

# Reflections on the Adopt-A-People Consultation II

Colorado Springs, August 16, 1993

By Frank Kaleb Jansen

Will history repeat itself? It was a fairly courageous statement that the 230 participants from 107 organizations made when they, at the Adopt-A-People Consultation II earlier this year, made their unanimous declaration: "*An Appeal to Disciples Everywhere*" echoing the petition from D. L. Moody and A.T. Pierson at the mission conference in Northfield 1885.

The declaration from Colorado Springs 1993 was even more daring than the original, because, we knew that these great men failed in their attempt to see the world evangelized before the turn of the century. In 1895 A.T. Pierson had to announce - "I despair of hope!" The reason was the lack of prayer and unity in the Body of Christ. The bloodiest and most destructive of all centuries, that was about to dawn did prove him right. Although for many other reasons, the twentieth century caused a whole mankind to despair of hope.

Back then was there a link between the failure of the church and the global rise of evil? We shall of course never know, but I tend to believe that Christian unity and a global mission thrust might have resulted in a revival that would have changed the history of our century.

## The April Consultation

What happened at the April Consultation that made the present group of mission executives standing, in defiance of both history and our giant forefathers, to declare that we believe it is possible to proclaim the Gospel to every person and to see a viable church established among all peoples, even before AD 2000? The conclusions of the meeting carrying the same title as the declaration from a hundred years back came in one accord, with no

dissenting votes. Truly it is a rare document of unity in spirit, purpose and goal. (Note: that document was printed in *extencio* in the summer issue of *IJFM*.)

The center piece, and actually the main reason for AAP Consultation II, was the presentation of the compilation of a comprehensive list of "unreached and adoptable peoples" and the consequences this would bring about for mission agencies and churches. The survey is called: "A Church for Every People" and carries on the back cover Jesus' words (John 17:21):

...that they may all be one;

...that the world may believe...

These words became in many ways the spiritual theme for every presentation, and undergirded the whole consultation. Several intercessors had been praying and fasting 40 days for the gathering, one group prayed day and night during the entire time we were meeting. Point #4 of the "Appeal" says: *We recognize that we have not done all that we could in making Christ known to the unreached peoples. For this we repent.*

It was therefore just natural as Dick Eastman (EHC) lead in prayer that the conference ended on bended knees, in repentance, seeking new strength before we were dismissed with E.V. Hill's powerful poem:

Go on!

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Some things were done differently at this conference compared to others we have hosted. First of all, much effort was put into making it a consultation, not only for the Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse, but also for churches and

mission agencies. A group consisting of Luis Bush (AD 2000), Bruce Camp (Ev. Free Church), Ron Rowland (SIL), Clark Scanlon (Southern Baptist, FMB) and Ralph Winter (WCIU) with Frank Kaleb Jansen (AAPC and the MC for the meeting) *ex officio* labored through the whole gathering as an editorial committee. Another group of about 30 acted as a "review committee" while the AAPC board members were collecting input from everybody. The final draft was then discussed in a plenary session before the final edit. It was exciting to see the unity among the participants when the "Appeal" was endorsed unanimously.

The 230 participants at the Conference might seem few and insignificant compared to the 6000 at the conference in Northfield. However, when one looks at who this consultation represented and their sphere of influence, they by far surpass the influence of the first meeting some 100 years ago.

## The Format

Another noticeable difference was the format of the conference. Because it was planned and executed as a live TV production, every presentation was shorter and more "visual" with graphs and illustrations. Everyone kept within their time frame and mission leaders did in ten or fifteen minutes what normally might have taken forty-five. All the speakers were informed beforehand of the content of everyone's presentation. Therefore the consultation was run like a relay race with minimal overlaps, with one speaker passing the baton to the other. The "TV format" with its short and to the point presentations also made it possible to

produce a nearly complete, condensed version of the whole unreached peoples concept as it is viewed by our leading missiologists and mission executives of today. (As a matter of fact, when we tried to edit this conference to one hour presentations it was not possible simply because every speaker packed so much wisdom and knowledge into every sentence that it was hard to delete anything.)

When historians are going to view this conference in hindsight they will appreciate the videos which make it possible to see even the facial expressions when a point is made by “tongue in cheek” humor - and there were a lot of those.

How I wish I had made videos of Ralph Winter’s speech at Lasagne’ 74, or the meetings called Dallas I and II, Chicago 1982, GCOWE 89, the constitution of AAPC 89 etc. Then the many misconceptions and even unsolvable conflicts based on differences in opinion on what really took place at their meetings could have been avoided and the God given inspiration that created those events could have been preserved for posterity. The quality speeches delivered at the AAPC are now available for everyone, and they really will serve as a resource in every mission library. For the AAPC these tapes have become our guidelines for the future and historic documents to which we feel obligated and accountable.

A third point was that the participants expressed their appreciation for the low price and that they could walk away with documents like the book “A Church for Every People” and a database for Unreached and Adoptable Peoples. After years of loose numbers and guesstimates many felt that they were given something tangible that they could focus on. One participant said: “The fog has finally lifted. I feel that I can see the targets now!”

The exhibits, that were all carefully selected and invited to the conference, were done so because they represented the practical hands and feet to what was presented by the speakers. They therefore became much more an integral part of the conference than usually has been the case. We tend to forget that it is often the exhibitors that carry conferences through both with regard to practical content and finances.

### Highlights

To select highlights from this meeting is like presenting golden nuggets from Fort Knox, one can just pick and choose from almost every presentation and speaker. But here are some outstanding points: Joy Crawford opened by saying: *“I’m just an ordinary housewife and I feel terrified standing before you guys with all your knowledge and expertise”*.

Then she went on to present a brilliant case study on how her church had selected, adopted and sustained the adoption until they had really “reached” that people group. Down to earth, void of missiological “slang” she gave us all a lecture on how God

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in His sovereignty can and will lead those who honestly seek to serve Him. To me she was a voice of the future of mission and mission mobilization.

Along the same line Stan Yoder from the Missionary Church gave us

the exiting story on how a smaller congregation of 250 members had adopted the Susu of West Africa. These two cases studies are in and of themselves sufficient for anyone to grasp the whole idea of our goal of A Church for Every People by AD 2000.

Seeing events like the above happening at an ever greater speed, I felt led to share right from the opening of the conference that the concept of adopting people groups has reached its point of critical mass. It is an idea whose time has come, and it will change the face of mission forever. As I see it, it was meant, not so much a prophecy, but as a statement of fact. Local churches in network with national Christians will partner with mission agencies and take a *LEADING ROLE* in reaching the unreached peoples of the world.

The mission agencies that understand this will thrive, those who don’t will barely survive. “The times they are achanging,” sang Bob Dylan. Western mission and missiology will be changed as well.

Clark Scanlon, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Rick Stroller from Interdev emphasized the paradigm shift taking place through the non-resident missionary program (CSI) and regional Partnerships. Their summing up of years of practical experience and highly professional presentation of networks and partnerships put “flesh on the skeletons of theoretical missiology” and will probably be the language that launch the baby boomers into missions.

Terry Riley, presented the AAPC follow up, a practical application with global, regional and local networks. The AAP Challenge is that American churches are assigned a people according to their zip code. This is one way we can secure every people to be adopted, even though it will only be one of many ways the concept of adopting peoples will be promoted. Although Riley’s presentation was virtually drowned between the “big guns” and never was debated, it will nevertheless be a working plan for AAPC how to best serve our constituency and the unreached peoples of the world.

Also it can be said that the high quality workshops were practical and

down to earth. Five different workshops were repeated every hour on the hour during the conference, but even so it was difficult for every one to participate. Marv Bowers (ILS) and Kent Schroder (SIL) covered data programs on the writing of Peoples Profiles. Mark Patterson (GMI) lectured on E-Mail and from Galcom we learned how to facilitate portable FM radio stations.

The workshop that especially captured my attention was Jay Gary's presentation, where he showed us from the literature on the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, five trends on what to expect at the turn of the millennium. Jay is probably the most versed person in our Christian community on this subject regarding the future as he leads the organization Celebration 2000. My special interest in his lecture was because I spoke on the same topic entitled: "The 15 Trends at Work Today and Where Will They Take Us in The Year 2020?" I am a little ashamed because I was the only speaker (even though as MC I had made the rules) that spoke too long, I had no visual aid and I only touched three of my intended fifteen points. Even so after a 12 hour day with massive information input, one could literally hear a needle drop and minds

buzzing when I closed by challenging our popular theology which is our greatest hindrance to meet the challenges of the future.

What about the "big guns" like Luis Bush, Don Kammerdiener, Dale Kietzman, Ralph Winter and Ron Rowland – the keynote speakers? First of all when the experts are asked to speak they all come prepared and bring with them oceans of wisdom. This consultation was no exception. Don Kammerdiener gave us the background and development of the concept of unreached peoples and the cooperation among Evangelicals from Lausanne '74 to Colorado Springs '93. Most interesting though was his insight in how this has changed and still is changing the Southern Baptist Convention and their Foreign Mission Board, regarding their thinking, strategy and actions – even their research which from now on will be submitted to their theology. He made us all rejoice when he in the spirit of "glasnost and perestroika" declared that their research was for the whole Body of Christ to use.

Luis Bush in his unique way revealed to us how he as a "dreamer was related to the dreamers of the

Bible", and then documented from his global vantage point why he had reasons to believe that his dream of a church for every people by the year 2000 would come true. Ralph Winter illumined us with his State of the World Address, and Dale Kietzman echoed D.L. Moody as he gave a 1990 version of:

*It can be done.  
It must be done.  
It will be done!*

Ronald Rowland and his presentation of the Peoples Information Network and the research that gave the scientific foundation for the listing of all the 12,000 ethnolinguistic peoples of the world, as well as the 5,310 unreached ones, was one of the two pillars of the whole Conference.

A panel of a newbreed of mission executives, Dave Dougherty (OMF), Paul Filides (YWAM) and Gary Corwin (SIM) probably was the most provocative and challenging as they opened up the conference for interaction from the audience by asking questions like: Are mission agencies a blessing or a bottleneck? What about facts and fictions in our research. Are we manipulating the truth to fit our