

IJFM

Int'l Journal of Frontier Missions

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of the International Society for
Frontier Missiology

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Summer 2001

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From the Editor's Desk



Three very crucial mission frontiers are addressed in this issue. But, they should not, at this date, still be frontiers. They should have been settled by now. They aren't. In each case enormous tension, confusion and misunderstanding reigns—politely of course.

The first frontier—the first two installments of which appear here—is the question of who ultimately calls the shots in mission operation and strategy decisions, especially delicate ones. This seemingly technical issue, amidst the gush of emotion, enthusiasm and heady commitment young people and congregations carry into the mission soup (all of which is essential to mission) is a small matter with big implications in the long run.

When a young man named Hudson Taylor first went to China one thing he learned, vividly: the board back in Britain under which he served did not know what it was doing. With fear and trepidation but firm in faith he later started a new board. All by himself. No discussion about who ultimately calls the shots.

And only 25 years later was this issue (home board or field council calling the shots) the cause of five long years of anguish and confusion. He very nearly resigned from the mission he started. I have often wondered if he knew nothing of the similar and tragic case of that other young man, William Carey, years earlier, which turned out the opposite (the home board pulling the rug out from under Carey)?

Note that while Joseph and Michele C. discuss the issue in terms of field versus home control, the issue is basically the same as that of an internal versus an external board. In the history of the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, internal boards were always allowed until certain pressures pushed the IFMA into suggesting member missions have a board with a majority of outside members—a real step back. An external board is a good idea where an organization employs and pays its people. But when the members of a mission society are themselves the largest contributors (in the sense of accepting a relatively modest support), an internal (or field) board makes a lot more sense.

Joseph and Michele were asked to explore this issue by their own mission, Frontiers, which is already grappling with such concerns. Their amazingly detailed treatment will extend into the next two issues of IJFM. But it begins solidly here with two of its five parts.

The second frontier in IJFM 18:2, namely, the challenge of the unreached peoples, also ought not still to be a frontier. But this subject has special significance to the very existence of this journal as well as the society (the *International Society for Frontier Missiology*). As with Joseph and Michele, Alan Johnson, a field missionary, was asked by higher-ups in his mission to explore this frontier in a special study. He tackles the entire emergence of the now virtually completed transition in mission strategy

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Editor

Ralph D. Winter

Managing Editor

Rory Clark

Contributing Editor

Hans Weerstra

Layout

Zach Boomsma

Secretary

Barbara R. Pitts

Publisher

Bradley Gill

Web Site

www.ijfm.org

Editorial Correspondence

IJFM

1539 E Howard Street

Pasadena, CA 91104

ijfm@wciu.edu

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Send all subscription correspondence to:

IJFM

7665 Wenda Way

El Paso, TX 79915

Tel: (915) 775-2464

Fax: (915) 775-8588

Email: 103121.26100@compuserve.com

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The third frontier is the least resolved. But it is not going away. In a way it is the most crucial of all—if we will allow it to be what it truly is.

from missions setting out to 1) win individuals in countries to 2) seeking to plant churches within unreached peoples. He also deals with the larger question of what a mission frontier really is. Again, the first two of five parts of this study appear here.

The third frontier is the least resolved. But it is not going away. In a way it is the most crucial of all—if we will allow it to be what it truly is. Ted Yamamori, who addresses this frontier, has had a long and varied career, from doing his Ph.D. at Duke in church growth theory to being academic dean at Biola University, to running Food for the Hungry where he forged ties between field service and U.S. academic credit. He seeks to sanctify the word holism. It has become the settled term among

those who use it. The word wholism would seem to be better, would seem to mean getting the whole together. But holism, which would seem to mean a hole is left, is nevertheless the in-word in this vast sphere of mission endeavor. If we want to speak their language and understand their insights we might as well get used to it.

But the frontier here is not the question of which of these two words to use. It is the exceedingly profound issue that is unavoidably raised when the work of the holism sphere of mission agencies is compared to standard missions. The public perspectives are perhaps wider apart than the actual work, since holists like Yamamori have always understood the importance of church planting and evangelism.

But Yamamori brings out a new angle. He claims that “the gospel of the Kingdom,” which focuses on God’s authority and His glory “coming on earth,” cannot be properly be pursued unless both “holistic” and standard mission is seen as part of a single engagement of the forces of evil on earth, and indeed, the attempt to redeem and restore all of God’s creation. I have myself wondered what kind of a gospel we promote if we may leave the impression that God cannot—or does not wish to—deal with earthly problems such as disease and injustice but really can only get people tickets to heaven.

Ralph D. Winter
Editor

P.S. We apologize for an Asbury Seminary ad in the last issue which was correct for the date of the issue but which was no longer correct by the time the issue was mailed. The new ad will appear in 18:3, which will correspond to the period to which it is appropriate.

The IJFM is published in the name of the International Student Leaders Coalition for Frontier Missions, a fellowship of younger leaders committed to the purposes of the twin consultations of Edinburgh 1980: The *World Consultation on Frontier Missions* and the *International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions*. As an expression of the ongoing concerns of Edinburgh 1980, the IJFM seeks to:

- ☞ promote intergenerational dialogue between senior and junior mission leaders;
- ☞ cultivate an international fraternity of thought in the development of frontier missiology;
- ☞ highlight the need to maintain, renew, and create mission agencies as vehicles for frontier missions;
- ☞ encourage multidimensional and interdisciplinary studies;
- ☞ foster spiritual devotion as well as intellectual growth; and
- ☞ advocate “A Church for Every People.”

Mission frontiers, like other frontiers, represent boundaries or barriers beyond which we must go yet beyond which we may not be able to see clearly and boundaries which may even be disputed or denied. Their study involves the discovery and evaluation of the unknown or even the reevaluation of the known. But unlike other frontiers, mission frontiers is a subject specifically concerned to explore and exposit areas and ideas and insights related to the glorification of God in all the nations (peoples) of the world, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.

Subscribers and other readers of the IJFM (due to ongoing promotion) come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Mission professors, field missionaries, young adult mission mobilizers, college librarians, mission executives, and mission researchers all look to the IJFM for the latest thinking in frontier missiology.

Field-Governed Mission Structures

by Joseph & Michele C.

How should mission structures be governed? Does the Bible provide us with information on the exercise of decision-making authority in how mission structures should operate? Do twenty centuries of mission history offer us any lessons on this question?

Of course virtually all Christians would agree that missions should be supremely governed by God, with Jesus Christ as active head of the Church. The biblical text which is most central to our reflections in this paper—Acts 13:1–4—has as its clearest emphasis the *Holy Spirit's* role in directing missionary decision-making.

However this does not answer the question of human instrumentality in God's direction of mission. Through *whom* does God exercise direction? Most Christians would agree that God often gives direction through godly, humble, legitimate human leaders—but *which* leaders? What if sincere, godly people *disagree* about what God's direction is? Who is the final human interpreter of God's direction of mission?

In our experience of the ways in which this question is discussed in the evangelical missions context today, debate frequently centers on the proper relationship between *field* leadership and leaders at the *home* base. In our experience that discussion also tends to revolve around the interpretation of Acts 13:1–4 and its implications for understanding the relationship between the Pauline missionary band and the Antioch local congregation.

The first article of this series will explore the question of field-governedness and home-governedness in the New Testament. It would be impossible in a article of this length to exhaust all that the Bible says on the question of the relationship between home congregations and field mission structures, so we will focus primarily on the Paul-Antioch relationship (since this is so central to the discussion today), while also looking briefly at some of the other relevant New Testament materials.

The succeeding articles of this series will examine the same questions of mission governance and structure throughout twenty centuries of missions history. As Spanish historian George Santayana remarked, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Again, concerns of length make it impossible to examine the organizational structures of every missionary movement in history. Instead we have attempted to select a number of the most important and representative movements and individuals in missions history. The criteria for this selection have been an attempt to represent broadly the entire sweep of twenty

centuries of history, and to focus on well known and influential individuals and movements, while giving particular attention to those missionary pioneers most interesting to evangelical Protestant readers. Thus our examination of New Testament mission structures in the 1st century (Part I) is followed by Patrick of Ireland and the Celtic peregrini movement in the 5th–10th centuries (Part II), then Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit mission to China in the 16th–18th centuries (Part III), then William Carey and the 18th–19th-century dawn of the era of modern Protestant missions (Part IV), and finally Hudson Taylor and the 19th–20th-century emergence of the "faith-mission" tradition (Part V).

We would like to emphasize that many other examples could have been chosen which would have illustrated equally well the issues at stake in this series of articles. In the future we hope to add a section on the rise and the fall of the so-called "Nestorian" missions of the medieval Church of the East (to illustrate a non-Western mission), and another section on the structural evolution of the American Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions (to illustrate a mainline Protestant denominational mission). In both cases we believe that one can observe the same forces which will be seen at work in the five examples in this series. **IJFM**

Field-Governed Mission Structures Part I: In the New Testament

by Joseph & Michele C.



Before looking exegetically at the text of the New Testament, we would like to examine the nature of the question as it is often posed in missiological discussions today. Then we will look at the Paul-Antioch relationship in its original context, and then we will consider what implications that has for answering the questions of today.

The Biblical Question as it is Posed Today

At a popular level, most missionaries who have visited the larger supporting churches in their countries of origin have observed the trend which Ralph Winter has described:

Brand new independent congregations [are] concluding . . . that there is no need for mission agencies at all: each congregation should send out its own missionaries, [and] global, specialized mission structures are not legitimate or even necessary (Winter, in Foreword to Frizen 1992: 9).

The leadership of larger churches which do send and support missionaries through specialized mission agencies often express sentiments which tend in a similar direction:

The man sitting across from me was the missions elder in a megachurch with a reputation for its commitment to missions. He said, "We didn't approve of what the missionary was doing, so we told him that he and his family had to return to the States." Some megachurches, believing the local church is "missions," send and supervise their own people.

A mega-church pastor states this view:

There are numerous organizations who say their purpose is to be an 'arm' of the church . . . I pray that the need for their existence would become obsolete because churches would obtain a healthy biblical perspective of ministry (Metcalf 1993: 26–27).

What is meant here by a "biblical" perspective? Perhaps one element in this elder's mind was Eph 4:11–12, which we would agree sees the role of "professional" ministers as being to equip the laity for the work of the ministry. But in our experience the biblical text most commonly cited in support of the local congregation as the "biblically" proper sender and supervisor of missionaries is Acts 13:1–4. As Jack Chapin points out:

The congregation at Antioch in Acts 13 is usually the final court of appeal for those who insist that the local church has the sole sending authority and is the sole sending agency for the missionary (Chapin 1998).

Joseph and Michele have worked for fifteen years in North Africa. Joseph is a Ph.D. candidate at Yale University. Michele is an R.N. and also an M.A. candidate at Fuller Seminary. They have two children.

George Peters, for example, interprets Acts 13 as teaching that “the local assembly becomes the mediating and authoritative sending body of the New Testament missionary” (1972: 219, cited in Glasser 1989: 264).

The popular terminology itself of “the *sending* church” is generally explained as having its biblical basis in Acts 13:3. In an Urbana address with the title “The Sending Church”, Gordon MacDonald explained the term thus:

The church in Acts 13 . . . called Saul and Barnabas and sent them out to the uttermost parts of the earth. That was a sending church . . . The church laid hands on them and “sent them off” (v. 3). It was a sending church (MacDonald 1982: 98).

Roy Stedman argues that Paul was not an apostle or a missionary until the Antioch church mediated that calling to him in Acts 13:

The missionary call of Barnabas and Saul, recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Acts . . . It is also the beginning of the apostleship of Paul. Up to this time, though he was called to be an apostle when he was first converted on the Damascus road, he has never acted as an apostle. Now, some eleven or twelve years after his conversion, he begins to fulfill the ministry to which he was called as an apostle of Jesus Christ (Stedman 1995).

Louis Berkhof, in his extremely influential volume *Systematic Theology*, goes even further, indicating that Paul and Barnabas were “ordained” in Acts 13:3 (Berkhof 1941: 588).

Do these statements represent sound exegesis of Acts 13? Does the Bible describe the relationship of the Antioch congregation to the Pauline missionary band as one in which the former was the “mediating and authoritative sending body” of the latter? It is to the exegesis of Acts 13 and related texts—in their original context—that we now turn.

Acts 13 in its Original Context

We think that some of the writers quoted above are correct when they see Acts 13 as a significant turning point in the overall Lucan narrative. Many commentators see Acts 1:8 as programmatic for the “theological geography” of the whole book of Acts. After the power of the Holy Spirit comes in chapter 2,

chapters 2–7 show Jesus’ followers “filling all Jerusalem” with their teaching; then chapters 8–12 show them bearing witness to all “all Judea and Samaria;” then chapters 13–28 show them bringing the Gospel to “the uttermost parts of the earth,” concluding in Rome. The end of chapter 12 has the phrase “Now the word of God grew and increased,” which is a Lucan literary device that often indicates turning-points in the narrative (cf. Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 19:20).

Acts 13 is a turning point not only in theological geography and narrative structure, but also in the creation of mission structures. As Glasser points out:

In Acts 2–12 the story of the expansion of the Christian movement is largely a record of spontaneous growth brought about by the witness of individual Christians (e.g., Peter in 2:14–40; 3:12–26 and Philip in 8:5–13) and, on occasion, by multi-individual activity (e.g., the Hellenists who were driven from Jerusalem and went everywhere preaching the Word—8:2,4). In Acts 13–28 the expansion of the Christian movement was achieved through a strikingly different structure—the apostolic band or mission structure (Glasser 1989: 262).

In what follows below we will examine whether Acts 13 tells us anything about the relationship between these two structures—the local congregation and the mobile missionary band. Does Acts 13 imply anything about an authoritative sending relationship between them?

When Did Paul Become a Missionary?

As we rightly perceive that Acts 13 is a turning point in the development of mission structures and in the Lucan narrative of theological geography, we must not think that this implies that this was Paul’s first discovery of his personal missionary call. We must not overlook other historical events in the life of Paul which took place before this, and which are reported both in Acts and in Paul’s own letters. For Paul did not become a missionary or an apostle for the first time in Acts 13.

In fact Paul had already been a missionary for probably at least a decade before the events of Acts 13 (see below), and it was as missionaries that Barnabas and Paul had first *come* to Antioch. Acts

makes no reference to the existence of a church in Antioch until Barnabas and Paul came to establish it. In 11:19–21 we read that some unnamed Cypriot and Cyrenian (North African) believers (with the sanction of no local congregation) went to Antioch and told the Gospel to both Jews and Greeks, with the result that a substantial number of people “turned to the Lord.” These individual believers are not yet described as a church, however. It is in 11:25–26 that they are first referred to as a church, after Barnabas had brought Paul from Tarsus, and together they had met with these believers and taught them “for a whole year.” Thus Barnabas and Paul *came* to Antioch as missionaries, and the Antioch church itself was a product of their missionary labors.

So was it at *that* point in time that Paul first became a missionary and apostle? Did Paul receive his missionary call or his call to apostleship through Barnabas when Barnabas brought him from Tarsus? Galatians provides some clues to answering that question.

In Gal 1:1 Paul states that he is an apostle “neither from human beings nor through a human being” (οὐκ ἀπ’ ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ δι’ ἀνθρώπου), but rather “through Jesus Christ and God the Father.” Paul continues, saying:

When God (who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me through his grace) was pleased to reveal his Son in me in order that I might preach the Gospel about him among the nations, I did not go for advice to flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I departed immediately into Arabia, and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to make the acquaintance of Cephas, and I stayed with him for fifteen days. I did not see any other of the apostles, except James the brother of the Lord. The things which I am writing to you—behold before God—I am not lying. Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:15–21, translation ours).

Thus Paul asserts that he received his missionary call directly from the Lord, without human intermediary, and that upon his conversion he *immediately* (εὐθέως, vs. 16) embarked on missionary work in Arabia, in Damascus, in Syria, and in Cilicia. The capital of Cilicia was

of course Tarsus, and it was from there that Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch to establish a church where there were already some new believers. Thus, by the time Paul came to Antioch, he had already been working as a missionary for some years.

Some readers may object that it is commonly held that Paul's time in Arabia was not spent preaching the Gospel, but rather in quiet meditation before the Lord, learning more about Christ. Some preachers suggest that this took place "in a cave," while others see Paul alone at a desert oasis. In reply we would first point out that this view is generally asserted without any support for it in the text. No other text in the New Testament supports that assertion, and the text we have reviewed above clearly implies that what Paul did immediately upon his conversion was to begin *preaching the Gospel* in the locations he names. Why should one think that he was preaching the Gospel in Damascus, Syria and Cilicia (ancient "Arabia" can be defined as including the first two of these), but that he was only meditating in Arabia? Is it perhaps because of a Western cultural assumption that the only thing in Arabia is sand? Given the presence of Arabic-speakers on Pentecost (Acts 2:11), is it not more plausible to remember that Arabia also contains *human beings* in need of the Gospel?

We would point out second that, even if one assumes that Paul's years in Arabia did not involve missionary work, few commentators would dispute that he was engaged in missionary activity in Damascus, Syria and Cilicia (including Tarsus) for several years before Barnabas brought him from Tarsus to Antioch (which was in Syria). Martin Hengel, for example, agrees that during this period these regions were "the focal point for his missionary activity" (Hengel 1979: 109).

The idea that Paul's missionary call, and the beginning of his missionary activity, took place at the time of his conversion and not in Acts 13 is also supported by the descriptions of his conversion in Acts. In Acts 9:15, three days after Paul's conversion, we read "This man is my chosen vessel to carry my name before the nations." In Acts 26:17–18 we read that on the Damascus road Paul heard



Jesus say, "[I will] rescue you from this people and from the nations to whom I am sending [ἀποστέλλω] you to open their eyes to turn from darkness to light."

How many years are involved here from the beginning of Paul's missionary call and work to the events of Acts 13? The clue provided in Gal 2:1 ("then, after fourteen years, I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas") is open to more than one interpretation, depending on how one harmonizes the Acts chronology with the chronology in Galatians. F.F. Bruce (1977: 151, 475) connects this trip with the one in Acts 11:30. On that basis he sees Paul's conversion in about the year 33, Paul's second trip to Jerusalem in the year 46, and the events of Acts 13:1–4 in the year 47. Thus Paul was working as a missionary for 14–15 years before the events of Acts 13 (or, if one sees the Arabian time as non-missionary, for 11–12 years). If one equates the Gal 2:1 trip with the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), then the chronology is perhaps 2–3 years shorter, but Paul must still have been working as a missionary for about a decade before the events of Acts 13.

In summary: Paul says that his missionary call was not communicated through any human intermediary; rather he received it directly from the Lord at the time of his conversion. Paul was engaged in missionary work for several years before he went to Antioch. It was as missionaries that Barnabas and Paul first went to Antioch, and though there were already individual believers

in Antioch when they arrived, the existence of the Antioch church as an organized community was the product of their missionary work. By the time of the events of Acts 13, Paul had already been a missionary for at least a decade. Acts 13 was certainly not the moment when Paul received his missionary call.

So what did happen in Acts 13?

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said:

Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they released them. They, then, sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia, and from there they set sail to Cyprus (Acts 13:2–4, translation ours).

I have called them

First let us note the perfect tense of the verb προσέκλημαι ("I have called them"). The meaning of the perfect tense in Greek is "an action [that] takes place in the past with results that extend up to, and even include, the present" (Story and Story 1979:115). Blass and Debrunner say that the perfect tense "denotes the *continuance of completed action*" (1961: 175, emphasis theirs). They cite the example of Acts 21:28 (Ἐλληνας εἰσήγαγεν εἰς τὸ ἱερόν καὶ κεκοίνωκεν τὸν ἅγιον τόπον τοῦτου), which they explain as meaning "their entrance *in the past* produced defilement as a *lasting effect*" (Ibid.: 176, emphasis theirs).

Thus Acts 13:2 indicates that the Holy Spirit said, in effect, "Set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I already fully called them in the past, with continuing implications today that they should continue that work." The work to which God had called them in the past was that of establishing churches where there were none. They came to Antioch for that purpose, but now that there was a solidly established church, that work no longer existed in Antioch. The past call to pioneer work must have continuing effect: Barnabas and Paul must go on to places where there are no churches.

"Sent" them?

As we noted earlier in this paper, much discussion today on the proper relationship between the home congregation and the missionary band centers on the use of the word "sent" in verse 3 of

our passage: “Having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they ‘sent’ them off.” This was the basis cited by Peters for saying that “the local assembly becomes the mediating and authoritative *sending* body of the New Testament missionary” (Op. cit., emphasis ours). It was the basis for Gordon MacDonald’s use of the term “sending church” (Op. cit.). While we are not here questioning more broadly whether a home congregation can play a role in “sending” a missionary (cf. Acts 11:22), we believe that this interpretation misrepresents the intent of Acts 13:3.

The word commonly translated “sent” is ἀπέλυσαν. As Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker note, the primary meaning of ἀπολυω is “set free, release, pardon.” Only secondarily is it used euphemistically to mean “let go, send away, dismiss, divorce” (1979: 96). Indeed the overwhelming majority of scholarly commentaries on Acts 13:3 interpret ἀπέλυσαν as meaning “released them.”

The euphemistic usage of ἀπολυω can be understood by analogy to the English euphemism for firing an employee: “We had to let him go” is a euphemism for “We sent him away.” The same euphemism can be found in French (“licencier”) and in German (“entlassen”) terminology for firing employees, where again “allow to leave” is a euphemism for “order to leave” or “send away.” This is the euphemistic sense in which ἀπολυω can mean “dismiss” or “send away.” It is almost painful to imagine that the Antioch church “sent away” Barnabas and Paul in that sense!

Because ἀπέλυσαν in Acts 13:3 is so widely understood today in popular exegesis as meaning “sent” in the sense of “authoritatively commissioned,” it is worth taking some time to examine closely the meaning of this verb in its New Testament context. The verb is used in 60 verses of the Greek New Testament in addition to our text (Bushell 1995). We have analyzed each of these 60 verses, and have classified them by the way in which ἀπολυω is used in each (i.e. according to what the verb means in each context). We list them here in order of frequency of use.

Usages of ἀπολυω

“Release” from prison (27 times):

Mt 18:37; 27:15; 27:17; 27:21;

27:26; Mk 15:6; 15:9; 15: 11; 15:15; Lk 23:16; 23:18; 23:20; 23:22; 23:25; Jn 18:39; 19:10; 19:12; Acts 3:13; 4:21; 4:23; 5:40; 16:35; 16:36; 17:9; 26:32; 28:18; Heb 13:23.

“Dismiss” burdensome people, e.g., hungry or rioting crowds, or importunate demanders of help (13 times):

Mt 14:15; 14:22; 14:23; 15:23; 15:32; 15:39; Mk 6:36; 6:45; 8:3; 8:9; Lk 8:38; 9:12; Acts 19:40.

“Divorce” (12 times):

Mt 1:19; 5:31; 5:32; 19:3; 19:7; 19:8; 19:9; Mk 10:2; 10:4; 10:11; 10:12; Lk 16:18.

“Give leave to return home” (6 times):

Lk 2:29; 14:4; Acts 15:30; 15:33; 23:22 (Acts 28:25, in passive voice, means “go home”).

“Forgive” (1 time):

Lk 6:37.

“Release from infirmity” (1 time):

Lk 13:12.

Nowhere in the New Testament (with the unlikely possible exception of Acts 15:30) is ἀπολυω used with a sense that is anything like “authoritatively commission.” The natural meaning is “release.” People are “released” from prison, “released” from financial debt, “released” from moral debt, and “released” from infirmity. They are “released” from a responsibility (e.g., Lk 2:29; Acts 23:22). The natural sense of ἀπολυω is also evident in the six verses where it is used to mean “give leave to return home.”

When the verb is translated “send away,” it is only in that euphemistic sense in which one “allows to leave” people whom one does not like or who have become burdensome. Thus it is the euphemism used by a man who wishes to “release” his wife (that is, send her away by giving her a bill of divorce). It is the euphemism used by the disciples in urging Jesus to “release” the hungry crowds (that is, to dismiss them so that they would find food for themselves and not demand food from Jesus). It is the euphemism used by the disciples to urge Jesus to “release” the Syrophenician woman who was importunately demanding

Jesus’ help (that is, “send her away so that she will stop bothering us”).

Based on this analysis, it seems almost grotesque to translate Acts 13:3 as indicating that the Antioch church “sent off” Barnabas and Paul. This missionary band was certainly not being fired, or divorced, or requested to stop being burdensome! It seems clear that the verb should be translated, according to its natural and more frequently used sense, as indicating that the Antioch church “released” Barnabas and Paul (that is, released them from their local responsibilities and allowed them to return to the kind of work that had brought them to Antioch in the first place).

An analogous text can be found in Lk 2. According to Lk 2:26 the aged Simeon had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. Lk 2:29 implies that he longed to depart in peace. When he saw the infant Jesus, he prayed, “Lord now allow me to depart (ἀπολύεις) in peace according to your word.” Similarly, when Paul and Barnabas saw the Antioch church well established with prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1), they too needed to be allowed to depart in peace—to go preach the Gospel where Christ had not been named. So the church “released” them (ἀπέλυσαν) from the pastoral responsibilities detaining them in Antioch.

Thus, F. F. Bruce’s commentaries on Acts translate ἀπέλυσαν here as “released” (Bruce 1988:244) and as “let them go, released them” (Bruce 1990: 294). Haenchen’s commentary similarly translates it as “*Sie . . . legten ihnen die Hände auf und entließen sie*” (“They laid hands on them and released them”) (Haenchen 1968: 335).

In his discussion of Acts 13:3, I. Howard Marshall says (contra Louis Berkhof and Roy Stedman, as we saw above):

The laying on of hands [was] an act of blessing in which the church associated itself with them and commended them to the grace of God (14:26), and not an ordination to life-time service, still less an appointment to the apostolate (Marshall 1981: 216).

Sent by the Spirit

However the word “sent” *does* appear in our passage, in verse 4. Barnabas and Paul went down to Seleucia and set sail for Cyprus “ἐκπεμφθέντες ὑπο του

ἀγίου πνεύματος (“sent out by the Holy Spirit”). As Stanley Horton’s commentary on Acts points out:

Verse 4 emphasizes that Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. The Church gave them their blessing and let them go (Horton 1981: 157).

Alex. Rattray Hay comments:

Barnabas and Saul went on their way, sent, as it says, by the Holy Spirit. The church did not send them; it ‘let them go’, or ‘released’ them—for that is the meaning of the word used (Hay n.d.: 67).

This reference to the *Holy Spirit* as Sender in verse 4 is often overlooked in discussions of Acts 13 as normative for the church’s role in sending. This is because it is common to make a break in the text between verses 3 and 4. Even many commentaries on the passage separate verses 1–3 from verses 4ff. For example, F.F. Bruce does this. (1988: 246) Then, in an astonishing slip, after translating verse 4 as “Barnabas and Saul, commissioned thus by the Holy Spirit . . .,” Bruce immediately goes on to paraphrase verse 4 as, “Barnabas and Saul, then, having been sped on their way by the Antiochene church [*sic*] . . .”! (Ibid.) To the extent that Acts 13 speaks about “sending” in the sense of “authoritative commissioning” it should be clear that the emphasis is on the *Holy Spirit* as Sender. Human leaders are active in blessing and supporting that sending, but Acts 13 does not describe human beings as “sending.”

Sending, Accountability, Authority Elsewhere in Acts

We are not hereby implying that the New Testament nowhere speaks of churches as “sending” people in the sense of “commissioning” them. We are saying only that Acts 13 does not do so. Acts 8:14; 11:19–30; 15:22–35 are passages which use the verbs *πεμπω* *ανδαποστελλω* to describe the “sending” of individuals by the Jerusalem church. Space will not allow us in this paper to examine these passages in depth. We will simply note here that each

of these three passages speaks of individuals being sent on a specific errand intended to be of short duration, and that all involve people being sent from one church to another existing church or at least to a place where the beginnings of a church (new believers) already existed. We know of no New Testament text which describes a local congregation as “sending”/“commissioning” people for long-term pioneer missionary service to plant churches where there are none. This does not mean that it is contrary to Scripture for a church to do so today: it means only that we know of no biblical text which directly *supports* the use of that terminology in that way.

We are also not implying here that the Barnabas–Paul missionary band, which was created in Acts 13, and which soon picked up additional members, did not see themselves as having any accountability at all toward the Antioch congregation. But we would note a clear distinction between the practice of *accountability* and the exercise of decision-making *authority* or direction. They did see Antioch as a base of operations from which they made outward journeys.

After being released from Antioch in Acts 13:1–4, they preached Gospel throughout South Galatia. Then we read in Acts 14:

They sailed to Antioch, from which they had been given over to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they announced the things which God had done with them and that he had opened the door of faith to the nations. And they stayed not a little time with the disciples (Acts 14:26–28, translation ours).

This text seems to imply that Antioch was a home base for this missionary band. When they had “fulfilled” the work they had gone out to do, they returned to stay for an extended time in Antioch, where they remembered having been “given over to the grace of God” (presumably an allusion to Acts

13:1–4). Their report of all that God had done with them implies that they sensed a responsibility for *accountability* toward the Antioch church, but nothing in this passage implies the exercise of decision-making *authority* by their home congregation over the decisions Paul and Barnabas had made “on the field.”

In Acts 15:35–40 we see that Antioch continued to be a home base for them, and that it was from there that they departed (separately from one another) on another missionary journey, with at least Paul and Silas again being “given over to the grace of the Lord” by the church (vs. 40). At the end of that missionary journey, in Acts 18:22–23, Paul again returned to Antioch and “spent some time there,” before departing again for his third missionary journey. The principle of accountability is not illustrated here, but the concept of a congregational “home base” is.

On this issue of accountability one other point should be mentioned. There is no evidence in the New Testament that the Pauline missionary band ever asked or received financial support from the Antioch congregation. From other New Testament texts, though, we can observe that for Paul the receipt of financial donations heightened the importance of accountability. This is important to our present-day discussions since most (but not all) missionaries today are financially supported by their home congregations.

In 2 Cor 8 we see Paul aggressively seeking donations, not for his own personal support, but for the poor in Jerusalem (as he had promised to do in Gal 2:10). In transporting these donations, he brought with him representatives chosen by the donor churches (the equivalent of financial auditors). In Acts 20:3–4 we read a list of the names of these representatives together with the churches which they represented. Paul says to the Corinthians why he is doing this:

So that no one may find fault with regard to this generous gift which we are administering. For we intend [to do] honorable things not only before

There is no evidence in the New Testament that the Pauline missionary band ever asked or received financial support from the Antioch congregation.

the Lord, but also before human beings (2 Cor 8:20–21, translation ours).

These words are quite remarkable coming from the same man who said, “Am I now seeking the approval of human beings, or of God? If I were still pleasing human beings, I would not be a servant of Christ!” (Gal 1:10) In most areas of life Paul insists that he cares only whether he pleases God; other people’s opinions of him are not important (cf. Jesus’ teaching on this in Jn 5:44). But Paul makes here a major exception to this principle, in the area of financial accountability. When receiving financial donations, he seeks total transparency with the goal of pleasing *both* God and human beings.

However, again, one must distinguish between the practice of *accountability* and the exercise of decision-making *authority*. Throughout the missionary-journey passages in Acts we can see various major decisions made by the missionary bands without consulting their home congregations. This was the case when Barnabas—sent by Jerusalem to Antioch—decided to go to Tarsus to get Paul to join him. It was true in Acts 16:6–10 when the missionary band wanted to “preach the word” in the province of Asia but were “forbidden by the Holy Spirit” from doing so. Then they tried to enter Bythnia, but the “Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.” Proceeding in the only remaining geographical direction, they came to Troas on the west coast of the Anatolian peninsula. There Paul had his “Macedonian vision” which directed the missionary band to cross the Hellespont into Europe. These were major decisions on the direction of the work, and they did not involve consultation with the Antioch congregation. The mission structure was apparently self-governing under the Spirit. Numerous similar examples could be cited.

Acts 16:1–3 is the interesting example of Paul’s recruitment of Timothy to join the missionary band. 16:2 indicates that Timothy’s two home congregations in Lystra and Iconium (both started by the Paul-Barnabas-John Mark missionary band) “bore witness” to Timothy’s good qualities. But 16:3 seems to indicate that it was Paul who made the decision that Timothy should join his group as a missionary.

Possible Examples of Home-Base Governance in the New Testament

Are there any examples in the New Testament of missionaries whose work was governed from a home base? There are certainly no examples for which we have anything like the kind of detailed information that we have about the Pauline missionary band and its relationship to Antioch and to other “home” congregations from which its members came. But two somewhat sketchy and uncertain examples are worth mentioning as possible cases of home-governed mission efforts in the New Testament.

The first example is the so-called “Judaizers” Paul writes about in Galatians. He writes:

When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he was clearly in the wrong. For before certain people came from James, he ate with the Gentiles, but when they came, he drew back and separated himself out of fear of those of the circumcision faction. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. . . . I said to Cephas in front of them all . . . “By what right do you compel the Gentiles to become Jewish [literally: to Judaize]?” (Gal 2:11–14, translation ours).

The details of this situation are unclear. It is not certain that the people referred to in this passage are the same as those elsewhere in Galatians who sought to persuade Gentile believers to be circumcised and to keep the Law of Moses. It is also not clear that the words “certain people came from James [president of the church in Jerusalem]” imply that we are dealing here with a home-governed mission structure. It is quite possible that there is no mission structure at all involved here, and that these people were simply individual visitors, not missionary envoys seeking to assert Jerusalem’s control over the ministry in Antioch. In that case this example would be irrelevant to the concerns of this article.

But *if* “came from James . . . fear of the circumcision faction” does imply that Gal 2:11–14 is indeed an example of a home-governed mission effort, then it is clear that it is recorded by the New

Testament as a *negative* example of what *not* to do. And it illustrates an interesting problem that we will see in later missions history. For the issue between Paul and the “Judaizers” was not merely *theological* (whether one is saved by the works of the Law), but also *cultural* (whether Gentile believers on the “field” at Antioch must change culturally to become like Palestinian Jewish believers in the “home country”). Newly arrived envoys from the “home-base” in Jerusalem were eager to see cultural practices in Antioch made to conform to the norms of the home country. Paul, the experienced missionary who had resided longest among these Gentiles and who knew them best, was vehement in insisting on the importance of their retaining their culture while renouncing those practices (idolatry, sexual immorality, violence, etc.—cf. Gal 5:19ff.) which were contrary to the moral message of Jesus.

The second (similarly sketchy) possible example of a home-governed mission effort in the New Testament is the case of the “superapostles” (οἱ ὑπεράλιαν ἀπόστολοι) in 2nd Corinthians. Again the details of this situation are unclear, and it may or may not be relevant to our concerns in this article.

It seems probable, but not certain, that the “superapostles” mentioned in 2 Cor 11:5, 13 and 12:11 are the same as those mentioned in 2 Cor 3:1ff. who brought with them to Corinth credentialing letters of recommendation from some other church (Jerusalem?), and who sought such letters *from* the Corinthian church. Paul insists vehemently that the only apostolic credential which matters is the evidence of an apostle’s ministry, such as: the churches the apostle has planted and people the apostle has led to Christ (2 Cor 3:3; 2nd Cor. 11:1–7); the sufferings which the apostle has endured (2 Cor 11:16ff.); and the signs and wonders wrought by God through the apostle (2 Cor 12:11–12).

Of course the writing of letters of recommendation from a sending congregation does not necessarily imply a home-governed mission structure. Acts 18:27 seems to imply a positive judgment on Priscilla and Aquila’s writing of a letter of introduction for Apollos to take with him to Corinth. But the tone

of 2 Corinthians seems to imply that the “superapostles” did not merely carry letters with them, but went further in asserting that no missionary was legitimate unless the missionary had such a credentialing letter.

As in the case of the “Judaizers” of Galatians, so also here with the “superapostles” it is not at all certain that we are dealing with a home-governed mission structure. But it is certain that *if* this is such a structure, the New Testament presents it as a *negative* example of what *not* to do. As we saw with the “Judaizers” in Galatians, these “superapostles” were apparently newer, less-experienced missionaries who came to visit an already-established church, and who criticized the legitimacy and work of the more experienced missionary (Paul) who had pioneered the church before them. Later in this paper we will have occasion to see this same social dynamic at work in the work of Matteo Ricci, of William Carey and of Hudson Taylor.

Comments of Other Exegetes and Missiologists

Our interpretation of the relationship in the New Testament between the home congregation and the Pauline missionary band is supported by other biblical scholars. Gerd Theißen goes so far as to see this as a key point of distinction between Paul, on one hand, and the “judaizers” and “superapostles” on the other:

Noch in einem zweitem Punkt haben sich die Konkurrenten des Paulus auf eine traditionelle Legitimation berufen: Sie kamen mit Empfehlungsschreiben und ließen sich von der korinthischen Gemeinde Empfehlungsschreiben geben (II Cor. iii. 1). Sie traten also immer auch als Abgesandte einer bestimmten Gemeinde auf. Paulus tat dies nicht.

Paul’s competitors appealed to a traditional legitimation in yet a second point. They came with letters of recommendation, and they had the Corinthian church give them letters of recommendation (2 Cor 3:1). Thus, they always appeared as emissaries of a particular congregation. Paul did not do this (Theißen 1979: 223; translation ours).

It will be remembered that Paul knew well what it was to travel with letters of reference to congregations: in Acts 9:2 he had taken letters of reference from the high priest to the Damascus syna-

gogues authenticating him as persecutor of the Church. His personal experience of using such letters was an example of abuse.

Paul Pierson’s commentary on Acts expresses a view similar to the one we have taken:

[The laying on of hands in Acts 13] did not add to their call or authority, but it was important because it symbolized the participation of the whole church in the mission... In turn, the two missionaries continued to recognize their bond of *koinonia* with the whole church, but with Antioch especially (see Acts 14:26–28; 18:22,23). They were not under its control but they continued to be a part of the church. In turn they enjoyed its support in prayer and hospitality (Pierson 1982: 105).

Similarly Warren Webster quotes with approval this analysis by C. Peter Wagner:

[Paul] reported back to Antioch from time to time, just as he reported to Jerusalem and the other churches. The church in Philippi most likely was one of the financial supporters of the mission. But the missionary society was not controlled by Antioch or Jerusalem or Philippi, so far as we can determine. The church was the church, and the mission was the mission, right from the beginning (cited in Webster 1991: D–240).

Ralph Winter expresses it thus:

Both the stationary Christian synagogue that remained in Antioch and the travelling missionary team (which, note well, no longer took its orders from the Antioch church) were essential elements of the body of Christ, the people of God of the New Covenant, and were equally the church (Winter 1978: 339).

“Doug,” a prominent leader in our own mission describes his understanding of these texts thus:

There is no indication that the church in Antioch (or anywhere else) laid out the plans for the work, or gave them direction in the work. In fact, they were constantly making “on the spot” decisions (where to go, whom to speak to, how to respond to circumstances like rejection, stoning, rioting, jail, “closed doors,” etc.) for which they could only be accountable to each other (in their apostolic band) under the direct supervision of God

(e.g., 13:46; 14:19–22; 16:6–15). They could “report” to the church(es), later, what they had done, but this is different from being directed by the church(es) in the work... I see a pattern of reporting to the church, not being supervised by the church (e.g., Acts 14:27; 15:4)... Paul & his companions were definitely NOT under the authority/direction of the church, either in Jerusalem or in Antioch, for their ministry, but accountable to each other in the team/apostolic band, for carrying out the work to which God had called them (personal e-mail 1999, emphasis his).

Arthur Glasser goes even further than the view which we have taken here:

There is no indication that the apostolic band (the mission team) was either directed by or accountable to the Christians in Antioch... We state this without qualification, even though upon returning from their first journey, Paul and Barnabas “gathered the church together and declared all that God had done with them” (Glasser 1989: 265).

Implications for Mission Structures Today

The discussion above has not considered all aspects of congregation-mission relationships in the New Testament, but has focused on the relationship between the Antioch congregation and the Pauline missionary band. This is the congregation-mission relationship about which we have the most information in the New Testament, and it is the one most frequently mentioned in discussions of this issue today. Our consideration of other such relationships in the New Testament has been more by way of brief overview. With the caveat that other perspectives might potentially be drawn from other relationships in the New Testament, we think that we can draw certain tentative conclusions from the material which we have analyzed:

- 1) Congregational structures and missionary structures are both legitimate structures, and are both legitimately part of “the Church.”
- 2) Mission structures which follow this biblical model will be directed in their decision-making by the Holy Spirit through their mutually-accountable personnel in the field, not by leaders at the “home base.” The missionary band which began in Antioch (and took on members from other congregations) was not

under the decision-making authority of the Antioch congregation.

- 3) Nevertheless mission structures, if they wish to imitate this biblical model, should see themselves as *accountable* to the congregations from which their missionary members come. Accountability implies transparency and reporting, but it does not imply decision-making authority or veto power.
- 4) When a missionary structure accepts financial donations from supporting congregations, this gives the congregations an increased right to transparent accountability. This still does not imply decision-making authority or veto power, however.

Glasser agrees:

We merely desire to take note of the distinctives of these two types of structure—congregational and mis-

sion—and to contend that neither is to be at the disposal of the other. Indeed, both are definitely subordinate to the Holy Spirit. Neither is to be an end in itself. Both are to be in wholesome symbiotic relationship to each other... Neither is to be overly upgraded or downgraded. Hence one should deliberately avoid speaking of “church” and “para-church” (Glasser 1989: 265).

Winter also expresses it compellingly:

Don't miss the larger and urgent significance of the very concept of the self-governed mission agency—just like the self-governed congregation—held in mutual accountability with other like organizations, fully legitimate as one expression of the people of God, the church of Jesus Christ (Winter, in Foreword to Frizen 1992: 10).

In the church today people in missional structures frequently tend to criticize congregational, local and geographical structures (including dioceses and districts) for lacking vitality and missionary commitment. The people leading the congregational-local-geographical structures equally often criticize missional structures as lacking legitimacy, as not really being part of the “Church.” The material considered above leads us to hope that these two ecclesial structures may learn the kind of partnership—envisioned in the New Testament—in which “through the Church the diverse wisdom of God may be made known” (Eph 3:10). **IJFM**

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Mission Structures in the New Testament:

Supplementary Comments on Part I of *Field-Governed Mission Structures*

by David Devenish



The paper exegetes well the role of the sending church in Acts 13 and also highlights the trend of large sending churches now seeking to exercise authority over missionaries they have sent out. However, I think that two other current issues being emphasised and rediscovered need to be examined in the light of Scripture because they may affect some of the assumptions in the article. These issues are:

1. The perception of the local church as a missional community rather than a pastoral community. Thus members are to regard themselves as “on mission” and sent into the world as Christ was sent into the world. Each church corporately must see itself in the same way—see, in particular “Missional Church,” ed. Darrell Guder, Eerdmans, ISBN 0 8028 4350 6.
2. The restoration of the role of apostles today not as adding to the completed Canon but as a gift given by the *ascended Christ* (unlike the twelve) to extend the mission of the church, plant new churches and bring the church to maturity according to Eph 4:7–13—see in particular, “Churchquake” by C Peter Wagner, which refers to this “new apostolic reformation”— ISBN 0 8307 1918 0.

These two issues are causing a re-examination of what we understand by “missionary” and “mission structures” but also a positive emphasis on mission—i.e., that the gospel of the kingdom must be preached to every people group. Also some missionary societies are now calling their church planters, “apostolic teams.”

So what are some of the functions of apostles according to Scripture:

- To plant churches.
- To lay good foundations in churches—1 Cor 3:10.
- To reach the regions beyond—2 Cor 10:16.
- To appoint elders in churches—Acts 14:23.
- To bring biblical wisdom to difficult situations e.g., Paul’s answers to questions in 1 Cor 7.
- To exercise continued care for the churches which they have planted—2 Cor 11:28.
- Note it is always out of personal relationship and not out of formal legal structures.

It is evident that in this endeavour, apostles and their apostolic teams (Paul always functioned in teams—see 2 Cor 2:12–13) had authority invested by God to fulfil that calling. In that sense I agree with the interpretation of Acts 13 in the paper and other Scriptures quoted concerning Paul’s call and anointing, but I would see it as his “apostolic call” not his “missionary call.” This is not just splitting hairs. It could be argued that “mission” is the Latin root equivalent of

David Devenish is part of the New Frontiers International Team with particular responsibility for mission in the former Soviet Union and the Islamic world.

apostle but not all we call “missionaries” today are apostles, though I believe that is biblically what the pioneers examined in the paper were.

So who are missionaries? Every believer in every church community is. But are not some called to travel to share the gospel in other cultures? Yes, so how was it done and structured in the New Testament? Firstly, what gifts do what we call missionaries have? Some may be apostles, some prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers, some helps, some administrators. They could have all the gifts and calling of any other local church member but with grace from God to function cross-culturally. The authority we have depends on our gifting from God, the recognition of that gift by others and the godliness of our character.

How did mission take place? In various ways:

- By believers being scattered—Acts 11:19ff.
- By apostolic strategy, adjusted by God’s revelation as in Acts 16.
- By evangelists travelling—Acts 8.
- By reluctant apostles receiving revelation—Acts 10.
- By Paul sending those he trained—so his strategy for Ephesus was different to that from Antioch; he trained in the Hall of Tyrannus and all of Asia heard the Word and churches were planted, e.g., Colosse to whom Paul could still write as their apostle even though they had never seen him, because of his relationship with Epaphras—Col 1:7.

What were the structures?

- Apostolic teams which could ensure a good foundation was laid even when the churches had been planted by other means—e.g., Barnabas and Paul going to Antioch, Peter and John to Samaria.
- Apostolic teams training people to go on their behalf, e.g., Epaphras
- Apostolic teams sending one of their member to a particular place with clear authority, e.g., Timothy.
- Apostles were genuinely accountable to each other, though also willing to stand up to each other—Gal 2:6–14.
- Apostolic teams reached decisions together—note plural in Acts 16:10, “concluding.”
- Apostles and their teams functioned as part of local churches

when they were there and in relational harmony with them as they travelled, Antioch—Acts 13:1–2, 14:35, Ephesus—Acts 20:18, 32–35, Thessalonica—1 Thess 2:8. Other churches founded by the apostles supported the ongoing mission—e.g., in Macedonia. They were therefore not separate from the churches but in genuine relationship.

I agree that the local church at Antioch did not govern apostolic decisions on where they should go but apostolic teams did have authority to check that good foundations were laid in churches founded by other “missionaries.”

So are mission structures field led or governed by sending churches? I would say apostolically led. The historical examples given in the paper were not local church but mission board or denominations. It may be that leaders of some local churches have an apostolic calling which in part is worked out through sending people under their authority. That does not mean every local church has authority over their church planting teams. I believe decisions should in the main be made “on the field” but with apostolic checking of the foundation and practices to ensure that they reflect biblical truth, though they will be expressed by culturally contextualised means. It may be that an apostle is leading the church planting team or the team may consult with apostles with whom they have confidence and relationship. **IJFM**

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Part II: Patrick of Ireland and his Celtic Peregrini Successors

by Joseph & Michele C.



t. Patrick, the 5th-century Apostle of Ireland, is considered by many writers to be the single most important missionary figure of the period from the close of the New Testament to the rise of the great missionary orders in the 13th–16th centuries. Though such a sweeping and unqualified statement is an exaggeration, neglecting the Eastern Orthodox pioneers of the Slavic churches and the Syriac-speaking missionaries of the “Nestorian” Church of the East, there is no question that Patrick and his Celtic peregrini successors were instrumental in changing the course of history in Europe and (as a result) in the rest of the world. Certainly Patrick was one of the most important missionary figures of the 2nd–13th centuries.

When Patrick went as a missionary to Ireland there were perhaps a handful of mostly-foreign Christians in the country, but there was no national church to speak of. The religion of Ireland was Druidism, and it probably still involved human sacrifice (Cahill, pp. 227–228). By the time of his death, he had personally baptized “countless thousands” (Patrick’s *Confessio* 14, 50, and *Epistola* 2) of the Irish people, and had ordained clergy “in every place” (*Ibid.*), and it appears that the majority of Ireland’s population had professed faith in Christ.

But, more importantly, the example of his life, and the churches which he founded, gave birth to a huge missionary movement which utterly transformed European history from the 6th–10th centuries. For a period of five hundred years nearly all of the great missionaries of the Western Church—nearly everyone responsible for the evangelization of Northern and Central Europe—were so-called “peregrini” (wandering pilgrim-monks) who came either from Ireland or from monasteries in Scotland and England founded by Irish missionaries.

These Celtic peregrini missionaries were responsible not only for the spread of the Christian faith, but also for the spread of literacy, the preservation and copying of books, and the teaching of up-to-date agricultural techniques to the invading Germanic and other tribes who had overwhelmed the crumbling remains of the Western Roman empire. Without these Celtic missionaries, literacy and books might well have disappeared entirely from Europe along with the Christian faith. It is for this reason that writers like Thomas Cahill have argued that these Celtic peregrini “saved civilization” in the West (Cahill, p.196).

Joseph and Michele have worked for fifteen years in North Africa. Joseph is a Ph.D. candidate at Yale University. Michele is an R.N. and also an M.A. candidate at Fuller Seminary. They have two children.

As we will see below, the mission of Patrick and the Celtic missionary movement give us interesting examples of missions which were field-governed at the start but which came under pressure, over time, toward home-base governance.

With the passage of centuries a large number of legends have collected around the person of St. Patrick, but most of them are impossible to document as historically reliable. For example, he did not miraculously drive all snakes from the island of Ireland (Ireland has never had an indigenous population of snakes). And though he strongly affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity (Confessio 4, 14, and Epistola 21), there is no historical evidence that he ever used a three-leafed clover to explain it. However, we do have excellent historical sources for his life in two documents from his own pen which have been preserved through the centu-

captivity), and some miracles, he made his way home to Britain.

Then one night he had a vision in which he saw “virum venientem quasi de Hiberione”—“a man coming, as it were, from Ireland” (Confessio 23)—and heard “vox Hiberionacum”—“the voice of the Irish”—calling to him, “Rogamus te, sancte puer, ut venias et adhuc ambulas inter nos”—“We beg you, holy youth, to come and again walk among us” (Confessio 23).

So Patrick went to Ireland, even though his family and some of his “seniores”—“elders”—pleaded with him “with weeping and tears” (Confessio 37) not to go, offering him “munera multa”—“many gifts” (Confessio 37) if he would change his mind and stay in Britain. It is clear from Confessio 37 that his loved ones’ and elders’ reason for pleading with him to stay was not any lack of qualifications on his part, but rather the fact that they did

baptized so many thousands of people... among that people [i.e. among the Irish]” (Confessio 14–15). “Baptizavi tot milia hominum... Ordinavit ubique Dominus clericos per modicitatem meam”—“I have baptized so many thousands of people... The Lord has ordained clergy in every place through my tiny efforts” (Confessio 50).

This success was not accomplished without suffering. In his modest way, and in response to criticism by others, he recounts one story after another of persecution, of imprisonment, of attempts on his life, of voluntary sacrifice, etc. One is reminded of Paul’s discomfort at being forced to recount his own sufferings in 2 Cor 11–12. The following are a few examples from the Confessio:

[Breviter dicam qualiter piissimus Deus de servitute saepe liberavit et de periculis duodecim qua periclitata est anima mea, praeter insidias multas et quae verbis exprimere non valeo.]

Briefly I will say how the most merciful God has frequently liberated me from slavery and from the twelve dangers in which my life was endangered, not to mention many plots and things which I cannot find words to express (Confessio 35).

[Deus... vincit in me... ut ego veneram ad Hibernas gentes evangelium praedicare et ab incredulis contumelias perferre, ut audirem obprobrium peregrinationis meae, et persecutiones multas usque ad vincula, et ut darem ingenuitatem meam pro utilitate aliorum, et si dignus fuero, promptus sum ut etiam animam meam incunctanter et libentissime pro nomine eius; et ibi opto impendere eam usque ad mortem, si Dominus mihi indulgeret.]

God... is victorious in me... that I came to the Irish peoples to preach the Gospel, and to endure insults from unbelievers, and to hear reproach of my missionary travels [Latin: *peregrinatio*], and [to suffer] many persecutions, even to the point of imprisonment, and to give up my birthright for the benefit of others. If I should be worthy, I am ready to give even my life unhesitatingly and gladly for His name. It is there [in Ireland] that I wish to expend [my life] unto death, if the Lord will grant that to me (Confessio 37).

[Comprehenderunt me cum comitibus meis et illa die avidissime cupiebant interficere me, sed tempus nondum venerat; et omnia quaecumque nobiscum invenerunt rapuerunt illud et me ipsum fero vinxerunt et quartodecimo die absolvit me Dominus de

The mission of Patrick and the Celtic missionary movement give us interesting examples of missions which were field-governed at the start but which came under pressure, over time, toward home-base governance.

ries. Patrick’s Confessio and his Epistola ad Coroticum are almost undisputed by critical scholarship as being the authentic writings of Patrick, and they contain abundant information on his life. Here is the basic outline of his life which Patrick provides in the Confessio:

Though raised in Britain in a Christian family, he says, “Deum verum ignorabam”—“I did not know the true God” (Confessio 1). At the age of sixteen he was kidnaped by Irish slave-raiders and taken to Ireland where for six years he was a slave working as a shepherd. There, in his suffering and isolation, he repented of his sins “ut converterem toto corde ad Dominum”—“so that I was converted with all my heart to the Lord” (Confessio 2). He spent large amounts of time in prayer. In response to a vision he escaped from Ireland, and through many trials (including a second

not want him to return to the dangerous land of his past enslavement, where they knew they might never see him again.

“Sed gubernante Deo nullo modo consensi neque acquievi illis”—“But, guided by God, in no way did I consent, nor did I acquiesce in their [wishes]” (Confessio 37).

In Ireland Patrick’s mission was abundantly successful. He reports that:

[Deus mihi tantam gratiam donavit ut populi multi per me in Deum renascerentur... et clerici ubique illis ordinarentur ad plebem nuper venientem ad credulitatem.]

God gave me such grace that many people were born again in God through me... and clergy were ordained for them in every place for a people just now coming to faith (Confessio 38).

“In Domino ego baptizavi tot milia hominum... in gentem illam”—“In the Lord I have

potestate eorum et quicquid nostrum fuit redditum est nobis propter Deum et necessarios amicos quos ante praevidimus.]

They arrested me with my companions, and that day they eagerly wanted to kill me, but my time had not yet come. They stole everything which they found in our possession, and they put me in chains, but on the fourteenth day the Lord rescued me from their power, and our possessions were returned to us, because of God and because of dear friends whom we had previously acquired (Confessio 52).

[Cotidie spero aut internicionem aut circumveniri aut redigi in servitutem sive occasio cuiuslibet.]

Every day I expect either to be killed or betrayed or returned to slavery or whatever may happen (Confessio 55).

[Peto illi det mihi ut...pro nomine suo effundam sanguinem meum, etsi etiam caream sepulturam aut miserissime cadaver per singula membra dividatur canibus.]

I pray to [God] to grant to me that for the sake of His name I might pour out my blood, even if I should not have a grave or if my body should be miserably torn limb from limb by dogs (Confessio 59).

However, these trials at the hands of the non-Christian Irish were not nearly as painful for Patrick as the problem of tensions with his fellow-Christians in Britain. Louis Gougaud notes:

It did not enter into the counsels of God that the soil of Ireland at this early beginning should be watered with the blood of martyrs. Trials of another kind were reserved for Patrick; and they were all the more painful to him because they came from his fellow-believers and even, it would seem, from priests, his fellow-workers (Gougaud, p. 43).

The first problem to prompt Patrick to take up his pen was political in nature. Patrick had just baptized a group of new Irish believers, and they were still wearing white robes, with the chrism still on their foreheads, when a nominally Christian British petty king named Coroticus landed with a party of slave-raiders. Coroticus and his soldiers killed a large number of the newly baptized Irish Christians, and he carried away others into slavery in Britain, together with substantial booty. Patrick immediately sent him a letter calling upon

him to repent, but Patrick's envoy was laughed out of Coroticus's court.

This was the occasion of Patrick's writing a second letter, the scathing *Epistola ad Coroticum* (Letter to Coroticus), an open letter intended to be read by the general public in Patrick's homeland of Britain (*Epistola* 21). Patrick of course remembered his own experience of slavery (*Epistola* 10), and he noted that female slaves faced the even greater terror of rape (*Epistola* 14, 19, 21). In the *Epistola* Patrick publicly excommunicates this British "Christian" king for his acts of violence against the Irish, until such time as Coroticus may show repentance and deep sorrow for what he has done. Patrick calls upon the Christians of Britain to refuse to have anything to do with Coroticus (*Epistola* 7, 13), and he does not hesitate to say that Coroticus will end up in hell if he does not repent (*Epistola* 4, 18–20). Patrick's *Epistola* is one of the most vehement and uncompromising public denunciations of the institution of slavery in the history of the Christian Church, and it was written fourteen centuries before the anti-slavery work of David Livingstone, William Wilberforce, and Arthur and Lewis Tappan.

Patrick's other surviving treatise, his *Confessio*, was occasioned by something even more painful to him personally, and it is more directly relevant to this paper's concern, the issue of field authority versus home-base authority in mission structures. Near the end of his life Patrick came under attack (not for the first time) among the leadership of the Church in his homeland of Britain. Both his personal character and his missionary methods came in for criticism in Britain "post tergum meum"—"behind my back" (*Confessio* 46). Finally a delegation of church leaders came to Ireland to summon Patrick to a church meeting in Britain to answer these charges. In the event, Patrick politely refused to accede to this summons, and he insisted on remaining in Ireland. He wrote the *Confessio* to explain in writing his reasons for this refusal, and to answer the charges themselves. One senses the anguish of Patrick's heart in nearly every line of this document, and one senses the damage which the whole crisis did to his ministry.

The intended audience of the *Confessio* is clearly the bishops and clergy in Britain (Hanson, p. 108), and "the attack or accusation which was made against Patrick...was the main cause of his writing this work" (Hanson, p. 131). In an attempt to reconcile the *Confessio* with later legends about Patrick, some scholars in the past suggested that this attack took place (and that the *Confessio* was written) *before* Patrick went to Ireland as a missionary. However, R. P. C. Hanson, author of the standard scholarly biography of Patrick, has so completely refuted this (Hanson, pp. 131ff.) that no one writing since Hanson seems to question the chronology which he outlines as follows:

- 1) first Patrick was made a bishop to Ireland;
- 2) then, at some later date, Patrick was criticized in his absence among the church leadership in Britain, but an old, dear friend defended him;
- 3) *now*, at a yet later date (occasioning the writing of the *Confessio*), a delegation has come from Britain ("venerunt...illo die") after many years of his hard missionary labor in Ireland ("contra laboriosum episcopatum meum"), near the end of his life ("antequam moriar") to demand or request that he return to Britain to respond to charges being raised against him at some kind of public church synod ("coram cunctis publice"), which include the dear, old friend's having divulged a sin which Patrick had confessed to him 30 years before ("post annos triginta").

John T. McNeill, author of the standard scholarly history of the Celtic churches, agrees: "The Confession... must be dated very near the end of his labors" (McNeill, p. 55).

The text of the *Confessio* makes it clear that Patrick is writing after many years' ministry in Britain. He is writing ["in senectute mea"]—"in my old age" (*Confessio* 10). The closing line of the document reads, ["Haec est confessio mea antequam moriar"]—"This is my declaration before I die" (*Confessio* 62). Patrick has been the object of criticism for some time: "Olim cogitavi scribere, sed et usque nunc haesitavi"—"For some time I have considered writing, but until now I have hesitated" (*Confessio* 9). The fact that he has already been ministering for years in Ireland is also clear from his reference

to “laboriosum episcopatum meum”—“my laborious episcopate” (Confessio 26)—and from the following statement: “In Domino ego baptizavi tot milia hominum... in gentem illam”—“In the Lord I have baptized so many thousands of people... among that people [i.e. among the Irish]” (Confessio 14–15).

He describes the current attack on him, and the delegation that has come to see him, and he makes allusion to at least one occasion in the past when he was similarly attacked in his absence (and was defended by a friend who has now deserted him):

[Tempatus sum ab aliquantis senioribus meis, qui venerunt et peccata mea contra laboriosum episcopatum meum obiecerunt, utique illo die fortiter impulsus sum ut caderem hic et in aeternum.]

I was attacked by some of my elders who came and, against my laborious episcopate, raised the issue of my sins. On that day indeed I was dealt a heavy blow, so that I might have fallen now and in eternity (Confessio 26).

Confessio 29: “Reprobatus sum a memoratis supradictis”—“I was rejected by the people I have referred to and mentioned above [i.e. “my elders”, mentioned in Confessio 26].”

[Sed magis doleo pro amicissimo meo cur hoc meruimus audire tale responsum. Cui ego credidi etiam animam! Et comperi ab aliquantis fratribus ante defensionem illam (quod ego non interfui nec in Britannis eram nec a me oriebatur) ut et ille in mea absentia pulsaret pro me... Sed unde venit illi postmodum ut coram cunctis, bonis et malis, et me publice dehonorearet quod ante sponte et laetus indulerat, et Dominus, qui maior omnibus est?]

But I am more deeply hurt for my dearest friend, why we deserved to hear such an answer as this. I had confided my very soul to him! And I learned from some brothers before that defense (at which I was not present, nor was I in Britain, nor did it originate from me) that he used to fight to defend me... But where did he get the idea afterward that he should publicly disgrace me in the presence of the whole assembly, of both good people and evil people, for a matter which previously he had spontaneously and joyfully excused, as had the Lord, who is greater than all (Confessio 32)?

Judging from the text of the Confessio, the criticisms of Patrick and his mission seem to have contained four main elements:

- 1) he was irresponsibly exposing himself to danger among a barbarian people who did not deserve it;
- 2) he was insufficiently educated to be a bishop;
- 3) he had confessed a scandalous sin thirty years earlier; and
- 4) he was improperly enriching himself financially.

Regarding the first criticism, Patrick writes:

[Multi hanc legationem prohibebant, etiam inter se ipsos post tergum meum narrabant et dicebant: ‘Iste quare se mittit in periculo inter hostes qui Deum non noverunt?]

Many were seeking to hinder this mission, and were even telling stories among themselves behind my back and were saying: ‘Why does this fellow send himself into danger among enemies who do not know God (Confessio 46)?

The charge that the Irish, as godless enemies of the British, do not deserve for a British missionary to risk his life among them is one that Patrick does not even answer. Perhaps he thinks that such an unchristian assertion should not even be dignified with a reply. Regarding his lack of education, Patrick was painfully aware that this was true. His enslavement from age 16 to age 22, which he blames on his own sins (Confessio 10), interrupted his education, and he was never able to achieve the level of mastery of the Latin language or of Roman law and literature that was typical of the British bishops.

In the opening lines of the Confessio he writes:

[Ego Patricius, peccator rusticissimus et minimus omnium fidelium et contemptibilissimus apud plurimos... [N]unc parvitas mea esse videtur inter alienigenas.]

I, Patrick, a sinner, most unsophisticated and the least of all the faithful, and most contemptible to many... [N]ow my insignificance is seen to be among foreign people.

At first one might think that this is simply a pro forma expression of humility to introduce his letter. But as he repeats again and again his painful awareness of his clumsy Latin and his unsophistication, one realizes that this was genuinely a source of real embarrassment to him.

For example in the Confessio 9–10, he says that he has been thinking of

writing for a long time, and that he has hesitated for fear of exposing how unpolished and unscholarly his Latin is. He says here that he is painfully aware that many in his audience are much better educated than he, having studied both law and Scripture, and that they may despise his clumsy writing. In Confessio 13, he mentions that his readers in Britain include some whom he calls “Dominicati rhetorici.” There is some uncertainty about how best to translate this expression, but it is clear that he is referring to verbally sophisticated intellectuals whom he expects to despise



his clumsy Latin prose. He says in Confessio 45, that he expects such people to “laugh and scorn” him (“Rideat autem et insultet qui voluerit”). In Confessio 10, he says of his Latin writing, “Unde ergo hodie erubesco et vehementer per timeo denudare imperitiam meam”—“For this reason today I blush and am extremely frightened to expose my clumsiness.”

Scholars reading Patrick’s Latin prose today agree that his Latin was indeed quite clumsy and unsophisticated, and was lacking in rhetorical touches or other evidence of a good classical education, but with one exception: Patrick knew the Bible extremely well. Both the Confessio and the Epistola quote constantly from Scripture, and they make such frequent indirect allusion to bib-

lical texts that it is clear that Patrick must have read the Bible in Latin constantly to the point where his Latin prose “breathed” the phraseology of the Old Latin (pre-Jerome) Bible.

But despite his embarrassment, even shame, at his lack of education, Patrick is clear that he does not think that this calls into question the legitimacy of his mission. Again and again in the *Confessio* he points out that his weakness was an opportunity for God’s power and grace to be demonstrated, for God has indeed used him powerfully to lead countless thousands of Irish people to faith in Christ. Furthermore, he points out various biblical texts which show that God especially delights to use stammering tongues and ineloquent speech (e.g. Isaiah 32:4 and 2 Corinthians 3:2–3, quoted in *Confessio* 11).

In response to accusations about a scandalous sin from his distant past, Patrick does not deny that he committed this sin. But he notes that the sin was confessed and forgiven thirty years earlier, and had actually been committed some years before *that*, when he was a teenager and did not yet know God. He writes:

[Occasionem post annos triginta inveniunt me adversus verbum quod confessus fueram antequam essem diaconus. Propter anxietatem maesto animo insinavi amicissimo meo quae in pueritia mea una die gesseram, immo in una hora, quia necdum praevalebam. Nescio, Deus scit, si habebam tunc annos quindecim, et Deum vivum non credebam, neque ex infantia mea; sed in morte et in incredulitate mansi.]

They found a pretext against me, after thirty years, in a confession which I had made before I became a deacon. Because of the anxiety of my troubled soul, I had privately told my dearest friend something I had done in my boyhood one day, rather in a single hour, because I had not yet become strong. I do not know, God knows, whether I was even fifteen years old at the time; I did not then believe in the living God, nor had I done so since my childhood, but remained in death and unbelief (*Confessio* 27).

He asks why this sin is being brought up now, when it was so long ago forgiven both by his fellow-Christians and by the Lord:

[Sed unde venit illi postmodum ut coram cunctis, bonis et malis, et me publice

dehonestaret quod ante sponte et laetus indulserat, et Dominus, qui maior omnibus est?]

But where did he get the idea afterward that he should publicly disgrace me in the presence of the whole assembly, both good people and evil people, for a matter which previously he had spontaneously and joyfully excused, as had the Lord, who is greater than all (*Confessio* 32)?

The accusation of mismanaging finances was the most serious charge against Patrick, and it is the one to which he devotes the most space in the *Confessio*. It is apparently in reference to this issue that he implies that his opponents in the British church hierarchy are liars who have libellously fabricated this accusation (*Confessio* 7). He readily acknowledges that “in multis imperfectus sum”—“In many things I am imperfect” (*Confessio* 6). But in this matter of financial integrity he asserts that his opponents are lying.

He defends his financial integrity as follows:

[Ad gentes illas inter quas habito, ego fidem illis praestavi et praestabo. Deus scit, neminem illorum circumveni, nec cogito.]

As for the peoples among whom I live, I have dealt with them honestly, and I will continue to do so. God knows that I have cheated none of them, nor would I think of doing so (*Confessio* 48).

[Nam etsi imperitus sum in omnibus, tamen conatus sum quippiam servare me etiam et fratribus Christianis et virginibus Christi et mulieribus religiosis, quae mihi ultronea munuscula donabant et super altare iactabant ex ornamentis suis et iterum reddebam illis et adversus me scandalizabantur cur hoc faciebam; sed ego propter spem perennitatis, ut me in omnibus caute propterea conservarem, ita ut non me in aliquo titulo infideli caperent vel ministerium servitutis meae nec etiam in minimo incredulis locum darem infamare sive detractare.]

For although I am clumsy in all things, nevertheless I have done my best to safeguard myself, even with Christian brothers and sisters and with virgins of Christ and with religious women who, without being asked, gave me little gifts and laid on the altar some of their jewelry. I gave these back to them, and they were offended by me that I would do this, but I did so out of hope for lasting results, and so that I might safeguard myself carefully in all things, so that they might not ‘catch’ me or my ministry of service in any

pretext of dishonesty, nor would I in the slightest way give any excuse to unbelievers to defame or criticize (*Confessio* 49).

[Forte autem quando baptizavi tot milia hominum speravi ab aliquo illorum vel dimidio scriptulae? Dicite mihi et reddam vobis. Aut quando ordinavi ubique Dominus clericos per modicitatem meam et ministerium gratis distribui illis, si poposci ab aliquo illorum vel pretium calciamenti mei, dicite adversus me et reddam vobis.]

But perhaps when I baptized so many thousands of people, did I expect from any of them even a fraction of a penny? Tell me, and I will give it back to you! Or when the Lord ordained clergy in every place through my tiny efforts, and I conferred the ministry on them for free, if I asked from any of them even the price of my footwear [perhaps worn out on the journeys to perform the ordinations], then tell it against me, and I will give it back to you (*Confessio* 50)!

[Magis ego impendi pro vobis ut me caperent... Interim dabam mercedem filiis ipsorum qui mecum ambulavit.]

Rather, I spent [money] for you, so that they would receive me... Meanwhile I used to give gifts to kings, not to mention the fees I paid to their sons who travelled with me [perhaps as protection on the roads] (*Confessio* 51–52).

Confessio 53: Patrick paid large sums of money to those who administered justice in the regions which he frequently visited: “Censeo non minimum quam pretium quindecim hominum distribui illis” “I think that I distributed among them not less than the price of fifteen people.”

[Patrick himself remained poor: Et Christus Dominus pauper fuit pro nobis, ego vero miser et infelix etsi opes voluero iam non habeo.]

Christ the Lord was also poor for us, and I am certainly wretched and unfortunate: even if I wanted riches, moreover, I do not have any (*Confessio* 55).

Both McNeill and Hanson point out that these texts imply that Patrick had some external source of funding which he used to make the above-mentioned gifts to kings and judges. “The price of fifteen people” is a substantial sum of money. Particularly interesting is his assertion that “I spent money for you, so that they would receive me,” though Patrick may here be addressing some Irish readers in addition to the British

From this it seems clear that, despite great anguish of soul, Patrick insisted that decision-making authority for missions in Ireland must remain in Ireland and not in his homeland of Britain.

hierarchy who were his primary audience.

Both Hanson and McNeill think that it is most logical to suppose that the British churches, having sent Patrick to Ireland in the first place, were continuing to support his mission financially. This might help to explain both the apparent vehemence of their criticism of his financial management and their assumption that they had a right to summon him to return to Britain when they judged necessary.

McNeill writes (p. 64):

From some source not indicated, probably the churches in Britain, he was evidently provided with funds, which he used liberally to gain from local authorities permission to preach and protection from harm.

Hanson (p.139) writes:

These protestations, which all come near the end of the *Confession*, suggest not only that Patrick was liable to be accused of feathering his own nest, but that he was constantly receiving financial support from somewhere. Everything points to Britain as the source for this. It was the Church of Britain which had sent Patrick to Ireland, and it was that Church which continued to supply him with funds, even though at times it appears to have suffered from heart-searching as to whether Patrick should ever have been sent.

We are of course particularly interested in the question of field-based authority versus home-base authority in missions. So we want to examine closely Patrick's attitude toward the assertion by the British church hierarchy of authority over his mission in Ireland. As McNeill demonstrates (p. 63), Patrick had originally been sent and commissioned from Britain by the British church. Years later, after long, fruitful ministry, and in the context of serious accusations being made against him in Britain, a delegation of British church leaders came to

him in Ireland to summon him to return to Britain. What was his attitude toward this summons?

One statement he makes in the *Confessio*, though it is somewhat ambiguous, could be interpreted as implying that he did see himself as *accountable* to the British church: "Teste Deo habeo quia non sum mentitus in sermonibus quos ego retuli vobis" "God is my witness that I have not lied in the words which I have reported to you" (*Confessio* 31). This can be read as implying that he did feel bound to provide a *report* when it was requested (and of course that that report must be honest).

But it seems very clear that he did not think that *accountability* extended to include *authority to command*. Thus, in the event, he politely declined the summons to return to Britain, and he insisted on staying in Ireland. He writes:

[Etsi voluero amittere illas et ut pergens in Britannias et libentissime paratus eram quasi ad patriam et parentes; non id solum sed etiam usque ad Gallias visitare fratres et ut viderem faciem sanctorum Domini mei; scit Deus quod ego valde optabam, sed alligatus Spiritu, qui mihi protestatur si hoc fecero ut futurum reum me esse designat, et timeo perdere laborem quem inchoavi—et non ego sed Christus Dominus, qui me imperavit ut venirem esse cum illis residuum aetatis meae.]

Even if I wanted to abandon them [the Irish believers, especially believing slavewomen, who suffer constant terror] and to go to Britain (and I would be gladly ready, as it were, to go to my homeland and family; and not only that, but also to go on to Gaul to visit the brothers and so that I might see the faces of the saints of my Lord; God knows that I longed for this), nevertheless I am bound by the Spirit who testifies to me that if I were to do this, He would declare me guilty. Furthermore I fear that I would lose the work which I have begun—not I, but Christ the Lord who commanded me to come to be with them for the rest of my life (*Confessio* 43).

Hanson adds here (p. 138): "That Patrick never left Ireland once he had set foot in it as bishop seems certain. He declares that God gave him the privilege of evangelizing the Irish people at the cost of losing native land and kinsfolk; and he resolves that in spite of all attractions beyond the shores of Ireland he will never leave the country."

A.B.E. Hood provides an insightful analysis of the issues at stake:

The reason he gave for his refusal to come to Britain was that he feared to waste the labour he had begun. He did not mean that all would be undone if he took a few weeks' leave of absence, for his plea was that Christ had commanded him to be with the Irish for the rest of his life. He meant that if he admitted the authority of the British church by attending at their summons, he would be unlikely to return to Ireland, and risked replacement. He did not trust the British bishops to win the confidence of his Irish converts. They were 'intellectual clerics', products of the opulent gentlemanly society of Roman Britain... and many of them regarded the Irish simply as enemy barbarians. They were naturally suspect to the Irish; Patrick's own rustic simplicity had broken down suspicion, but other British clergy, less sympathetic in their outlook, caused trouble (Hood, p. 8).

Hood goes on to report some very interesting evidence for what action Patrick and his colleagues on the field in Ireland took after this incident:

The earliest list of ecclesiastical regulations of the Irish Church, known as the *Canons of St. Patrick*, is probably in essence the work of Patrick and his clergy in the middle of the fifth century; it includes a rule that forbids British clergy to preach in Ireland without licence from the Irish church, and the rule was clearly devised in the light of experience. The Irish church had need of British clerics, and several of those named as Patrick's younger contemporaries in the late fifth century were British by name and birth; but

Patrick and his colleagues needed to be able to choose those who were temperamentally suited to their task, and to reject the unfit. It may well be that Patrick's rejection of unsuitable British clergy had been the occasion of the dispute, the reason that prompted the British church to assert authority. Patrick rejected the metropolitan claims of the British episcopate (Hood, p. 8).

From this it seems clear that, despite great anguish of soul, Patrick insisted that decision-making authority for missions in Ireland must remain in Ireland and not in his homeland of Britain. This was particularly important in the appointment of culturally sensitive personnel and the dismissal of culturally insensitive personnel. In view of the non-Romanized culture of Ireland and the Romanized culture of Britain, the consequences of this decision for the cultural indigeneity of the Irish church were far-reaching. Cahill points out:

Patrick's gift to the Irish was his Christianity—the first de-Romanized Christianity in human history, a Christianity without the sociopolitical baggage of the Greco-Roman world, a Christianity that completely inculturated itself into the Irish scene (Cahill, p. 148).

This was the Christianity that spawned the Celtic "peregrini" missionary movement that for the next five hundred years was almost single-handedly responsible for the evangelization of the Germanic and other peoples of Northern and Central Europe.

McNeill introduces this movement in the following words:

It is no negligible phase of European history that now claims our attention, as we survey the widespread activities of Celtic missionaries and scholars among continental peoples during the formative era of Western Christianity. The attention of historians had been drawn to the colorful story of warrior tribes moving westward to form a patchwork of kingdoms where unity had been imposed by Rome, rather than to the religious and cultural invasion that moved eastward from islands once thought of as beyond the frontiers of civilization. The new invaders were unarmed white-robed monks with books in their satchels and psalms on their lips, seeking no wealth or comfort but only the opportunity

to teach and to pray. For more than half a millenium a stream of educated and dedicated men poured from the monasteries of Ireland (McNeill, p. 155).

Ireland, with some cooperation from Celtic Britain and from Irish-trained Englishmen, exerted for six centuries a pervasive, life-giving influence upon the major part of Europe (McNeill, p. 192).

This was the movement which produced Columba (also called Collumcille) the 6th-century pioneer missionary to the Scots and the Picts; and Aidan, the 7th-



century pioneer missionary to the northern half of Anglo-Saxon England (as incoming Anglo-Saxon tribes were overwhelming the indigenous Britons); and Columbanus (also called Columban) the 7th-century pioneer in northern Gaul, Switzerland, Germany and northern Italy; and Columban's companion Gall, who became known as the founder of the Church in German-speaking Switzerland; and Willibrord, the 8th-century pioneer missionary to Frisia; and countless others. This movement was single-handedly responsible for the evangelization of Northern and Central Europe.

The impact of these Celtic peregrini can scarcely be overstated. After a list similar to the one above, McNeill states:

Only a few have here been mentioned of an uncounted army of monks on pilgrimage for Christ from the late sixth to the early eighth century. The creative era of this strange invasion was to continue for three centuries more. That one small island should have contributed so rich a legacy to a populous continent remains one of the most arresting facts of European history. The weight of the Irish influence on the continent is incalculable (McNeill, p. 175).

In the 6th–8th centuries the impact of the Celtic peregrini was felt primarily in pioneer evangelism. In the 8th–10th centuries these missionaries' impact was often in their raising the level of scholarship throughout Europe, though we continue to see pioneer evangelists as well (McNeill, 175–177).

Gougaud thinks that the dynamism of this movement owed much to the example of St. Patrick: "He won so many [Irish people] for Christ, he founded so many churches, ordained so many clerics, kindled such a zeal in men's hearts, that it seems right to believe that to him was directly due the wonderful out-blossoming of Christianity which distinguished Ireland in the following ages" (Gougaud, pp. 44–45).

During these centuries Celtic Christianity exhibited certain traits which distinguished it culturally and structurally from diocesan Roman Christianity. One distinctive of the Celtic Church which is noted by virtually all scholars is the fact that its structure was much more strongly centered on abbots, and that it saw bishops as being much less important.

Hood writes:

[Celtic] Christianity was rooted on monasteries and identified with them... The bishop and priest were reduced to the status of ecclesiastical officials, necessary for the performance of certain specified ritual functions... From the sixth century onwards, most of the recorded bishops were monks, detached from their abbeys to serve the needs of the laity. As monks, they remained subject to the authority of their abbot, whose superior rank was [clearly] marked (Hood, pp. 11–12).

Similarly McNeill reports:

By the [sixth century] the Church of Ireland was under the leadership of abbots who were secondarily bishops, or had bishops attached to their monasteries and under their jurisdiction...Bishops who are not abbots appear as agents of abbots or of monasteries; and bishops in such subordinate position seem not to have contended for control. Diocesan episcopacy did not flourish (McNeil, pp. 69–70).

It is Ralph Winter who sees the missiological dimension of this structural distinctive:

The Celtic 'church' was more a series of missionary compounds than it was a denomination made up of local churches...We must remember the relative chaos introduced by the invasions, and therefore not necessarily expect to see, dotting the landscape, the usual parish churches that are familiar in our day (Winter, 1990, p. B–11).

Celtic peregrini missions were often launched by a concept known as "white martyrdom." As we have seen above, St. Patrick desired a martyr's crown but did not receive it. Despite repeated imprisonments and repeated attempts on Patrick's life and on the lives of his co-workers, Ireland turned out to be one of the few lands in history which was completely evangelized with no martyrdoms.

Perhaps it was because of this that Patrick's Celtic successors developed the concepts of "red martyrdom", "green martyrdom" and "white martyrdom." "Red martyrdom" refers to what is usually meant literally by the word "martyrdom." "Green martyrdom" refers to a voluntary vow to withdraw permanently from human society and to live a radically ascetic life in some remote location in the country.

"White martyrdom" refers to a voluntary vow to leave one's homeland and one's kindred and never to return, never to see them again, but to spend the rest of one's life in *peregrinatio* ("wandering pilgrimage"), a term Patrick himself used in the *Confessio* to describe his permanent commitment to stay in Ireland and not to return to Britain. A person who undertook such a vow was thus a *peregrinus* ("wandering pilgrim")—another term Patrick used

for himself; hence the term "peregrini" to describe the Celtic missionaries who evangelized Europe.

As with Patrick, so with his peregrini successors, the commitment to permanent exile from one's homeland had an obvious and direct effect on mission structures. It is pragmatically impossible for a base in a home country to exercise administrative control of missionaries on the field if everyone who leaves the home country takes a vow never to return. In the case of the Celtic peregrini, there is no evidence that their home monasteries in Ireland and Scotland and England ever attempted such control.

McNeill writes of the early peregrini missionaries:

They were fond of citing the example of Abraham who obeyed the command: 'Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to a land that I will shew thee' (Gen. 12:1); and this pattern they followed literally. It was typical too that in the circumstances they broke off communication with their home monasteries. *They were not directed by committees or expected to make periodic reports to a home base.* The home base was only a prized memory. With a strange eagerness they sentenced themselves to perpetual banishment and went forth never to return (McNeill, pp. 155–156, emphasis ours).

To put this in modern terms, the early Celtic peregrini missions were perhaps the purest example in history of a totally field-governed structure.

This field governance did not mean that the missionaries did whatever they felt like doing, with no accountability. On the contrary, they had strong, even draconian, rules for mutual accountability and authority among the missionaries on the field. But the fact that decision-making authority was entirely *on the field* had a direct effect on the cultural adaptability and effectiveness of their work:

Complete freedom from superiors beyond their own communities in the mission field made them adaptable to local needs and opportunities. They rapidly enlisted Frankish and other German youth who, working harmoniously with them, made Christianity indigenous and self-perpetuating (McNeill, p. 175).

In time, however, the field-governed structure of the peregrini was questioned from another quarter. In some of the geographical areas the peregrini entered, the Romanized urban population had already been somewhat evangelized in previous centuries before the massive influx of Germanic peoples had overwhelmed the crumbling remains of the Western Roman empire. Some areas had bishops who tended small urban churches among the dwindling ethnic minority of Romanized city-dwellers, while most of these bishops apparently did little for the evangelization of the countryside or of the invading tribes. It was perhaps inevitable that tension would develop between these bishops and the Celtic missionaries who arrived and began to preach to unevangelized tribes and regions that were technically located within the dioceses of these bishops.

A good example of this tension can be found in the life of Columbanus (also called Columban). James Thayer Addison says of Columbanus:

The most celebrated of all the Irish who came to the continent in the early Middle Ages and the great initiator of Irish monastic migration was Columban (Addison, p. 86).

Gougoud agrees:

To St. Columban above all was due the initiation of these monastic and missionary migrations to the Continent (Gougoud, p. 140).

In the early 7th century Columbanus founded dozens of monasteries across the unevangelized areas of what is today known as France, Germany, Switzerland and northern Italy. He won many converts and recruited many new monks among the local peoples. Many of these monasteries grew quite large, their ranks swelling with local converts, and they continued to be very influential throughout the Middle Ages.

Thomas Cahill describes as follows Columbanus's tensions with the bishops in Burgundy:

Before long he clashes with the region's bishops who are nettled by his presence. Still employing the old Roman episcopal pattern of living urbanely in capital cities and keeping close ties with those who wear crowns, the bishops tend their local flocks

of literate and semiliterate officials, the ghostly remnants of the lost society. It has never occurred to these churchmen to venture beyond a few well-tended streets into the rough-hewn mountain settlements of the simpler Sueves. To Columbanus, however, a man who will take no step to proclaim the Good News beyond the safety and comfort of his own elite circle is a poor excuse for a bishop. In 603 the bishops summon the saint to appear before them in synod at Chalon-sur-Saône. Columbanus, who cannot be bothered to take part in such a travesty, sends a letter in his stead (Cahill, pp. 188–189).

Cahill is perhaps using a slightly exaggerated tone for effect. McNeill describes the same events in a somewhat more balanced tone, but the essential facts of the story are the same:

He had failed to obtain the approval of the bishops who nominally controlled, but had hitherto neglected, the area of his work; and he had failed to keep on safe terms of acceptance with the rulers... Neither a worldly episcopate nor a depraved court could continue to tolerate his presence... His now numerous adherents were in no way under episcopal sway. In Ireland bishops were often functionaries of monasteries under obedience to abbots, and he had not reckoned with a system in which abbots and monasteries were answerable to bishops. There was no charge that he and his followers were heretical, but to the bishops they were schismatic and to be brought under obedience... Columban was summoned to appear before a synod of bishops meeting at Chalons sur Saône (603) to answer for his irregularities. His reply was by letter only. While the spirit of his letter is friendly and fraternal, it is not that of compliance... [The letter implies that he thinks that the bishops are not themselves doing the work of evangelizing the incoming non-Christian peoples over whom they claim ecclesiastical authority.] The view of Jonas [Columban's companion and biographer] was that through [the bishops'] negligence the Christian faith had almost disappeared from Burgundy before Columban came (McNeill, pp. 160–161).

In the end, though, Columbanus was deported from Burgundy because he had offended Brunhilda, the grandmother of king Theodoric, when he rebuked the latter for concubinage and refused to recognize the royal legitimacy of the

sons produced by extramarital unions. Brunhilda and Theodoric attempted to deport him to Ireland (which would of course have been a disaster for one who had taken a vow of “white martyrdom”), but he and his companions escaped and went on to found monasteries in Germany, Switzerland and northern Italy.

Perhaps in response to this kind of problem, the abbot-bishops in Ireland and Britain apparently consecrated some peregrini missionaries as “wandering bishops” (*episcopi vagantes*), so that these could deal with diocesan bishops on the European continent as equals. McNeill (p. 172) recounts how a series of church councils in the 8th and 9th centuries, and even centuries later, repeatedly condemned these *episcopi vagantes*. But the fact that the conciliar condemnations needed to be repeated again and again over a period of centuries is evidence that these wandering bishops continued to exist. A typical example is the Council of Mainz, held in 813, which denounced the *episcopi vagantes* as monstrous creatures, “acephali... hippocentauris similes, nec equi nec homines”—“headless... like centaurs, which are neither horses nor humans” (McNeill, p. 172).

It was inevitable that gradually, through the centuries, the mobile independence

of the Celtic peregrini was absorbed by the hierarchical structure of geographically-defined dioceses administered by stationary bishops. Along with that structural absorption, the missionary vitality of the Western Church also gradually disappeared. McNeill concludes:

By the time of Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) little remained of the former Irish spontaneity and self-direction in continental lands. We need not think of this administrative absorption as complete assimilation. No doubt something very Celtic was retained in the psychology of many who not unwillingly accommodated themselves to the more efficient polity of the hierarchical church. It was the way of progress, and there was no alternative. Nevertheless, the abounding energy and apostolic impetuosity of an earlier day were no longer characteristic. In terms of great leadership and bold endeavor we enter on a descending slope (McNeill, p. 193).

However, as the Celtic peregrini movement died, missionary vitality sprang forth again in the 13th–16th centuries through the creation of the missionary orders (Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuit) which rediscovered an organizational structure which was intentionally independent of diocesan control and of the authority of geographically stationary bishops. **IJFM**

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Analyzing the Frontier Mission Movement and Unreached People Group Thinking

by Alan Johnson

Two events in the late 1970s radically altered the direction of my life. Just after high school graduation I began attending an Assemblies of God church, and that summer I was baptized in the Holy Spirit. That experience brought a zeal and passion to share the Gospel and ultimately led to a decisive calling into full time vocational ministry. The second event happened a few years later when a missionary friend from my church handed me a brochure about a group trying to found an organization called the U. S. Center For World Mission. I liked the idea when I read about it, sent a small financial gift and received in return a poster that I hung on the wall across from my desk in the small youth pastor office I was occupying. Day after day I would look at this simple pie chart depicting the five major blocks of unreached people. Looking turned into praying, and led in turn to more reading and study until the Holy Spirit used that data to create an unshakable conviction that I personally had to work among an unreached people. That pie chart changed my life by giving me a whole new vision of the world.

Before that my local church experience of hearing missionary reports had fanned the flame for evangelism, but it never pushed me toward the conclusion that I must be involved personally. With my missiological naivete and lack of context, the glowing reports I heard were so victorious and exciting they only confirmed my conviction that overseas the job was being finished and someone needed to stay in America to try to bring such revival here. However, this unreached peoples chart turned my naïve thinking upside down. Suddenly I found myself in a world where some people had access to the Gospel and others did not—unless someone crossed a cultural frontier with the message. Now, my own personal calling to involvement in missions was created as two streams of my experience converged. Baptism in the Spirit brought passion to reach the lost, while missiological data showed me the state of the world and where those with least access to the Gospel were located.

What I was unaware of at the time was that just a few years before, the developer of that chart, Ralph Winter, had given a brief presentation featuring facts, figures and biblical interpretation that challenged the Christian community to make cross-cultural evangelism the very highest priority. The concepts presented that day became the foundation of a new paradigm of missiology and the inspiration for a movement that has mobilized Christians everywhere in unprecedented fashion for a final thrust at the last unreached and least reached harvest fields. Calling itself the frontier mission movement, this new

way of thinking centers on the concept of people groups and the need for establishing a viable church movement among every people. Gary Corwin assesses the impact of the movement in this way:

When in 1974 Dr. Ralph Winter gave his famous speech, "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism," at the first Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, a new era in mission history was begun. It was not really so much that a new vision was born, but that a new way of looking at an old vision was provided . . . What was new at Lausanne was that for the first time in the modern period the task was now couched primarily in terms of ethnic or peoples and religious blocks, rather than in geographic or geopolitical terms. Over the last two decades since that speech an astounding shift has taken place. The concept of unreached peoples (in contrast to unreached people) is on the lips of virtually everyone concerned with the mission of Christ's church.¹

However, the spread of this new mission philosophy has not come without controversy. While being enthusiastically embraced in some corners, it has found a mixed reception in others. There has been sharp debate in the missiology literature regarding the concepts, definitions and strategies of the movement.

In this series I am suggesting that the concepts of the frontier mission movement form a powerful paradigm

However, the spread of this new mission philosophy has not come without controversy.

for viewing the world missiologically and for understanding the work of the missionary. However, these concepts are capable of providing only a partial framework for understanding what is happening in mission around the world today. As we move into the 21st century I believe that it is vitally important for those of us involved in cross-cultural missions to do two things. First, there needs to be analysis and evaluation of the frontier mission movement and unreached people group thinking as a mission philosophy in order to clarify the fundamental contributions it makes to missiology. Second, these core contributions should be utilized to develop a more comprehensive view of mission that embraces the whole world and the whole Body of Christ.

The structure of this series therefore reflects these two major concerns. The first three sections involve analysis and evaluation of the frontier mission movement and unreached people group thinking. They include a look at the historical context in which this movement developed, definitions of terms, important movements, applications and organizations that have grown from it and a critical analysis that looks at some of the problem areas that have developed from this type of thinking. The last two sections examine the key contributions that this movement has made to missiology and then seeks to integrate these core contributions into a paradigm for understanding the missionary role in every context and that can assist mission agencies in developing appropriate strategies for mission in the 21st century.

The frontier mission movement represents a diverse group of organizations and key thinkers without a single headquarters or center. There is no one person or group that speaks authoritatively on its behalf. The major concepts that form the shared thinking of those involved act as a mission philosophy or paradigm that provide a perspective

for understanding the missionary task. If a more comprehensive framework for understanding missions is going to be attempted, it must be built on a clear understanding of the contributions of prior frameworks. This section on analysis seeks to provide a historical and conceptual understanding of the thinking and major concepts of the frontier mission movement.

I have chosen to begin my analysis (Part 1) with the movement's particular view of mission history in the modern era because I believe that it provides the best introduction to the specific understandings it has about what a missionary is and the nature of the missionary task. Then using the 1974 Lausanne meeting as a critical turning point, I will examine the pre-Lausanne roots of the movement to provide some historical background, and then look in detail at Ralph Winter's Lausanne presentation. The next two sections will overview the major concepts, and trace the development of key organizations, movements and applications that have grown out of frontier mission ideology. In the next issue of the IJFM, I will look critically at the movement to identify problem areas and conceptual difficulties, as well as summarize the core contributions made to missiology. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹Gary Corwin 1996 "Sociology and Missiology: Reflection on Mission Research," in *Missiology and the Social Sciences: Contributions, Cautions and Conclusions*, ed. Edward Rommen and Gary Corwin (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library), 20-21.

Analyzing the Frontier Mission Movement and Unreached People Group Thinking Part I: The Frontier Mission Movement's Understanding of the Modern Mission Era

by Alan Johnson



believe that the ethos of the frontier mission movement and unreached people group thinking can be found in its understanding of the events of the modern missionary era. A close examination of this understanding will reveal both the similarities and differences that are shared with standard evangelical missiology.

In evaluating a mission philosophy it is critical to understand its historical roots. The frontier mission movement grew out of a specific understanding of mission that spurred the development of what we now call the modern mission era.

David Bosch, in his book *Transforming Mission*, points out that from the very beginning there have been differing theologies of mission and that “there are no immutable and objectively correct ‘laws of mission’ to which exegesis of Scripture give us access and which provide us with blueprints we can apply in every situation.”¹ Bosch divides the history of Christian mission into six major paradigms. He notes:

In each of these eras, Christians, from within their own contexts, wrestled with the question of what the Christian faith, and by implication, the Christian mission meant for them. Needless to say, all of them believed and argued that their understanding of the faith and the church’s mission was faithful to God’s intent. This did not however, mean that they all thought alike and came to the same conclusions.²

Developing a philosophy of mission is a dynamic and interactive process between an understanding of Scripture and also a particular viewpoint on the missiological state of the world. I believe that this interactive process becomes very clear when we look at the frontier mission movement’s understanding of mission history, and it helps to provide keys for understanding the major concepts that power the movement.

Evangelical Roots

Johannes Verkuyl points out that in the modern historical period of mission there have been six major definitions of mission which have governed missionary practice.³ Four of these would be identified with those that are commonly found among mission efforts of evangelical background. These include the goals of converting the lost, planting churches, and developing indigenous church movements that support, propagate and govern themselves. The frontier mission movement, with its emphasis on planting a church movement among every people, group sits squarely within this basic evangelical framework. Thus they share

Alan has worked in Thailand as an Assemblies of God missionary to Thailand since 1986. He currently serves as the program director for the Institute of Buddhist Studies and is a member of the committee on two-thirds World Mission focusing on the non-western Assemblies of God mission movement and its role in bringing the Gospel to least reached people groups. He and his wife, Lynette, have two daughters. Alan is serving as the Missionary in Residence at Northwest College for the 2001-2002 academic year. They will return to Thailand in the fall of 2002.

the same understanding, motivation and goals of mission that the evangelical standard missions both denominational and interdenominational hold.

A New Lens on Mission History for a New Missiology

Although the frontier mission movement sits within the broader framework of evangelical missiology, yet, as a mission philosophy, it has some distinct elements that make it capable of being defined as a separate movement underneath the broader evangelical umbrella.⁴ One of these defining elements is the specificity in which the movement defines the terms “mission” and “missionary.” The frontier mission movement advocates that Christian World Mission is the redemptive activities of the church in societies where the church is not found.⁵ Thus a missionary is one who crosses out of a society that has an existing church movement over cultural boundaries to bring the gospel to a society that does not have the church. They maintain a sharp distinction between *evangelism*, which is the work of the church among its own people in the same cultural group, and *mission*, which means crossing a cultural boundary to bring an initial penetration of the gospel among a cultural group. These cultural boundaries that must be crossed in order to bring the gospel to a new group become the new “frontiers” of mission, which is where the name of this movement is taken from.

The historical viewpoint that drives this definition can be found in Ralph Winter’s analysis of modern mission history in terms of four men and three eras.⁶ In these three overlapping eras Winter sees fresh initiatives to fulfill the Great Commission generated from the faith and vision of four key men. During this period of time that covers the late 1700s till present we see that although the task of preaching the gospel remains

the same, the dimensions of that task in terms of what remains to be done changes. A recognition of these changing dimensions in dynamic interaction with the biblical data on mission lies at the foundation of the definition of mission and missionary that powers the frontier mission movement.

The first era

The first era extends from the late 1700s till about 1865 and was initiated by the work of William Carey. Although his ideas were unpopular at first, his book *An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen* led some of his friends to form a small mission agency. Although Carey was not the first Protestant missionary, “his little book, in combination with the Evangelical Awakening, quickened vision and changed lives on both sides of the Atlantic.”⁷ Within a few short years numerous agencies had sprung up both in Europe and America and there was an outpouring of dedicated people who literally were sacrificing their lives to move into new lands with the gospel. This initial movement focused on the coastlands of Africa and Asia, and by 1865 footholds were established throughout these regions.⁸

The second era

The second era was initiated by Hudson Taylor, and covers from about 1865 to the present. Taylor stirred up controversy in his day by suggesting that the inland peoples of China needed to be reached with the gospel. The question was asked as to why more agencies were needed when there were already many in existence, and why one should go to the interior when the jobs on the coastlands were not yet finished.⁹ Taylor himself formed the China Inland Mission and from his influence over forty new agencies sprang forth dedicated to reaching new peoples in the

interiors of Africa and Asia.¹⁰ Winter notes that the result of this movement, which continues to this day, is that “by 1967, over 90 percent of all missionaries from North America were working with strong national churches that had been in existence for some time.”¹¹

The third era

While the first era reached the coastlands, and the second began thrusts to the inland territories, the third era moves away from geography to an emphasis on socio-cultural and ethno-linguistic groups. The roots of this era extends back to the 1930s in the work of Cameron Townsend in Central America and Donald McGavran in India. Both of these men went to the field as second era missionaries, part of the Student Volunteer movement. Like Carey and Taylor (who saw respectively the need of initial penetration and penetration of the inland areas) these men encountered barriers that helped them to see new unreached frontiers for mission.

Cameron Townsend in his work among indigenous Indian populations in Guatemala learned from earlier missionaries that people needed to be reached in their own language. His recognition of linguistic barriers led him to found Wycliffe Bible Translators, dedicated to translating God’s Word into every existing language on earth. McGavran, laboring in the diversity of India’s social groups, discovered the concept of homogeneous units of people that need to be penetrated with the gospel message. Winter summarizes this viewpoint:

Once such a group is penetrated, diligently taking advantage of that missiological breakthrough along group lines, the strategic “bridge of God” to that people is established. The corollary of this truth is that fact that until such a breakthrough is made, normal evangelism and church planting cannot take place.¹²

McGavran then became the father of both the church growth movement and the frontier mission movement, “the one devoted to expanding within already penetrated groups, and the other devoted to deliberate approaches to the remaining unreached people groups.”¹³

Hesselgrave credits the work of McGavran, anthropologist Alan

McGavran then became the father of both the church growth movement and the frontier mission movement . . .

Tippett, and systems analyst Ed Dayton with the creative analysis of the homogeneous unit principle to arrive at the conclusion that a better way of thinking about world evangelization was in terms of "people groups" rather than nations, continents or individuals.¹⁴ Once this viewpoint is accepted then the very specific definition of missionary follows. In his 1974 Lausanne address McGavran attributes the specific definition of missionary he uses to Professor Jack Shepherd:

A Christian of any culture or nation who is sent, across cultural and linguistic frontiers [where there is no church], to win men to Christ and incorporate them in Christian churches.¹⁵

Critical Issues Based on the Definition of Mission

Because this historical perspective and the definitions that grow out of it are so foundational to the thinking of the frontier missions movement, several observations need to be made at this point.

A major assumption: Missiological reality changes over time

I believe that an underlying critical assumption that is not dealt with explicitly in the writings of the frontier mission movement is that missiological reality changes over time. By missiological reality, I mean one's view of the world through the lens of mission in terms of the level of completion of the Great Commission. Traditional evangelical missiology operates on the assumption that wherever people do not know Christ personally they are eternally lost and therefore, no matter where they are, they are the object of mission. Since there are always lost people in every generation this means that for the most part missiological reality changes very little. The world may well have more and more Christians, but for practical purposes in terms of the Great Commission the task remaining is still huge.

The frontier mission movement, on the other hand, bases its strategy on the changing nature of missiological reality. As people groups are penetrated and "reached" by the gospel there is no longer the same pressing need for the cross-cultural missionary, the work of near neighbor evangelism can be carried out by those of that culture. The unique

and critical missionary task is to cross cultural boundaries into a new group so that an initial breakthrough of the gospel can occur there.

This means that as the nature of the task changes over time there is a need for new paradigms of mission to respond to those changes. The narrow definition of mission and missionary employed by the frontier mission movement grows specifically from the fact that as the Christian church expanded in each era it became necessary to more precisely focus definitions of missionary labor based on the remaining task. The overview of mission history above shows that in each era there were fresh initiatives to proclaim the gospel that were based on the perception of the task left to be completed. After beachheads were established in the coastlands in the first era, the cry went forth to reach the inland areas. When the inland areas had beachheads established, there was a recognition that the remaining task needed to be conceived of in terms of language and ethnic groups, and fresh new initiatives for mission have arisen, through the frontier mission movement, to meet that need.

Changing missiological reality demands a change in the missionary role

The fact that these eras overlap and understanding the nature of this overlap shows that the missionary role in a culture is a dynamic rather than static one. Drawing upon the work of Henry Venn and using the terminology of Harold Fuller of Sudan Interior Mission and Geoffrey Dearsley of S.U.M. Fellowship, Winter identifies four distinct stages of mission which happen when a new group is penetrated with the gospel.¹⁶ These stages are as follows:

- A Pioneer stage—where the gospel first is brought to a group with no existing Christians or church movement.
- A Paternal stage—where expatriates train national leaders as a church movement is emerging.
- A Partnership stage—here the missionary and the national leaders work as equals.
- A Participation stage—in this level expatriate missionaries are no longer equals, but work only at the invitation of the national church.

What happens in the transition periods

of overlap is that while the work of mission has progressed to stages three and four in many places, it is recognized that pioneer work is still needed elsewhere. In Hudson Taylor's day it was the peoples of the vast inland territories. In this century through the work of Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran it was seen that the need for pioneer mission no longer could be accurately described in terms of nation states and geo-political boundaries as in the past, but rather in terms of ethno-linguistic groups.

Strategically this means that the missionary role is a dynamic one, changing as the emerging national church movement develops. It also means that within a given culture or geo-political unit, all four stages could be in progress and necessary at the same time. Based on the changing missiological landscape, unreached people thinking emphasizes the strategic importance of the narrow definition of the role of the missionary as the pioneer. In a world where literally thousands of people groups do not have strong existing church movements, the crucial mission priority is the crossing of cultural boundaries to engage in the pioneer church-planting task. This does not diminish or negate the importance of the kinds of training, development and special contribution roles that are vital to emerging or even developed national churches, since they can be expected to keep with the missionary task, but it does place the highest priority upon the pioneer penetration of those groups that are unreached.

Changing missiological reality brings the hope of closure

One of the distinctive elements of the frontier mission movement that is somewhat different from traditional evangelical missiology is the belief in our ability to complete the essential basis of the Great Commission in a measurable fashion. This is often expressed through the term *closure*. Evangelical missiology also believes in closure, but the optimistic belief in the possibility of actually finishing the task is diminished by the way in which they define the task in terms of reaching lost people everywhere. In contrast to this, when the task is conceived in terms of penetrating peoples it opens the door to a host of specific definitions that can measure in terms of those definitions the progress of the task. Thus

changing missiological reality, which now becomes measurable through the “reaching” of people groups, fuels the hope of closure, completing this aspect of the task of the Great Commission and fulfilling the condition of Matthew 24:14 so that the end of this age can come.

A major part of the second era missions thrust came out of the Student Volunteer Movement that started in 1888. Their watchword was “The Evangelization of the World in This Generation.” Timothy Wallstrom points out that by this phrase they meant neither the Christianization nor conversion of the world, but rather the presenting of the gospel to every person so that responsibility for their response lay with them and not the Church or an individual Christian.¹⁷ The goal was not met at that time, but now in the third era, with more specific definitions and strategy in hand there is a deep conviction that this indeed may be the final era of missions.¹⁸

The Biblical Basis for Unreached People Group Thinking

I have suggested in the section above that the specific definitions that drive the unreached people group philosophy are rooted in a particular assumption about missiological reality that is based in their understanding of mission in the modern era. However, there is another critical influence that works in conjunction with missiological reality that I call biblical reality. Scripture has always been the driving force behind mission. But as Bosch has pointed out, Christian mission over the centuries has found its primary motivation in different places in the Scriptures.¹⁹

In the paradigm of the modern era it has been the Great Commission of Jesus that has been at the heart of missionary enterprise, and this remains so in the frontier mission movement, which has its roots in evangelical missiology of this period.²⁰ However, I want to suggest that there has been a dynamic interplay between missiological reality and biblical reality so that each has in turn refined the understanding of the other. The call to worldwide mission embodied in the Great Commission thrust forth the missionaries of the first two eras. However,



as second era missionaries Townsend and McGavran encountered barriers to the progress of the gospel and as they worked on solutions to those barriers, they helped to create a lens that defines a new missiological reality and launched a fresh era of missionary initiative. This new understanding led in turn to a fresh examination of the Scripture to understand the Great Commission in these new dimensions. This inevitably led to a more refined view of missiological reality that has resulted in the full flower of unreached people group thinking today.

Biblical arguments for People Group Thinking

John Piper asks the question, “Is the emphasis that has dominated mission discussion since 1974 a biblical teaching, or is it simply a strategic development that gives mission a sharper focus?”²¹ Specifically he wants to see if the missionary mandate is to reach as many individuals as possible, all the “fields” of the world or people groups as the Bible defines them.²² The crux of the matter concerns the interpretation of the terms *mishpahot* (families, peoples) in Genesis 12:3 and *panta ta ethne* (all the nations) in Matthew 28:19. Richard Showalter, after an extensive review of the Hebrew terms *mishpahot* (clans) and *goyim* (peoples) concludes that as used in the Genesis commission they are:

particular, yet inclusive, references to humanity in all its subdivisions. We find this underscored in the both the meanings and usage of the words. In general, the *goyim* are larger subdivisions and the *mishpahot* are smaller. A free, but not misleading, sociological translation might be (cultures) (*goyim, mishpahot*) and (subcultures) (*mishpahot*).²³

In commenting on the meaning of *mishpahot* Stanley Horton points out that the

word has a “much broader meaning than the word ‘family’ does in English today. In Numbers 26, it is used of divisions of tribes, what might be better called clans.”²⁴ In his analysis of *goy* he concludes that it can be used of political, ethnic or territorial groups of people.²⁵

In his work on the term *ethne* in Matthew 28:19, usually translated as “nations,” John Piper is concerned to show that the term is not limited to just geographic or political groupings. He points out that even in English the term nation can refer to a people with a unifying ethnic identity as when we speak of the Cherokee nation or the Sioux nation.²⁶

Piper shows that the singular *ethnos* in the New Testament never refers to an individual but rather to a people group or nation, while the plural *ethne* can refer to Gentile individuals (Acts 13:48; 1 Corinthians 12:2) it can also be used of people groups (Acts 13:19; Romans 4:17–18). He concludes “this means that we cannot be certain which meaning is intended in Matthew 28:19.”²⁷ However, Piper amasses a weight of biblical evidence to support his view that the term as used in Matthew 28:19 does indeed support the view that people groups are in mind. He bases this conclusion on the following arguments:²⁸

1. The 18 references to *panta ta ethne* (all the nations) in the New Testament favor a people groups view.
2. The term appears 100 times in the Septuagint, all of which refer to people groups outside of Israel.
3. The blessing of Genesis 12:3, reiterated in Genesis 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14, as translated by the Septuagint uses the term *phulai* (tribes) while *mishpahot* itself can be used to refer to grouping even smaller than a tribe.
4. The New Testament references to the Genesis promise in Acts 3:25 and Galatians 3:6–8 support an ethnic groups viewpoint.
5. There is an abundance of Old Testament texts which he puts in the categories of exhortations, prayers, promises and plans which demonstrate “that the blessing of forgiveness and salvation that God had granted to Israel was meant also to reach all the people groups of the world. Israel was blessed in order to be a blessing among the nations.”²⁹

6. Paul's conception of the missionary task, particularly as is seen in Romans 15:18–21 shows that he was not concerned just to "win more individual people to Christ (which he could have done very efficiently in these familiar regions), but the reaching of more and more peoples or nations."³⁰
7. John's vision of the missionary task as seen in Revelation 5:9–10 with his use of peoples, tongues, tribes and nations is supportive of a people group viewpoint.

Piper concludes on the basis of this broader contextual witness that it would "go entirely against the flow of the evidence to interpret the phrase *panta ta ethne* as 'all Gentile individuals' (or 'all countries'). Rather the focus of the command is the discipling of all the people groups of the world."³¹

However, there are dissenting voices to the exegetical views that have been presented here. In his article, Showalter points out that Hesselgrave argues that although his understanding of the Great Commission allows for the methodology of approaching peoples as peoples rather than as individuals, it is not required by it.³² Frank Severn, though accepting the vision of Revelation 5 and 7 which shows the gospel will reach all the divisions of mankind, cites Kittle to show that *ethne* is used non-sociologically and refers generally to individuals who do not belong to the chosen people.³³ He also points out that most commentators do not read ethnicity into *panta ta ethne*, and cites Bosch to show that Paul's methodology as depicted in Romans 15:20 is illustrative of regional and not ethnic thinking.³⁴

Evidence of the Need for a New Mission Paradigm

It is apparent that there are two conflicting views of how to understand these key words in the commission passages of Genesis 12:3 and Matthew 28:19. What I want to suggest here is that both sides of this issue are actually very close to each other, having at their heart the best interests of those who have never heard and who have not believed. Where they differ is in emphasis and in how the biblical data is implemented into actual mission strategy.

The frontier mission movement with its emphasis on unreached people wants to redress the imbalance that has occurred

in the mission world and trumpet the need for reaching into every group, clan, culture, subculture to plant a beachhead of gospel witness. But they admit that this frontier mission work is not the only work and use the biblical example of Paul leaving Timothy, as a foreigner, in Ephesus, to continue a work that he began.³⁵

Those who feel uncomfortable with the emphasis on peoples are not rejecting the need to reach all the peoples of the earth (as Severn notes in his understanding of Revelation 5:9 and 7:9). Rather, they harbor a deep concern for "passing over multitudes of 'Gentiles/people' who live in neighborhoods, cities, regions, and nations where the church does not yet exist or where there are so few believers the gospel has yet to be fully preached there."³⁶ Severn also cites the same text concerning Timothy to show that Paul's missionary team was involved not only in pioneering stages but in the strengthening stage of church planting as well.³⁷

Although I personally feel that the weight of the linguistic and contextual evidence favors a people group focus in Scripture, I want to suggest here that the peoples/people debate is virtually a moot point. First, the polarization that appears in the literature is actually only apparent and not real. It has created the impression of conflicting agendas when in reality the agendas of both "peoples" and "people" thinkers are identical. Everyone wants to see people come to know Christ personally and to reach the whole world. Second, as Hesselgrave points out:

...almost all agree that whether the Great Commission requires it or not, the best way to plan for world evangelization is to divide its population up into some kind of identifiable and homogeneous groupings for which sound strategy can be devised and implemented.³⁸

What this is indicative of is the need to develop a framework for viewing the task that can incorporate the concerns, emphases and strategies of both sides.

The Pre-Lausanne Roots of People Group Thinking

The frontier mission movement and unreached people group thinking did not just spring up from a vacuum in

Ralph Winter's 1974 presentation on cross-cultural evangelism. There was a building momentum in the mission world to focus on peoples rather than just geographic regions or geo-political boundaries. Schreck and Barrett have developed a historical outline they call God's global plan of redemption that traces key events from biblical times through to 1986.³⁹ The details that follow are taken from this outline and the work of Patrick Johnstone⁴⁰ and highlight in the modern mission era the gradual momentum that came to clarify the task remaining in terms of people groups.

In his *Enquiry*, William Carey presented the first global survey of Christian world mission. By the end of the next century, Johnstone notes that the great drive toward the completion of world evangelization was a motivating factor to get data as accurate as possible for measuring the task remaining. The 1880s saw the production of a survey of every province of China, and in 1887 Broomhall brought out a book entitled *The Evangelization of the World*.

By the time of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 there was a call to reach peoples and non-Christian peoples in a document entitled "Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World." Influenced by this document, C. T. Studd founded World Evangelization Crusade in 1913 to focus on "the remaining unevangelized peoples on earth." Beginning in 1916 the World Dominion Movement in Britain began to publish detailed surveys of missions by countries and peoples. The late 1920s saw the directors of missions in China and Africa focusing on unreached peoples and unevangelized tribes, while in 1931 the Unevangelized Fields Mission (UFM) was founded.

L. G. Brierly of WEC began his career as a Protestant missionary researcher in 1936 doing surveys on "remaining unevangelized peoples" known as RUP's. The publication of *The Bridges of God* by McGavran in 1955 brought a whole new set of terminology regarding people movements to the fore. By the mid 1960s survey research in Africa was listing various tribes at different stages of being reached and

Mission Advanced Research and Communication (MARC) was founded to provide technical support to the church to build momentum for world evangelization and the modern idea of people groups was born.

In 1968 truly global surveys began, both in Africa. “Two books became pivotal for numerous other global surveys linked with the Lausanne Movement, World Evangelical Fellowship, and numerous unreached peoples surveys by MARC/World Vision and others.”⁴¹ The first was the *World Christian Encyclopedia* by David Barrett started in Nairobi as a successor to the World Christian Handbook Series, and published in 1982. The second was *Operation World* by Patrick Johnstone, first published in 1972 as an effort to compile complete denominational and religious population breakdowns for each country and whole world for the purpose of motivating prayer. The year 1972 also witnessed a consultation on the Gospel for Frontier Peoples held in Chicago and the publication of a survey on the status of 213 Muslim peoples, 411 groups open to Christianity, and 236 unevangelized peoples in Africa (Pentecost, Edward C. *Reaching the Unreached*. South Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1974, a thesis done under Winter at Fuller).

By the time of the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974 Hesselgrave notes that the conveners of the congress had made an important distinction among concepts. They chose to separate the terms unreached people and unevangelized people rather than having them be synonymous.⁴² In preparation for the Congress, MARC had prepared an *Unreached Peoples Directory* consisting of 424 unreached people groups to which Winter wrote the introduction.⁴³

It is clear that long before the 1974 Lausanne Congress that there was a growing interest in quantifying the remaining task of the Great Commission. From the charts and maps of Carey, to the cry of the Student Volunteer Movement, down to the work of McGavran and Townsend, there was continual sense of need for a fine-tuning of the picture of the remaining task.

As the gospel penetrated deeper and deeper into the various countries, national boundaries and divisions of

humanity, there was a rather natural progression to begin to see the task in terms of peoples rather than geo-political nations. This initial research revealed that even as more and more countries of the world had existing Christian movements, there were still many groups within the boundaries of those countries lacking a vital Christian witness. The stage was being set for the articulation of a new paradigm for viewing the missionary task. The articulation of that new paradigm happened at Lausanne through the presentation of Ralph Winter’s paper on cross-cultural evangelism, who was chosen because of his previous involvement in previous conferences and research.

Lausanne 1974 and Ralph Winter’s Presentation

Background to Lausanne
Although the brief history above shows some of the antecedents of the unreached people group movement, the importance of Ralph Winter’s paper presented at the International Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974 as a catalyst to the formation of a broader movement cannot be understated. This congress grew out of the vision of a number of leaders who met in Montreux, Switzerland, in 1960 to discuss and pray about the task of world evangelization.⁴⁴ The first outgrowth of that small gathering was the Berlin Congress on Evangelization in 1966 where Dr. Carl Henry served as the chairman. Between Berlin and Lausanne there was a building momentum towards a larger world level meeting through a number of regional congresses and Billy Graham noted that in the eight year period between Berlin and Lausanne that nearly all the major countries of the world had held congresses on evangelism.⁴⁵

In preparing for the Lausanne Congress it was intended from the beginning that the meeting itself not be a single event but rather a continuing process.⁴⁶ Those who attended were considered participants rather than delegates as it was not to be a legislative body, but rather a convening of evangelical leaders and practitioners from around the world to, in the words of Billy Graham, “seek how we can work together to fulfill Christ’s last

commission as quickly and thoroughly as possible.”⁴⁷ It was also intended that one of the results of the Congress would be a statement, known as the Lausanne Covenant, that would be produced and serve as a theological rallying point for the ongoing movement.

Ralph Winter’s Paper

Winter’s paper entitled “The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism” became both a culmination and starting point in terms of missionary thinking. This presentation marked the end of an era of missions and the beginning of another that focused on peoples rather than countries. He begins his introduction by pointing out a misunderstanding that he saw rising in the thinking of many evangelicals. It was based on the incredible success of the Christian mission so that it was possible at that time to say that the Great Commission had been fulfilled at least in a geographical sense. In the light of this success many had come to believe that the job was nearly completed and the task could be turned over to national churches that engaged in local evangelism.⁴⁸ Winter said:

Many Christian organizations, ranging widely from the World Council of Churches to many U.S. denominations, even some evangelical groups, have rushed to the conclusion that we may now abandon traditional missionary strategy and count on local Christians everywhere to finish the job.⁴⁹

Winter conceded at this point that it is true that most conversions are going to come from near neighbor evangelism, but there is an additional truth “that most non-Christians in the world today are not culturally near neighbors of any Christians, and that it will take a special kind of ‘cross-cultural’ evangelism to reach them.”⁵⁰ This then is the critical thesis of what has become the frontier mission movement and is at the heart of unreached people group thinking.

The need based in missiological reality

Winter used three major points to show the truth and urgency of his thesis. His first point focuses on the need for cross-cultural evangelism and takes the perspective of what I have called above “missiological reality.” He begins with four illustrations (from Pakistan, the Church of South India, the Bataks of north Sumatra and the Nagas of east India) which show how existing

Christian movements can be effective in reaching their own people and at the same time cut off from other populations that are geographically nearby due to religion, caste, language and other cultural barriers.

This leads him to develop a continuum of evangelism that is the single most important concept that underlies his thesis. Again, using illustrations from contemporary experience he shows how it is crucial to understand evangelism in terms of the cultural distance of the evangelist from the hearer. Rather than seeing all evangelism as equal, he devises a scale from E-1 to E-3 (E here is for evangelism) with the following definitions: E-1 is evangelism done among one's own cultural group, which is also called "near neighbor" evangelism. E-2 occurs when evangelism crosses a boundary of what he calls "significant (but not monumental) differences of language and culture."⁵¹ Finally, E-3 is evangelism at even farther cultural distance from the hearer. "The people needing to be reached in this third sphere live, work, talk, and think in languages and cultural patterns utterly different from those native to the evangelist."⁵² The examples that he presents in this section are all based in language differences, but he notes that "for the

purpose of defining evangelistic strategy, any kind of obstacle, any kind of communication barrier affecting evangelism is significant."⁵³

The need based in biblical reality

In his second point Winter develops what I have called above the theme of "biblical reality." He draws upon Acts 1:8 to show that the mandate there contains not only the call to cross-geographical boundaries but cultural ones as well. He then applies his E-1 to E-3 evangelistic continuum to the work of Peter and Paul in reaching Gentiles. We see from the account in Acts 10, where the Lord had to help Peter overcome his cultural prejudice against Gentiles in order to go to the home of Cornelius, that reaching out to Gentiles was an E-3 task for him. For Paul, on the other hand, as a Jew with a familiarity with the Greek world, reaching Gentiles was an E-2 task to Paul. Winter's conclusion to both of these major points is the same and is worth quoting in its entirety:

The master pattern of the expansion of the Christian movement is first for special E-2 and E-3 efforts to cross cultural barriers into new communities and to establish strong, on-going, vigorously evangelizing denominations, and then for that national church to carry the work forward on the really

high-powered E-1 level. We are thus forced to believe that until every tribe and tongue has a strong, powerfully evangelizing church in it, and thus an E-1 witness with it, E-2 and E-3 efforts coming from the outside are still essential and highly urgent.⁵⁴

The remaining task

His third point deals with the scope of the task remaining in terms of the need for E-2 and E-3 efforts. Winter develops the concept of "people blindness," meaning the blindness to seeing separate peoples within the border of countries. He points out that the task remaining is immense in two dimensions. The first is in sheer size, his data and the preliminary data produced for Lausanne revealed that about four/fifths of the non-Christian world were beyond the reach of Christian's E-1 evangelism. Secondly, it is immense in the sense of the complexity of the task of E-2 and E-3 evangelism across cultural boundaries. He makes the point that one of the primary obstacles to E-2 and E-3 work comes in the area of follow up. In evangelistic efforts around the world people of other cultures are frequently won but there is no understanding of the need to gather these people into their own churches which would create "infusions of new life into whole new pockets of society where the church does not now exist at all."⁵⁵ **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books), 8.

²*Ibid.*, 182.

³Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 180ff.

⁴In this article I am making a distinction between different kinds of missiology. In this sense I am using missiology as a kind of lens for viewing mission. Thus there is not a single correct lens but rather a series of lenses (or one could say frameworks or paradigms as well) among which there would be significant overlap. The comparison I am making in this article is between what I am calling standard evangelical missiology (summarized by Verkuyl) and frontier mission missiology. The two are not mutually exclusive yet the latter has its own unique perspective within the broader umbrella of the evangelical viewpoint. I believe there is also a lens of Pentecostal missiology, again within the broader framework of evangelical missiology, but which has its own unique perspectives and insights. However, within the limited scope of this article I have included the Pentecostal paradigm within the evangelical viewpoint. For a more detailed development of the theme of a Pentecostal missiology see John York's *Missions in the Age of the Spirit* pp. 148-158, and Everett Wilson's *Strategy of the Spirit* pp. 3-5, 7, 56-69.

⁵Ralph Winter, "The Meaning of 'Mission,'" *Mission Frontiers Bulletin* (March-April 1998): 15.

⁶Ralph Winter, "Four Men, Three Eras," *Mission Frontiers Bulletin* (November-December 1997): 18-23.

⁷*Ibid.*, 19.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*, 22.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴David Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Mission: An Evangelical Perspective on Trends and Issues in Missions* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, 1988), 51.

¹⁵Donald McGavran, "The Dimensions of World Evangelization," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, Minnesota: World Wide Publications, 1975), 105. In his paper McGavran did not provide any citation for his definition from Jack Shepherd.

¹⁶Winter, "Four Men, Three Eras," 20; Ralph Winter, "Frontier Mission Perspectives," in *Seeds of Promise: World Consultation on Frontier Missions, Edinburgh '80*, ed. Allan Starling (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1981), 59; and Ralph Winter, "The Long Look: Eras of Mission History," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1981), 170.

¹⁷Timothy Wallstrom, *The Creation of Student Movement to Evangelize the World* (Pasadena, California: William Carey International University Press, 1980), 19.

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¹⁸Winter, "Four Men, Three Eras," 23.

¹⁹Bosch, 182, 339. Bosch says, "I have indicated that in every period since the early church there was a tendency to take one specific biblical verse as *the* missionary text. Such a text was not necessarily quoted frequently. Still, even where it was hardly referred to, it somehow embodied the missionary paradigm of that period" (339).

²⁰Bosch notes that in the missionary paradigm of the Enlightenment era it is more difficult to identify a single biblical motif since the period is marked by such a great diversity. He suggests that the most prominent would be Paul's Macedonian vision (Acts 16:9), Matthew 24:14, John 10:10 for those in the Social Gospel stream, and the most widely used of all in the period, the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 (339-340).

²¹John Piper, "The Supremacy of God among 'All the Nations,'" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 13:1 (January-March 1996): 16.

²²Ibid., 16.

²³R. Showalter, "All the Clans, All the Peoples," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 13:1 (January-March 1996): 12.

²⁴Stanley Horton, "Blessing for All," *Enrichment* (Summer 1999): 93.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Piper, 17.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., 18-22.

²⁹Ibid., 20.

³⁰Ibid., 21.

³¹Ibid., 22.

³²Showalter, 12.

³³Frank Severn, "Some Thoughts on the Meaning of 'All the Nations,'" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (October 1997): 415.

³⁴Ibid., 414.

³⁵Piper, 22.

³⁶Severn, 416.

³⁷Ibid., 414.

³⁸Hesselgrave, 52.

³⁹Harley Schreck and David Barrett, eds., *Unreached Peoples: Clarifying the Task*, (Monrovia, California: MARC, 1987), 44-56.

⁴⁰Patrick Johnstone, *The Church is Bigger Than You Think*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1998), 89-93.

⁴¹Ibid., 92.

⁴²Hesselgrave, 52-53.

⁴³Ibid., 53.

⁴⁴Billy Graham, "Let the Earth Hear His Voice," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1975), 16.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶A. J. Dain, "International Congress on World Evangelization," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, Minnesota: World Wide Publications, 1975), 11.

⁴⁷Billy Graham, "Why Lausanne?," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, Minnesota: World Wide Publications, 1975), 22.

⁴⁸Ralph Winter, "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, Minnesota: World Wide Publications, 1975): 213.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., 218.

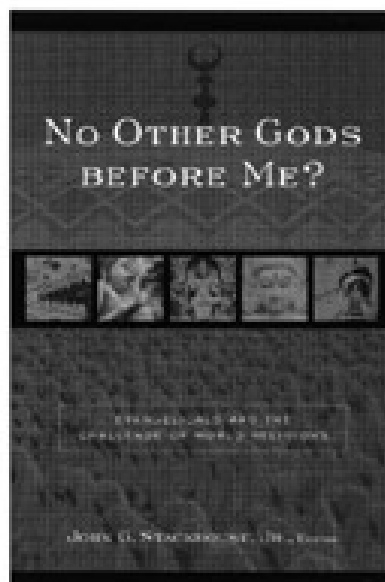
⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., 215.

⁵⁴Ibid., 220.

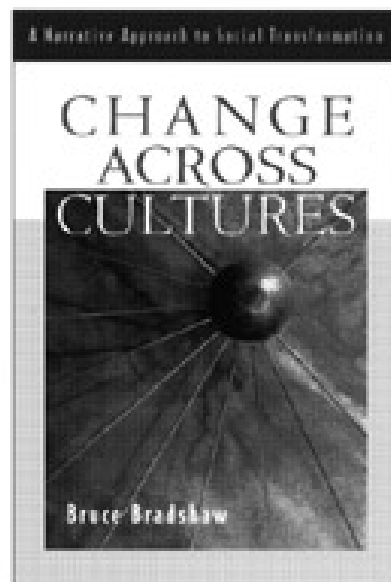
⁵⁵Ibid., 223.

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Analyzing the Frontier Mission Movement and Unreached People Group Thinking Part II: Major Concepts of the Frontier Mission Movement

by Alan Johnson



In November of 1974 after the Lausanne Congress Donald McGavran wrote:

Christians must not delude themselves with the comfortable assumption that existing churches using near neighbor evangelism will complete the task. They will not. They cannot. This is the hard, unshakeable core of what Dr. Winter told Lausanne.¹

He also noted that, “Nothing said at Lausanne had more meaning for the expansion of Christianity between now and the year 2000.”² The stage had been set for a new thrust to reach those who were not accessible to near neighbor outreach. Winter’s paper and his continued advocacy for cross-cultural evangelism became the rallying point for the several streams of thinking and research documented above which focuses on peoples and helped to launch a new paradigm for developing missions strategy.

In an article entitled “The Story of the Frontier Mission Movement,” Winter traces through the various missions conferences from the turn of the century the developments that led to a 1980 World Consultation on Frontier Missions held in Edinburgh, Scotland. This conference was purposely designed to be a second and follow up meeting to the 1910 world level meeting held in Edinburgh of missionaries and mission executives focusing on unoccupied fields.³ The Edinburgh 1910 meeting was significant in that it consisted of delegates from mission agencies, and it focused on finishing the task of world evangelization, particularly in what were termed the unoccupied fields.⁴

The chain of events leading up to the second Edinburgh meeting began prior to Lausanne and was given a boost by the Congress of 1974. In 1972, at the meeting of the North American Association of Professors of Mission, Luther Copeland of Southeastern Baptist Seminary proposed a meeting like the 1910 one for 1980. At the 1974 meeting of this same group a call for such a meeting was written and at the time of the Lausanne Congress (thanks to Arthur Glasser) buttons advertising “World Missionary Conference 1980” were being passed out. The call for the meeting was for a gathering composed of cross-cultural workers from a broad representation of mission agencies to focus on contemporary issues in Christian missions.⁵ Later on the sponsoring committee of agency representatives added the concepts of peoples and closure to the focus of the meeting. Winter notes that in the aftermath of Lausanne there

Alan has worked in Thailand as an Assemblies of God missionary to Thailand since 1986. He currently serves as the program director for the Institute of Buddhist Studies and is a member of the committee on two-thirds World Mission focusing on the non-western Assemblies of God mission movement and its role in bringing the Gospel to least reached people groups. He and his wife, Lynette, have two daughters. Alan is serving as the Missionary in Residence at Northwest College for the 2001-2002 academic year. They will return to Thailand in the fall of 2002.

was some lobbying on the part of both the World Council of Churches and the Lausanne Committee to coordinate the 1980 meeting.⁶ As it turned out the World Council held a 1980 meeting in Melbourne, Lausanne had one in Pattaya and Edinburgh was forced to reschedule till November. At the suggestion of the Lausanne Committee it also changed its name from “World Missionary Conference” as it was in 1910 to “World Consultation on Frontier Missions.”

In August of 1979 the sponsoring committee of mission agencies voted:

that those formally participating consist of delegates from agencies with current involvement in or with formal organizational commitment to reaching hidden people groups.⁷

Hidden peoples were defined as:

those cultural and linguistic subgroups, urban or rural, for which there is as yet no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize their own people.⁸

The Edinburgh 1980 meeting thus became the crystallization point for this new movement by bringing to the front the idea of frontier missions and a people group focus. In the next section I will utilize material from the consultation and more recent writings to develop the critical definitions and concepts of frontier missions and then trace their development down to the present.

Definitions and Concepts

Defining frontier missions

The plea of Winter’s 1974 Lausanne paper was for cross-cultural evangelism. This plea was based on the reality that although existing Christians and congregations do near neighbor evangelism well, there are cultural barriers both on the side of the evangelist and the non-Christian. These barriers mean that for all practical purposes those who are not near neighbors of the same culture will not be able to gain an adequate hearing of the gospel. Winter quotes Arthur Glasser’s summary of the situation as this:

If every congregation in the world were to undergo a great revival and reach out to every person within their own people—that is, to everyone in the

cultural spheres represented by each congregation—over half of all remaining non-Christians would still not be reached.⁹

However, because of the fact that the terms “mission” and “missionary” were used in different ways that were firmly entrenched, Winter found it necessary in his advocating for cross-cultural evangelism to develop a new set of terms to help bring clarification to the issues. The key ideas can be found in his definition of frontier missions which “is the activity intended to accomplish the Pauline kind of missiological breakthrough to a Hidden People Group.”¹⁰ I will expand each one of the major terms here and give some indication of their development after 1980.

A distinction between frontier and regular missions

The frontier mission movement was distinguished by the fact that it adds the adjective “frontier” to missions to separate this activity from what it calls “regular” missions. It is important to understand that these terms were adopted in order to bring a sense of precision about the remaining task of the Great Commission and how to complete it. They reflect an understanding of missiological reality where the Church has reached virtually all geopolitical nation states and where many countries of the world have thriving Christian movements. As was noted in the historical review and the summary of Winter’s 1974 paper, unreached people group thinking specifically defines a missionary as one who crosses a cultural boundary to share the gospel where no indigenous church exists. What Winter strives to point out is that in the missiological reality of today, most “missionaries” in this narrow sense who are crossing real cultural boundaries do so in order to work among a culture where there is an already existing church movement of some sort. This he terms “regular” missions,¹¹ which is involved in all kinds of good work assisting national church movements, doing works of compassion, training leaders and discipling new believers. The term “frontier” is then reserved for another kind of cross-cultural work, the kind where there is no existing church movement among a particular people. As seen in the defi-

nition above, the condition of frontier missions depends upon two things: the need for 1) a missiological breakthrough 2) among a people that is “hidden.” The idea of “hidden” here means that the group does not have a strong enough Christian movement resident that can do near neighbor evangelism and thus requires a cross-cultural missionary to come and share the gospel.

Defining missiological breakthrough

Missiological breakthrough is the process:

whereby a church in a new tradition is born within the indigenous culture (not borrowed and patched in from another country or cultural tradition).... Such a breakthrough classically was Paul’s concern, that is, to produce a truly Gentile synagogue.¹²

The goal of such a breakthrough is a viable church, which is a concept very important to the missiology and strategy of the frontier mission movement. Winter notes that the viable church is:

... not just anything someone may call a *church*, and this emphasis then corresponds to the previous statement: *at least that minimum yet sufficiently developed indigenous Christian tradition to be capable of evangelizing its own people without E2 or E3 help*. A barely viable church must be understood as a minimal goal. Nothing here should imply that any such church anywhere should be considered totally independent of the world family of Christians, nor that it cannot both minister through and profit from continued cross-cultural contacts and expatriate help. All it means is that the *missiological breakthrough has been made*. This would seem to require at least a cluster of indigenous evangelizing congregations and a significant part of the Bible translated by the people themselves.¹³

It is important to understand at this point that these definitions are human constructs designed to help us create a tangible form of measurement for describing basic aspects of the completion of the Great Commission. Jesus said to make disciples among every *ethne*, so the concept of missiological breakthrough defines in a minimal sense what it would mean to bring the gospel to a group of people that previously had no Christians at all. It is significant to note that the task here focuses not

These are precisely the type of groups and situations where existing churches manifest “people blindness,” being unable to see past their own cultural walls and prejudices in order to reach out to a group that is different than them.

on simply telling people the gospel, nor planting a single church, but rather it is to seek to develop an indigenous movement of churches that are capable of doing the work of near neighbor evangelism without outside help. It is not so much an issue of the size or percentage of believers as one of vitality of that Christian movement.

Defining hidden peoples

The second component of the definition of frontier missions has to do with a people group, particularly a group that Winter defined as “hidden.” At this point Winter introduces another continuum to help illustrate his point. This continuum parallels the one on evangelism with its E-0 to E-3 distinctions of cultural distance from the hearer, except that it looks at how far the individuals in a people group are culturally from a church movement. Thus P-0 to P-3 refers to individuals in people groups that are either very similar to that of the evangelist (P-0 meaning nominal and not born again, P-.5 meaning those on the fringe of the church but having a church within their people, P-1 referring to those who do not identify themselves as Christians but have an indigenous evangelizing church within their group) or who are increasingly dissimilar (P-2 and P-2.5) or who do not have any Christian movement close to them culturally (P-3).¹⁴

The critical missiological point that Winter strives to make here is that even though there are many missionaries crossing E-2 and E-3 boundaries, they are most often doing so to work among a people that is P-1, meaning that they have an evangelizing church within their own cultural group. He points out that when the E number is larger than the P number “there is an inherent waste of effort, even though for other purposes such activity may be justified.”¹⁵ Thus “regular” missions takes place when cross-cultural missionaries work among a people that already can

do near-neighbor evangelism. As a missionary, it is E-2 or E-3 work for them, but to the local people it is an E-1 situation. Winter is not denigrating such work, which has importance in leadership training and *in fact development of further missionary activity* from that group to other groups. Rather, he is pleading for the necessity of an expansion of work by E-2 and E-3 missionaries among P-2 and P-3 groups, which is the special and complex work of missiological breakthrough and what he terms true “frontier” missions. These P-2 and P-3 groups are “hidden” because there is no church culturally close enough to reach out to them and they require a cross-cultural effort. These are precisely the type of groups and situations where existing churches manifest “people blindness,” being unable to see past their own cultural walls and prejudices in order to reach out to a group that is different than them.

Developments in Key Concepts

The whole idea of frontier missions is driven by the concepts of peoples and the need to have missiological breakthrough to produce a viable church. This next section will examine these two interrelated concepts as they have been refined and debated over the past 20 years. The critical issues concern the definition of a people group, how to define whether a people has been reached or not with missiological breakthrough, and how many unreached groups actually remain.

Defining people groups

The Lausanne Strategy Working Group initially defined a people group as “a significantly large sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another.”¹⁶ In order to bring further clarity to the idea a meeting was jointly convened March 25–26, 1982 in Chicago by the Lausanne Committee

and the EFMA in order to help settle a standardized terminology. A number of mission agencies and organizations involved in people group research attended. They agreed on the following definition:

A people group is a significantly large sociological 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. From the viewpoint of evangelization this is the largest possible group within which the gospel can spread as a viable, indigenous church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.¹⁷

Johnstone notes several variations from the original definition have been suggested.¹⁸ It was Ralph Winter who argued for the addition of the terms “viable, indigenous” in the definition while Barbara Grimes felt that the words “significantly large” were dangerous because it may cause people to overlook small language groups. Later in that same year the Lausanne Strategy Working Committee dropped the phrase “as a viable, indigenous church planting movement” so that the idea of sociological groups could be added to the concept. Johnstone suggests that within the varieties of this definition there were two fundamental perspectives operating, that of ethnolinguistic peoples and sociological people groups.¹⁹

This uncertainty as to whether or not to count sociological groups as candidates for church planting (such as prisoners, taxi drivers, drug addicts, etc.) along with ethnolinguistic groups has been at the heart of the controversy over how many unreached groups actually remain. Johnstone suggests that one solution is to use the broad umbrella term people groups as defined above and then prefix other terms to indicate

the parameters in terms of evangelistic work.²⁰ Ethnolinguistic peoples are then the concern of cross-cultural church planters and can be more easily counted, sociopeoples can be the target of either cross-cultural agencies or a local church depending on the situation, since some sociopeoples may require an outside cross-cultural church planting effort. Sociopeoples are the concerns of local churches and specialized ministries to reach out to sociological groupings that do not need a separate church planting movement but need to hear the gospel. These last two groups are very difficult to count and there are huge numbers of them as well.

Most recently the efforts to quantify the remaining task of people groups in need of missiological breakthrough has led to an approach which merged four major streams of people group research to count those ethnolinguistic peoples appearing on all four lists and taking into account political boundaries.²¹ This list, known as the Joshua 2000 Project (JP 2000) list was developed for people groups with over 10,000 members and originally featured 1685 groups which had less than 2% Evangelicals and 5% total Christian adherents. As of December 1999 there were 1594 peoples, 1117 of which had no church reported, 539 with no known church planting team on site, and 197 peoples unchosen.²²

Defining unreached and reached

This leads us to a discussion of the concepts unreached and reached when speaking of a people group. By the 1982 definition an unreached people group is a:

people or people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize the rest of its members without outside (cross-cultural) assistance.²³

A reached people group then is:

A people group with adequate indigenous believers and resources to evangelize this group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance.²⁴

The difficulties in quantifying the number of unreached people groups has come not only in the way in which a people is defined, but also in trying to determine by these definitions when a

group is actually reached.

In the early stages the Lausanne Committee Strategy Working Group defined an unreached group as one in which there less than 20% practicing Christians.²⁵ This number was chosen because sociological diffusion of innovation theory indicated that “when an innovation is proposed to a given society, the ‘early adapters’ will constitute somewhere between ten and twenty percent of the people. Until they adopt it the innovation spreads very slowly.”²⁶ Hesselgrave says that it was predictable that such a definition would produce criticism.²⁷ There were two primary objections to the use of 20% benchmark. First, it meant that even places in the world where some of the most successful evangelism had occurred (like South Korea) would not be considered reached. Second, the definition said nothing about the state of the churches in such a culture and their ability to proclaim the gospel.²⁸ Later it was proposed that there could be a breakdown of this percentage so that 0–1% represented initially reached, 1–10% minimally reached and 10–20% possibly reached.²⁹

It was at this same 1982 meeting that an agreement was reached whereby the U. S. Center for World Mission would give up using its phrase “Hidden Peoples” and adopt the Lausanne Strategy Working Group’s phrase “Unreached Peoples” on the grounds that the latter’s percentage definitions would be replaced by the USCWM’s definition based simply on the presence or absence of a viable indigenous evangelizing church movement.

Another approach in trying to quantify reachedness has been that of David Barrett in the *World Christian Encyclopedia*. He uses “reached” and “evangelized” synonymously and “defined both in terms of the state of having had the gospel made available or offered to a person or people.”³⁰ In his efforts to chart out missiological reality Barrett has divided the world into what he calls Worlds A, B, and C. World C is evangelized and primarily Christian, world A is the unevangelized and non-Christian, while world B is the evangelized non-Christian. By this term he means those who are not Christians

but who are aware of Christianity, Christ and the gospel but have not yet responded positively.³¹ As with the other sociological definition, this has not been very satisfying as well since it appears to leave such a huge part of the non-Christian world as a lesser strategic target since it is already “evangelized” in this very narrow sense. In a 1993 article in *Mission Frontiers Bulletin* Frank Kaleb Jansen points out that in a broad sense, Barrett’s use of the term “evangelized” is seeking primarily to measure exposure to the gospel, while the idea of “unreached” focuses on response. It is a comparison of apples and oranges.³² A more recent trend has been to move away from a percentage viewpoint to consider a whole complex of factors that would indicate unreachedness and in its opposite state, reachedness. Five criterion have been proposed as constituting an unreached group:³³

1. The people have not heard the gospel in an understandable way or form.
2. The people group has not responded to the gospel.
3. The people group has no growing church or fellowship of believers.
4. The Word of God has not been translated in the mother tongue of the people.
5. The Word of God is not available (due to illiteracy or legal restrictions of the country).

In constructing the Joshua Project 2000 list these criteria along with the less than 2% evangelical and 5% total Christian adherents figures were what was used. In this sense there has been a combination of the ideas of evangelizing by having the gospel offered or accessible in some form, a percentage of response, and the idea of there being a relevant communication of the gospel and opportunity for response.

Just how ambiguous and confusing the concepts of unreached and reached people groups have become is seen in a 1990 *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* survey of mission leaders on what “reached” means.³⁴ There is very little agreement among the eight respondents, it depends primarily on the type of effort that they are involved in. Those involved in church planting type ministries tend to conceive of reached in terms of a viable church present

in that people, while others with ministries focusing more on evangelism tend toward a definition which speaks of having given people the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel.

How many unreached people groups are there?

If the goal is to complete the Great Commission by planting a viable indigenous church among every people group in the world, how many unreached groups are there? As I have pointed out above, the move towards people group research was already happening before the Lausanne Congress in 1974. However, it was Ralph Winter's preliminary estimate of 16,750 unreached people groups that really began to spark the debate about the number of remaining peoples in the world. Johnstone says that although Winter's challenge and the 16,750 group number "motivated many Christians, churches and agencies to do something for the forgotten peoples with no exposure to the gospel... because the definitions of people, people group and unreached and hidden were not clear and consistent, considerable confusion resulted."³⁵ The first problem was that back then there was no actual list of these peoples, they were estimates based on the sources of research available at that time. Johnstone notes that although it was a "wonderful mobilizing concept... frustration grew without the check-list of peoples—how could they become targeted and reached?"³⁶ The second problem, which I have alluded to above, is that researchers began to make their own definitions of people and unreached/reached based on the type of ministry they were involved in, thus causing some to include sociological peoples while others wanted to focus strictly on ethnolinguistic groups.³⁷

Jaffarian, writing in 1994 documents some of the confusion that had occurred up to that time in trying to make estimates of the number of unreached

people groups.³⁸ He points out that Winter's first estimate of 16,750 was first changed up to 17,000 to show its imprecise character and then in 1989 after an agreement among researchers to look at larger segments was reached it was revised down to 12,000. Later it was dropped to 11,000 in 1991 to show progress. Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse came up with a figure of 6,000 that was unconnected to the process used to determine the other lists. He concludes, "Those who produced the changed estimates are not claiming the changes are due to sudden progress."³⁹ The changes were due to the methodology used in doing the counting rather than in verifiable statistical studies among these groups.

A more hopeful approach, noted above, was the work of the Joshua Project 2000 list begun in 1995 that has brought together four major streams of research in a cooperative effort in order to identify and prioritize least evangelized peoples. In a kind of disclaimer put out with the original list, Dan Scribner points out that it is not comprehensive, it contains only peoples that all the streams of research agreed upon. He also notes there are many errors that require feedback to be corrected, that the list is intended for annual revision, and is at best only a general picture of peoples most needing the gospel.⁴⁰ Despite some of these weaknesses and limitations it does bring a unifying force to people group research by drawing into one database the work of major research groups around agreed upon criteria. As such, it has the potential for being a powerful evaluative tool to track gospel penetration among the peoples on the list.

In the final analysis one needs to go back to the 1982 definition of a people and remember that the definition is tied to a strategy for evangelism. The crucial phrase is that the gospel can spread as a church planting movement "without

encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance." With this understanding, it means that the task of making lists of the unreached is always a work in progress and never fully quantifiable because as the work of church planting proceeds among various ethnolinguistic and sociological groups new barriers previously unseen will be encountered. This means that new church planting efforts will need to be undertaken for this new group. The revisions of numbers of unreached people groups from over 16,000 down to several thousands down to the 1685 of the initial run of the Joshua Project 2000 list reflect not only progress in the spread of the gospel but changes in methodology and criteria for counting. If it turns out that the JP 2000 list becomes the standard measuring device it will necessarily fluctuate up and down as pioneering church planting efforts reveals either the existence or non-existence of barriers to the spread of the gospel.

Movements, Organizations and Applications

Ralph Winter's 1974 paper on cross-cultural evangelism was both a culmination and a beginning. His articulation of the need for cross-cultural evangelism was in a sense the culmination of many streams of thought that had been incubating in mission circles for a number of years. The platform of that presentation, the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, was itself evidence of the growth of a broader movement focusing on the completion of the Great Commission. However, the very act of articulating those concepts in conjunction with the momentum towards world evangelization contained in the Lausanne movement was the catalyst for the proliferation of a host of new organizations. These sub-movements and organizations utilize and apply the missiological paradigms of the frontier mission thinking. This section will examine some of the major move-

However, it was Ralph Winter's preliminary estimate of 16,750 unreached people groups that really began to spark the debate about the number of remaining peoples in the world.

ments, organizations and applications of frontier mission thinking that form part of the contemporary mission landscape today.

Initial People Group Research

Winter has chronicled events and meetings beginning with World War II through 1995 which he believes “evidences the growth of a significant historical movement... [they are] events which reflect the exploding rebirth of global vision.”⁴¹ I will jump into this history in 1974 with the Lausanne Congress. As I noted above, the Lausanne Congress was intended from the beginning to be an ongoing movement. Wagner says that the challenge given to reach the 3 billion who had never heard at the Congress “stimulated the 2,400 participants... to request the formation of an ongoing structure to stimulate and practical implementation of the Lausanne vision for reaching the unreached.”⁴² This happened in Mexico City, January 20–23, 1975, when the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization was officially formed. Structurally, it consisted of an international body, seven regional committees dealing with evangelistic challenges in their areas, an executive committee of twelve and four working groups: theology and education, intercession, communication and strategy.⁴³ What is important to our study here are the tasks assigned to the Strategy Working Group. They were to identify and describe unreached peoples, identify forces for evangelism and suggest effective methodologies for evangelism. This group from the beginning established a working relationship with Mission Advanced Research and Communication Center (MARC) which had been founded in 1966 specifically around the philosophy of evangelization based on people groups.⁴⁴ MARC had been asked by the program committee of the Lausanne Congress to prepare statistical data on the current status of world evangelization, which led to their presentation of an *Unreached Peoples Directory* listing 434 peoples.⁴⁵ In the years after the 1974 congress the Strategy Working Group used the research capabilities of MARC to help produce “a series of publications that focused on unreached peoples and developing strategies to reach them.”⁴⁶

The series *Unreached Peoples* ran from 1979–1987 and included strategic articles and a particular focus as well as broad lists of unreached groups.

The U.S. Center for World Mission

In 1976 Ralph Winter presented a paper entitled “The Grounds for a New Thrust in World Mission” to the Executives Retreat of the Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association (IFMA) and the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA). He provided some new visual diagrams of the information presented in his 1974 paper and a list of 12 major obstacles that agencies would need to deal with in order to carry out the task of frontier mission. One of those obstacles was the lack of a major mission center that would utilize mission staff as representatives of mission agencies in order to focus strategic attention on the major blocks of unreached peoples.⁴⁷ This concept of such a center was very close to the heart of Winter as he was not only advocating such an idea



but actively pursuing it at the time. In 1976, Winter, along with some seminary students, were seeking to take advantage of an opportunity to purchase a college campus in Pasadena, California in order to turn that vision into reality. Winter left Fuller Seminary on November 1 of that year for a two-year leave of absence to endeavor to work on the possibility of bringing such a mission center into existence. Their fund-raising plan later became the thought that God would raise up a million Christians to give

\$15.00 as a one-time gift only (to avoid competing with agencies for funds). By September of 1978 they were able to occupy the property and later miraculous provision for balloon payments enabled the work of what is now known as the U.S. Center for World Mission to continue uninterrupted. By 1982 personnel from 42 different mission agencies were represented there working to advocate and strategize to reach the least-reached people groups.

The Decade of the 80s

The momentum for focusing on the unreached continued to build throughout the 1980s with meetings and conferences taking place around the globe. I have already dealt in some detail above with the World Consultation on Frontier Missions held in Edinburgh in 1980. In 1982 the IFMA formed a Frontier Peoples Committee and the definitions of people, unreached and reached were clarified in the Chicago meeting of mission representatives a month later sponsored by the Lausanne Committee and the EFMA. In 1983 the World Evangelical Fellowship held a global meeting in Wheaton and had a track on unreached peoples. 1984 saw the founding of the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* and 1986 was the first meeting of the International Society for Frontier Missiology and a burgeoning student movement began to spring up.

The AD 2000 and Beyond Movement

While the decade of the 1980s saw the concept of frontier missions and its focus on the unreached become firmly rooted as a major framework for understanding mission throughout the evangelical world, the decade of the 1990s would see a veritable explosion of many of these ideas into the hearts and minds of millions of Christians around the world. In preparation for the final decade before the new millennium there were two important meetings held in 1989 that brought about the birth of a new movement and a new terminology which have proved to be very influential and have helped to popularize unreached people group thinking.

In January of that year the first Global Consultation on World Evangelization (GCOWE) was held in Singapore. Part of the impetus for this meeting grew out

of a 1987 paper written by Dr. Thomas Wang, entitled “By the Year 2000, Is God Trying to Tell us Something?” Wang, who had been working as the director of a movement among Chinese Churches worldwide focusing on global evangelization, had been asked in that year to serve as the International Director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. His paper led to the GCOWE meeting where participants learned of the over 2,000 separate plans for world evangelization in existence at that time.⁴⁸ There was a sense of the need for a greater coordination of effort and promotion of vision and this led to the formation of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement which picked up where GCOWE had left off. This new movement took the Great Commission Manifesto of the GCOWE meetings and “approved [it] with a specific focus—to provide every people and population on earth with a valid opportunity to hear the gospel in a language they can understand, and to establish a mission-minded church planting movement within every unreached people group, so that the gospel is accessible to all people.”⁴⁹ This was then popularized in the phrase “A Church for Every People and the Gospel for Every Person by 2000” (the first half being brought over from the 1980 meeting in Edinburgh).

Another stream which came together to strengthen the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement was the Lausanne II Congress held in Manila in July 1989. After a plenary session on AD 2000 there was a meeting of some significant people who agreed upon the need for a group to work towards the AD 2000 vision.⁵⁰ The AD 2000 and Beyond Movement is a loosely structured grass-roots movement, a “network of networks, a fusion of visions . . . with a focus on catalyzing, mobilizing, multiplying resources, through networks . . . to encourage cooperation among existing churches, movements and entities to work together toward the vision of a church for every people and the gospel for every person by the year 2000.”⁵¹

The 10/40 Window

Along with this movement which has had a truly amazing impact in spreading the vision of unreached peoples on a broader basis among the church world-

wide this same year saw the birth of a new term which was destined to become one of the critical missions terms of the 1990s. Patrick Johnstone states that for years he had referred to the area from the Atlantic to the Pacific embracing North Africa, the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent, China and Southeast Asia, Japan and Indonesia as the resistant belt.⁵² In this region the majority of the world’s least evangelized peoples reside, primarily among Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Chinese groups. Luis Bush notes that nearly 90 years ago Samuel Zwemer wrote the book *Unoccupied Fields of Africa and Asia* that covered the countries that lay in this same region.⁵³

It was Bush himself, in a presentation at Lausanne II in Manila in 1989, who began to advocate a refocusing of evangelization on the geographic region between 10 degrees and 40 degrees North of the equator between West Africa and across Asia.⁵⁴ Later, on July 17, 1990, at the first meeting of the International Board of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, that group concluded “If we are serious about providing a valid opportunity for every people and city to experience the love, truth, and saving power of Jesus Christ, we cannot ignore the reality that we must concentrate on the resistant region of the world.”⁵⁵ In that same meeting they coined the phrase “the 10/40 Box” to explain this region. Bush relates that later while he and his wife were viewing the redwood trees framed in the window of their home, the thought came to them that rather than call this region the 10/40 Box, “‘why not think of it as the 10/40 Window? A window is a picture of hope, light, life and vision.’”⁵⁶

Johnstone believes that the concept of the 10/40 Window “is good and the publicity impact brilliant—even if this rectangle only approximates to the areas of greatest spiritual challenge.”⁵⁷ By Johnstone’s estimates, the countries in or near this region that are least-evange-

lized have 35% of the world’s surface area and 65% of its people, and that of all the least-reached peoples in the world, 95% of their population live in the Window (although about 1/3 of the *groups* are outside this window). In addition to this, 90% of the world’s poorest people live there, representing the abused, illiterate and diseased who lack access to proper medical care. This region is also the least accessible for open missionary effort due to religious or political systems, geography or lifestyle.⁵⁸

The challenge of the 10/40 Window has been brought to bear upon millions of Christians around the world through the efforts of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement’s United Prayer Track and their Praying Through the Window initiatives. Four times, every 2 years from 1993–1999 during the month of October, there was a concentrated promotional effort to unite millions of believers to prayer for the nations, cities, peoples and major people clusters of this region. These prayer initiatives and the dissemination of maps of the 10/40 Window along with other promotional materials made certainly made this one of the most widely known mission concepts among Christians today.

People Group Adoption

Another important organization that has grown out of frontier mission thinking is the Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse. The idea of adopting specific unreached groups was first circulated in a discussion document by Len Bartlotti during the World Consultation on Frontier Missions in Edinburgh in 1980. It was later written up in *Mission Frontiers Bulletin* in November of 1980 and after that in a revised form in the MARC Newsletter.⁵⁹ In March of 1989 48 mission agencies formed the Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse with the purpose of creating a comprehensive list of peoples, discovering who was targeting or working among them, and working to

...this same year saw the birth of a new term which was destined to become one of the critical missions terms of the 1990s.

see that they are all adopted.⁶⁰ Peoples that are considered unreached by the five criteria discussed above are adoptable, which means that mission agencies or congregations can choose to select that group and make a commitment to reach it. The adopting group makes a long-term commitment to pray for that people, gather information and share it with others who have adopted the group or who are working there. The goal is to get an initial group of cross-cultural workers on site working to establish an indigenous church.

Joshua Project 2000

One of the goals of the Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse was to create a comprehensive database of unreached peoples. As noted in discussion above, the task of quantifying the numbers of unreached is a daunting task, in large part due to the varying definitions that different researchers used. In 1992 Luis Bush called together a number of the key people group researchers because of “the concern... that much of the research on unreached peoples was being carried on independently and there was little real sharing of information.”⁶¹ From the meeting the Peoples Information Network (PIN) was formed. By 1993 PIN had brought together some major research streams to produce the list of adoptable peoples published by AAPC. This became the first generation of a joint listing of peoples with agreed upon definitions.

The Joshua Project 2000 list of peoples represents the second generation of a joint people group listing and is a part of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement’s thrust in the last half of the 1990s to increase cooperation to reach the goal of a church for every people by the year 2000. The first half of the decade was focused on creating vision for the task, and the second half has been dedicated to mobilization. The heart of JP 2000 is the people group listing of nearly 1700 peoples, most occupying the 10/40 Window. In developing the JP 2000 list, four major streams of unreached people group research were brought together. There was the work of AAPC which PIN published in 1993, the World Evangelization Database from the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptists, the Registry of Peoples and Languages (ROPAL) list developed by

Wycliffe and the work of Patrick Johnstone in *Operation World*. As a beginning point, only peoples with a population of 10,000 or more were included on this list. Groups smaller than this will be included in future revisions.

An April 15, 1996, revised list took 16 pieces of data on each people (less than 2% Evangelical and 5% Christian to make the list) and grouped it into 11 categories. Key additions in this list from the first revision included the church status, showing what level of church planting efforts were underway, agency work, summarizing the work of mission agencies among that people, ministry tools available (such as Scripture, the JESUS film, radio broadcasts and audio recordings), and a priority ranking according to ministry need. The priority ranking followed this criteria: percent evangelical, 30%; church status, 25%; ministry tools available, 20%; agency work, 15%; and population, 10%. A number from one (meaning highest priority need) to nine (lowest priority) was assigned. It is the goal of the researchers who contributed to the list to produce a revision every April.⁶²

The developers of the JP 2000 list freely admit that such a listing comes from a very particular perspective that uses ethno-linguistic-political criteria. Other ways of viewing the world are possible and they would result in radically different lists. The chief limitation derives from the word *political*, because a group split in two by a political border may have a missiological breakthrough that may exist on only one side of the border, thus arbitrarily inflating the total groups unreached. The current list has gaps and there are some groups that one researcher would include that others would not and therefore it did not make the list. In spite of these limitations the list is being used as a kind of benchmark for measuring the finishing of the task. The goal has been to see every group on the list targeted by a mission agency or church, an on-site church planting team to begin work, and an initial church of 100 people planted among them. Progress on these goals is being tracked and updated versions are available at the AD 2000 website.⁶³ **IJFM**

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Endnotes

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²Ibid.

³Ralph Winter, "The Story of the Frontier Mission Movement," *Mission Frontiers Bulletin* (September–October 1995): 44–45.

⁴Ibid., 45.

⁵Ibid., 48.

⁶Ibid., 50.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 48.

¹⁰Winter, "Frontier Mission Perspectives," 65.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 64–65.

¹³Ibid., 65–66.

¹⁴Ibid., 62–64. Winter employs the terms megasphere, macrosphere, minisphere and microspheres to help explain the idea of cultural distance of an individual from a Christian tradition. For the purposes of evangelism, "a megasphere is simply a group whose cultural kinship to any other megasphere is not sufficiently close to be of strategic significance." Macrospheres then are "evangelistically significant sub-communities" and when those sub-groups have significant divisions they are called minispheres. "A microspheres is, in the same way, a breakdown of a minisphere, but in this later case we shall agree that the microspheres differences are not sufficiently great enough to require a separate missiological breakthrough." Thus P-0 to P-1 have a church in their minisphere, while P-2 has no church in its minisphere but is culturally near to another minisphere with a church within the same macrosphere. For those in P-2.5 the closest church is in another macrosphere, while those in P-3 the closest church is in another megasphere.

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¹⁶Ibid., 60.

¹⁷Patrick Johnstone, "People Groups: How Many Unreached?" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 7:2 (April 1990): 36–37.

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²²Doug Lucas, *Brigada Today*, 1/14/2000 (e-mail version).

²³Johnstone, "People Groups," 37.

²⁴Edward Dayton, "Reaching Unreached Peoples: Guidelines and Definitions for Those Concerned with World Evangelization," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 2:1 (January 1985): 33.

²⁵C. Peter Wagner and Ed Dayton, eds. *Unreached Peoples '80* (Elgin, Illinois: David C. Cook Publishing, 1980), 8.

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²⁷Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices*, 53.

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²⁹Winter, "Frontier Mission Perspectives," 60.

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³¹David Barrett and Todd Johnson, *Our Globe and How to Reach It: Seeing the World Evangelized by AD 2000 and Beyond* (Birmingham, Alabama: New Hope, 1990), 25.

³²Frank Kaleb Jansen, "Four Decisive Moves Forward," *Mission Frontiers Bulletin* (January–February 1993). There is no page number on the article that was included in the Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse book *A Church for Every People* edited by Jansen. See Works Cited for the full citation.

³³Terry Riley, "Intercession and World Evangelization," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (January–March 1995): 18–19.

³⁴"What Does 'Reached' Mean? An EMQ Survey," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July 1990): 316–321.

³⁵Johnstone, "People Groups," 36.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸E. Michael Jaffarian, "World Evangelization by A.D. 2000: Will We Make It?," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (January 1994): 20, 26 footnote 9.

³⁹Ibid., 20.

⁴⁰Scribner, "Identifying the Peoples, 12.

⁴¹Winter, "The Story of the Frontier Mission Movement," 49.

⁴²C. P. Wagner, "Introduction," in *Unreached Peoples '79*, ed. C. Peter Wagner and Edward R. Dayton (Elgin, Illinois: David C. Cook, 1978), 7.

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⁴⁴C. Peter Wagner and Edward Dayton, "The People Group Approach to World Evangelization" in *Unreached Peoples '81*, ed. C. Peter Wagner and Edward R. Dayton (Elgin, Illinois: David C. Cook, 1981), 24.

⁴⁵C. Peter Wagner and Edward Dayton, "Introduction," in *Unreached Peoples '81*, ed. C. Peter Wagner and Edward R. Dayton (Elgin, Illinois, 1981), 7–8.

⁴⁶Ibid. For a list of some of these publications see page 8.

⁴⁷Ralph Winter, "The Grounds for a New Thrust in World Mission," 2d ed., (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1980), 20.

⁴⁸www.ad2000.org/histover.htm, Nov. 15, 1998.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Johnstone, *The Church*, 213, 215.

⁵³Luis Bush and Beverly Pegues, *The Move of the Holy Spirit in the 10/40 Window* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 1999), 225.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Johnstone, *The Church*, 215.

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⁵⁹Lawrence Radcliffe, "Part 4: A Field Worker Speaks out about the Rush to Reach All Peoples," Conference 'brigada-pubs-mission-frontiers' file 'MF98.01–02.40–Field 4', 3, footnote 3.

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⁶¹Dan Scribner, "Identifying the Peoples," 12.

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⁶³For the most recent revisions see <http://www.ad2000.org> and follow the links to the Joshua Project 2000 lists.

Christian Health Care and Holistic Mission

by *Tetsunao Yamamori*



traveled recently in Central Asia, where life has become especially difficult since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Health care systems are inadequate. Food shortages are common. Crime is increasing. Poverty is grinding. Economic stability is a dream. Farmlands are eroded. People's morale is down. Hopelessness and despair predominate.

However, I met several Christians who were engaged in agriculture, education, medicine, entrepreneurial business, and microenterprise development. One was a 65-year-old retired English-language teacher from the Republic of Korea. Five years ago, Mr. Kim and his wife came to a village of 2,400 people in a Central Asian republic to teach English while learning the culture and the language of the people, who are poor. They enjoy few medical facilities, their farming techniques need improvement, and—after decades of Soviet rule—they lack initiative. The republic itself, though nominally democratic, is strongly communist in practice and Muslim in religion. Missionaries do not receive visas, and gospel proclamation is prohibited.

As he established himself in the 100-percent Muslim community, Mr. Kim told the leaders, "We are not to live like this." Mr. Kim and the community leaders began identifying the problems that could be solved by: (1) themselves, (2) the government, and (3) nongovernmental organizations.

Mr. Kim and the leaders identified a lack of water for drinking and farming as the community's primary problem. Soon they began bringing spring water to the village via a plastic pipe from a mountain several miles away. Today the community can farm and can drink water safely.

Three years ago, Mr. Kim leased 70 acres from the government to found the Agricultural Development Training Center. His focus with this ministry is young people who have little hope and who often get involved in drugs and crime. The center teaches them income-producing skills, such as the English language, computer programming, organic farming, and health care. It also teaches the Christian worldview. Some of the residential students have given their lives to Christ. Mr. Kim wants to send these young people not only to the rest of the republic but also to other Central Asian countries.

Tetsunao Yamamori is a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Religion and Civic Culture, University of Southern California.

Mr. Kim says that Christian development work should aim at the whole person, not only in training, but also in ministry to others. "This means," he says, "we must address the needs of the whole person—physically, spiritually, socially, psychologically, and intellectually."

At the beginning of the 21st century, we have limitless opportunities for the church's involvement in contexts of human need. Christian health care is one dimension of holistic mission. So we must ask the question, *What is Christian about Christian health care?* Let me unpack the question a little further.

Does Christian health care have anything to do with the concept of biblical holism?

What role do the Christian health care practitioners have in the church's worldwide mission? What part does holistic health care play in the bigger picture of holistic mission?

I argue that all dimensions of holistic mission, brought together under Christ, contribute toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Let us look at three aspects: (1) Biblical Holism, (2) Holistic Mission, and (3) Holistic Health.

Biblical Holism

Some writers avoid using the words *holism* and *holistic* because, to them, they sound like New Age terms. To understand the meaning of holism, it is best to describe it. Four adjectives seem appropriate.

1. Holism is *w-holistic*.

John Steward says:

The Greek word *holos*, meaning whole, wholly, or complete is used by Matthew (5:29–30), Luke (Acts 3:16), John (9:34), James (1:4), and Paul (1 Thess. 5:23). Jesus (John 7:23) and Peter (Acts 3:16) are quoted using it.¹

Holism in these passages refers to the wholeness and well being of the person. Biblical holism therefore is concerned with the whole person. We should direct our work with people to the development of the whole person, just as Jesus himself grew. Luke 2:52 states: "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

Development is a process. It is a qualitative change of life in which a person

finds essential wholeness (socially, physically, spiritually, and in wisdom) as an individual and as a part of a community. This change ultimately occurs only through the redemptive power of the gospel. The focus of development activities, then, is the whole person. Humans are social beings in tune with God, with others, and with their environment.

2. Holism is *synergistic*.

Valson Thampu, an Indian scholar, discusses the main conceptual assumptions of holism in this way:

- (1) The whole is more than the sum of its parts,
- (2) the whole determines the nature of its parts,
- (3) parts cannot be understood if considered in isolation from the whole, and
- (4) the parts of an organic whole are dynamically interrelated or interdependent.²

Anything that is holistic, in other words, is synergistic. The whole (namely, God's mission) determines the nature of the church's many missions, including health care. Holism implies the identity and distinctiveness of various parts in their relationship to the whole and, at the same time, their relationally inseparable nature.

Dayton Roberts illustrates this point:

"For example," he says, "all the parts of a bicycle can be heaped into a 'whole'—a pile of junk. That accumulation of parts becomes holistic only when it is assembled in an intelligent, harmonious, functional way."³

The apostle Paul discusses the concept of synergy in Romans and Ephesians. In Romans 12:4–5, the apostle writes:

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Paul reiterates this theme in Ephesians 4:11–13:

It was [God] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the

whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Biblical holism is synergistic, but it is also something more.

3. Holism is *restorative*.

Biblical holism begins to restore relationships destroyed by human sin. God said in Genesis 1:26–27:

Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God told Adam and Eve how to live, but they chose to disobey him. This rebellion against God brought about severe consequences (Gen 3:14–24). The relationships that God created good were ruined, including the relationship between humans and God, our interactions with others, and our role as stewards over creation.

Now, biblical holism refers to God's attempt to restore and redeem all these lost relationships. God begins this process by summoning Abram to a task. God says in Genesis 12:2–3:

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

The Old Testament chronicles how God raised up the nation of Israel to redeem the world. This plan finds fulfillment in the New Testament, as God sends His own Son into the world (John 3:16) and, later, the church to carry on the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17–19).

4. Holism is Christocentric, or Christ-centered.

John Steward also says:

Biblical holism is based on Christ's lordship over every part of life—where people who are in right relationship with God and one another (relationship) are responsibly managing the resources entrusted by him (stewardship) in ways that show that those resources belong to God (ownership).⁴

Ephesians 1:10 echoes the Christocentric nature of holism. God's redemptive history will culminate in God's bringing "all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."

Holistic Mission

All faithful believers under Christ's lordship are charged to pursue the church's mission: to proclaim Christ and bring all people possible to faith and obedience in him (Rom 16:26). How are we to do this? Before we discuss strategic issues, let us first analyze the context of mission.

1. The context of mission.

In this new century, mission will occur where physical and spiritual needs converge. Bryant Myers of World Vision wrote in 1988 that "the poor are the lost and the lost are the poor... those who are the poorest and in greatest need of hearing the name of Jesus are living in the midst of Muslim and Marxist contexts in the two-thirds world."⁵

Dan Harrison was similarly far-sighted⁶ in 1991. He described an important geographical area for missions that we now call the "10/40 Window." Harrison noted that this area has "great physical as well as spiritual poverty." Since the fall of the Soviet Union, of course, many changes have occurred in the world, but the physical and spiritual needs of this underserved region remain largely the same.

Poverty, in various degrees of severity, plagues over half the world's population. The poor lack food and clean drinking water. Malnourishment and various illnesses are common. In addition, health care systems in the world's impoverished regions are inadequate, and, in many places, virtually nonexistent.

Ralph Winter and Bruce Koch estimated that 1.896 billion non-Christians of the total world population of 6 billion to be living within unreached people groups in 2000.⁷

2. Strategic framework.

Think of two population groups and two approaches to reach them. Several years ago, I elaborated on this concept elsewhere.⁸ I shall summarize it briefly.

The two population groups are (1) those that are open to Christianity and

(2) those that are not. I further distinguished these two groups by using four indices: hospitality, evangelization, receptivity, and the need for development.

Hospitality refers to the degree to which a country, social group, or people group welcomes Christianity. It especially refers to the quantity of and quality of social sanctions placed upon gospel witness. Ninety percent of the world's unreached people groups live in countries with social or governmental policies prohibiting the entrance of missionaries and limiting or forbidding the evangelistic activities of national Christians.

Evangelization refers to the number of people within a population who have heard the good news of Jesus Christ and the degree to which they have received the message.

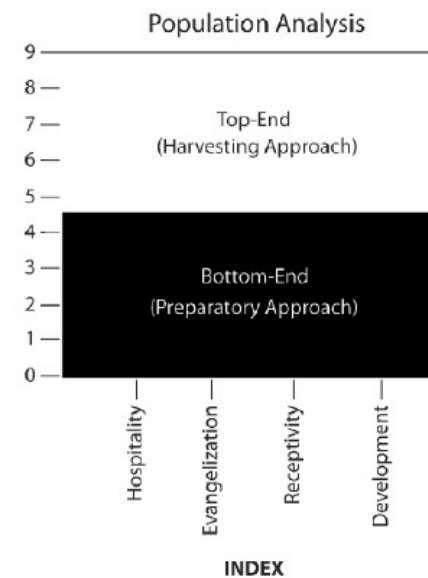
Receptivity gauges the degree to which individuals within a particular people group are open to the gospel. This differs from hospitality, which refers to societal or governmental limitations, not to the people's openness. For example, while the hospitality of China to Christian missions is low, the receptivity of the people is very high.

Development measures the physical condition of the target group. Extreme poverty has many faces. The poor are often malnourished and diseased, underemployed or without jobs, unable to provide for the basic needs of the family.

Using these four indices as a guide, we can classify population groups into two types: top-end and bottom-end. The top-end group includes countries or people groups that are most hospitable to Christianity, most evangelized, most receptive to the gospel, and most developed. The bottom-end group consists of countries or people groups that are least hospitable to Christianity, least evangelized, least receptive, and least developed. The bottom-end population type is found to the greatest degree in the 10/40 Window. Obviously, some countries and people groups fall between these two extremes, but research is key to identifying accurately who they are and into which group they fall.

3. Two basic approaches.

There are two corresponding evange-



listic approaches: a harvesting approach for the top-end and a preparatory approach for the bottom-end.

Harvesting approach

This is a direct, traditional missionary strategy characterized by sharing the Word of God overtly and forthrightly. It is common where missionaries are welcomed and people are openly receptive to the gospel. Many national Christians live in areas appropriate for the harvesting approach. Physical needs will not overwhelm all other concerns.

Preparatory approach

This is the strategy best suited for the 10/40 Window and other countries at the lower end of the scale. It involves doing something now in the hope that people will respond to the gospel later. It is appropriate in countries where career missionaries are not permitted or the people are not yet responsive to the gospel. Typically, few or no Christians live in these regions. Residents in these areas often need food, basic health care, education, clean drinking water, information on proper nutrition, small-scale technology, food production, microenterprise development, entrepreneurial business opportunities, and other measures.

4. Health care practitioners and their inescapable calling.

What role do the Christian health care practitioners have in the church's worldwide mission? The answer is clear.

All Great Commission Christians⁹ are given marching order by their Lord to

“go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20). And his teaching encompasses, among other things, care for the sick. Serious Christian health care practitioners have an inescapable calling to holistic health—restoring health to the whole person physically, spiritually, and in all aspects of his or her human existence.

Holistic Health

In *Health, the Bible, and the Church*, Daniel Fountain writes: “We consider health in terms of fitness of the body rather than of the whole person. We concentrate on diseases and how to cure them and not on how to promote health. As a result, we offer ‘sickness care’ rather than health care and do little if anything to promote the health of persons and groups.”¹⁰

Mr. Kim’s passion to address the needs of the whole person is still etched vividly in my memory. His conviction arose not so much from his biblical understanding but from his encounter with the harshness of poverty and human misery. His love for the Lord and for his neighbors compelled him to seek to resolve the community’s predicament.

What part, then, does holistic health care play in the bigger picture of holistic mission? I maintain that Christian health care, along with other dimensions of holistic mission, brought together under Christ, contributes toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

1. All dimensions under Christ.

The taxonomy of relief and development work generally includes (a) disaster relief, (b) water resource development, (c) food production, (d) business enterprises, and (e) health care. Different organizations might also add justice, literacy, and the environment, depending on their objectives.

Research must be conducted to discover how these categories of general relief and development can become *holistic* mission, such as (a) holistic relief, (b) holistic water, (c) holistic food, (d) holistic business, and (e) holistic health. We need to find out how people come to faith and obedience in Christ while their dire physical needs are being met.

As holistic practitioners, we must constantly keep in mind the needs of the whole person and explore how that person ultimately becomes reconciled to God.

We know very little about how people in different circumstances of need come to know Christ. I shall simply mention the categories of investigation.

Holistic relief

In 1980, I visited the Khao-I-Dang camp for Cambodian war refugees just inside the Thai border. There were 130,000 suffering people in the camp, of whom only eight families had been Christian at the beginning. But soon conversions began occurring, sometimes at the rate of hundreds a day. I witnessed the dynamic worship of believers. Within months, the Christian population of Khao-I-Dang had grown to 20,000.

The refugees were mainly women and children who had witnessed the atrocities of Pol Pot and his followers. They had barely survived the minefields. They were separated from their loved ones. They had lost husbands, parents, and children. They were malnourished and ill. Their hopes were dashed and they were in despair. Christian relief workers not only attended to their physical needs but also simply provided loving care. This was ministry to the whole person. Many Cambodians in utter despair turned to Christ.

Holistic water

Polluted water kills 3 million children each year. People without clean drinking water suffer from diarrhea and related illnesses. Responding to this great need, some Christian water specialists I know of share the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well in Sychar and explain the meaning of “living water.”

Holistic food

Larry Ward, founder of Food for the Hungry International, said that the organization shared “food for the body” and “food for the soul.” Jesus describes himself as the “bread of life.” In May 2002, Dordt College in Iowa and Food for the Hungry International are co-sponsoring a consultation on “Biblical Holism and Agriculture” to bring these two kinds of nourishment together.

Holistic business

People in business are the least utilized segment of the missions workforce. In the churches, their checkbooks are valued, but they are not. This must change for mission in the 21st century. We need holistic entrepreneurs, those who are cross-cultural business owners, called by God to do business holistically in restricted-access countries. Their goal is to share the gospel and make disciples while they start new ventures and run for-profit businesses.

Traditional tentmakers generally are job takers, and they have their place in the missions enterprise. Holistic entrepreneurs, on the other hand, are job makers. Acts 18:1–3 is the much-discussed passage authenticating tentmaking. In it we see Paul joining Aquila and Priscilla to make tents to support his ministry. In business terms, Paul was an employee of a business owned by Aquila and Priscilla, who were holistic entrepreneurs with an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures (18:24–26).

Holistic entrepreneurs incorporate “kingdom values”¹¹ into their business practice so that a model of the kingdom can be seen. Further, of course, they share the gospel and disciple new believers.

The holistic business approach deserves close examination. The Regent University Graduate School of Business, in collaboration with Lausanne Holistic Ministries, will host a Consultation for Holistic Entrepreneurs, October 3–5, 2002. The consultation will attempt to integrate “kingdom business” models with outreaches to unreached peoples in the 21st century.

2. The critical demand for holistic health care.

Recently I spent considerable time with Pastor Norman Pule of the Assembly of God Church in Soweto, South Africa. Although the community has been hard hit by the HIV/AIDS crisis, the churches are almost numb to it. AIDS patients go through various stages of (a) denial, (b) anger (at husband, God, and the pastor who represents God), (c) worry (about children and other matters), (d) rejection (from the family and people in the community), and (e) care (by the church). Some churches teach that God is punishing the AIDS-infected persons. Other churches teach

that God can heal infected people. Still other churches, such as Pastor Pule's, attempt to educate people about AIDS and care for those affected by it. Because this illness affects not only the patient but also the family and the community, people need comprehensive care. They need medical assistance, social reconciliation, psychological healing, spiritual nurture, and friends.

We need more research on the ways in which churches are dealing with this crisis. However, other areas demand attention from Christian health care practitioners, as well. In all of them, we must examine the cultural issues that affect the healing process. Christian health care professionals must do research in areas such as "Biblical Holism and Health Care," "Cultural Issues That Advance or Impede Holistic Health," "Strategies for Networking among Christian Health Practitioners," "Case Studies in Holistic Health," and "Training for Holistic Health Practitioners."

3. Insights from previous research on holistic ministry.¹²

Thankfully, we already know some factors in effective holistic ministry (involving near-neighbor outreach).

Prayer

Without prayer, nothing significant happens. We must pray every step of the way toward physical and spiritual health among the people with whom we work.

Holistic ministry concept

Evangelical relief and development organizations must have a clearly delineated concept of holistic ministry in their vision statement.

Appropriate staffing

Unless enthusiastic, vibrant, and dynamic witnessing staff members have frequent contact with non-Christians in the project community, no spiritual rebirths are likely. These staff members must be professionally qualified and conversant with the Bible.

Sociological and anthropological insights

Staff must possess accurate and culturally appropriate knowledge. They must know the sociologically and anthropologically discernible facts about the community and its people. Who are the people? What do they believe? How do they behave? What do most people do

for a living? Do they marry within the same ethnic group or do they marry outside their group? Who among the people have responded to the gospel? Then staff need to focus on responsive groups.

Respecting lines of communication

Christian staff must respect existing lines of communication. Communication is generally good between two intimates, such as relatives or friends. The gospel flows best from one member of a family to another, or between friends.

Training and outreach

Nurturing new believers is critical. They must grow in grace, increase in the knowledge of Christ, engage in holistic spiritual and physical outreach ministries, and become responsible members of their churches. Sunday school classes, small interest groups, Bible study fellowships, and church services are all part of this training.

Finding God's bridges

The late Donald McGavran, known for his church-growth thinking, used the phrase "bridges of God"¹³ to refer to the segments of society that are responsive to the gospel. We must find such people and attend to them with love and care.

4. Implications for health care practitioners

Each of these insights is applicable to holistic health. Health care practitioners must pray continually, digest the concept of biblical holism, acquire qualified staff, gain sociological and anthropological insights, respect lines of communication, nurture new converts, and find God's bridges to reach the people receptive to the gospel. In addition, every health care provider must remember that the best vehicle to dispense holistic care is through the local church.

Conclusion

We need research and frequent consultations to create a network among holistic health practitioners. Then we need to publish the resulting insights. Once we lay this groundwork, holistic health care can fulfill its increasingly strategic role in the Great Commission.

Fundamental to all I say in this article is the fact that to be fair to a holistic approach to both health and mission

we must recognize that we are not just trying to clean up something like the horrendous mess created by the collapse of the twin towers in New York. We are up against an on-going campaign of intelligent terrorists in the form of 1) diabolic delusions which enchain and destroy people and 2) diabolic disease pathogens which must be exterminated. To oppose these is to do his will on earth.

In regard to diabolic delusions, God's will and his glory is at stake when women in India are conned into being burned to death on their husbands' funeral pyres being assured that they will thereby attain a higher level in reincarnation or when in Africa the rumor is rampant that intercourse with a virgin will rid a man of AIDS. These are examples of destructive, diabolic delusions which must be opposed.

In regard to diabolic pathogens, God's will and his glory is at stake when we, in effect, bandage up the mugged and tell them to avoid dark alleys, and yet let the mugger go free. This is no different from helping sick people and telling them how they might avoid sickness, but not seeking to destroy the pathogens that are able again and again to make them sick.

That is, truly holistic effort is part of the Kingdom of God aimed ultimately at the conquest of all evil and the glorification of God by all peoples. "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil," and "as his Father sent (him) so (he sends us)." This kind of effort is needed greatly in conventional evangelism. It is the difference between "preaching the gospel to all peoples," on the one hand, and as Jesus put it, "this gospel of the Kingdom must be advanced among all peoples." Missionaries that merely preach a gospel of getting to heaven or who merely preach a gospel of clean water both fall perilously short of biblical holism. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹John Steward, 2000 *Biblical Holism*, in A. Scott Moreau (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), p. 448.

²Valson Thampu, 1995 *Rediscovering Mission: Towards A Non-Western Missiological Paradigm* (New Delhi: Theological Research and Communication Institute), p. 4.

³W. Dayton Roberts, 1993 *Christ's mission as concerto*, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July), p. 301.

⁴Steward, p. 448.

⁵Bryant L. Myers, 1988 *Where are the Poor and the Lost? Together* (October–December).

⁶Dan Harrison, 1991 *Hope for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), p. 49.

⁷Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, 2000 “*Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge*,” *Mission Frontiers* (June), p. 27.

⁸Tetsunao Yamamori, 1987 *God's New Envoys: A Bold Strategy for Penetrating "Closed Countries"* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press), pp. 88–94. See also Tetsunao Yamamori, “*Furthering the Kingdom Through Relief and Development: Where and How Is It Happening?*” AERDO Occasional Paper #5. 1997.

⁹“Great Commission Christians” are defined as “active church members of all traditions who take Christ's Great Commission

seriously,” David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, 2001 “Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 2001” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (January), p. 24.

¹⁰Daniel E. Fountain, 1989 *Health, the Bible and the Church* (Wheaton, IL: The Billy Graham Center), p. 1.

¹¹Two exceptional books on the topic of business and ministry are: *Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Marketplace* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997) by Alexander Hill, and *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999) by R. Paul Stevens.

¹²From 1994 to 1997, consultations were held annually in Chiang Mai, Thailand; Harare, Zimbabwe; Quito, Ecuador; and Manila, Philippines, to gather empirical data and analyze them. The findings were reported in the series of four books: Tetsunao Yamamori, Bryant L. Myers, and David Conner (eds.), *Serving with the Poor in Asia* (1995); Tetsunao Yamamori, Bryant L. Myers, Kwame Bediako, and Larry Reed (eds.), *Serving with the Poor in Africa* (1996); Tetsunao Yamamori, Bryant L. Myers, C. Rene Padilla, and Greg Rake (eds.), *Serving with the Poor in Latin America* (1997); and Tetsunao Yamamori, Bryant L. Myers, Kenneth L. Luscombe (eds.), *Serving with the Urban Poor*.

¹³Donald A. McGavran (1970), *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), pp. 395–411.