinion.

C. Inadequate Yet Popular Concepts of Closure

1. Reaching all countries. By now it is obvious that to plant the Gospel in all of the *countries* of the world is an inadequate measure of closure. Even if it had not already happened, we would have to acknowledge that this is not what the Bible is talking about. It is doubtful whether the Bible ever refers to the kinds of political states we talk about today.

However, we must face the fact that the present day statistical resources of the world are mostly arranged in political units. But the word *country* is slippery. Is Hong Kong a separate country, since it still officially "belongs" to Great Britain? Patrick Johnstone, for example, speaks of the only two "countries" in the world where there are no known evangelical Christians. It is to be noted that he is not referring to separate countries such as would be invited to be members of the United Nations, but is referring to tiny, French possessions, which involve only a few hundred thousand people (who are solidly Roman Catholic). But, in any case, even if you count separately all political units, like Hong Kong, rather than include them as part of the countries which govern them, it is obvious that there are Christians of one sort or another in all such political entities. Thus, getting to the place where there are Christians in all *countries*—by any current definition—is not a good enough measure of closure.

It is probable, then, in terms of mission strategy, that any counting which takes countries into the picture—as targets of pioneer church planting—is probably misleading to that extent. For example, I personally would much rather see *Operation World* take up 365 clusters of ethnic peoples throughout the year (mini, macro, and megapeoples) than to take up the political units of the world. The obvious reason we do not more often employ such a Biblical frame of reference is that data collection is primarily packaged according to countries. That is, Patrick can much more easily track the political units than the peoples of God's perspective. In any case, his *Operation World* is a phenomenal devotional blessing. Under the present circumstances—where data collection is primarily by country—his book could not exist if he did not

simply take the data that is available!

But why not at least *try* to talk about peoples and the countries in which they are found, rather than to cut the peoples up with country boundaries! We are told that 800 peoples in Africa alone are isolated in two or more populations by country boundaries. That way we can mention a given people and the various countries in which it is found rather than start with a country and list the pieces of various peoples represented within it.

If only a few members of a group mainly in one country are in some other country, that small group can be the key to reaching the entire group from which the small group comes. This has accidentally happened many times. This fact is the basis of the concept of "Non-residential missionaries." People separated from their homeland are often more open to new things and are often influential when they return. It is not as strategic to know that 10 million Kazakhs are in the Soviet Union, or that 16 million Zhuang are in China, as it is to know that 10 thousand Kazakhs are in Munich, Germany and that members of the Zhuang peoples may be reachable in Hong Kong.

As a matter of fact—as unconventional as this may sound—it is true, at least as a generalization, that fragments of populations, whether refugee, student, business, or governmental, are probably always more strategic as preliminary beachheads than is the main body of a group approached indiscriminately. Taking ethnicity more seriously than geography or politics can introduce us into a whole new perspective on the massive phenomenon of migration in our time. Ethnic diversity should be seen as God's opportunity rather than man's disability!

2. Winning individuals/"reaching unreached people." Whenever we hear someone saying "What will it take to win the world to Christ?" we probably encounter a point of view based upon winning individuals or "reaching people." But we are not called to make everyone in the world into a Christian. We are called to confront everyone, to invite everyone, not necessarily win them. Thus, counting how many are won to Christ is not an ultimate measure. What if everyone in the world from this point on simply said "no?" Would that stop us from giving

everyone a chance? We do believe that the Bible expects "some from every nation, tribe and tongue and people" to be present among God's peoples (plural) in the final day. Note that most English translations of Rev 21:3 mistakenly put *peoples* in the singular. Thus, we would have to expect that there ought to be the possibility of at least a beachhead in every people group. But, beyond that essential missiological breakthrough, which gives everyone a chance, the Bible does not assure us that everyone will be "won to Christ," nor every *person* reached. It speaks of every *people* reached.

3. **A certain number of churches.** A measure superior to counting individuals won to Christ is the counting of churches, and to report the rate of increase in the number of churches. This is superior because it requires us to produce the minimal context of a full opportunity for anyone to "say yes" to Jesus Christ.

Jim Montgomery, of DAWN (Discipling A Whole Nation), in saying we need 7,000,000 churches by the year 2000, also specifies that there are to be some in every people group. To plant 7,000,000 churches ought not to be too difficult. That is only double the number of evangelical Bible-believing churches in the world today. The crucial point, however, is that *it would be possible to double the number of churches we have today without penetrating every people group.* That is not the way the DAWN people intend this goal to be interpreted. But a sheer "number of churches" goal is not, by itself, good enough to assure that everyone in the world has an adequate chance to "say yes" to Jesus Christ.

4. **Exhausting the limits of a given communication tool.** Many mission enterprises have gained special skills in the use of particular communication tools. In each case, whether it is radio, film, cassette or printed page, it is possible to define a type of closure which is appropriate to the use of that particular medium. This is a different kind of closure than closure of "the task," but it has its merits.

The missionary radio sphere sparkles with competence and global muscle. Nothing in the secular world corresponds to the linguistic diversity

and geographic penetrating power of present-day missionary radio stations, whose transmitting wattage commonly exceeds the power of U.S. domestic stations by a factor of ten or more. On the other hand, such enormous wattage cannot be harnessed economically for

No one claims that the full employment of any given means of communication is in itself a fully adequate measure of completion of the task.

languages spoken by a small number of people. Thus, the radio people hope, by the year 2000, to reach every person in the world with a radio signal which is at least in a trade language. That is, closure for them is measurable by how close they are to the goal of working in the 280 languages which have a million speakers or more. By that measure they are over half way, and feel confident they can make the total by A.D. 2000.

A similar and similarly spectacular achievement exists in the program of Campus Crusade, utilizing on-the-spot presentations of the Jesus film. They, also, are working in the same languages, with a million or more speakers, and they also are more than half way, with this goal in sight by A.D. 2000.

The printed page is still one of the most durable and penetrating means of communication, and the Wycliffe Bible Translators employ printed translations of portions of the Bible, normally at least the New Testament. From the standpoint of how many printed translations (of substantial portions of the Bible) are necessary to reach every person in the world, Wycliffe's *Ethnologue* indicates that about 6,170 would be a reasonable current estimate, about half of which are either already in existence or in progress or not positively identified as to need. Note that the number (6,170) here is not so much based upon a definition of *language* or a *dialect* as it is simply a group (whether there are dialects or not) which can effectively be served with a single printed medium of communication. The task to be completed in these terms could, with further mobilization, well be done by the year 2000, but not if we continue at the present level of effort.

Curiously, if you employ cassette tapes, the job gets both smaller and bigger, smaller because it is a lot easier to put the Gospel on tape than to translate the whole New Testament, develop an alphabet, and teach the people to read. But the job is bigger, too, because people are strikingly more discriminating by ear than by eye. Three different groups which will not speak to each other may very nicely read the same printed New Testament, while they may strenuously object to listening to a slightly different dialect

when it is captured on tape or spoken on the radio. Gospel Recordings, which is the specialist in this area, has already dealt with over 4,000 languages in this way, but they figure that there are another 8,000 to go—again, not impossible by the year 2000. For example, they already have recordings in 45 of the languages of Afghanistan.

All of these communication tools are a blessing and a great help in the process of establishing a people movement to Christ within every remaining Unreached People. All of the specialized organizations employing these tools recognize that there are other aspects of the task besides the use of their own special tool. It is marvelous for these particular skills to be so effectively employed and the corresponding goals so efficiently pursued. But no one claims that the full employment of any given means of communication is in itself a fully adequate measure of completion of the task.

5. Promoting the Effort

Now that the concept of Unreached Peoples has taken hold very widely, it is possible to make plans and develop intermediate goals with far greater confidence and precision. As a result, there is considerable interest all around the globe today in local churches "adopting" a specific unreached people group by name, and there has been considerable effort to try to make these efforts into an effective movement.

A. The March 1982 meeting, again. At that meeting, the possible stages in the people reaching process were discussed in detail, as already mentioned above. One of the key points was number 5, "Supported, or Adopted"—the mobilization of sufficient prayer, manpower and funds for a

Latin Americans and the Challenge of the Year 2000				
Country	Number of Evangelicals	Percentage of Total Ev. in Latin Am.	Unreached Peoples	
			Proportionate Share	Adoption Goal
Brazil	22,144,000	63.9%	1,917	2,875
Chile	2,592,000	7.5%	224	337
Mexico	2,495,000	7.2%	216	324
Guatemala	1,597,000	4.6%	138	207
Argentina	1,438,000	4.1%	124	187
Colombia	706,000	2.0%	61	92
El Salvador	704,000	2.0%	61	91
Peru	585,000	1.7%	51	76
Bolivia	403,000	1.2%	35	52
Costa Rica	385,000	1.1%	33	50
Honduras	385,000	1.1%	33	50
Venezuela	363,000	1.0%	31	47
Ecuador	301,000	0.9%	26	39
Panama	210,000	0.6%	18	27
Nicaragua	203,000	0.6%	18	26
Paraguay	90,000	0.3%	8	12
Uruguay	58,000	0.2%	5	8
	34,659,000	100%	3,000	4,500

Assumption #1: That Latin American Evangelicals can address one fourth of the total of 12,000 Unreached Peoples remaining in the whole world.

Assumption #2: That each country may do well to reach for 50% more, as in the final column—in case other countries fall short.

given people group to be reached. But this must follow upon and develop from the earlier step, in which a mission agency "selects" an unreached people, and slates it for outreach, resources becoming available.

B. The crucial role of mission agencies. An unwise trend in some quarters today is the idea that a local church, without the help of a mission agency, can send, or ought to send, its own missionaries directly overseas. This method has been tried. It is probably the one method that has most universally failed. It means the missionaries are not properly supervised, guided, or, in the last analysis, even properly supported, since a single congregation is not as stable as a group of congregations working through a tried and true mission agency. It is very important to realize that Paul was not "sent out" by the Antioch congregation, but Paul and Barnabas were "sent off" by the group. Paul reported back but did not ask for orders. His missionary team had all the authority of a local church. They were, in effect, a "traveling church." And his support came from many congregations.

The reason to stress this point here is that built right into the Adopt A People program is the very basic idea that the first move a local congregation should make is to consult with their favorite mission board to find and adopt a specific people group. They ought not

to look in the encyclopedia, but to support with their prayers, financial and manpower resources the frontier mission work that is already going on, or is soon slated to begin, under the auspices of well-established mission agencies. This allows the local congregation to pray and begin to hear monthly reports from the mission agency that was poised to begin when that local congregation decided to adopt a given people by name. They don't have to wait and wonder who is going to make the next move, and they won't be tempted to send off their own people directly.

C. What is the time table? I am sure that God has many surprises in store for us. We need to realize that we cannot minutely plan the future. On the other hand it does not seem impossible for the evangelical congregations of the world to "adopt" by name all of the remaining Unreached Peoples *by the end of 1991*. This, at least, is a good goal to shoot for. Then, the agencies need to try to "engage" every group *by the end of 1995*. *Engage* means that missionaries are now at work, either on the spot or as non-residents.

As the world Christian movement gains momentum, each remaining unreached group will be closer and closer to other groups where the Gospel is already being preached; as is often the case it may become easier and easier for people in the remaining new groups

to accept the Gospel. There does not seem to be any over-arching obstacle which would make it impossible for there to be a people movement to Christ within every remaining unimax group. This goal has been popularly spoken of as "A Church for Every People by the Year 2000." But, as mentioned earlier, to say that this *can be done* is quite different from predicting that it *will be done*. A great deal depends on the success of a global Adopt A People movement, it would seem.

D. The Singapore Consultation on World Evangelization by A.D. 2000 and Beyond. This meeting brought together for the first time in history the key mission agencies of the entire world, with plans for completing the task, or some significant portion of the task, by the year 2000. It set in motion more than one vehicle for keeping in touch. It positively demonstrated the vital readiness of the mission communities of the world

E. The Adopt A People Symposium of March 1989. At this symposium, attended by about 40 different entities (mostly mission agencies) an Unreached Peoples Clearinghouse was both designed and established. The idea is that as mission agencies offer to churches the adoption options which the agencies are ready to implement, the resulting countdown or "score" can be kept in a database, which will be available on an electronic bulletin board for consultation by either congregations and agencies. As Patrick Johnstone so often stresses, we need to collaborate, and in no case to compete. There is enough to do for everyone to be involved, and there is no room for duplication or blind spots. This kind of centralized, easily accessible, constantly up-dated bulletin board will not only enable more efficient deployment of resources, but will encourage everyone by making progress visible. It will promote increased interest and action, not just facilitate present progress.

F. The Lausanne II Congress on World Evangelization, Manila, July 1989. The people from 190 "countries" at this meeting demonstrated very dramatically the vitality of the global Christian tradition, and the relative nearness of its key leaders to each other. The 4,500 participants in this great meeting have gone back with urgent new convictions about attempting to

complete the task. Many of the 46 groups of workshops pertained in one way or another to completing the task. One entire evening session was on the year 2000.

G. Costa Rica's "Alcance 2000," August 21-25, 1989. The table on the next page came out of this amazing meeting. If the evangelicals in every country in every continent will think in the "adoption" terms you see there, e.g. will take their share of the remaining task, it is perfectly realistic to see that **the job can be done by the year 2000**—that is, it is not impossible.

In Costa Rica, a little country of 2.5 million people, the evangelical community is getting way up there in percentage of the general population. Guatemala is already 25% and Costa Rica is somewhere between 15 and 25%. (*Operation World* shows 7% for a period five years earlier.) Remember that the galloping gains of the evangelicals in turbulent Central America are positively legendary! To be conservative we settled on a figure somewhere between the 7 and 25 percent, and an outside speaker from Brazil, Edison Queiroz, head of the fabled COMIBAM for Brazil then pulled together the chart below, much to the delight and challenge of the thousand or more who came to this national-level mission congress. Note, Costa Rica's share is 50 Unreached Peoples.

H. Global division of labor. It is

exciting to see the whole Latin American continent rising with eagerness to do its share. Latin American believers are generally a progressive, educated group, compared to many African and Asian brothers. If they can take 3,000 out of the 12,000 remaining Unreached Peoples, and if other areas of the world can emulate their example it will be a magnificent step forward. North America, for example, might feel obligated to try for 6,000 of the 12,000 peoples. Note that the Latin Americans have gone one step further: they have added 50% to their goal for each country in order to compensate for another country that may fall short. It would seem likely that church and mission leaders in the other parts of the world may soon begin to estimate how much falls to them, and which of the groups within their sphere are going to do what portion of the task.

This kind of **division of labor** is the very core of completion.

I. The International Society for Frontier Missiology, the International Journal of Frontier Missions, the International Association of Centers for World Mission, the Adopt A People Clearing House, all of these things will converge in England in the fall of 1990.

J. The incredible events which are happening in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, which were hardly contemplated at the time of the Manila conference sponsored by the Lausanne

Committee, are opening up closed areas of the world in a truly remarkable fashion.

K. **Keeping up with what God is doing.** One of our most difficult tasks is to try to keep up with things which God is apparently doing without asking us. Our task is only to fit in with His plans, not to engineer Him to fill out ours. He is doing amazing things. We need to let what God is doing come home to our hearts! The end of the job is in sight! ■

Comments or inquiries are welcome regarding any aspect of this material. Some portions of this material were presented in the Unreached Peoples Track at the Lausanne II conference in Manila, in July 1989. Write or contact:

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