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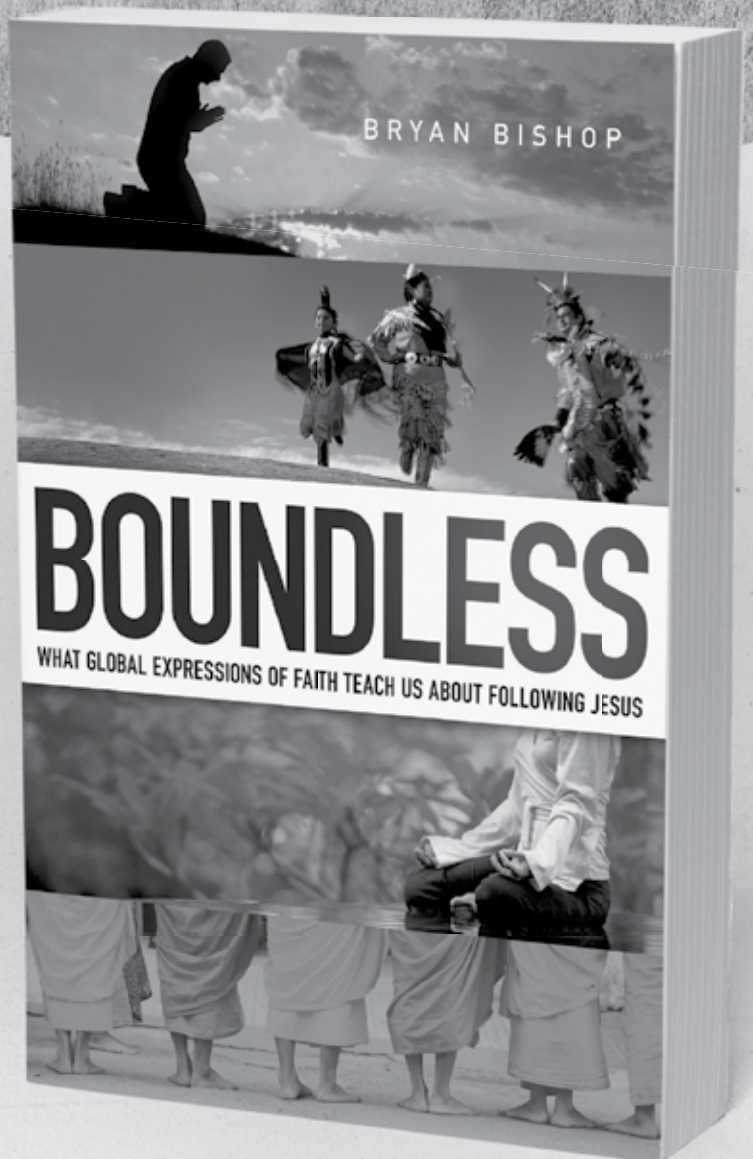
April–June 2016

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# DISCOVER MUSLIMS, HINDUS, AND BUDDHISTS EXPERIENCING JESUS

**IN HIS MANY TRAVELS** as a researcher for Youth With A Mission, Bryan Bishop has discovered a startling phenomenon: hidden movements of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others who are experiencing and following Jesus outside the boundaries of traditional Western Christianity.

If you want to grow in areas where you feel stagnant or disillusioned, if you are concerned about friends who have left the church behind, or if you chafe against Christianity's European-American cultural box, you will find in this book a liberating view of what it looks like to follow Christ.



## *Unreached: A Term, a Concept, and a Reality*

It has been said, "A mist in the pulpit is a fog in the pew." We could also add that oblique mission concepts will fail to guide the church effectively. The terms we utilize must tie our missiological concepts to the actual realities we face in mission today, so it's no surprise if we are constantly debating both our terms and concepts. "If the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?" (I Cor. 14:8).

We've given the greater portion of this issue of the *IJFM* to Dave Datema's historical review of the term "unreached" (pp. 45-71). Mission demographers today are still faithfully mapping unreached populations with a conceptual grid that has developed over decades. Our hope is that a newer generation in mission will find Datema's overview a beneficial synopsis of how this term has been negotiated.

Over the past four decades "unreached" has been a term, a concept and a reality. Other terms have been explored (pp. 72-76), but unreached (or "unreached peoples") has held its ground.

To be historically accurate, the concept actually came first. Most of the relevant ideas were nurtured in the Church Growth school of thought, where "people groups" or "people movements" were studied and modeled for the purpose of expanding or extending the church. The reality came second. As Ralph Winter was given the task of outlining the state of world evangelization at the Lausanne Congress in 1974, a certain reality was dawning on him. When he took those same concepts, he began to see that a tremendous population of un-evangelized individuals resided in peoples who had no access to an indigenous church. As much as we have gone back and forth over our conceptual tools these past decades, we must still admit to a huge demographic reality that faces us on the frontiers of the global church. That reality—those unevangelized peoples with no access to the Gospel—needed a term, and the one that stuck was "unreached."

For forty years the concepts behind the term have been discussed, debated, and tested—and most of that evaluation has come from new developments in socio-cultural analysis. An "anthropology of globalization" promotes new realities and new paradigms, and mission anthropologists are continually pushing for a more postmodern perspective on "people group" thinking (p. 86). We've chosen to dip into the archives of Paul Hiebert for a much earlier analysis, and we find his assessment of Church Growth thinking to be cogent and profound (pp. 77-81).

*Editorial continued on p. 44*

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The views expressed in **IJFM** are those of the various authors and not necessarily those of the journal's editors, the International Society for Frontier Missiology or the society's executive committee.

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As early as the 1980s, those of us who had been students of Hiebert were arriving on the field with his syllabi under our arms, ready to test and explore our typical cultural categories. Hiebert, the anthropologist, had a way of inviting us into the inductive task of understanding the ever-changing contexts of mission; he was brilliant on the epistemological shifts taking place in modern social science.

But note that this critique did not force him to automatically discount the reality of the unreached challenge that had dawned on Winter and the others at Fuller's School of World Mission. He may have wanted our conceptual grid to correspond better to mission realities, but he did not minimize this particular unevangelized reality itself. May his irenic approach be a model to us all. (I should say that at the time of publication, we had yet to determine just when and where Hiebert presented this short evaluation to his Mennonite Brethren denomination, but maybe by virtue of its publication here, a reader might help us situate it historically.)

At the upcoming ISFM 2016 (October 14–16, in Dallas) we look forward to addressing the challenge of mapping the demographics of unreached peoples today. Mapping the unreached tests the application of our terms and concepts, forces ambiguities to surface, and exposes “the fog in the pew.” Mission demographers and statisticians will be in attendance and some will present papers; we invite you not only to attend but to participate in their discussions.

Other sessions at this ISFM will bend towards the EMS theme of “Missions in the Local Church.” These sessions will examine key missiological concepts that need to be understood if local churches are to engage the frontiers (i.e., culture, sodality, pluralism, urban sociality). We will have a special focus on the challenges facing the Korean church in understanding the religious challenge at its doorstep.

Concerning mobilizing the local church today, we commend Darren Duerksen's review (pp. 83–84) of Bryan Bishop's new book, *Boundless*, and the attempt—in clear layman's

terms—to cut through the mist surrounding insider movements. Again, in his book as in this issue, terms and concepts are woven in and around an actual reality—in his case, movements to Christ within other religious worlds. And, finally, we have Jonathan Bornman's review (pp. 82–83) of Peter Sensenig's *Peace Clan*, a sixty-year history of work among the Somalis by Mennonite missionaries and workers of the Mennonite Central Committee. It examines the symbiosis of gospel transformation with on-the-ground development, all from the peacemaking worldview of the Mennonites.

Hope to see you at ISFM 2016!

In Him,



Brad Gill  
Senior Editor, *IJFM*

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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.” (Acts 26:18)

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.

Unreached

# Defining “Unreached”: A Short History

by Dave Datema

The concept of seeing the world as people groups is arguably the most significant thought innovation in twentieth century missiology. From roughly 1970–2000, it enjoyed almost universal acceptance. While the concept remains a dominant one, it has since lost its shine. In the first place, the initial decades of excitement with the new idea has worn off as the low-hanging fruit was picked and it became clear that “finishing the task” would bring immense challenges. As the year 2000 has come and gone, this early optimism has faded. In the second place, issues of identity, especially in urban contexts, have challenged the veracity of the people group concept. It is argued that while people group thinking fits the rural domain, it falls short in the urban one, and a new framework for mission is needed. Thus, we have witnessed in recent years continued criticisms of the homogeneous unit principle, calls to move into a “fourth era” of missions which have been variously defined, and concerns about how the percentage criteria used in our definitions force us to look at the world. The purpose of this paper is to review the development of unreached peoples definitions and to ask whether or not they are still serving the frontier mission community well. Specifically, it deals with both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of these definitions.

This final issue of percentage criteria was the impetus for the research that follows. It all began with two charts in Patrick Johnstone’s *The Future of the Global Church*. The first chart was a listing of countries defined as “<2% evangelical and <5% Christian” and the other was another listing of countries defined as “<2% evangelical but >5% Christian.”<sup>1</sup> The striking difference in the two lists, based on a simple tweak of the percentage criteria, caused me to wonder what was behind the percentages presently used and the untold stories they might reveal. The other issues mentioned above are illustrative of the present missiological conversation, which deserve attention, but are not dealt with directly herein. I will look at the historical development of different understandings of what an unreached people is and then go a step further

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Figure 1. The Evolution of Definitions for Unreached Peoples through 1983

1	<b>Barrett 1968, 137.</b> "By the time the number of Protestant or Catholic adherents in the tribe has passed 20% . . . a very considerable body of indigenous Christian opinion has come into existence." <sup>2</sup>
2	<b>Pentecost 1974, 30.</b> Unreached Peoples: "We consider that a people is unreached when less than 20% of the adults are professing Christians." (Note: This definition does not require "practicing" Christians.)
3	<b>MARC 1974, 26.</b> "Unreached Peoples are those homogeneous units (geographic, ethnic, socio-economic or other) which have not received sufficient information concerning the Gospel message of Jesus Christ within their own culture and linguistic pattern to make Christianity a meaningful alternative to their present religious/value system, or which have not responded to the Gospel message, because of lack of opportunity or because of rejection of the message, to the degree that <i>there is no appreciable (recognized) church body effectively communicating the message within the unit itself.</i> "
4	<b>MARC 1974, 26.</b> Unreached Peoples: "For the purposes of this initial Directory, we consider that a people is unreached when less than 20% of the population of that group are part of the Christian community." (Note: does not require "practicing" Christians)
5	<b>LCWE/SWG 1977 (see Wagner and Dayton 1978, 24).</b> Unreached Peoples: "An Unreached People is a group that is less than 20% practicing Christian." (Note: In demanding "practicing Christians" almost all groups become unreached.)
6	<b>Winter 1978, 40, 42.</b> A Hidden People: "For both spiritual and practical reasons, I would be more pleased to talk about the presence of a church allowing people to be <i>incorporated</i> , or the absence of a church leaving people <i>unincorporable</i> . . . . Any linguistic, cultural or sociological group defined in terms of its primary affinity (not secondary or trivial affinities) which cannot be won by E-1 methods and drawn into an existing fellowship, may be called a Hidden People." (Note: the first published definition of hidden peoples)
7	<b>Edinburgh Convening Committee 1979.</b> "Hidden Peoples: Those cultural and linguistic subgroups, urban or rural, for whom there is as yet no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize their own people."
8	<b>Wagner and Dayton 1981, 26.</b> "When was a people reached? Obviously, when there was a church in its midst with the desire and the ability to evangelize the balance of the group."
9	<b>LCWE/SWG 1980 (in Wagner and Dayton 1981, 27).</b> "Hidden People: no known Christians within the group. Initially Reached: less than one percent, but some Christians. Minimally Reached: one to 10 percent Christian. Possibly Reached: ten to 20 percent Christian. Reached: twenty percent or more practicing Christians." (Note: suggests a different concept for the phrase <i>hidden peoples</i> )
10	<b>NSMC January 1982.</b> "Unreached Peoples are definable units of society with common characteristics (geographical, tribal, ethnic, linguistic, etc.) among whom there is no viable, indigenous, evangelizing church movement." (Note that this definition introduces a geographical factor.)
11	<b>IFMA Frontier Peoples Committee, February 24, 1982.</b> Agreement to use the Edinburgh 1980 definition (#7 above) for all three phrases, <i>hidden peoples</i> , <i>frontier peoples</i> , and <i>unreached peoples</i> . (This action was taken in light of advance information regarding the mood for change on the part of the MARC group. This mood was officially expressed at the C-82 meeting, see #12.)
12	<b>LCWE/Chicago March 16, 1982.</b> Unreached Peoples: "A people group (defined elsewhere) among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group."
13	<b>LCWE/SWG May 21.</b> Same as number 12 except that the SWG voted to replace, "able," by the phrase, "with the spiritual resources."
14	<b>LCWE/Chicago July 9 (further revision of numbers 12 and 13 by second mail poll).</b> Unreached Peoples: "A people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians <i>with adequate numbers and resources</i> to evangelize this people group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance." (Note: new phrase italicized) <sup>3</sup>

and ask whether or not they are still serving the frontier mission community well. I will specifically deal with both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of these definitions.

My personal interest in the topic has been nurtured by spending the last seventeen years as a member of Frontier Ventures (formerly the US Center for World Mission). Although I sat under Ralph Winter, one of the main architects of people group thinking, I realized that I and many others had accepted unreached people group definitions without questioning them. And the reason this matters is that our entire understanding of “the unfinished task,” and the billions of dollars spent pursuing it, are based on these definitions. It also matters because each generation inherently questions the settled opinions of the previous one. Forty years have passed since Lausanne ’74 and the emergence of people group thinking. As the leadership of mission communities transition to new generations, scrutiny will be leveled at these definitions. I trust this research is an example of such scrutiny that conveys deep respect and admiration for past conclusions.

Here is one example of why this discussion is an important one. Which country in each of the following pairs do you consider most “unreached”?

- Algeria or Slovenia
- Palestine or Poland
- Jordan or Austria
- Mali or France

Based on an even rudimentary knowledge of these countries, most people are likely to pick the first country in each pair. North Africa and the Middle East must be more unreached than Europe, right? But the answer is not that clear cut and depends entirely on how “unreached” is defined.

### *The Dilemma of UPG Definitions*

In 1983, Ralph Winter described the evolution of definitions for unreached peoples. I reproduce it here at some

**B**ut how do we know when we’ve reached “the tipping point”—when a body of believers is able to evangelize its own people group?

length because of the wealth of insight it contains. Any emphases or notations are those of Winter (see Figure 1, page 46).

This final 1982 definition hinges on the assumption that if there are believers within an unreached people group, they don’t have the capacity to evangelize<sup>4</sup> the rest of their people group without outside assistance.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps there is as yet no Bible translation. Perhaps the number of believers is infinitesimally small. Just before he died in 2009, Ralph Winter co-authored an article with Bruce Koch (for the 4th edition of the *Perspectives* reader) that sought to explain again the definition of an “unreached people.” Instead of the July 1982 phrasing which talked about “an indigenous community of believing Christians” (see #14 above), Winter and Koch substituted the words “a viable indigenous church planting movement” and then proceeded to define these terms in this manner:

What is needed in every people group is for the gospel to begin moving throughout the group with such compelling, life-giving power that the resulting churches can themselves finish spreading the gospel to every person... The *essential missionary task* is to establish a *viable indigenous church planting movement* that carries the potential to renew whole extended families and transform whole societies. It is *viable* in that it can grow on its own, *indigenous* meaning that it is not seen as foreign, and a *church planting movement* that continues to reproduce intergenerational fellowships that are able to evangelize the rest of the people group. Many refer to this achievement of an indigenous church planting movement as a *missiologistical breakthrough*.<sup>6</sup> (italics theirs)

But how do we know when we’ve reached “the tipping point”—that point whereby a body of believers is able to evangelize its own people group?

We don’t. It happens and goes unnoticed. At some point, we realize that it has indeed happened, but we never really know when we’ve reached the tipping point unless the group is quite small. We can only see it in hindsight, perhaps years later. The dilemma this presents is that *if the very definition of reached/unreached hinges on this one thing happening, and if we don’t know if and when that one thing has happened, then we really don’t know if the group is reached or unreached*. This, in turn, means that we have no simple way of measuring progress for mobilization purposes.

While this may not be a huge issue on the field, it becomes a major issue at home. By its very nature, mobilization demands the translation of complex field realities into simple and clear slogans in order to rouse those who at first can only grasp basic concepts. In order to galvanize support and inspire commitment, the plight of the unreached must be presented with black and white clarity. The cookies have to be placed on a lower shelf. Someone, somewhere has to draw a line between reached and unreached. In this paper we will be looking at how those decisions have been made over the last forty years and what might be learned moving forward.

### *The Early Players*

While Winter’s overview is helpful in showing the basic evolution of thought regarding the unreached peoples definition, one soon recognizes the difficulty missiologists had in coming to agreement, an agreement that eluded them until 1982 at the “Chicago consensus.” There were two main schools of thought influencing this discussion in the early years. On the one hand was C. Peter Wagner, Chairman of the

Strategy Working Group (SWG) of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE)<sup>7</sup> along with Ed Dayton, Director of the Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center (MARC) of World Vision. Together they represented what is called the "Lausanne Tradition" in this paper. On the other was Ralph Winter and his fledgling US Center for World Mission (USCWM), advocating what is called the "Edinburgh Tradition" in this paper.<sup>8</sup> Before getting to their specific thinking, it will be instructive to understand the organizations they represented and the context in which they worked.<sup>9</sup>

### Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission

The story of Fuller's School of World Mission is well known and will not be reconstructed here. It is sufficient to remind the reader that it began with the coming of Dr. Donald McGavran with his Institute of Church Growth in 1965. Joining McGavran that first year was Alan Tippett, and others soon followed: Ralph Winter (1966), J. Edwin Orr (1966), Charles Kraft (1969), Arthur Glasser (1970) and C. Peter Wagner (1971). Under McGavran's leadership and direction, the SWM faculty took a positive approach to missions and were published widely. Within a relatively brief amount of time, the SWM was considered by some to be the most influential school of world mission in America.

### The World Congress on Evangelism and the Beginning of MARC

A global meeting of significant consequence was the World Congress on Evangelism, held in Berlin October 26–November 4, 1966:

Billy Graham, Carl Henry and other American Protestant Evangelicals desired to provide a forum for the growing Evangelical Protestant movement worldwide. The congress was intended as a spiritual successor of the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland. At

the meeting, many Evangelical leaders were in touch with each other for the first time. The meeting was overwhelmingly American planned, led and financed, and was sponsored by *Christianity Today* magazine, with heavy support from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. The reports and papers at the congress helped to illustrate the shift of Christianity's center of gravity from Europe and North America to Africa, Asia and Latin America. The 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland was a successor to this conference.<sup>10</sup>

Of note at this conference were Donald McGavran from Fuller's School of World Mission (SWM) as well as Bob Pierce and Ted Engstrom, President



and Executive Vice President of World Vision, respectively. Engstrom presented an article for the "Missions and Technology" discussion group at the Congress. In the article he advocated for the use of the new technology of the day—computers.

Can you possibly imagine the benefit to the many branches of the Christian Church if all available information about any one country were stored in a computer?<sup>11</sup>

He went on to say,

Using our World Vision IBM Model 360/30 computer, a pilot project is now being started to test the validity of this concept. Information about various individuals serving in the mission

task is being cataloged and put in electronic storage. A pilot country will be selected and a test will be run on the gathering and exchange of information among the denominations, societies and groups working in this country.... The ways in which proper use of computerized information can speed the message of the Gospel world-wide are beyond imagination.<sup>12</sup>

He then outlined the need for communicating this research.

Good research and good planning will take place only when we have established an effective communications network throughout the Christian world.<sup>13</sup>

In these words one can see the seeds of the Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center (MARC), begun that same year. In the second volume of the proceedings of the Congress was the report from this "Missions and Technology" discussion group,

Delegates attending the discussion of missions and technology pointed to the need for research into means and methods of evangelism, marshaling of missionary information, and continuous analysis of the results of evangelism if the Christian outreach is to reach maximum effectiveness in our time.... Ted Engstrom (USA) of World Vision International gave the background of his interest in technology and missions, calling for a concentration on means and methods in evangelism. D. A. McGavran (USA) protested the fact that much missionary information is sealed in compartments, tucked away in annual reports, and appealed for ways to share this knowledge with the world. "We need ways of finding out how and where the Church is growing," McGavran said.<sup>14</sup>

### MARC and Fuller's School of World Mission

The previous synopsis discloses the close working relationship between Fuller Seminary's SWM and World Vision's MARC. McGavran began the SWM in 1965 while MARC was established in 1966 as a division of World Vision International. Ed Dayton, its first Director,



was a Fuller graduate and had studied under SWM professors. Because of this collegiality and the close proximity (9 miles) between Fuller Seminary (Pasadena) and the then-headquarters of World Vision (Monrovia), MARC and Fuller's SWM had a large influence during the 70s and 80s on unreached peoples research. Of special note is the work of McGavran and Dayton. According to Wagner and Dayton,

Since its founding in 1966, . . . MARC centered its philosophy of world evangelization around the people group. The analysis that was done jointly by Donald McGavran and Ed Dayton, at the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary, indicated that the country-by-country approach to mission was no longer viable. . . . McGavran and Dayton worked through an analysis of needed world evangelization, based on McGavran's earlier insight gained from people movements. . . . As the analysis continued, it was obvious that the basic unit of evangelization was not a country, nor the individual, but a vast variety of subgroups.<sup>15</sup>

### Ralph Winter and the US Center for World Mission

Again, this story is better known and will only be mentioned very briefly. Winter's role on the SWM faculty made him an intimate witness to all that is described above. However, Winter was ultimately unable to persuade the Fuller faculty and board to create new structures to address what they all acknowledged to be the huge imbalance between mission resources and personnel and the completely unreached people groups. Unable to fulfill his more activist tendencies, in 1976 he reluctantly left his professorial role at Fuller's SWM to found the US Center for World Mission (just 3 miles away in Pasadena). Boosted by his presentation at Lausanne in 1974, Winter became a significant voice in mission circles and the Center became in the years that followed a third organization of profound influence in mobilization toward unreached peoples.

**F**or most Congress-goers, this attractive booklet was surely the first time they had ever seen a list of unreached peoples.

With the addition in 1976 of the US Center for World Mission, there were three organizations in close proximity, each with unique yet parallel and complimentary purposes, creating a rich environment for dialogue and debate. It is remarkable that established names within American evangelicalism such as Fuller, McGavran, Pierce, Engstrom, Tippett, Winter, Wagner, Kraft, Glasser, and others were concentrated in such a small geographical space, which some called "Pasarovia."<sup>16</sup> Their influence on the mission world, especially between 1970 and 1990, was immense.<sup>17</sup>

### *Evaluation of Unreached Peoples Definitions (1974–1982)*

#### The Lausanne Tradition

While the "Lausanne Tradition" refers to a very broad constituency and effort, the purpose of this paper is not to give an overview of the whole movement, but just to underscore the role the Strategy Working Group played in the early years of debate regarding unreached peoples.

#### *ICOWE 1974 and the Unreached Peoples Directory*

This story took off with the planning for the International Congress on World Evangelization (ICOWE)—a direct follow up of the Berlin Congress—which was to be held in Lausanne, Switzerland in July 1974. Directors Don Hoke and Paul Little asked the Fuller SWM, which in turn asked MARC, to do a study on unreached peoples as part of the broader survey of the status of Christianity around the world in preparation for the Congress. Edward Pentecost was the Research Coordinator for this project, which resulted in the *Unreached Peoples Directory*, handed out at the Congress. Ed Dayton, Fuller SWM Dean Arthur Glasser and Ralph Winter rounded

out the team that worked on the project. Glasser was the main author of the questionnaire that became the instrument for collecting data.<sup>18</sup> The *Directory* was an attractive booklet that introduced Congress-goers to the world of unreached peoples. For most, it was surely the first time they had ever seen a list of unreached peoples. The questionnaire had been sent to 2,200 people and 500 responses were received, creating a list of 413 unreached people groups, which were then sorted by group name, country, language, religion, group type, population and attitude toward Christianity. It first defined a people as a homogenous unit, quoting McGavran,

The homogeneous unit is simply a section of society in which all the members have some characteristic in common. Thus a homogeneous unit . . . might be a political unit or subunit, the characteristic in common being that all the members lie within certain geographic confines. . . . The homogeneous unit may be a segment of society whose common characteristic is a culture or a language.<sup>19</sup>

It went on to say,

the distinguishing characteristics may include race, tribe, caste, class, language, education, occupation, age, geography, and religion, or some combination of these. Usually only one or two of these features are the unique ones that identify a particular group.<sup>20</sup>

The *Directory* also clearly explained the importance of segmenting apparent peoples down to the appropriate level, encouraging people to see

that many ethnic, linguistic or tribal peoples may be subdivided into distinct homogeneous groups. If we do not see those subdivisions, we may mistakenly try to approach the group as a single, unified people and fail to see that different approaches are needed for different segments.<sup>21</sup>

The *Directory* then formulated its own tentative definition for unreached peoples (#3 in Winter's list above).<sup>22</sup>

*The First Use of a Percentage Criterion*  
As noted previously, David Barrett was the first to apply a percentage criterion (20%) to a people group in order to suggest change in group identity, but he did not use it as a criterion for determining "reachedness." In fact, as we'll see later, he would have been against it.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, there is no indication where Barrett's use of the 20 percent criterion came from. What is clear is that Barrett was fully aware of the imprecise nature of the 20% criterion, saying that

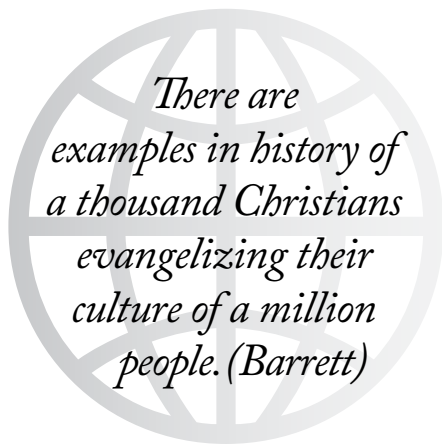
even a church as small as 0.1% of a people can be a significantly evangelizing church; there are plenty of examples in history of a thousand Christians evangelizing their group or culture of a million people.<sup>24</sup>

The *Unreached Peoples Directory* was not only the first broadly distributed list of unreached peoples, it was also the first broadly distributed list to use 20% Christian as a criterion. The idea here was that once a people group contained a specified percentage of believers, they would be more likely to hit the tipping point, having obtained the critical mass needed to evangelize their own people. These percentages were borrowed from social science research and lacked precision. One irony is that *while these percentages are admittedly somewhat arbitrary and without empirical precision, they nonetheless have had a massive impact on how we think about the unfinished task today.* Here is how the *Directory* described its use of the 20% criterion:

For those who prefer a single criterion for deciding if a people is unreached, several researchers have suggested that 20 percent is a reasonable dividing point. In other words, a group of people could be classified as unreached if less than 20 percent of the population claimed or was considered to be Christian. This 20 percent figure is used because of the view of

at least some sociologists and missions researchers that a people has a minority group attitude until that people reaches 15 to 20 percent of the population of the region in which it resides. Above the 20 percent point, group members are more likely to feel secure in their self-identity and able to reach out to others in communicating ideas. This is not always true but the 20 percent figure gives a practical measure which has some recognized basis.<sup>25</sup>

Because Edward Pentecost was the ICOWE Research Coordinator responsible for the *Directory*, and because of his close association with MARC and Fuller,<sup>26</sup> it is no surprise that the 20% criterion was also adopted later by the Strategy Working Group



(SWG), chaired by C. Peter Wagner.<sup>27</sup> In the case of both Pentecost and Wagner/Dayton, we know that the source for the 20 percent criterion was from the sociologist Everett Rogers and his book *Diffusion of Innovations*.<sup>28</sup>

*Everett Rogers and Diffusion of Innovations*  
This landmark book was first published in 1962 with new editions in 1971, 1983, 1995 and 2003.<sup>29</sup> The different editions of the same book reveal ambiguity about the viability of such a percentage to predict the diffusion of an innovation within a particular social context. In the 1962 edition, he mentioned a percentage only once, saying, "after an innovation is adopted by 10 to 20 percent of an audience, it *may* be

impossible to halt its further speed"<sup>30</sup> (emphasis mine), but this sentence was removed from the 1971 volume. In the last two editions (1995, 2003) he mentioned another percentage range,

such peer influence usually makes the diffusion curve take off somewhere between 5 and 20 percent of cumulative adoption (the exact percentage varies from innovation to innovation, and with the network structure of the system). Once this takeoff is achieved, little additional promotion of the innovation is needed, as further diffusion is self-generated by the innovation's own social momentum.<sup>31</sup>

Obviously, Rogers, over forty years, remained quite ambivalent about the ability to precisely predict a tipping point for any innovation. He identified five categories of variables that determine the rate of adoption of innovations. These categories contained more than a dozen sub-variables, all of which affect rate of adoption.<sup>32</sup> It is much easier to understand and appreciate Rogers' ambiguity with the recognition that these variables might vary from people group to people group. *The simple truth is that there is no reason to believe that any percentage of believers in a people group (be they evangelized, professing Christians or practicing Christians) will guarantee hitting the tipping point within a people group. A corollary of this is that there is no reason to believe that a specific percentage that hits the tipping point in one people group will do the same for another.*

In the 1995 edition of Rogers' book, he began discussion of the concept of critical mass and expanded it in the 2003 edition. He defined critical mass as

the point at which enough individuals in a system have adopted an innovation so that the innovation's further rate of adoption becomes self-sustaining,<sup>33</sup>

but no attempt was made to promote a different percentage range. This is clearly akin to the concepts of missiological breakthrough and viability described above and the present-day frontier mission community could

learn much from Rogers' work.<sup>34</sup> However, Rogers mentioned two vastly different percentage ranges for a "tipping point" in diffusion of innovations: 10 to 20 percent and 5 to 20 percent. Surely the fact that such ambiguity emerged after forty years of continuous study covering over 5000 diffusion publications and studies should prevent us from putting too much faith in any given percentage as a criterion for unreached peoples lists. Or if we do, we should not use it to decide whether a group is reached or not. As we have seen, *there is no empirical basis to believe that any percentage can predict a tipping point in a given unreached people group.* Such percentages remain essential to signify comparative need, but they are clearly less useful in predicting diffusion or missiological breakthrough.

#### *The Demise of the Percentage*

To get back to our story: Wagner, the chairman of the newly-formed SWG, teamed up with MARC, directed by Ed Dayton, to once again publish an unreached peoples list, which took the form of the *Unreached Peoples* book series from 1979–1984.<sup>35</sup> In *Unreached Peoples '80*, Wagner and Dayton admitted that there was significant pushback to the 20 percent criterion used in *Unreached Peoples '79*, conceding that it was on the "high side." They then introduced 10 to 20 percent as the new criterion, saying

the critical point is reached when about 10 to 20 percent of the people are practicing Christians. From one point of view, the number is somewhat arbitrary. But from another, it reflects a degree of realism. More research is needed, and as new information is available we may well decide to alter the figure accordingly.<sup>36</sup>

In *Unreached Peoples '81*, they gave a much longer treatment of Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory. They said clearly,

Why was the figure 20 percent chosen as a dividing line between unreached and reached peoples? In

*Such percentages remain essential to signify comparative need, but they are clearly less useful in predicting diffusion or missiological breakthrough.*

no way is it more than an educated guess. It comes from an attempted application of sociological diffusion of innovation theory.<sup>37</sup>

They went on, and explained that the 20% figure occurs at the point when "middle adopters" are added on to the "early adopters" toward a given innovative idea.

By the time 10 to 20 percent of the persons of a group accept a new idea, enough momentum may well have been built up so that subsequent increases of acceptance will be rapid.<sup>38</sup>

Yet they also accepted that

a given people could legitimately be considered reached with substantially fewer than 20 percent of its members practicing Christians.<sup>39</sup>

Another new feature in the 1981 edition was the designation of categories of unreached peoples as follows:

Hidden People: No known Christians within the group.

Initially reached: Less than 1 percent, but some Christians.

Minimally Reached: One to 10 percent Christian.

Possibly Reached: Ten to 20 percent Christian.

Reached: Twenty percent or more practicing Christians.<sup>40</sup>

Strikingly, there was no mention of any percentage at all in *Unreached Peoples '82*.<sup>41</sup> *Unreached Peoples '83* had this to say about the 20 percent issue,

The definition of an "unreached people group" as one being less than 20% practicing Christian was at times misleading. This definition, which had been based on sociological theory (see *Unreached Peoples '81*), in one sense was so broad that people had difficulty believing that there were any reached people groups. In

responding to this criticism, the Lausanne Strategy Working Group at its March 1982 meeting agreed to a modification of a definition worked out at the Edinburgh '80 Congress.<sup>42</sup>

However, even though the new 1982 definition did not include a percentage, the 20% criterion remained in use for the purposes of creating lists of unreached people groups. Without some type of quantifiable criterion, there was no way to distinguish a reached group from an unreached one. In all the post-1982 lists published in the *Unreached Peoples Series*, the 20% criterion remained in use. The point here is that even though the new official definition didn't mention a percentage criterion, such a criterion had to be, and continued to be, used.

#### *The Edinburgh Tradition*

It was an overstatement to use the title "Edinburgh Tradition" to describe an opposite view of Lausanne's unreached people definition. Winter called it thus in an attempt to take the attention off of himself, yet surely he had more to do with this stream than the single Consultation at Edinburgh, important as it was. In order to integrate Winter's thinking with the timeline of the Lausanne definition of unreached peoples, we will go back to his work in the 1970s and work forward.

#### *Hidden Peoples*

Two years after the Lausanne Congress, Ralph Winter conceived of the project that necessitated his leaving his position at Fuller's SWM and secured the Pasadena campus, establishing in 1976 both the US Center for World Mission and William Carey International University. One of the main themes in this period for Winter was that of the sodality, the very thing he was attempting to create in founding the USCWM.<sup>43</sup> He gave credit

to those already mentioned above as being the main promoters of unreached peoples and followed their work closely. Yet right out of the gate, Winter had qualms about the phrase "unreached peoples," stating nakedly, "I am convinced that the terminology *reached/unreached* is not very helpful."<sup>44</sup>

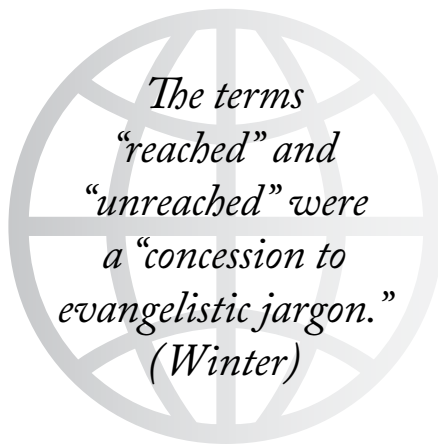
I was on the ground floor when the early thinking was developed for bypassed peoples, and felt that "unreached" was a bad choice due to its previous and current use with the phrase "unreached people" (meaning individuals unconverted) which is actually a distinctly different concept from the need of a group within which there is not yet a viable indigenous evangelizing church movement. Furthermore, and even more importantly, I felt that the World Vision office assisting with the Lausanne Congress unwisely defined what an unreached people was (in the early stages, "less than 20% Christian").<sup>45</sup>

In Winter's mind, the terms "reached" and "unreached" were a "concession to evangelistic jargon" and were tainted by their use among American evangelicals, who "conceive of regeneration as an event, either taking place or not taking place, just as a woman cannot be *partially* pregnant."<sup>46</sup> The use of reached/unreached for people groups implied that they were either saved or not, and did not fit the wide spectrum of actual faith/belief/practice that existed in any given group. The words created a stark "in or out" categorization that became meaningless when attempting to understand the status of groups. In this way of thinking, a group could not be considered unreached unless there were absolutely no believers present.

Another issue for Winter was that the Lausanne definition of 20% *practicing* Christians prioritized quantity of Christians over quality of church life. "By this definition the presence or the absence of a culturally relevant congregation is ignored."<sup>47</sup> He did not like the switch made in *Unreached Peoples*'<sup>79</sup>

from "professing Christians" to "practicing Christians" nor the use of 20% (see endnote 28). Instead, he suggested that

it is much more important to stress the presence or the absence of some aspect of the church in its organized form than to try to grapple with statistics that ultimately rest upon the presence or absence of the gospel in an individual's heart. It is not only easier to verify the existence of the visible church, it is also strategically very important in missionary activity for church planting to exist as a tangible goal. We know that where there is no determined stress upon founding an organized fellowship of worshipping believers, a great deal of evangelism fails to produce long term results, fails to start a beachhead that will grow by



itself. Thus, for both spiritual and practical reasons, I would be much more pleased to talk about the presence of a church allowing people to be *incorporated*, or the absence of a church leaving people *unincorporable* instead of *unreached*. I feel it would be better to try to observe, not whether people are "saved" or not or somehow "reached" or not, but first whether an individual has been incorporated in a believing fellowship or not, and secondly, if a person is not incorporated, does he have the opportunity *within his cultural tradition* to be so incorporated.<sup>48</sup>

Winter said,

being reluctant to launch a counter definition for the same phrase, I proposed another concept under

another label—*hidden peoples*, a phrase suggested by a member of our staff, Robert Coleman.<sup>49</sup>

The first use of this new phrase and definition occurred in an address given at the Overseas Ministries Study Center (OMSC) in December 1977, later published in 1978 as the booklet *Penetrating the Last Frontiers*.<sup>50</sup> He first stated simply that hidden peoples were "the people of the world who cannot be drawn by E-1 methods into any existing, organized Christian fellowship," or alternatively, "those E-2 and E-3 groups within which there is no culturally relevant church."<sup>51</sup> Because of the need to refine what was meant by a "group," the definition ended up like this:

Any linguistic, cultural or sociological group defined in terms of its primary affinity (not secondary or trivial affinities), which cannot be won by E-1 methods and drawn into an existing fellowship is a Hidden People.<sup>52</sup>

This definition was unique in that it was 100% Winter, whereas the definition was soon to be nuanced by others.

For Winter then, there were three aspects to hidden peoples. First, he defined them in terms of the type of evangelism needed to reach them, which was the main emphasis of his ICOWE 1974 presentation. Second, he defined them in terms of the presence or absence of a culturally relevant church. Third, he defined them in terms of their primary affinity.<sup>53</sup> Thus for Winter we can surmise a three-fold test that determined whether or not a group was hidden.

1. Does the people group require E-2 or E-3 evangelism?
2. Does the people group need a culturally relevant church?
3. Does the people group consist of a cohesive, primary affinity/identity within which there are no barriers of understanding or acceptance?

If the answer is "yes" to all three questions, you have yourself a "hidden people."



### Edinburgh 1980

Winter and other mission leaders spearheaded E'80, the Edinburgh 1980 World Consultation on Frontier Missions, which met in October, a few short months after Lausanne's Global Consultation on World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand.<sup>54</sup> By 1980, Winter's thinking on unreached peoples had coalesced to the extent that most of what he presented there remains foundational for those who follow the Edinburgh trail today, and is preserved in various articles of the *Perspectives Reader*.

The convening committee created a new definition for hidden peoples, tweaking Winter's definition with his permission as follows:

Hidden Peoples: Those cultural and linguistic sub-groups, urban or rural, for whom there is as yet no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize their own people.<sup>55</sup>

This was the first definition to include the word "indigenous." In Winter's address at the Consultation, he contrasted the unreached peoples definition with the E'80 hidden peoples definition, saying that the former was a "predictive" definition designed to be on the "safe side" (meaning that once a group was 20% practicing Christian, it was safe for cross-cultural efforts to subside). By contrast, the hidden peoples definition "asks not how much is done, but how little" and considers when a fellowship of believers could "conceivably handle the remaining task, not when it can safely handle the job."<sup>56</sup> He went on to say that "it might be possible to say that a Hidden People Group is simply a 'definitely Unreached' People Group."<sup>57</sup> The Consultation also equated hidden peoples with "frontier peoples."

Another theme at Edinburgh was Winter's concept of people group segmentation, using the schema of MegaspHERE/Macrosphere/Minisphere/Microsphere to identify the sub-cultures that exist as layers or strata within a people group. Winter noted,

Whenever a megaspHERE has within it evangelistically significant sub-communities, we then need another

**T**hey accepted the "presence-or-absence-of-the-church" definition and convened a meeting of mission executives to endorse the change. (Winter)

term. I have chosen macrosphere for the immediate constituent groups, should there be any within a megaspHERE.

The same process continued to the mini and micro spheres when necessary. Stated differently,

whenever we discover that a people group is internally too diverse for a single breakthrough to be sufficient, we must then employ the term macrosphere and pursue the details of the missiologically important minispheres which are within it.<sup>58</sup>

Winter felt that hidden peoples were generally not found at the microsphere level because differences there were not great enough to require additional evangelistic efforts.

Finally, Winter also introduced the P-scale. Just as the E-scale measured the cultural distance between an evangelist and the people (s)he is reaching, the P-scale denoted "how far away (culturally) the individuals in a people group are from the culturally nearest, settled, congregational tradition."<sup>59</sup> He then used the E and P scales to distinguish between evangelism (E0-E1 work in P0-P1 settings), regular missions (E2-E3 work in P0-P1 settings) and frontier missions (E2-E3 work in P2-P3 settings).<sup>60</sup> As a result, frontier missions was described as "the activity intended to accomplish the Pauline kind of missiological breakthrough to a Hidden People Group."<sup>61</sup> Winter noted the apparent dissonance in definitions:

Thus, as a result of this October, 1980, meeting, the basic concept here expressed, whatever the label (*hidden* or *frontier*), went to the ends of the earth with all of the various mission agency and youth delegates who went back to their home countries. Meanwhile, the *unreached peoples* phrase, employing the new 20-percent ("practicing") definition,

was now reinforced worldwide in the same year at the Pattaya Conference of the Lausanne tradition.<sup>62</sup>

### The Chicago Consensus

Over the next year this dissonance would begin to move toward consensus. Again, according to Winter,

Early in 1982, Ed Dayton approached me with the thought that if we would accept their term "unreached peoples" and give up "hidden" they would accept our "presence-or-absence-of-the-church" definition and would convene a suitably representative meeting of mission executives to endorse that change.<sup>63</sup>

First was the definition for people group in general:

A people group is a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another<sup>64</sup> because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these. For evangelistic purposes it is the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.<sup>65</sup>

The second sentence of the people group definition actually came from Winter,

Equally important in my eyes at the same meeting the group endorsed a definition I suggested (actually worked out on the plane going to the meeting) for the kind of people group we were trying to reach: "the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance" and these words were duly added to the already existing but somewhat indefinite Lausanne SWG wording.<sup>66</sup>

This concept of barriers of understanding or acceptance was a crucial

aspect of Winter's understanding of unreached people groups, and was the main conceptual impulse that led him to recast it under "hidden peoples" and later "unimax peoples." Though this sentence wasn't part of the "unreached people group" definition per se, it was highly significant in that it revealed the methodology for how those groups were to be found.

Then came the new definition for unreached people group:

An unreached people group is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance.

True to form, Winter never accepted this later modification and kept to the original one, "a people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group," still used in the present *Perspectives* Reader.

### Summary

Perhaps the perspective of the Lausanne Tradition can best be summarized by the definitions given after the Chicago consensus in *Unreached Peoples '84*,

**People Group:** a significantly large sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another. From the viewpoint of evangelization this is the largest possible group within which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.

**Primary Group:** the *ethnolinguistic* preference which defines a person's identity and indicates one's primary loyalty.

**Secondary Group:** a *sociological* grouping which is to some degree subject to personal choice and allows for considerable mobility. Regional and generational groups, caste and class divisions are representative.

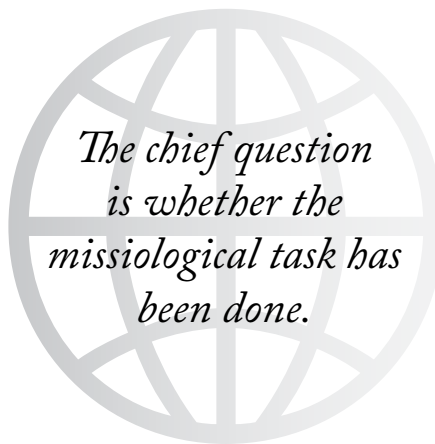
**Tertiary Group:** casual associations of people which are usually temporary

and the result of circumstances rather than personal choice such as high-rise dwellers, drug addicts, occupational groupings and professionals.

**Unreached People Group:** a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance. Also referred to as "hidden people group" or "frontier people group."

**Reached People Group:** a people group with adequate indigenous believers and resources to evangelize this group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance.<sup>67</sup>

Let me close this section by wrapping up Winter's view of unreached peoples



definitions using his own words from the spring of 1983.

1. "Underlying all these definitions . . . is the concern for evangelistic outreach to function in such a way that people (individuals) have a 'valid opportunity' to find God in Jesus Christ."<sup>68</sup>
2. "Reaching peoples is thus merely the process whereby the realistically valid opportunity is created."<sup>69</sup>
3. "The crucial question . . . is whether there is yet a culturally relevant church. From that point of view it is the unique burden and role of a mission agency to establish an indigenous beachhead, to achieve what I

would call 'a missiological breakthrough,' not the cessation of need for further work from elsewhere. Thus, I believe, whether the indigenous community possesses 'adequate numbers and resources' is not the crucial point . . . The chief question would seem to be whether the missiological task has been done."<sup>70</sup>

4. Commenting on what the "missiological task" would be: "It should mean at least a handful of believers who had become consciously part of the world fellowship, capable of drawing upon the life and experience of Christian traditions elsewhere, and even capable of consulting the Bible in the original languages. In short, an unreached people needs very urgent, high priority missiological aid until it is quite able to draw on other Christian traditions and is substantially independent, as regards holy writ, of all traditions but those of the original languages themselves."<sup>71</sup>
5. "I do not believe any church anywhere can ever get so mature that it has no need of continued contact and interchange with other church traditions."<sup>72</sup>
6. "I would prefer to stress the unreachedness of a people in terms of the presence or absence of a church sufficiently indigenous and authentically grounded in the Bible, rather than in terms of its numerical strength vis a vis outside help. That is, I have all along felt in my own mind that the phrase . . . 'able to evangelize their own people,' referred back to the indigenous quality of the believing community rather than to the numerical strength of the indigenous movement."<sup>73</sup> He notes, "Unreachedness is thus not defined on the basis of whether there are any Christians, or whether there are any missionaries working among them. It is

defined on the basis of whether or not in that culture there is a viable, culturally relevant, witnessing church movement.”<sup>74</sup>

Here Winter clearly showed: 1) his concern for every individual; 2) the understanding that people groups are the container wherein those individuals are best reached; 3) his surprisingly broad idea of what the missiological task requires; 4) his reticence to make a big deal out of missionaries leaving; 5) his clear preference for qualitative measures over quantitative ones; and 6) his preference for the presence of a viable, indigenous church movement rather than the presence of Christians or missionaries.

This overview of the years between 1974–1982 portray a period bristling with missiological insight and ambition. Clearly these years were a unique flourishing of mission thought and practice. One stands in awe of those who attempted to understand the new reality of people group thinking, navigate through the flood of new research data, and attempt helpful definitions of the mission task. Perhaps the best summary of what these men were motivated by comes from Wagner and Dayton,

When we think of a people we try to think of them the way God sees them, to understand them *in terms of reaching them* with the gospel. We are attempting to define the world *in terms of world evangelization* (emphasis theirs).<sup>75</sup>

In fairness to them, the literature shows that they were quick to emphasize the limits of their research and definitions. They never claimed, for instance, that the percentages were anything more than a helpful way to clarify the task.

While much of the discussion centered on a qualitative definition (“no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group”), the quantitative definition was also highlighted (20% professing or practicing Christian). Those involved with the Chicago 1982 definition apparently

**T**he Chicago definition was a remarkable achievement in that the qualitative portion has remained unchanged and relatively unchallenged.

felt no need to include a quantitative part of the definition. Perhaps this was because they were all well aware of the 20% criterion that remained in use. It turns out that the Chicago consensus was a remarkable achievement in that the qualitative part of the definition remained unchanged and relatively unchallenged to this day. While it may be impossible to know exactly when it happens, the idea of an indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize their own people group remains the gold standard.

### *Evaluation of Unreached Peoples Definitions (1982–1990)*

#### Unimax Peoples (Edinburgh Tradition continued)

Before the ink was dry from the March 1982 consensus definition, and in that very same year, Winter introduced “unimax peoples” at the September gathering of the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA), in which he was invited as a keynote speaker. There he said,

Various mission thinkers have been groping toward a definition of people group. For me, a significant point concerns the potential such groups have for rapid, nearly automatic, internal communication. Since this is the trait that is so significant to missionary communicators, this is undoubtedly the reason such an entity has been highlighted in the Bible all along.

For want of a better word I have decided to call such a group a Unimax People, that is, a group unified in communication, maximum in size. While this definition does not apparently employ Biblical language, I believe it describes an entity important to the Bible, reflecting the Bible’s missionary concern for relentless and rapid evangelism as its reason for importance. In other words, what is

crucial about a Unimax People is the size of the group, not just the unified condition of the group.<sup>76</sup>

Winter went on to employ the people group segmentation idea previously mentioned.

In this series of mega, macro, mini, micro, it is the next to the smallest unit, the minisphere, that should, I believe, be considered the mission relevant, Biblically important Unimax People. The macro is one notch too large to be sufficiently unified, while the micro is unnecessarily small, being part of a larger, still unified group.

We can say, using this terminology, that the distinctive breakthrough activity of a mission is not complete if it has merely penetrated a mega or macrosphere, and if there are still minispheres or what I have called Unimax Peoples still unpenetrated. On the other hand, the unique and distinctive breakthrough activity of a mission agency (as compared to the work of evangelism) may, in fact, be over long before all the tiny microspheres within a Unimax People have been penetrated.<sup>77</sup>

Later, it became obvious that Winter felt the term “unreached peoples” began to be used as a synonym for larger ethnolinguistic groups instead of the subgroups the 1982 definition intended (or he intended!). The reason for this was that the 1982 definition did not deal at all with segmentation level, leaving it up to individual interpretation as to where people group lines were drawn. It focused on what happens within a people group, without giving any specific definition to what the confines of a people group were. Winter and Koch clarify,

The term “unreached peoples” is used widely today to refer to ethnolinguistic peoples, which are based on other criteria and would normally be larger in size than groups as defined in the 1982

definition. To avoid confusion and help clarify the missiological task before us, we can use the term unimax peoples to distinguish the kind of people group intended by the 1982 definition.<sup>78</sup>

They rightly asked,

What if an ethnolinguistic people is actually a cluster of unimax peoples, and while one of them is experiencing a church planting explosion, other groups in the cluster have little or nothing happening within them?<sup>79</sup>

They differentiated between the different levels of segmentation by highlighting blocs of peoples, ethnolinguistic peoples, sociopeoples and unimax peoples.

*Blocs of peoples* are a limited number of summary categories into which we can place peoples in order to analyze them.

An *ethnolinguistic people* is an ethnic group distinguished by its self-identity with traditions of common descent, history, customs and language.

A *sociopeople* is a relatively small association of peers who have an affinity for one another based upon a shared interest, activity or occupation.

A *unimax*<sup>80</sup> *people* is the *maximum* sized group sufficiently *unified* to be the target of a single people movement to Christ, where "unified" refers to the fact that there are no significant barriers of either understanding or acceptance to stop the spread of the gospel.<sup>81</sup>

In other words, Winter wanted to find the largest pockets of cohesiveness within a people that could be captured by a single people movement. The difficulty of this definition was that making a list of unimax peoples could only be done by those with "boots on the ground." Only by entering a people and understanding the complexity of ethnicity, identity, social structure, etc., could a person identify the spheres and know what the barriers were and ultimately how many people movements would actually be needed. Not satisfied with identification of ethnolinguistic affinity, it pushed to find where and why the gospel was being

hindered *within* a given ethnolinguistic group. Here are Winter and Koch again,

Beware of taking ethnolinguistic lists too seriously, however. They are a good place to begin strategizing church planting efforts, but cross-cultural workers should be prepared for surprising discoveries when confronted by the cultural realities on the field.<sup>82</sup>

A good example of the need for this approach is the Somali people group, an ethnolinguistic people group of 14 million who speak the same language but are splintered into six main genealogical clans, numerous sub-clans and extended family networks.

The fact that Somalis share a common ethnicity, culture, language, and religion might seem to be an excellent



basis for a cohesive polity, but in reality the Somali people are divided by clan affiliations, the most important component of their identity.<sup>83</sup>

The segmentation inherent in Somali culture is evidenced by an Arab Bedouin proverb:

My full brother and I against my half-brother, my brother and I against my father, my father's household against my uncle's household, our two households (my uncle's and mine) against the rest of the immediate kin, the immediate kin against nonimmediate members of my clan, my clan against other clans, and, finally, my nation and I against the world.<sup>84</sup>

Obviously, one people movement within one extended family network

is unlikely to reach, in turn, all the sub-clans and main clans. So even within the affinity of language and culture there are many barriers that prevent the gospel spreading from one clan to another. The concept of unimax peoples recognized this reality and I believe still warrants a wider hearing. It seems that many if not most mission strategists were content with the level of ethnolinguistic segmentation, while Winter continued to emphasize a "no-people-group-left-behind" approach.

There will never be a complete list of unimax peoples because the task stated above is never done and is always yielding new insights. However, we can hope that as more of this essential work is done, our lists will become more and more accurate.

Winter and Koch maintained that the unimax approach

has more to do with finishing, not in the sense that there is nothing left to do, but in the sense that the essential first step for the gospel to flourish within a people has been accomplished. The unimax approach to peoples can help us press on toward closure—our corporate finishing of what is completable about Christ's mission mandate. The value of the unimax approach lies in the way it identifies the boundaries hindering the flow of the gospel, while at the same time firing the ambitions of dedicated Christians to pursue the evangelization of every peoples cut off by prejudicial boundaries, leaving no smaller group sealed off within a larger group.<sup>85</sup>

One can see consistency in Winter's emphases during this period. His main concern was missiological breakthrough—seeing a viable, indigenous witness get started within a people. He felt that only the unimax people approach would prevent some people segments or groups getting lost in the shuffle. He and others felt that the post-1982 era had led to a hijacking of the 1982 definition to mean something (ethnolinguistic peoples)



that was never intended. And although Winter and Koch spent much time dissecting people groups as they groped for clarity in definition, they at the same time were very aware of the limitations of their task:

Another reason to be cautious when applying people group thinking is the reality that powerful forces such as urbanization, migration, assimilation, and globalization are changing the composition and identity of people groups all the time. The complexities of the world's peoples cannot be neatly reduced to distinct, non-overlapping, bounded sets of individuals with permanent impermeable boundaries. Members of any community have complex relationships and may have multiple identities and allegiances. Those identities and allegiances are subject to change over time.

People group thinking is a strategic awareness that is of particular value when individuals have a strong group identity and their everyday life is strongly determined by a specific shared culture.<sup>86</sup>

### The David Barrett Factor

As if the debate covered thus far were not enough to sort through, it was generally a debate within what David Barrett called the "Unreached Peoples Program." These were missiologists who, while disagreeing about percentages and precise definitions, were nonetheless on the same page in their focus on identifying peoples on the basis of evangelism strategy. But there were others concerned with world evangelization that looked at the task from a broader perspective. This difference, along with the fact that this stream also published widely, has made our present situation even more complex. Enter David Barrett, the 1982 publication of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, and yet another twist on thinking about unreached peoples.

It should seem odd to finally mention Barrett this far in to this discussion. By all accounts, Barrett is the father of modern religious demography and when

**S**chreck and Barrett began by noting the "global way" and "particularistic way" of looking at the world, each requiring a different research design.

it comes to research on people groups, his work remains the foundation of the three major people group databases in use today. Barrett's work, therefore, has significantly informed the thinking of both the Lausanne and Edinburgh traditions, and they are indebted to him. His first major work was his PhD dissertation, published as *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (1968). It contained an exhaustive analysis of independent renewal movements in Africa and included a first-of-its-kind fold-out people group map of Africa. Barrett then spent the next fourteen years researching the rest of the world. In the same year as the Chicago Consensus (1982), Barrett published the *World Christian Encyclopedia* to the adulation of both religious and secular peers. One cannot scan Barrett's reference-like works without being impressed by the immense amount of data and analysis related to Christianity around the globe.

Even more significantly for our discussion, in 1985 Barrett left his base in Nairobi to work for the Foreign (now International) Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in Richmond, Virginia.<sup>87</sup> This was an unlikely marriage between an ordained Anglican priest and a denomination known for its strong conservative stances on American social issues as well as its exclusive perspective on the need for all non-evangelicals to be saved. Nonetheless, the partnership was formidable, bringing together Barrett's unquestioned research pedigree and the FMB's reputation as North America's largest mission board. Thus two heavyweights joined forces, raising the tide for all ships in the North American mission enterprise.

In 1987, Barrett added his perspective on the debate regarding people group segmentation with the publication of

the seventh and final Unreached Peoples Series book, entitled *Unreached Peoples: Clarifying the Task*.<sup>88</sup> Schreck and Barrett began by noting the "global way" and "particularistic way" of looking at the world, each essential yet requiring a different research design. The former approach looked at ethnolinguistic peoples (identifying the central ethnicity and mother tongue) while the latter looked at "sociologically defined people groups."<sup>89</sup>

Schreck and Barrett then listed ten subgroups within the sociological definition. I have included an example of each for clarity (see Figure 2, page 58).

The authors noted that

the next worldwide total of all such sociologically defined people groups in existence today is probably huge... one should not attempt to total such groupings per country on a worldwide scale to list exhaustively all unreached people groups, since the resulting totals will mean little or nothing.

Instead, the focus on sociological groups was considered "a method of ministry... regarded as a major breakthrough."<sup>91</sup>

In their evaluation of the particularist approach (that of Fuller's SWM, MARC, Winter, etc.), Schreck and Barrett said, "there has been a significant amount of controversy and confusion associated with this approach over the last ten years."<sup>92</sup> They showed general support for this approach, acknowledging that ethnicity is not the only way human beings form themselves into groups, and that church planting among sociologically defined groups is legitimate. They spoke to the "perceived contradiction" between the two approaches:

Instead, there is a difference in the foci of the research efforts, and this difference is best described in terms of

Figure 2. Sociological Subgroups (Schreck and Barrett)

Group	Example
Sociolinguistic groups	English-speakers in Guadalajara
Sociogeographical groups	Japanese in Sydney
Sociopolitical groups	Hmong refugee women in Thailand
Socioreligious groups	Sikhs in Toronto
Socioeducational groups	Chinese students in Australia
Socioeconomic groups (poor)	Slum dwellers in Madras
Socioeconomic groups (elites)	Copacabana apartment dwellers in Brazil
Sociomedical groups	Lepers of central Thailand
Sociodeviant groups	Deviant youth in Taipei
Socio-occupational groups	Jeepney drivers in Manila <sup>90</sup>

complementarity. Ethnicity is a suitable unit of analysis for peoples, allowing the formation of a global research design, but it is not suitable for a particularistic research design which aims at developing ministry strategies for specific people groups. Both research designs, however, have a place in the overall effort of world evangelization.<sup>93</sup>

Schreck and Barrett noted that while the focus of the global approach was "to see the extent to which the gospel has traveled to all peoples," the focus of the particularistic approach was to "indicate where a people group is on the path away from or toward Christ."<sup>94</sup> Schreck and Barrett's volume attempted to clear the confusion that had resulted from the juxtaposition of Barrett's work (the global approach) with the work emanating largely from Pasadena, with Fuller's SWM, MARC and Winter's USCWM (the particularistic approach). They posited that:

there has been a general failure to recognize that we are dealing with two different ways of looking at this entire scene. These are motivated by

different but complementary purposes. . . . Both approaches are valid. Both approaches are needed for the task of world evangelization. The former speaks most clearly to the question, "How have we done?" The second speaks most clearly to the question, "What should we be doing?"<sup>95</sup>

### Summary

Winter twice coined new phrases ("hidden peoples" in 1977 and "unimax peoples" in 1982) in order to challenge prevailing sentiment. While the hidden peoples phrase suffered the loss of the word "hidden," the actual definition was approved by a significant constituency of mission leaders in 1982. But his attempt with unimax peoples wasn't as successful. Today few have ever heard of it outside the *Perspectives* course. However, Winter's viewpoint lives on in the Joshua Project people group list, which takes a unimax approach to listing peoples in South Asia, where the layers of identity are more complex. To my way of thinking, the unimax approach is needed wherever "barriers of understanding

or acceptance" appear *within* ethnic or language groupings.

Surely one of the main reasons for the failure of the unimax approach was that it exponentially increased the complexity involved. In fact, the sociological segmentation of people groups, mentioned as early as 1974 in the *Unreached Peoples Directory*, had always been an irritant for missiologists and the average church member alike.<sup>96</sup> It was hard enough for people to transition from nations/countries to ethnolinguistic peoples, but to have to then move several strata down into macro/mini/micro etc., was more than the average person can handle.

*Missiologically*, Winter's focus was needed to inform mission strategy. To not take into account these segmented peoples was to leave parts of God's mosaic outside the pale of the Kingdom. Complex though it was, it was necessary. Winter was right to insist that the level of ethnolinguistic categorization was not enough.

However, *practically*, unimax theory is still a bit too complex for the average believer and creates a mobilization dilemma. We count down the list only to add more people groups to the list as we become aware of them! How is progress measured when groups are added not subtracted?!

### *Evaluation of Unreached Peoples Definitions (1990–2000)*

**The Reduction of the Percentage**  
From 1982–1992, unreached peoples lists continued to include the 20 percent criterion to measure whether the group was reached or not. But the viability of this long-standing criterion was under increasing scrutiny. As people group research became more sophisticated and the need for better and more nuanced categorization became acute, the twenty percent criterion was re-evaluated and eventually changed. Part of the reason for this was simply that the weaknesses of the twenty percent criterion were now

more widely understood and prevailing sentiment led to its demise. The other part of the reason for the change stems from cooperative efforts triggered by a new massive wave of unreached peoples mobilization that took place in the 1990s.

### *AD 2000 and Beyond*

The impetus for the change in the percentage criteria was the surge of mobilization effort in the decade leading up to the year 2000. With renewed vigor to complete the task of world evangelization by 2000, the AD2000 and Beyond Movement was established under the capable leadership of Luis Bush to galvanize support to finish the task.

In October, 1992, Luis Bush, international director of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement, called together a small meeting of key unreached peoples researchers. The concern was that much of the research on unreached peoples was being carried on independently and there was little real sharing of information. Out of a genuine spirit of cooperation and interest in jointly producing a definitive list of peoples, including the unreached, the Peoples Information Network (PIN) was born. The eventual steering committee of this newly formed research cooperation was coordinated by Ron Rowland (Summer Institute of Linguistics/Wycliffe—SIL) and chaired by Luis Bush. Other members included John Gilbert (Foreign Mission Board—Southern Baptist Convention—FMB—SBC), Kaleb Jansen (Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse—AAPC, now replaced by Keith Butler) and Pete Holzmann (Paraclete Mission Group).<sup>97</sup>

Together, they agreed to create a list out of the several represented by those key leaders. A lowest common denominator list was put forth consisting of 1,685 (later updated to 1,739) unreached peoples, all with a population over 10,000. It was the beginning of a key collaborative effort that continues to this day. The effort, dubbed “Joshua Project 2000,” had the goal to see at minimum:

- a pioneer church-planting movement

**T**he impetus for the change in the percentage criteria was the surge of mobilization effort in the decade leading up to the year 2000.

- resulting in 100 or more Christians in one or more reproducing churches
- within every ethnolinguistic people of over 10,000 individuals
- by December 31, 2000.<sup>98</sup>

One notes the interesting use of “100 or more Christians” as well as the use of ethnolinguistic peoples as a base definition. Such changes were exactly what concerned Winter and why he had introduced the concept of unimax peoples.

### *The Patrick Johnstone Factor*

Someone who had a definitive role in establishing the new criteria for unreached peoples definitions was Patrick Johnstone. Like Barrett, Johnstone moved from England to Africa, where his research skills were first applied to mission work. While Barrett was engaged as a full-time researcher, Johnstone did his research initially as an addendum to a full-time evangelistic role. And whereas Barrett sought to publish for a largely academic crowd, Johnstone published to mobilize prayer for the world. These differences aside, both men can be regarded as “fathers” of sorts of people group research.

Johnstone published the first version of *Operation World* in 1965, although only about 30 countries were covered. With two editions in the 1970s, it was fully global in coverage. Now in its seventh edition, *Operation World* has sold over 2.5 million copies worldwide. In 1980 Johnstone joined the leadership team of WEC International, serving in research and strategy. It was during these years that he became involved with Lausanne’s Strategy Working Group and the Unreached Peoples track of AD2000. With his decades of research behind him as well as a broad understanding of mission realities afforded by inclusion in

these networks, Johnstone was well positioned to play a leading role in unreached peoples definitions.<sup>99</sup>

### *The 2 and 5 Percent Criteria*

Finally, in 1995, a change emerged in percentage criteria that has endured to this day.

In 1995, in order to bring greater clarity to the issue, a committee of Patrick Johnstone (then Editor of *Operation World*), John Gilbert (then IMB Global Research Office Director), Ron Rowland (SIL/Ethnologue researcher), Frank Jansen (then Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse Director) and Luis Bush (then AD2000 & Beyond Movement Director) decided on the Joshua Project definition of “unreached.” The criteria for unreached on the Joshua Project list are:

less than or equal to 2% Evangelical—AND—less than or equal to 5% Christian Adherent.

Both conditions must be met to be considered unreached.<sup>100</sup>

Once again, the figures seemed somewhat arbitrary. Noted American sociologist Robert Bellah was quoted in support of the choice of 2% Evangelical as a legitimate criterion, but it is uncertain whether Bellah’s viewpoint was known at the time the criterion was set:

I think we should not underestimate the significance of the small group of people who have a new vision of a just and gentle world. In Japan a very small minority of Protestant Christians introduced ethics into politics and had an impact beyond all proportion to their numbers. They were central in beginning the women’s movement, labor unions, socialist parties, and virtually every reform movement. The quality of a culture may be changed when two percent of its people have a new vision.<sup>101</sup>

While Bellah knew a lot about Japan and was most certainly an eminent sociologist, this statement alone does not justify the widespread use of 2% Evangelical as an established criterion. His statement represents a general observation from a particular case and not the conclusion of more comprehensive research. I have been unable to find any other research or study to back up the choice of 2% Evangelical as a criterion. Interestingly, Johnstone in a later work concedes that

many sociologists take 20% as the point at which a population segment begins to impact the worldview of the wider society.<sup>102</sup>

The 5% Christian Adherent criterion, suggested by Johnstone, fares little better in terms of giving us confidence as to its origin. Again, there is no research to justify its use. What we have instead are reasons for why it seems helpful.

The 5% Adherent criterion was included in the definition of unreached to differentiate between a people group in Afghanistan with 0% Evangelicals and 0% Christian Adherents with no Christian heritage, no access to a Bible, no church, no Christian broadcasts, training, literature, etc. compared to a people group in say Western Europe that may have only a few true Christ-followers but a high number of Christian Adherents with a Christian heritage and access to Bibles, fellowship, broadcasts, training, literature etc.

Certainly individuals within these two groups are equally lost, yet one people group is considered unreached while the other would be considered in need of renewal and evangelism. The 5% Christian Adherent criterion helps define the spiritual "environment" (for lack of a better word) of a particular people group.

Patrick Johnstone makes the following observation,

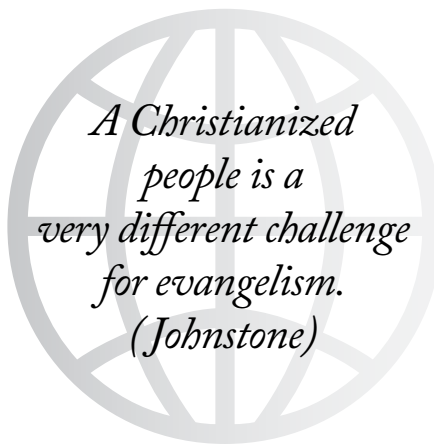
We cannot avoid the fact that a Christianized people is a very different challenge for evangelism than a non-Christian people. They may need

a personal meeting with Jesus just as much and be equally darkened in their understanding of the Gospel, but you insult them and prejudice your outreach if this is not taken into consideration. Hence my plea that both criteria be retained.<sup>103</sup>

A more practical reason for the 5% Christian Adherent is given by Todd Johnson:

One reason that the percent Christian was lowered to 5% was that most of the least evangelized (50% or less by Barrett's method) were less than 5% Christian. So this made the initial JP list closer to that of Barrett's World A peoples.<sup>104</sup>

What these criteria lacked in empirical support they made up for by practically



providing a "line" to differentiate peoples into reached and unreached categories. While the debate might never end as to what the exact percentage should be, it has served the frontier mission community well over the past twenty years by focusing attention on the least reached peoples. And it should not surprise us that the 2 and 5 percent criteria were not based on empirical studies, since our earlier discussion on diffusion studies has shown clearly that there simply is no empirical proof that a single percentage can be relied upon to predict breakthrough for innovation. Thus, the best that can be done was in fact done—researchers gathered together and sought God for a wise approach to interpreting and presenting the data.

The 2 and 5 percent criteria were generally accepted with one solitary and critical exception—the International Mission Board (IMB). Their reaction was mixed. Under Barrett's influence, they had consistently used the 20% criterion. But Barrett left in 1993 and the new criteria (2 and 5 percent) came out in 1995. According to Dale Hadaway,

in the summer of 1997, the IMB was using the twenty-percent figure in their statistics . . . within a year the percentage was lowered to twelve percent. The following year the first version of the Church Planting Progress Indicator (CPPI) was unveiled by the IMB, featuring a precipitous drop in what had been considered the measure of "reachedness." Two-percent evangelical believers became the new statistical benchmark for the IMB and most other mission agencies. Suddenly the goal posts had been moved.<sup>105</sup>

While the IMB eventually adopted the 2% Evangelical criterion, they never did adopt the 5% Christian Adherent criterion, opting for a more exclusive view of salvation in terms of evangelical faith. This remains one of the key differences between the Joshua Project list and the IMB list. The quest for a "definitive" listing of peoples has proved elusive.

#### *The Three People Group Lists*

Thus, by the early 2000s, there were three distinct people group lists that informed the broader mission enterprise. The three lists are the World Christian Database,<sup>106</sup> the Joshua Project list<sup>107</sup> and IMB's Church Planting Progress Indicators (CPPI).<sup>108</sup>

A brief interlude is necessary here to explain the relationship between the MARC lists which began in 1974 (and then from 1979–1984, and again in 1987) and those that followed. Todd Johnson is Barrett's successor and he was also heavily involved in all described here. According to him,

MARC collected data on peoples from all over the world but did not try to create a comprehensive list. Barrett



had collected extensive data on African peoples in the 1960s and early 1970s. He then created the first comprehensive list of peoples shortly after completing the World Christian Encyclopedia (1981). He was working with that list (not MARCs) for Clarifying the Task. I joined Barrett in 1989 and helped to edit the list. The IMB broke off with their own version of the list in 1993 when Barrett left. Joshua Project created a third version in 1996. People group lists today are derived from Barrett's initial work...<sup>109</sup>

The MARC list was thus subsumed into Barrett's list when Barrett edited the last *Unreached Peoples Series* book called "Clarifying the Task" (1987).

The fact that there are three distinct lists of ostensibly the same thing (unreached peoples) can be understood by looking at the three different audiences for whom these lists were compiled. A parallel example would be the lists of spiritual gifts in three different places in the New Testament (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4). In each case, Paul was addressing a particular audience with particular needs, and thus the lists are different even though he is

addressing the same topic. Likewise, the three people group lists address similar yet different issues and therefore are different. Would it have been better if Paul had used exactly the same list of gifts in all his letters? Perhaps, but the very fact that he didn't do so is instructive. Apparently, an exhaustive and absolutely consistent list isn't necessary for God's people to understand and use them. In a similar vein, those who manage the lists appreciate the accountability and corroboration generated by the existence and maintenance of the different lists. Figure 3 below compares and contrasts the three lists.<sup>110</sup>

Figure 4, at the top of page 62, is a table showing how the three lists measure people groups.<sup>111</sup>

One major issue with these lists has been the number put forth for unreached people groups. See Figure 5, the chart at the top of page 63.

As Figure 5 indicates, the JP and IMB lists are the most similar in what they are measuring. The biggest single difference is how list managers segment people groups. South Asia has proved formidable in this regard, creating com-

plexity with the additional layers of caste and religion in forming primary identity. The reason the JP and IMB numbers are different is because they differ in how they prioritize the different layers (language, caste, tribe, religion, etc.) in determining identity. One list may primarily look to religion as a prioritizing factor, while another may prioritize caste.

### Summary

As the need for clarity in mobilization became acute in the evangelical push to reach the unreached by the year 2000, the 2 and 5 percent criteria were born. One result of the AD2000 and Beyond movement was the increase in collaboration and unity in the body of Christ. But even then, the ideals and passion to see "a church for every people by the year 2000" were balanced by continuing theological and methodological differences. Concerning the actual percentages themselves, it seemed the only research-based criterion for establishing any kind of tipping point came from Everett Rogers and the use of a broad percentage range, as explained above. The 2% and 5% criteria were not based on empirical

Figure 3. A Comparison of Global People Group Lists

	World Christian Database	CPPI (IMB - Southern Baptist)	Joshua Project
<b>People Definition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Globally ethnolinguistic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outside South Asia ethnolinguistic</li> <li>South Asia mixture of language and caste</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outside South Asia ethnolinguistic</li> <li>South Asia by caste</li> </ul>
<b>Unreached Definition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less than 50% evangelized*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less than 2% Evangelical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less than 2% Evangelical and</li> <li>Less than 5% Christian Adherent</li> </ul>
<b>Unreached Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response</li> </ul>
<b>Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Census and academic reports</li> <li>Denominational reports</li> <li><i>Ethnologue</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primarily IMB field staff</li> <li>Regional and national researchers</li> <li><i>Ethnologue</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional and national researchers</li> <li>Networks, individuals, other data sets</li> <li><i>Ethnologue</i></li> </ul>
<b>Philosophy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds groups when documented in published research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds groups once verified by field staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assumes worst case, adds all potential groups, removes if verified as not existing</li> </ul>

\*This database speaks in terms of "least evangelized peoples."

Figure 4. Varying the Definition of a People Varies the Resulting Lists.

Peoples Defined By	Resulting List	Examples	Totals
Language	Linguistic peoples	<i>The Ethnologue: Languages of the World</i>	~10,900
Language / Dialect Ethnicity	Ethnolinguistic peoples	PeopleGroups.org / CPPI <i>World Christian Encyclopedia</i> Operation World peoples lists	~ 11,500 ~ 13,000
Language / Dialect Ethnicity Religion Caste / Community Culture	Ethnic peoples	Joshua Project / Frontier Ventures	~ 16,300
Language / Dialect Ethnicity Religion Caste / Community Culture Education Ideology Politics Historical enmity Customs Behavior	Unimax peoples	Original USCWM / Ralph Winter estimates	~ 24,000

research but were a way to highlight relative need, which remains critical.

Another concern with quantitative criteria was the tendency to exclude the qualitative criteria. This was especially likely when the only definition given for UPG was “less than 2% evangelical.” This led to the potential danger of overlooking qualitative criteria, such as that which Winter prioritized:

Unreachedness is thus not defined on the basis of whether there are any Christians, or whether there are any missionaries working among them. It is defined on the basis of whether or not in that culture there is a viable, culturally relevant, witnessing church movement.<sup>112</sup>

In other words, the quantitative criteria alone left the door open for western-style churches since indigeneity was not emphasized. If all we’re looking for is a certain number of “evangelicals,” we may miss the mark. Qualitative criteria need to remain.

### *Evaluation of Unreached Peoples Definitions (2000–Present)*

Since the year 2000, there have been no changes in unreached peoples definitions. The 1982 definition (variously interpreted) with the 1995 addition of percentage criterion is still in use today. However, there were changes in categorization of people groups.

#### **Unengaged, Unreached People Groups**

During this period a new word was added to the normal “unreached people group” phrase, yielding the “UUPG,” the unengaged, unreached people group. This emphasis can trace its beginnings to a global gathering of evangelists in Amsterdam in 2000 and the infamous “Table 71.” But that is another story that will not be told here. Suffice it to say that the emphasis on unengaged was a logical next step. While it’s helpful to have a list of unreached people groups, it is another step forward to further segment

that list to determine which groups have been “engaged” and which ones remain “unengaged.” This initiative is alive and well today due to the relentless efforts of Paul Eshleman and the Finishing the Task network. Following the IMB, FTT acknowledges four essential elements that constitute effective engagement:

1. Apostolic effort in residence
2. Commitment to work in the local language and culture
3. Commitment to long-term ministry
4. Sowing in a manner consistent with the goal of seeing a church planting movement (CPM) emerge<sup>113</sup>

#### **Calls for Change**

Having looked at definitions and the criteria for determining who is unreached, let’s look at some of the interesting dilemmas they create. Let’s go back to the pairs of countries mentioned earlier:

- Algeria or Slovenia
- Palestine or Poland

Figure 5. Unreached Peoples Totals (2015)

List Source	Number of Unreached Peoples (How Derived)
Joshua Project	6,571 (<=2% Evangelical, <=5% Christian Adherent)
IMB (Southern Baptist)	6,827 (<=2% Evangelical)
World Christian Database	4,219 (<50% evangelized)

- Jordan or Austria
- Mali or France

Each pair of countries is the same percentage Evangelical. It just so happens that the countries mentioned first are also less than 5% Christian Adherent, while the countries mentioned second are more than 5% Christian Adherent. Is it really okay to call the former countries “unreached” and the latter countries “reached” just because of their Christian past? Some feel that people groups in Europe with a Christian past are definitely less unreached since there are evangelists within E-0/E-1 distance from them. Although they may be equally lost, they have greater access to the gospel and Christian literature, the Bible, etc. Others feel that any Christian history among these peoples are mere relics of a dead tradition, and that as long as they fit the criteria for unreached they should be listed as such, regardless of the weak, flailing Christian influence around them.

There is no room for smug complacency about “Europe’s Christian heritage”—and “Christian” majority.... If we take as the criterion for being evangelized that a population should be more than 2% evangelical, there is no country bordering the Mediterranean that comes even close to that figure, even

including evangelical Catholics. In fact, only 16 of Europe’s 47 countries do.<sup>114</sup>

The Joshua Project Progress Scale shown below (Figure 6) gives the breakdown of people groups based on these criteria. The first countries mentioned above in each pair are red and unreached, whereas the second in each pair are yellow and reached.

The present criteria emphasize never-reached peoples over once-reached ones. Interestingly, of the thirty countries with the smallest percentage of Evangelical Christians in the world, thirteen are Muslim, eleven are Catholic, four are Orthodox, one is Buddhist and one Jewish.<sup>115</sup>

*Back to 20 Percent?*

Robin Dale Hadaway, Professor of Missions at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, believes that the less-than-or-equal-to 2% Evangelical criterion needs to be changed. A Southern Baptist missionary with field experience in both red and yellow peoples, he feels that 2% Evangelical is simply not enough to bring about a tipping point. He also regrets the movement of workers from yellow peoples or nations to red ones (e.g. from Europe to Asia) because of the present criteria.<sup>116</sup>

Figure 6. The Joshua Project Progress Scale

Category	Label	% Evangelical	% Christian Adherent	People Groups
Red	Unreached	<=2%	<=5%	6,571
Yellow	Formative / Nominal	<=2%	>5%	2,717
Green	Established / Significant	>2%		6,864

To bolster his claim, he found one source indicating a larger percentage for a tipping point:

Scientists at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute have found that when just 10 percent of the population holds an unshakable belief, their belief will always be adopted by the majority of the society. The scientists, who are members of the Social Cognitive Networks Academic Research Center (SCNARC) at Rensselaer, used computational and analytical methods to discover the tipping point where a minority belief becomes the majority opinion. The finding has implications for the study and influence of societal interactions ranging from the spread of innovations to the movement of political ideals. “When the number of committed opinion holders is below 10 percent, there is no visible progress in the spread of ideas. It would literally take the amount of time comparable to the age of the universe for this size group to reach the majority,” says SCNARC Director Boleslaw Szymanski, the Claire and Roland Schmitt Distinguished Professor at Rensselaer. “Once that number grows above 10 percent, the idea spreads like flame.”<sup>117</sup>

The study, entitled “Social Consensus Through the Influence of Committed Minorities,” found that

the prevailing majority opinion in a population can be rapidly reversed by a small fraction *p* of randomly distributed *committed* agents who consistently proselytize the opposing opinion and are immune to influence. Specifically, we show that when the committed fraction grows beyond a critical value  $P_c \approx 10\%$ , there is a dramatic decrease in the time  $T_c$  taken

for the entire population to adopt the committed opinion.<sup>118</sup>

They conclude,

we have demonstrated here the existence of a *tipping point* at which the initial majority opinion of a network switches quickly to that of a consistent and inflexible minority.<sup>119</sup>

However, there are caveats with their approach. First, they say that their model

is well suited to understanding how opinions, perceptions, or behaviors of individuals are altered through social interactions specifically in situations where the cost associated with changing one’s opinion is low, such as in the pre-release buzz for a movie, or where changes in state are not deliberate or calculated but unconscious.<sup>120</sup>

Certainly, most missionaries would not equate allegiance to Jesus in a Muslim or Hindu context as one in which the cost associated with changing one’s opinion is low! Neither would they be satisfied with believers whose decisions were unconscious. The model of this particular study tested the influence of committed agents on those who held opinions but were open to other views. Another caution is that the study seems to assume that the many variables in a given innovation mentioned by Rogers are static in every place at all times. But this is Rogers’ main point and reason why a given percentage can never work across the board—there are simply too many variables that affect the rate of adoption. The study doesn’t appear to acknowledge these variables.

Hadaway continues,

If a ten-percent threshold replaced the two-percent benchmark for depicting “lostness” and “reachness” on

evangelical maps, however, at least it would give a more reliable indicator of what is really happening on the ground. The evangelization maps of Latin America and Africa would turn from green (reached) to yellow and red (unreached).<sup>121</sup>

His solution then is to

Immediately raise the two-percent evangelical population threshold back to twenty percent or at least ten percent. I believe exiting a people group that is more than two-percent evangelical is the historical equivalent of the United States declaring victory in the Vietnam War, only to see the country fall three years later.<sup>122</sup>

But what does this look like in actual numbers? The chart below, in Figure 7, depicts numbers of “unreached peoples” if we were to change the criteria.<sup>123</sup>

The dark gray column represents our present criteria. As you can see, if the Christian Adherent criterion is taken away, the number of unreached peoples goes up significantly by 2000 (comparing the first and fifth columns). This is simply accomplished by adding the peoples represented in countries like Slovenia, Poland, Austria and France that have a population of Christian Adherents greater than 5%.

One can see what happens when the criteria is taken up to 5, 10 or 20% Evangelical (columns two, three and four)—the number of unreached peoples rises considerably; for example, the 10% Evangelical criterion would double the present number of unreached people groups. If the mission community went back to using the 20% criterion, 85% of all people

groups would be unreached! According to Bill Morrison, a researcher with Joshua Project who has spent countless hours combing over people group data,

If everyone is Least-Reached then maybe it’s not a very useful concept. I’m doubtful it’s possible to well-justify ANY cutoff figure in terms of “all groups below this figure have not achieved a meaningful breakthrough and groups above have achieved breakthrough.” There are too many variables involved and we are unable to accurately measure those variables.<sup>124</sup>

According to Bruce Koch,

Winter never liked the percentage thresholds as a criterion because in the many, many groups with less than a few hundred people (almost 1200 with a population under 500!), 2% amounts to a handful of people, whereas in large groups it can mean hundreds of thousands or even millions. Are we really going to say that we will not call the Turks reached until 1.2 million of them (2%) associate themselves with evangelical churches? Or 12 million (20%)?!<sup>125</sup>

Such an exercise reveals the astounding power of these criteria. How different the task can seem based on how it is viewed! But it should also give us pause. Would we really want to double the present number of unreached peoples? What would it do to morale? How would it affect the concept of progress? Would it further undermine frontier mission vision and effort, already in decline? Here are some helpful observations from those who manage the Joshua Project list,

Joshua Project is definitely not advocating that missionaries leave a people group when an arbitrary % Evangelical

Figure 7. Total UPGs According to Various Criteria

	<2% E	<5% E	<10% E	<20% E	<2% E, <5% CA	<2% E, >5% CA	<2% E, >50% CA
UPGs	8,121	10,130	12,059	13,730	5,944	2,018	1,278
UPG % of Total 16,238	50%	62%	74%	85%	37%	12%	8%



figure is reached. Missionaries should stay on-site as long as needed regardless of percentages. Their role might change from pioneer church planting to disciple making, administrative support, leadership development, etc. all leading to saturation church planting by indigenous manpower. The time for missionaries to exit would seem to be when there is enough momentum and resources within the indigenous church to reach the rest of the people group without outside assistance. This exit point will be very different depending on the local situation.

The role of FV/Joshua Project seems to be to encourage “beginning the task” without suggesting that 2% is a finish line or withdrawal point. At the same time, we need to better promote rigorous discipleship and saturation church planting.

The term “unreached” is rather unfortunate as it implies an on/off or yes/no toggle, suggesting only two options: zero happening (unreached) or no need to send missionaries at all (reached). When a toggle is the measurement, there can easily be a focus on countdowns and checking groups off a list when they cross some threshold. A better term might be “least-reached” implying a scale or progression.<sup>126</sup>

## Summary

This more recent debate reinforces the fact that we are dealing with “messy-ology.” Field realities are messy and don’t translate easily into mobilization slogans without significant loss. Those who manage these lists have in most cases dedicated their entire lives to the constant perusal of peoples and their state of evangelization, however defined. They are more aware of the inconsistencies and incongruencies that are part of their discipline than those of us who see them less clearly. The bottom line reality, repeated earlier in this paper, is that without quantifiable criteria, regardless of their supposed subjectivity or reliability, there is no possible way to count unreached people groups. Surely it is better to have a number in this sense than to

**T***he bottom line reality is that without quantifiable criteria there is no possible way to count unreached people groups.*

have none at all. As I write, researchers are scouring the world, even at the village level, to ascertain the breaking in of the Kingdom. These efforts are to be praised. May God continue to grant grace and wisdom to their efforts.

## A Way Forward

Finally, some general conclusions are given here as a result of the foregoing discussion.

1. The 2 and 5% criterion for unreached peoples is not perfect, but it has the advantage of having twenty years of constant use. Changing the percentages at this point creates more problems than it solves. Wise handling of the lists, and the assumptions behind them, will prevent presumption and promote mature reflection on the overall health of any given people group.
2. Deep questions remain concerning the relationship of Evangelicals and those of Catholic/Orthodox traditions. Are missiologists involved in this dialogue, or just theologians? Better relationships here could significantly advance the move of the gospel among people groups with a non-Evangelical Christian heritage.
3. Should an unreached people in a historically non-Christian environment always be prioritized above an unreached people with a Christian background in the distant past? Perhaps not. Any missionary in either group is on the same team, bringing the Bread of Life to hungry souls. Sometimes certain fields are ripe and others are not. Sometimes God guides us to a specific place, for reasons that may not meet the requirements of human reason. If the Spirit moves

in mysterious ways, we should be careful in forecasting exactly what he is up to. Jesus made forays into different geographical areas for reasons that were primarily spiritual, not rational. Likewise, Paul was guided by the Spirit and was sometimes led in ways contrary to his natural way of thinking. E-2 or E-3 distance should not be the *only* consideration in prioritization, even if it should (rightly) be the first.

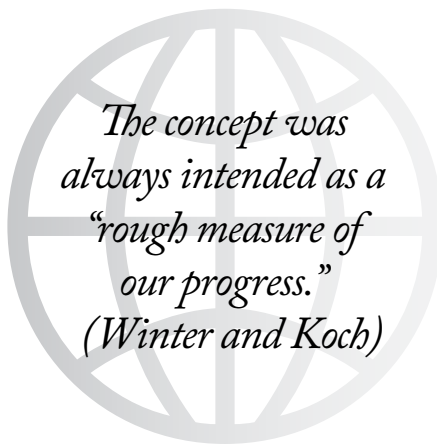
4. We need to continue to present being reached as a process not a point-in-time. The present criteria, and any that may come in the future, can create lopsided/distorted views of people group realities.
5. We need to recognize that identifying a “tipping point,” that moment when an indigenous body of believers becomes viable and able to evangelize its own people, is ultimately dependent on the Holy Spirit. Sociologists do not concern themselves with supernatural phenomena when they attempt to describe social change, but we do. And the Holy Spirit is surely able to use any percentage he wishes as a tipping point. We should remember that there were 7 million Jews in Jesus’ day (2 million in Palestine and 5 million Diaspora), and the 120 gathered in the upper room represented .000017% of the Jewish nation! In a matter of a few days after Pentecost, they had grown by thousands and this movement was later accused of turning the world upside down. This reality is too often overlooked by missiologists.
6. We need to recognize that different percentages will motivate different ministries for different purposes. It is perfectly legitimate

for some ministries to keep the present criteria. Alternatively, it is also legitimate for other ministries to focus on different criteria. There is much to do in seeing the Kingdom find expression in new people groups. Everyone can have a seat at the table and fulfill God's calling for the particular focus of their ministries. The people group data is available and can be sliced many ways, and should be. The primary blessing of people group data is that it is there for the body of Christ. Anyone can go on the Joshua Project site,<sup>127</sup> put in percentages to sort the list by, and see what pops up.

7. We need to be aware of the limitations of our numbers, which reflect a very basic sense of reality but lack precision. This will always be the case when complex field realities are necessarily simplified for purposes of quantification and also mobilization. We must beware of "managerial missiology" and the tendency to reduce the incomprehensible reality of God's activity in this world to manageable strategies. There is absolutely nothing about the work of the Holy Spirit that is ours to manage apart from our own obedience to Him. But we can humbly present what we do know in order to fan into flame God's heart for all peoples in every believer. The concept of people groups was always intended as a "rough measure of our progress toward completing the entire task."<sup>128</sup>
8. The biggest single problem in reaching the unreached is not a matter of definitions or percentage criteria, but of what Eugene Peterson calls a "long obedience in the same direction." Not the strident obedience of a soldier under command, but the loving obedience of sons and daughters who walk daily in intimacy with their Father and come to know and share His

heart of extravagant love for the lost. Not the obedience motivated by numbers and the thrill of being the generation that gets it done, but the obedience motivated by a deep and abiding joy in living out God's call among the nations.

It has been said that "a mist in the pulpit is a fog in the pew." Attempts to clear up the mist of what exactly is meant by "unreached" has and continues to be elusive. All three lists of unreached peoples are grounded in decades of specific research methodologies and tried convictions (including theological ones), which are not likely to be set aside for the practical purpose of simplicity, as helpful as that would



be for mobilization. The two poles of the tension we are dealing with are the complexity of people group identity (reality on the field) on the one hand and the simplicity needed for mobilization (reality back at home on the sending base) on the other. This tension exists in all disciplines and the answer lies in effective communication from one side to the other. This takes persons who can understand the complexity and yet present it in simple and meaningful ways. It takes persons who live in both worlds and can translate from one to the other. This is not an impossible task. The expertise and abilities exist within the mission community. We owe it to ourselves and the unreached peoples we desire to serve to make

these concepts more accessible to the church. It is my hope that this article will inspire others more qualified and experienced than I to do just that. **IJFM**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: Global Mapping International, 2011), 165.

<sup>2</sup> Winter's quotation of Barrett is a bit misleading because when Barrett wrote in 1968 the concept of unreached people groups was nascent. While Barrett did note significant changes within a people when more than 20% became Christian adherents, he in no way was making any conscious statement about 20% or less as a criterion for being "unreached." I am indebted to Gina Zurlo of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity for her insight into Barrett's thinking.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph D. Winter, "Unreached Peoples: The Development of the Concept," in *Reaching the Unreached: The Old-New Challenge*, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1984), 36–37.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that "evangelization" to some means proclamation only, while to others it means proclamation and response. The former emphasizes a person or group's *exposure* to and *awareness* of the Gospel, while the latter emphasizes *positive response* to the Gospel ("Go and *make disciples* . . ."). Since Revelation (5:9 and 7:9) predicts and promises that some from every tribe, tongue and nation will find their place in the heavenly assembly, this author assumes the latter meaning throughout the paper.

<sup>5</sup> Our focus at Frontier Ventures (formerly the US Center for World Mission) has historically been and remains that of working alongside others in the frontier mission movement to bring about that "tipping point" whereby a body of believers is able to evangelize its own people group.

<sup>6</sup> Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, "Finishing The Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 538.

<sup>7</sup> The LCWE was established in January 1975 to implement the ethos and vision of the International Congress on World Evangelization (ICOWE), July 16–25, 1974. It consisted of the international body, seven regional committees, an executive

committee and four working groups: theology and education, intercession, communication, and strategy. The first meeting of the Strategy Working Group was in 1977.

<sup>8</sup> The phrases “Lausanne Tradition” and “Edinburgh Tradition” as descriptive monikers originated with Winter.

<sup>9</sup> Of course, none of what is recorded here occurred in a vacuum. William Carey’s *Enquiry* reignited concern for the heathen and a steady stream of research and promotion toward that end can be seen to the present day. Twentieth century antecedents worth mention would be W. Cameron Townsend’s focus on tribal peoples in Central America and J. Waskom Pickett’s research on mass movements in India in the 1930s; Donald McGavran’s continued work about people movements in the 1950s; and the research in Africa of David Barrett and Patrick Johnstone in the 1960s.

<sup>10</sup> “Billy Graham Center, Archives: World Congress on Evangelism, 1966,” Wheaton College, Billy Graham Center, last modified Oct 25, 2006, accessed October 13, 2015, <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/berlin66.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Ted Engstrom, “The Use of Technology: A Vital Tool That Will Help,” in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task, Volume I, World Congress on Evangelism, Berlin 1966, Official Reference Volumes, Papers and Reports*, eds. Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1967), 316.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>14</sup> David A. Hubbard, “Missions and Technology,” in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task, Volume II, World Congress on Evangelism, Berlin 1966, Official Reference Volumes, Papers and Reports*, eds. Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1967), 525–526.

<sup>15</sup> C. Peter Wagner and Edward Dayton, eds., *Unreached Peoples ’81: The Challenge of the Church’s Unfinished Business* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1981), 24.

<sup>16</sup> Another significant name to mention is W. Stanley Mooneyham, the Vice President of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the Coordinating Director for the Berlin Congress. When Pierce began to have health issues, Mooneyham took over as World Vision President in 1969, a position he held until 1982. Engstrom became Executive VP of World Vision in 1963 and followed Mooneyham as President from 1982–1984.

<sup>17</sup> This influence was not without its critics, such as Latin American missiologists C. Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar. Padilla wrote a critique of the homogenous unit principle (1982), stating it had no biblical basis as a church planting strategy. For his part, Escobar lashed out against the “managerial missiology” coming out of Pasadena (1999), citing the tendency to turn the mission enterprise into something that can be managed with measurement-based analysis, goal-setting and strategic planning.

<sup>18</sup> Greg H. Parsons, *Lausanne ’74: Ralph D. Winter’s Writings, with Responses* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015), 134.

<sup>19</sup> Edward R. Dayton, *Unreached Peoples Directory* (International Congress on World Evangelization, 1974), 23.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that in the back of the Directory, the questionnaire used for the research is included and gives its own slightly different definitions: “*Homogeneous unit* (people or group): A recognizable segment of society having some characteristic(s) in common. The uniting element(s) may be linguistic, ethnic, geographic, socio-economic, political, religious, or any other. . . . *Unreached/unevangelized people*: Those homogeneous units which have not received or responded to the Gospel. Thus unresponsiveness may be due to lack of opportunity, lack of understanding, or because they have not received sufficient information about the Gospel message within their own language, cultural frame of reference and communication channels to make Christianity a viable option. For the purpose of this questionnaire, and for the International Congress on World Evangelization for which this initial study is made, we consider that a people is unreached/unevangelized when less than 20% are professing Christians,” 112.

<sup>23</sup> David Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968), 137. Barrett also uses the 20% criterion in his *World Christian Encyclopedia*, “the only people groups who can correctly be called unreached are the one thousand or so whose populations are each less than 20% evangelized,” in David B. Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World AD 1900–2000* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 19. Note that Barrett differed

from most other researchers represented in this paper in that he measured evangelization as proclamation only, whereas others measure it as proclamation and response. See endnote 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Dayton, *Unreached Peoples Directory*, 26.

<sup>26</sup> Pentecost did a master’s thesis at Fuller with Winter as Mentor and Glasser and Wagner on the Examining Committee. The paper was published in 1974 as the book *Reaching the Unreached: An Introductory Study on Developing an Overall Strategy for World Evangelization*.

<sup>27</sup> Their definition is “An unreached people is a group that is less than 20 percent practicing Christian,” in C. Peter Wagner and Edward R. Dayton, eds., *Unreached Peoples ’79: The Challenge of the Church’s Unfinished Business* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co, 1978), 24. While Barrett and Wagner/Dayton both used the 20 percent criterion, they had two very different things in mind. Barrett was thinking of “adherents” (professing Christians) and Wagner/Dayton had in mind “practicing Christians.” In fact, Wagner and Dayton used the percentage of “professing Christians” in their people group list in the back of the book (257) even though their definition above was “practicing Christian.” One surmises that they changed their definition to “practicing Christian” but their research still reflected the professing Christian data that had been used in the 1974 *Directory*. In the *Unreached Peoples ’80* edition, they correct this contradiction. They say, “It is important to note that this figure is the estimated percentage of *practicing* Christians within the group. If the group was listed in *Unreached Peoples ’79*, the figure recorded here will most likely be different, because that volume recorded the percentage of *professing* Christians (or adherents), which most often will be a higher number,” in C. Peter Wagner and Edward R. Dayton, eds., *Unreached Peoples ’80: The Challenge of the Church’s Unfinished Business* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co, 1980), 210. Ralph Winter called this movement from “professing” to “practicing” a “fatal” change. He says, “In my own biased recollection, the change to ‘practicing Christians’ was almost instantly criticized . . . when the new 20-percent definition came out, I remember calling my friend Peter Wagner, who was the chairman of the Strategy Working Group, and saying, ‘This is a great mistake. Almost all groups everywhere are now classified as unreached!’ But it was too late. The Strategy Working Group was an international committee, and

everyone had gone home," in Ralph Winter, "Unreached Peoples: The Development of the Concept," 31.

<sup>28</sup> Edward C. Pentecost, *Reaching the Unreached: An Introductory Study on Developing an Overall Strategy for World Evangelization* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1974). Pentecost not only cites Rogers in his use of the 20%, but also incorporates Roger's concepts of communication channels (70), the four stages of the innovation-decision process (71) and the use of indicators to measure social change (79–120). This is the only attempt I know of in which diffusion of innovation theory is seriously considered as a method of studying gospel diffusion in an unreached people group.

<sup>29</sup> Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: Free Press, 1962). Rogers defines diffusion as "the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (2003, 5), while an innovation is "an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new" (12). Pentecost, Wagner, Dayton and others obviously saw the potential for such research to inform the frontier missionary task. Based on thousands of empirical studies, Rogers claims, "no other field of behavior science research represents more effort by more scholars in more disciplines in more nations" (2003, xviii). Because this research includes many cross-cultural studies, it brims with relevant guidelines and principles for mission theorist and practitioner alike.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 1962, 219.

<sup>31</sup> Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 360.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 221–222.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>34</sup> Research using Rogers' model could be done on individual people groups and then compared with others. We could determine our own variables or indicators that affect rate of adoption that spring specifically from the context of gospel planting among unreached people groups. Principles and/or best practices could be compared, contrasted and new theories put forth.

<sup>35</sup> According to Wagner, "From its very inception the Strategy Working Group established a functional relationship with the MARC (Missions Advanced Research and Communication) Center of World Vision International. MARC pioneered research into unreached peoples and challenged the 1974 Lausanne meeting with the preliminary results. Its office facilities,

computer capability, competent staff, and accumulated expertise in the field qualifies it as the central research agency worldwide for unreached peoples" in Wagner and Dayton, *Unreached Peoples* '79, 8. Each volume in the series contains a list of unreached people groups (1979: 666 upg; 1980: 1,982 upg; 1981: 2,914 upg; 1982: 3,265 upg; 1983: 3,690 upg; 1984: 3,815 upg). The original *Unreached Peoples Directory* had a list of 413 groups. Note that there is a four-year gap between the initial directory published for ICOWE in 1974 and this series. The reason for this is that it took time to organize the LCWE (1975) and SWG (1977) after the Congress. Though MARC had already helped produce the unreached peoples directory for the Lausanne 1974 Congress, they had done so with funding from Lausanne. The final and seventh book of the series (*Unreached Peoples: Clarifying the Task*) was co-published in 1987 by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention as the seventh book of the Unreached Peoples series and the third book of the FMB's *AD2000 Series*. It was edited by Harley Schreck and David Barrett. None of these lists were comprehensive.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>37</sup> C. Peter Wagner and Edward R. Dayton, eds., *Unreached Peoples '81: The Challenge of the Church's Unfinished Business With Special Section on the Peoples of Asia* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co, 1981), 28.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 28–29. Wagner and Dayton also show a helpful correlation between the growth of an innovation over time as early, middle and late adopters are added on, with the Evangelism scale (E-1, E-2, E-3), a Christian Nurture scale (N-1, N-2, N-3) and a Service scale (S-1, S-2, S-3). They thus show how E-2 and E-3 evangelism is prominent at the beginning of a movement but then transitions to E-1 and N-1 work of practicing Christians.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 27. The reference to hidden peoples was an attempt by Wagner and Dayton to incorporate Winter's alternative to "unreached," described later in this paper. Unfortunately, they reduced it to a meaning Winter did not intend. However, a few pages later (32) they define hidden groups as "people groups among which there is no viable church," closer to Winter's intent.

<sup>41</sup> C. Peter Wagner and Edward Dayton, eds., *Unreached Peoples '82: The Challenge of the Church's Unfinished Business, Focus on Urban Peoples* (Elgin, IL, David

C. Cook Publishing Company, 1982). One wonders if this omission had anything to do with the fact that with *Unreached Peoples '82* Samuel Wilson would begin to replace C. Peter Wagner as co-editor. Was the 20 percent emphasis largely that of Wagner?

<sup>42</sup> Edward R. Dayton and Samuel Wilson, eds., *Unreached Peoples '83: The Refugees Among Us* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1983), 33. As a result, in the 1983 annual the definitions of "Hidden People Group" and "Frontier People" were the same: "unreached people group" (499). There was now one definition. Here is a final interesting fact observed: the members of the Strategy Working Group identified in the 1983 annual represent an almost wholesale change from the previous group. Wagner stepped off as Chairman at this point with Dayton taking over. Only one other existing member continued on with Dayton as Chairman.

<sup>43</sup> When Winter's missiological output is observed side by side with his labors in purchasing the USCWM properties and founding a sodality community, it is remarkable to realize that in the midst of all his thinking and writing, the campus was in a constant state of fiscal jeopardy. This may be one reason why he tended to write articles, not books. He had at least two full-time roles as a missiologist and organizational leader.

<sup>44</sup> Ralph D. Winter, *Penetrating the Last Frontiers* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1978), 39.

<sup>45</sup> Ralph D. Winter, *Frontiers in Mission: Discovering and Surmounting Barriers to the Missio Dei* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2008), 133.

<sup>46</sup> Winter, *Penetrating the Last Frontiers*, 40.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Winter, "Unreached Peoples: The Development of the Concept," 32.

<sup>50</sup> This pamphlet was reprinted in *Unreached Peoples '79*. However, the parts of the pamphlet critical of the SWG definition is nowhere to be seen. Did Winter cut out this section (the bulk of his critique presented above comes from this section), not wanting to create undue tension?

<sup>51</sup> Winter, *Penetrating the Last Frontiers*, 40–41.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>53</sup> This issue of affinity was an important one, as people struggled to know how deep people group segmentation should run. Were "nurses in St. Louis" or "professional hockey players" (these were in the early lists) distinct people groups? While Winter and



Koch in the *Finishing the Task* article deal with this by distinguishing such segments as “Sociopeoples,” the idea persists today with talk of the handicapped as unreached people groups. While we would normally see groups with a common disability as a sociopeople, the case of the deaf is unique because they speak a unique language.

<sup>54</sup> “While Pattaya ’80 took unreached peoples *seriously*, Edinburgh ’80 was devoted to them *exclusively*,” in Warren Webster, “New Directions for Western Missions” in *Unreached Peoples ’84: The Future of World Evangelization*, Edward Dayton and Samuel Wilson, eds. (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1984), 134. Winter had a unique penchant for setting up alternatives to the status quo, be it definitions, institutions or in this case consultations, while maintaining congenial relationships with those with whom he disagreed. This gave him platforms for his personal thinking yet also kept him on the edge of the inside.

<sup>55</sup> Ralph D. Winter, “Frontier Mission Perspectives” in *Seeds of Promise: World Consultation on Frontier Missions, Edinburgh ’80*, ed. Allan Starling (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 61.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 63. Winter concedes that “the reality of human diversity is, of course, immeasurably more complex than these four levels imply. One can easily imagine cases where there are far more than four levels.”

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 63–65, 79. Winter’s presentation included helpful diagrams that graphically portrayed the interrelationships between three different megaspheres (and the sub-spheres within them) along with the type of evangelism needed from one sphere to another.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>62</sup> Winter, “Unreached People: The Development of the Concept,” 33.

<sup>63</sup> Winter, *Frontiers in Mission: Discovering and Surmounting Barriers to the Missio Dei*, 134.

<sup>64</sup> According to Wagner and Dayton, this sentence up to this point is word-for-word the same definition defined by the Strategy Working Group (SWG) of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) in its first meeting in 1977, “after a lengthy period of research and discussion,” with the exception that the word “sociological” was taken out of the original phrase “large sociological grouping,” in Wagner and Dayton, *Unreached Peoples ’81*, 23. However,

in the *Unreached Peoples ’79* edition, the same definition is given with an added phrase, “because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these” (23). It could be that the definition was shortened for the sake of brevity. Whatever the case, the longer version reappears as part of the 1982 Chicago definition.

<sup>65</sup> Winter and Koch, “Finishing The Task,” 536.

<sup>66</sup> Winter, *Frontiers in Mission: Discovering and Surmounting Barriers to the Missio Dei*, 134.

<sup>67</sup> Dayton and Wilson, *Unreached Peoples ’84*, 129.

<sup>68</sup> Winter, in *Reaching the Unreached: The Old-New Challenge*, 37–38.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 39–40.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>75</sup> Wagner and Dayton, *Unreached Peoples ’79*, 23.

<sup>76</sup> Ralph Winter, “Facing the Frontiers,” *Mission Frontiers*, (Oct–Nov 1982), 13, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/facing-the-frontiers>.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Winter and Koch, “Finishing the Task,” 535. This article remains definitive for Winter’s views on various aspects of people group thinking.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 539.

<sup>80</sup> Winter noted elsewhere, “I don’t love this term. But for the time being I have come up with nothing better, and we do need some definition that deals with this particular unit of peoples. Otherwise, we end up with a megapeople like the Han Chinese, a people in almost anybody’s language, but not an entity that is in itself an efficient missionary target in the sense we would like an unreached people to be,” in Ralph Winter, “Unreached Peoples: What Are They and Where Are They?” in *Reaching the Unreached: The Old-New Challenge*, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1984), 50–51.

<sup>81</sup> Winter and Koch, “Finishing the Task,” 534–535.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 537.

<sup>83</sup> Seth Kaplan, “Somalia’s Complex Clan Dynamics,” *Fragile States Resource Center*, accessed April 20, 2015, <http://www.fragilestates.org/2012/01/10/somalias-complex-clan-dynamics/>.

<sup>84</sup> “Somalia – Clans,” *GlobalSecurity*, last modified April 8, 2015, accessed April 20, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/somalia/clans.htm>.

<sup>85</sup> Winter and Koch, “Finishing the Task,” 536.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 537.

<sup>87</sup> Barrett served the FMB until 1993, when he began working as an independent researcher under the World Evangelization Research Center, also located in Richmond, and its successor, the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (established in 2003 by Todd Johnson at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, in South Hamilton, Mass.). He died in 2011. Along with another “DB,” David Bosch, Barrett and Bosch are arguably the most significant continental, Protestant missiologists of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>88</sup> Harley Schreck and David Barrett, *Unreached Peoples: Clarifying the Task* (Monrovia, CA: MARC and Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishing Co., 1987). The *Unreached Peoples* series, published each year between 1979 and 1984, then on hiatus until 1987, was in some ways the authoritative source for many regarding unreached people groups. The seventh book was a partnership between MARC and the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention as the seventh book of the *Unreached Peoples* series and the third book of the FMB’s *AD2000* series.

<sup>89</sup> In the registry of peoples found within the book, several changes are noted from the previous annuals. There is only one listing of peoples by country. Both ethnolinguistic and sociologically-defined people groups are listed, with the latter presented in boldface type. Finally, the criteria for inclusion in the list is “only peoples among whom church members number less than 20 percent of the population” (15) or “people groups for whom it has been reported that there is less than 20% of the population who have any affiliation with a Christian church,” (215). This reflects Barrett’s preference to count professing Christians as opposed to practicing Christians, which had been the definition proposed by Wagner and Dayton. Thus the *Unreached Peoples* series (if you include the 1974 Directory) evolved from professing Christians to practicing Christians and then back to professing Christians. The power of editorship!

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 18–24.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 38–39.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 41–42.

<sup>96</sup> In Harvie Conn's edited work cited several times in this paper, *Reaching the Unreached: The Old-New Challenge*, there is a chapter by James Reapsome that is basically a list of quotes from a "Who's Who" list of Western mission leaders of that time complaining about "sociological segmentation." Warren Webster sums it up this way: "The use of sociological definitions of people groups tends to cloud and confuse the picture when employed on a global scale," 67.

<sup>97</sup> Dan Scribner, "Joshua Project Step 1: Identifying the Peoples Where Church Planting Is Most Needed," *Mission Frontiers* (Nov–Dec, 1995), <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/joshua-project-step-1-identifying-the-peoples-where-church-planting-is-most>.

<sup>98</sup> "Joshua Project 2000," AD2000 and Beyond, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.ad2000.org/joshovr.htm>.

<sup>99</sup> "Author: A Brief Biography of Patrick Johnstone," The Future of the Global Church (GMI), accessed January 29, 2016, <http://www.thefutureoftheglobalchurch.org/about/author/>.

<sup>100</sup> "Why Include Adherents when Defining Unreached?" Joshua Project, accessed April 20, 2015, <https://joshuaproject.net/assets/media/articles/why-include-adherents-when-defining-unreached.pdf>. A Christian Adherent is simply anyone who self-identifies as a Christian of any kind.

<sup>101</sup> Sam Keen and Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion: The Sacred and the Political in American Life," *Psychology Today* (January 1976), 64.

<sup>102</sup> Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: Global Mapping International, 2011), 224.

<sup>103</sup> "Why Include Adherents when Defining Unreached?" Joshua Project, accessed April 20, 2015, <https://joshuaproject.net/assets/media/articles/why-include-adherents-when-defining-unreached.pdf>.

<sup>104</sup> Todd Johnson, email message to author, February 10, 2016.

<sup>105</sup> Robin Dale Hadaway, "A Course Correction in Missions: Rethinking the Two Percent Threshold," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 57, no. 1 (2014): 22.

<sup>106</sup> See <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/>.

<sup>107</sup> See <http://joshuaproject.net>.

<sup>108</sup> See <http://peoplegroups.org>.

<sup>109</sup> Todd Johnson, email message to author, February 8, 2016.

<sup>110</sup> This chart taken from "Global People Group Lists: An Overview," Joshua

Project, accessed November 23, 2015, [http://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/global\\_peoples\\_list\\_comparison](http://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/global_peoples_list_comparison).

<sup>111</sup> Adapted from "How Many People Groups Are There?" Joshua Project, accessed November 23, 2015, [http://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/how\\_many\\_people\\_groups\\_are\\_there](http://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/how_many_people_groups_are_there).

<sup>112</sup> Winter, "Unreached Peoples: What Are They and Where Are They?" 47.

<sup>113</sup> "Frequently asked Questions," Finishing the Task, accessed January 29, 2016, <http://finishingthetask.com/faq.html>.

<sup>114</sup> Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church*, 189.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>116</sup> Hadaway, "A Course Correction in Missions."

<sup>117</sup> Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, "Minority Rules: Scientists Discover Tipping Point for the Spread of Ideas," Association for Computing Machinery, last modified July 26, 2011, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://cacm.acm.org/careers/115120-minority-rules-scientists-discover-tipping-point-for-the-spread-of-ideas/fulltext>.

<sup>118</sup> J. Xie, S. Sreenivasan, G. Korniss, W. Zhang, C. Lim, B. Szymanski, "Social Consensus through the Influence of Committed Minorities," *Physical Review E* 84, 011130, 2011, 1.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>121</sup> Hadaway, "A Course Correction in Missions," 24.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>123</sup> This chart used Joshua Project numbers. Note that once we put in figures that are 5% Evangelical or greater, the 5% Christian Adherent criteria becomes irrelevant, because Evangelicals are Christian Adherents.

<sup>124</sup> Bill Morrison, email message to author, February 8, 2016.

<sup>125</sup> Bruce Koch, email message to author, April 13, 2015.

<sup>126</sup> Dan Scribner, Bill Morrison, Duane Fraser, email message to author, April 8, 2015.

<sup>127</sup> <http://legacy.joshuaproject.net/people-selector.php>.

<sup>128</sup> Winter and Koch, "Finishing the Task," 534.

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# Editorial Reflections

## The Unfortunate Unmarketability of “Unincorporable”

—by Brad Gill

Reading Dave Datema’s article on the history and development of the term “unreached” reminds me of a word my son likes to throw around these days: disambiguate. The term “unreached” seems to immediately carry a simple meaning when applied to an “unreached people,” and this assumed understanding has helped mobilize people and churches globally for over four decades. But ambiguities arise when we apply the term demographically in frontier mission, and we’re indebted to Datema for offering a review of how missiologists have negotiated its range of meanings and strategic application.

More recently, it’s mission demographers who are trying to disambiguate “unreached.” Its imprecision became evident when they applied it to the populations of post-Christian Europe. Due to lower statistical levels in people professing the Christian faith (i.e., less than 5% Christian or 2% evangelical), these populations of an old and receding Christendom appear to warrant the label “unreached.” That inclusion creates one large undifferentiated pool of unreached peoples that would now stretch from Asia into Europe. This particular application of “unreached” exposes the insufficiency of the term once again.

Datema reminds us that at least two preeminent missiologists, David Barrett and Ralph Winter, were demonstrably uncomfortable with “unreached,” and both insisted on their own conceptual grid as this term emerged in missiological parlance. They recognized its inevitable use in the years following Lausanne ’74, but both would debate its meaning and application. As far as David Barrett’s understanding of “unreached” and how he understood a population being 20% evangelized, we must defer to Gina Zurlo of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity.<sup>1</sup> However, Datema reminds us that Winter originally mused about other terms that might communicate more clearly the missiological challenge that confronted us among unreached peoples.

### *Unincorporable*

Datema reviews how Winter partnered with Koch to advance the more strategic term “unimax” peoples after the Chicago meeting in 1982 (p. 55). Winter thought perhaps a new term would help clarify the missiological task among the unreached.

A unimax people is the maximum sized group sufficiently unified to be the target of a single people movement to Christ, where “unified” refers to the fact that there are no significant barriers of either understanding or acceptance to stop the spread of the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

Winter and Koch recognized that beyond language there were other factors like religion, class distinctions, education, political and ideological convictions that create sociocultural boundaries. These unimax realities create a kind of people group that requires a more strategic term.

But Datema reminds us that Winter had earlier contemplated the term “unincorporable.” It didn’t pass the test of marketability and lacked the impact and apparent significance of a term like “unreached.” Some people may take umbrage with this term, just as some did with the homogenous unit principle, for reflecting what they perceive to be a latent racism in Frontier Missiology. I hope to lay that response to rest in these paragraphs. Datema quotes Winter’s brainstorming on this term unincorporable, and I think it may disambiguate the missiological cloud that has surrounded unreached peoples:

It is much more important to stress the presence or the absence of some aspect of the church in its organized form than to try to grapple with statistics that ultimately rest upon the presence or absence of the gospel in an individual’s heart. It is not only easier to verify the existence of the visible church, it is also strategically very important in missionary activity for church planting to exist as a tangible goal. We know that where there is no determined stress upon founding an organized fellowship of worshipping believers, a great deal of evangelism fails to produce long term results, fails to start a beachhead that will grow by itself. Thus, for both spiritual and practical reasons, I would be much more pleased to talk about the presence of a church allowing people to be *incorporated*, or the absence of a church leaving people *unincorporable* instead of *unreached*. I feel it would be better to try to observe, not whether people are “saved” or not or somehow “reached” or not, but first whether an individual has been incorporated in a believing fellowship or not, and secondly, if a person is not incorporated, does he have the opportunity *within his cultural tradition* to be so incorporated.<sup>3</sup>

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Winter was consistent in calling attention to a single missiological issue at stake in any plan for world evangelization: the ability or inability for the church to *incorporate* new believers among a particular people. Winter pondered a term like *unincorporable* because, as awkward or clumsy or complicated as it might seem, it more accurately pinpointed the vital missiological predicament. Where there was no viable indigenous church movement for a particular people, or where the incorporation of new believers was difficult due to cultural distance, then these people were the unincorporable. While the term might have unfortunate social connotations, the use of this term might have secured Winter’s missiological criteria more effectively than unreached. But as I’ve indicated, the term “unincorporable peoples” was not only hard to pronounce, its meaning was not immediately apparent. It just couldn’t compete with popular response to “unreached” no matter what ambiguities the later term introduced.

A quick study of the term unincorporable discloses two important conceptual dimensions to Winter’s missiology. First, the root *incorpor* is from the Latin meaning “to embody,” which is basic to Winter’s argument on the strategic priority of an organized fellowship of worshipping believers (the church). Secondly, the prefix and suffix “un—able” together communicate the inability to integrate certain believers into a corporate body. It poses the question of barriers and inhibitors to the enfolding of these unincorporable peoples. Over the past forty years missiologists have produced a library on these barriers among peoples, but that body of research has not used a term like unincorporable to better define its core missiology.

### **Conditions**

We’ve grown accustomed to some contemporary perspectives on the traditional reasons for the “un-incorporable-ness” of peoples (i.e., ethnicity, language). Some anthropologists insist that the recent flows of globalization and urbanization dissipate ethnic and linguistic impediments to the gospel. More contemporary anthropology tries to account for the way “people groups” is now an obsolete category. New models seem to explain how peoples are culturally less distant and more easily incorporable into the existing Christian movements.

The recent article by George Yip in *EMQ* is a quick and densely written review of how anthropology and missiology must adjust to the realities of globalization.<sup>4</sup> I commend the article to readers, but with a small proviso: Yip is trying

to abruptly apply insights that have built up tremendous anthropological nuance for over four decades. The manner in which he speaks to the categoricalness of people group thinking is apparent in Hiebert’s anthropological assessment of Church Growth a couple of decades ago (p. 77). Indeed, globalization and urban drift have accelerated the loosening of local ties and are lifting people out of their traditional identities. We must affirm these global trends and adjust our missiological models.

But, for our purposes here, it’s important to note that Yip and his anthropology of globalization is focused on the legitimacy of ethnic and linguistic “groupness” and boundary. A term like un-incorporable, on the other hand, provides a different focus. It allows for a bit more of an inductive sensitivity.<sup>5</sup> It prioritizes the ability or inability of incorporation among a population without any initial insistence on a particular group boundary. As an alternative terminology, the idea of incorporable-ness remains more open to the impact of globalization on peoples. It does so by providing an initial probe into unincorporable-ness, and only secondarily into the boundary markers of a people group. Winter’s preference for unincorporable may have assumed people groups, but it prioritized the crux of the matter for a missiology that would further evangelization.

Secondly, the recent flow of refugees across Europe and the Middle East indicate that crisis conditions not only increase receptivity to the gospel, but they reduce the barriers of incorporation. Trauma, violence, and loss of livelihood create a new openness to adapt to an alternate world. The brutality that precedes and accompanies the flow of refugees loosens traditional ties and creates a sort of suspended existence. In these settings the unincorporable appear more able to be enfolded almost without regard to language, culture, or religious identity. But this openness may lessen abruptly after an initial “honeymoon” period in which ethnicity, language and traditional identities don’t seem to matter.

Beyond global or crisis conditions is the phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal movement and the evidence that the need for healing and deliverance can cause people to be incorporated into Christian fellowships across social divides. In this push and pull, an accurate assessment of incorporation is strategic in discerning barriers. I recall a conversation with an Indian demographer who not only was a dedicated statistician, but one who spent weeks and months on the ground observing the villages of India. I recall what he told

me about the way healing and deliverance impacted caste realities. There in the byways of the villages he was seeing people from upper castes willing to enter and attend Dalit (untouchable) churches in order to be healed and released. But, he said it was also clear that these same people would never enter the home of that Dalit pastor. He noticed there was a flexibility according to need, but he was alert to the complexity of incorporation. While we should be open to the social adaptations created by spiritual need, by globalization or crisis, a term like unincorporable would actually maintain a crucial missiological focus amidst these new conditions.

### *Movements and Institutions*

The unprecedented surge in movements to Christ happening since 2000 especially among unreached Muslim peoples assumes the incorporation of believers into a vital ecclesial experience (church). These movements, which are more often disciple making movements (DMM)—or in some cases insider movements—have their own characteristic way of incorporating new believers as they steadily reproduce. DMM is a method that encourages a natural and voluntary way of following Christ in small cellular discipleship groups that maintain connectedness and commonality across a growing movement, and these appear to fulfill Winter's most critical benchmark for a "viable church movement." It represents a "breakthrough" or "beachhead" which has been established.

For those who knew Winter, this terminology of incorporation conveyed his preference for institutions. He always had an eye for the viability of structures in the Christian movement, and this applied to this ecclesial embodiment (church) among peoples. As is clear from his quote above, the church as a corporate institution had a missiological value beyond the mere aggregation of individual believers. Winter was typically partial to numbers, to quantitative analysis, and the significance of statistics in a study of church growth. But the scale of a movement could not represent the more significant qualitative factors of ecclesial life in incorporating the unreached.

As a colleague in McGavran's school of thought, Winter had gained an analytical command of people movements and those natural bridges that provide for the growth of a movement to Christ. But he had also been trained as an anthropologist and respected the nature of social institutions in cultural innovation, and his suggestion of the term unincorporable (rather than unreached) called for a certain institutional acuity in assessing the viability of a church movement. The term invites further embellishment.

Tim Keller provides a well-crafted comparison of movements and institutions in his book, *Centered Church*, a cogent treatment I've not seen elsewhere in missiological discussions.<sup>6</sup> Keller recognizes that he is writing to an American culture that is highly suspicious of institutions, for they typically seem to cramp one's personal freedom. And just the word institution seems to make their blood run cold for some who hang around DMM movements, because institutions smell of a hardened establishment that can slow the pace of growth and reproduction. We prefer "organic" or "natural" patterns of growth and a minimal institutional framework as a way to insure the extension of a movement.

But I suspect Winter valued institutional thinking because it was necessary for the durability of a Christian movement. Rather than exclusive categories, movement and institution represent a continuum, an institutional process (some would say an "institutionalization") in the establishment of a viable church. We witness this process underway early in our own New Testament, where roles and offices emerge as a nascent movement penetrates Jewish and Gentile populations.

The choice of the word "viable" for a church movement indicates the ability to maintain life, and I think we can assume that meant an initial grounding in appropriate contextualized institutions. My sense is that many DMM movements demonstrating new breakthroughs and the ability to incorporate new believers are now facing the issue of durability, which will demand an institutional viability beyond the initial scaffolding of DMM coordination, training and reproduction.

### *Conventions*

Allow me to add two further perspectives on the institutional nature of movements. The first is the anthropology of Mary Douglas, who introduces a distinction between *conventions* and *institutions* in her attempt to discern the "legitimacy" of a social institution. "Minimally," she says, "an institution is only a convention,"<sup>7</sup> and then she adds Lewis' definition:

A convention arises when all parties have a common interest in there being a rule to insure coordination, none has a conflicting interest, and none will deviate lest the desired coordination be lost.<sup>8</sup>

Might we use this label of convention for the minimal coordination and reproduction of a Christward movement that has yet to become a stable and viable ecclesial body? Certain conventions do provide a nascent movement with early coordination in natural groupings around a common

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interest and purpose; but this may still lack the institutional grounding of a “legitimate social grouping.” By legitimate, Douglas means something akin to what we would call the “self-theologizing” (or “self-actualizing”) of an ecclesial movement. This Fourth Self grounds a nascent movement in biblically and culturally appropriate institutions through a process of contextualization. It provides an authenticity to its institutions that goes beyond the mere three-self independence of government, propagation and finance. The continued incorporation of believers into a movement may require an institutional authenticity beyond the initial coordination and reproduction.

This point is reinforced by the tragic fact that large Christward movements can die out. I well remember a conversation a few years ago with one of the leaders of the DMM philosophy of ministry. For a few minutes he rolled out a description of a large-scale movement that had totally disappeared in South Asia. He was trying to alert mission leaders to a more comprehensive perspective on these movements. Examples of attrition or regression like this raise the question of viability, and my hunch is that we’re needing to be more sensitive to the institutional maturation of these nascent movements.

### *Translation*

The terminology of incorporation can also call on studies of World Christianity, and I particularly wish to point out the contribution of Lamin Sanneh. African missiologists like Sanneh study the old frontier of Africa with indigenous eyes and offer us profound insights into the emergence of viable churches. They’re tunneling back through history and discovering how African peoples were incorporable or unincorporable. Sanneh’s study of religious movements has identified two different processes at work in the transmission of the gospel. One he calls *diffusion*, the other *translation*, and it’s the latter that is vital for the establishment of a viable church.

Datema has actually introduced how the diffusion studies of Evertt Rogers were used in discussions of unreached peoples, (p. 50) and that analysis included the study of patterns in the adoption of new innovations. But Sanneh, according to John Flett, alerts us to the way religious diffusion has normally favored the Western carrier of the innovation.

With diffusion, “the ‘missionary culture’ is made the carrier and arbiter of the message... By it religion expands by means of its founding cultural warrants and is implanted in other societies primarily as a matter of cultural adoption...

Diffusion distrusts translation because...it involves “too radical a concession to indigenous values to be acceptable.” It permits a range of unexamined interpretive assumptions that define the faith and its authenticity.<sup>9</sup>

In religious diffusion, the carrier’s form of religious life (read institutions) is often maintained as it crosses linguistic, ethnic and social boundaries. Sanneh illustrates this type of religious diffusion poignantly in the orthopraxis of Islamic religious life, where we witness the way certain religious institutions are imposed in that diffusion.

Sanneh emphasizes, on the other hand, how Christian translation is an alternate process whereby the receptor population “appropriates the gospel” and translation commences indigenously. It’s this translation process that corrects the ethnocentrism of Christian diffusion and grounds a young ecclesial movement in authentic institutions. This perspective, then, promotes an understanding of a movement’s durability, viability or incorporability that requires more indigenous participation in its self-actualization. The diffusion of a movement across a people is at risk without this translation process.

Winter used to hint at this process when he would call for indigenous minds to interact directly with the biblical languages. He had encouraged this process in a highland tribe of Central America, and he would indeed champion Sanneh’s insight. But, I am also suggesting that Winter’s use of the term incorporable is an extension of the idea of translation to the institutional nature of movements. Translation should be an indigenous institutional process as well as a linguistic process in order to insure the emergence of a viable church with the capacity to incorporate believers.

### *Recession and Re-Incorporation*

In conclusion, let’s return to the question of demography and the categorizing of the post-Christian populations of Europe as unreached peoples. The concept of unincorporable also applies to these European peoples, for while they may not present any real linguistic or ethnic barrier per se, a case can be made that they actually are more difficult to reach and to enfold into Christian fellowships. As Winter and Koch introduced in their unimax definition, other factors apply to this barrier. Any previous success in translation, in conversion and in the contextualization of the church are now met with resistance, as if a people has been inoculated to the gospel. An increasingly difficult “stained glass barrier” makes them unincorporable.

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*WE MIGHT ADAPT THE LANGUAGE OF INCORPORATION and distinguish the post-Christian challenge of Europe as “re-incorporation.” It communicates the idea of “again,” and designates that a re-contextualization of the gospel is required.*

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Again, we might turn to the study of global Christianity and begin with the serial nature of a Christian movement and its pattern of advance and recession.<sup>10</sup> These studies help us assess the distinctive challenge of populations experiencing Christian recession, where resistance to the gospel is characterized by a powerful counter-actual (counteractive) persuasion against the gospel. A society like Europe has Christian roots which are historically remote, and a more recent secular consciousness has arisen that defines itself in opposition to that prior Christian civilization. This is a competing contradiction that has been nurtured within that civilization, and I believe it presents an “unreachedness” which is distinct from the unreached of Asia. Those who are “unincorporable” in this context require a different kind of evangelization.

I might suggest we adapt the language of incorporation and distinguish this post-Christian challenge as “re-incorporation.” This may be an awkward terminology in some ways, but it might offer us a better way to distinguish the nature of unreached in Europe from that in Asia. The use of a prefix like “re” communicates the idea of “again,” and designates that a re-translation or a re-contextualization of the gospel is required to enfold these post-modern, post-Christian peoples. This counteractive resistance presents a new kind of barrier, one not to be confused with the original challenge of translation and contextualization required in unreached peoples whose societies have never witnessed a missiological breakthrough.

Historically we have used terms like renewal, reformation, revitalization or even rebirth (renaissance) to describe the return of a Christian impulse. But as I suggested, re-translation or re-contextualization might be actually more appropriate for the Christian revision needed today. I have no desire to be emphatic; I only wish to promote a better terminology that cuts through the ambiguities. It seems a term like re-incorporation would immediately alert us to a different type of unreached.

This could also distinguish Europe’s unreached from the challenge we are seeing in places like Korea today, where a strong Christian movement has yet to penetrate a large and entrenched segment of Buddhist society. The Christianization of Europe has impacted the social structure, values and ethics of an entire society, but this is not the case with a large percentage of Korean society. While the Korean church is also looking for ways to re-translate

and re-contextualize the gospel for the unreached in Korean society,<sup>11</sup> a major portion of the resistance they confront appears essentially to be a religious reaction to the Christian world. It is not counteractive in the same way as a receding Christendom that leaves significant traces of its historic influence. Again, the term re-incorporation encourages us to examine the nature of counteractive (post-Christian European) or reactionary (Korean) barriers in assimilating new believers.

Ultimately, gangly and awkward terms like un-incorporable or re-incorporation won’t survive. This is unfortunate in my estimation. Terms should converge more closely with the concepts and realities they represent. That convergence would help us maintain a missiological accuracy in our mission mobilization. Frontier missiology must invite better terminology if it’s going to direct attention to the strategic issue of viable, durable church movements. I think Winter got closer to that convergence with the term unincorporable. **IJFM**

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Gina Zurlo is presently doing research on Barrett as part of her role with The Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Seminary in South Hamilton, MA.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, “Finishing The Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed., eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 535–6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> George Yip, “Introducing Post-Postmodern Missiology,” *EMQ*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Copyright © 2016 Billy Graham Center for Evangelism), 262–270.

<sup>5</sup> Winter and Koch, 535–6.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Keller, “Movements and Institutions” in *Center Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 337–53.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1987), 46.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>9</sup> John G. Flett, *Apostolicity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2016), 271.

<sup>10</sup> See Andrew Walls on Latourette’s historical perspective in, “A History of the Expansion of Christianity Reconsidered: Assessing Christian Progress and Decline,” in *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 12f.

<sup>11</sup> See an example in Mantae Kim’s “The Ancestral Rite in Korea: Its Significance and Contextualization from an Evangelical Perspective,” *IJFM* 32:3, Fall (2015): 117–127.



Unreached

# An Evaluation of Church Growth

by Paul G. Hiebert

*This short presentation is one of the many unpublished pieces lodged in the archives of Paul Hiebert at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. It is still undetermined just where and when Hiebert made this particular presentation to leadership in his own Mennonite Brethren denomination, but hopefully this printing in the IJFM may help connect us with the precise historical occasion. You are invited to access Hiebert's archives at [www.hiebertglobalcenter.org](http://www.hiebertglobalcenter.org).*

**L**ike many other Protestant churches in North America, the Mennonite Brethren Church has been forced to reevaluate itself in the light of the rapid changes occurring in North American society, and its place in that society. Like many, it has become painfully aware that it has not effectively reached out to that society. As long as we were a cultural enclave this question was not so central to our thought—we evangelized at a distance—but as we joined mainstream evangelicalism this did become a problem for us. Its growth has been slow and largely due to biological increase.

In trying to find a solution, we have been tempted to turn to the Church Growth Movement (CGM) as a solution. This movement has influenced us increasingly, both on the surface level of methods for outreach and church growth, but also on the deeper level of presuppositions of what the church is to be in our modern setting.

It is important now, after more than two decades of increasing use of this theory, to evaluate it and its fruit. Others who are more informed than I will examine the specific impact of Church Growth on the Mennonite Brethren (MB) Churches. I will limit myself to some general comments regarding the contributions and weaknesses of the movement as a whole.

## *Contributions of Church Growth Theory*

In our discussions, it is important to look at the contributions of Church Growth to churches that have become involved with it. Many of these have impacted us as MB as well.

### **Refocusing Our Priorities**

In the first place the Church Growth Movement refocused our attention on the priorities of our mission to the world. Over time, it has been easy for us to lose sight of the big picture, and to focus our attention on building and maintaining existing programs.

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*Paul Gordon Hiebert was born in India to second generation Mennonite Brethren missionaries, where he also served as a missionary. As a mission anthropologist he served on the faculties of Fuller Seminary (1977–1990) and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1990–2007). A vigorous researcher who authored twelve books and published over 150 articles in various academic journals, his ideas on conversion (contrasting “bounded-set” vs. “centered-set” thinking), critical contextualization, split-level Christianity (the flaw of the excluded middle), and self-theologizing became core concepts in missiology.*

It is crucial that we as MB step back periodically and evaluate everything we do in the light of our central vision. It is too easy to be content with the status quo, and with turning our attention upon ourselves as Christians, rather than living—really living—in the light of the fact that we are called to minister in a lost and dying world.

Church Growth constantly asks whether our programs and actions lead to the growth of churches. It will not let us turn away from this central goal.

### Focus on the Church

A second contribution of Church Growth is its redefinition of our central goal as planting churches. The major thrust verbalized in missions until this century was evangelism—leading people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. The result, too often, was rapid growth in Christians, but a lack of strong churches that were able to nurture new believers and continue the outreach of the gospel. By stressing the “Church,” the CGM reminds us that evangelism is not enough. Believers need to be incorporated in worshipping and nurturing communities if they are to stand in a non-Christian world.

### Awareness of Social Contexts

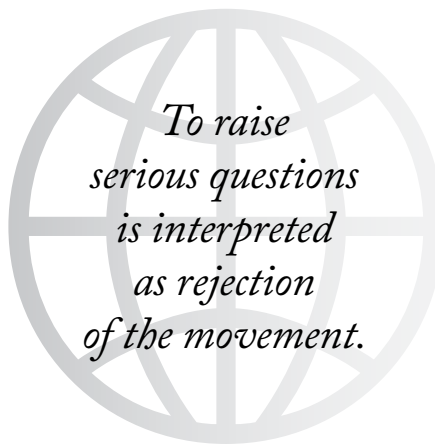
A third contribution of the CGM is its attention to social contexts. Early missionaries were very aware of these contexts in other societies, but tended to equate them with paganism. Christianity was equated with western culture. Wilbert Shenk writes,

The seventeenth-century New England Puritan missionaries largely set the course for modern missions. They defined their task as preaching the gospel so that Native Americans would be converted and receive personal salvation. But early in their missionary experience these New Englanders concluded that Indian converts could only be Christians if they were “civilized.” The model by which they measured their converts was English Puritan civilization. These missionaries felt compassion and responsibility for their

converts. They gathered these new Christians into churches for nurture and discipline and set up programs to transform Christian Indians into English Puritans (1980, 35).

The Church Growth Movement is part of the anti-colonialism that emerged after world war II. It affirms both the reality, and basic utility, if not goodness, of human social systems. They need not be changed in conversion. Rather, the church must work at changing them over time.

Earlier the mission movement focused on geography: on reaching India, Africa and Latin America. The CGM pointed out that the real barriers between people are social, not geographic. We need, therefore, to understand



social structures and social dynamics in order to understand how people respond to the Gospel.

In particular, the CGM makes us aware of social differences. People in an Indian or American village often do not belong to the same social group. We cannot assume that because we have planted a church in one community, that we have evangelized the neighborhood. We have to understand the social context to evangelize a town or city.

The CGM, therefore, led us to think in terms of new concepts. “Homogeneous units,” “people groups,” “multi individual conversions,” “receptivity and resistance,” and “felt needs” became part of our jargon.

### Solid Research

In founding the CGM, Dr. McGavran was insistent that our planning and action be based on careful research, not on isolated illustrations and hunches. He wanted hard thinking, and this, in his day meant science. He, therefore, insisted that the CGM was a science. Wishful thinking and pep talks would not do in a hard, real world.

This insistence on scientific research is the major reason for quantification and statistics in studying the growth of the church. One might argue with a particular measure, but one must use some measure to determine what really is going on. In particular, the CGM has provided us with macro-statistics which are useful in planning overall strategies for reaching whole nations and neighborhoods.

Good research is important for good planning. It challenges our unfounded notions about the way things are. It forces us to ask new and difficult questions that need to be raised.

### Critique of Church Growth Theory

As with any movement, there are areas of weakness in the Church Growth Movement. These are particularly difficult to deal with because the movement is polemical in its stance, not irenic. Church Growth theories are presented as facts, and not open to debate and revision. One is either “for” or “against” the movement. To raise serious questions about parts of it is interpreted as a rejection of the whole of the movement’s findings.

A second reason it is hard to critique the CGM is that its goals are good. It calls us back to evangelism and church planting. To question its methods is often seen as questioning its goals. For example, when we call for “whole ministries” or for “qualitative growth,” we are charged with not being for quantitative growth in believers and churches.

Recognizing this, there are a number of areas where we must examine the

CGM more closely to understand and evaluate its foundations.

### Church Growth and Theology

The first area of concern is the theological foundations of the CGM. Dr. McGavran came from a denomination that had no strong theological commitments. It should not surprise us, therefore, that while he had a deep passion for saving the lost, he did not lay strong theological foundations for the CGM. It was Allan Tippett who provided more lasting theological reflections for the movement.<sup>1</sup>

The need for theological reflection is seen in the lack of theological understandings of the Church. Considerable effort is given to defining Growth, little to defining Church. In part this explains the debate between McGavran and his critics such as Rene Padilla. For McGavran, the church is any gathering of the saved. Issues such as the unity of the church are the fruit of the church. They should appear in time. Padilla notes that the unity of the church is itself part of the Gospel (1982).<sup>2</sup> It is the mystery revealed to us in Christ (Eph. 3:3–9). Without it we do not have the church. We may have a religious club, just as the Pharisees had a religious club. But we do not have the church.

The lack of a theological definition of what constitutes the church reduces the church in the CGM to the simplest common denominator. The pressure, then, is for churches such as ours to give up what we feel are essential parts of the gospel—such as the emphasis on peace—to achieve growth. Doctrinal matters are left to “perfecting,” which someone must do sometime, but is not of real concern in the CGM. Its focus is on “discipling.”

This sharp distinction between “discipling” and “perfecting” leads John Howard Yoder and others to wonder whether anyone will get around to “perfecting,” which obviously is secondary to “discipling.” The distinction

*There's a problem with the social theories of Church Growth. The structuralist sociology of the 1960s fits best with tribal and peasant societies.*

also led to the debate between McGavran and Edwin Orr over the relationship of revivals and church growth. Orr held that true revivals generally lead to rapid church growth. McGavran denied this, and assigned revivals to the “perfecting” of the saints. Growth, he argued, cannot await times of spiritual revival. It is achieved by systematic planning and effort aimed at the growth of the church.

Before we embrace CG theory, we need to define theologically what we mean by the church, justification and sanctification, and the relationships between these three.

### Church Growth and Science

The second area of concern is “science.” McGavran is clear, Church Growth is a science. Specifically it is sociology. More specifically, it is structuralist sociology of the 1930–1960s. This examined the structural units that make up a society, and the relationship between them.

The value of CG is that it makes us aware of social structures and their importance in the lives of people. Social walls can be as hard to cross as geographic distances which shaped early mission strategies. Now we speak not of going to “Nigeria” but to a “people-group” such as the Ibo, Yoruba or Hausa. We don’t talk of Mahbubnagar District, but of the Merchants, Washermen and Gypsies.

CG has also helped us understand group dynamics, such as group conversions, “mass movements” or “people movements,” and the importance of the church as a community that provides a social haven for new converts.

There are problems here, however. In the first place, there is a problem with the social theories of CG. The

structuralist sociology of the 1960s fits best with tribal and peasant societies. It does not help us much in understanding modern urban settings. In any city there are pockets of rural peoples such as Korean immigrants in L. A. Most fully urban people, however, do not belong to one homogeneous unit. Rather they participate in many “social frames” and interact with many different “peoples” in networks, institutions and associations. This, in part, is the reason we do not see “people movements” in cities. A structuralist sociology is not adequate for analyzing modern urban settings.

Structuralist sociology also has a static view of the social order. Societies are seen as made up of homogeneous units related to each other in formal ways. The fact is that most of the modern world is in rapid flux, and today’s homogenous units are fragmented tomorrow. One case illustrates the point. There is a massive migration of Koreans to L. A. and Korean pastors are rapidly starting Korean churches (more than 600 at the last count). These churches are running into deep trouble (Hiebert and Hertig 1991). The children of the immigrants (1.5 and 2 generation) want to be Americans, not Koreans. The Korean churches, however, are seeking to preserve the Korean culture. Consequently, in their rebellion against being “Korean,” an estimated 40% of the young American-Koreans raised in the churches are leaving Christianity. To them it has become identified with Koreanness. Studies of immigrants show that HU churches must break their homogeneity in three generations or they will die as the older immigrants pass away. Our own experience as MB immigrants is another illustration of the case.

If we want to make church planting a science (I will raise this issue later), we need to move beyond the structuralist sociology of the past. We need sociological models that include more sophisticated understandings of complexity and change. We also need to include the insights of anthropology and psychology which are largely absent in current CG theory.

The second problem with the current CGT from a scientific point of view is its scope. Sociology, particularly as used in CGT, provides us with a macro-analysis of a society. It is a “balcony” view that enables us to see the bigger picture of how a society is put together. This is why the CGT is particularly helpful for planners and top executives in charge of church planting.

CGT, however, provides us little insight into the “street level” view of society. This is why pastors and missionaries who are sent out to reach the “Drag strip” society, or the Baluch of Pakistan find themselves largely at a loss of what to do when they get there. It does not provide the field practitioners with methods for studying the local culture and social structure of the people to whom they have come, how to identify with them, or how to evangelize them and plant strong churches. These questions require other methods and principles for answers.

The third problem has to do with the social science methodologies used in the CGM. McGavran insisted on research and hard facts. In the CGM this has come to be equated with quantitative studies of churches such as membership growth/loss and number of churches planted. Over time there was a growing awareness of the need to measure the spiritual life of churches, and attempts were made to measure this. We cannot, however, directly measure qualitative characteristics. We need other methods to evaluate them. The CGM has largely overlooked the explosion of qualitative methods of analysis now emerging in the social sciences.

Even in quantitative analyses, however, the CGM has used a very weak methodological approach. It has tended to look at specific successful churches and sought to discover why they grow. This “case study” approach is the weakest level of scientific analysis. Its findings are illustrations at best. They cannot be used in this way to develop and test broad theories. A more rigorous scientific methodology would be to select twenty comparable churches, use ten as a control group and apply Church Growth Principles to the other ten, and measure the results in five or ten years. The tendency to look only at a few successful churches over simplifies social realities. It also looks at short range growth. It does not examine the big picture of twenty, fifty or a hundred years.



If we want to use CGT in our conference, we must move on to more sophisticated types of church analysis.

A fourth problem with the CGT has to do with its instrumentalist view of science. Science is seen as a “means” to achieve theological ends. The result is scientific “pragmatism.” It is not important to us that most scientists today reject this view of science. What is important is the place pragmatism plays in CGT. This will be discussed later.

### Science and Theology

Our most fundamental concern must be with the foundations of Church Growth. It claims to be a science. But how does science relate to missions, the church, and to the way God works in

the world? A corollary question is, what should the relationship be between the church and the cultures around it?

### *God's Action and Human Control*

Fundamental to science is the belief in human control. Science, as McGavran sees it, seeks to discover the laws that underlie reality. The social sciences search for the order underlying human behavior. If we know that order, we can get the desired results through human planning and effort.

The question arises: Is church planting the result of human effort or of God's divine activity? Obviously we must speak of both. The question here is one of priority and balance. Is church planting based primarily on human effort, or are we to wait upon God and seek his leading? To be sure, the Church Growth Movement calls for prayer and listening to God. But the real emphasis is on working in scientifically prescribed ways.

In recent years the CGM has emphasized prayer as one of its chief methods. But this only shows the tension I refer to. In Church Growth theory, the more we pray, the greater the results. Prayer, therefore, is not seen as primarily a relationship to God, but as a technique we use to plant churches. As Ellul points out (1963), a technological approach (the basis for science) in the end reduces everything to technique. Being is lost in doing. Relationships are lost in programs. And, if we are not careful, God is replaced by our activities.

### *Scientific Pragmatism and Theological Absolutes*

Key to the CGT approach to the relationship of science and theology is its view of science. McGavran wrote,

We teach men to be ruthless in regard to method. If it does not work to the glory of God and the extension of Christ's church, throw it away and get something which does. As to methods, we are fiercely pragmatic—a doctrine is something entirely different (1970, 3).

On the surface of it, this approach seems right. In fact, one might argue that McGavran did not understand the technical meaning of the word “pragmatism,” and the epistemological foundations (instrumentalism and relativism) that underlie it. If so, we need to re-word the approach we take towards the methods we use in church planting.

In fact, too often we have become “pragmatic” in the way we plant churches. This is reflected, on the surface, by our lack of theological discussions about the methods we use. At a deeper level, it is reflected in the uneasy alliance we have between “methods” and “goals” in our outreach program. At the deepest level it is seen in the fact that God is not an essential part of our methods as well as our goals. As one critique pointed out, we can use Church Growth methods to start Muslim mosques and Hindu temples as well as Christian churches.

An example of this pragmatic approach to church planting is the current discussion of which leadership style “works” to produce Church Growth. There is little discussion of the leadership styles of Jesus or of the early church. The style chosen is the one that “works.” This shows how deeply we have bought into pragmatism and American instrumentalism.

We need to rethink methodological “pragmatism” and seek to understand how God is working in the world. We need, also, to make sure that the methods we use are compatible with the message we bear, namely the Gospel. If methods and message are divorced, in the end the message itself is subverted.

### Science and Western Culture

A final area of caution must be noted: namely, is CG in danger of over contextualizing the gospel in a modern cultural setting? The gospel must be contextualized—in other words, it must be understood clearly in each cultural setting. But, we as Anabaptists believe, it must also be prophetic—seeking to

**T**he gospel must be contextualized, but it must also be prophetic—seeking to transform that culture in line with the Kingdom of God.

transform that culture in line with the standards set by the Kingdom of God. The church is always in danger of letting the context set the agenda rather than of calling that context to change.

One of the hallmarks of modernity is a mechanistic, technological approach to reality (Berger 1974, Ellul 1964). In the natural sciences this has led to factories and an engineering mentality that seeks to control nature. In the social sciences this same technological approach has led to bureaucracies and an engineering approach to human beings. This is seen, for example, in the M.B.O. (Management By Objective) style of management found in modern businesses. Goal setting, progress reports and amoral methods are characteristics of this culture.

To what extent can the church buy into this culture and still remain the church? At what point, in seeking to contextualize our church planting, have we lost the heart of our message and become a Christian club? This question must be on our agenda for discussion.

### Conclusions

It is not my purpose to reject the contributions CGT has made to the church and to our thinking. There is much we can learn. My concern, rather, is with the dogmatic stance we often find among Church Growth practitioners who appear to be unwilling to reexamine the foundations of CGT in the light of Scripture, and in the light of recent scientific developments.

We do, indeed, need better theories to inform our actions. We all have such theories, whether they are implicit or explicit in our thinking.

We also need more and better research to better understand the Gospel and the human contexts in which it must become incarnate.

Above all, we must turn again to God, to seek his guidance in our planning and acting. Human efforts can produce short-term successes, but in the long run, if God is not at the center both of our message and our methods, the churches we build, we build in vain. **IJFM**

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The vital role of Alan Tippett is clear in Harvie M. Conn, *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology, and Mission in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 153.

<sup>2</sup> Rene Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle,” *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January (1982).

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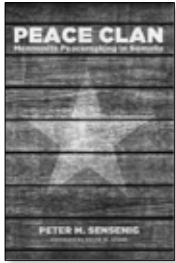
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# Book Reviews

*Peace Clan: Mennonite Peacemaking in Somalia*, by Peter Sensenig (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016, pp. 260)

—Reviewed by Jonathan Bornman



I was gripped by this book in which a fellow Mennonite peacemaker wrestles with the story of 60+ years of Mennonite witness and service in Somalia. At the center of the story is what happens when sincere disciples of two very different faiths meet in weakness: Somali Muslims and pacifist Mennonite missionaries and Mennonite

Central Committee workers. Sensenig works from primary sources, and many of the main players are still living, so the relationships continue. These ongoing relationships also lead to new connections. For example, in 2014, a group of Mennonite teachers visited the university in Hargeisa, by invitation of the Somaliland Ministry of Education.

The author draws extensively from John Paul Lederach, quoting from his writing on conflict transformation more than any other single source. Author Mark Gopin of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University is also a frequent source. Sensenig embraces the just peacemaking theory and practice pioneered by his mentor at Fuller Theological Seminary, Glen Stassen. The missiology of David Shenk runs deep throughout this book: keeping one's identity in Christ clear while welcoming and valuing the contribution of the other is a constant theme.

The chapter titled, "Salt, Light and Deeds," is the strongest. Mennonites in North America have struggled with how to understand our Great Commission calling and the Sermon on the Mount. Should we emphasize evangelism or service? With the clear eye of a theologian and the experience of an insider, the author uses the Mennonite experience in Somalia to illuminate this conundrum and point a way forward that is intellectually and biblically inviting. He argues that Mennonite peacemaking work in Somalia followed the mission Jesus gave his disciples in Matthew 5:13–16 to be a community of salt, light and deeds. Mennonite peacemakers use these terms to describe their commitments: salt refers to communal practices that witness to Jesus the Prince of Peace; light points towards God's saving work and elicits the cultural resources that will glorify God; deeds refer to

acts of service that reflect God's concern for the wellbeing of people. This kind of community embodies an alternative to the violence of the powers. Sensenig writes, "In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus initiates a family whose means and ends are peace—in Somali terms, a *peace clan*" (92).

In this same chapter, the call to discipleship and community, so foundational to Mennonite identity, is tied to the church. He writes,

From the beginning of the Mennonite presence in Somalia . . . the formation of fellowships of believers gathered around Jesus has been an indispensable goal. Witness to Jesus the Messiah was inseparable from the work of service to the Somali people in education and medicine. (92)

While reading about kinship, clan, and conflict, I was reminded of something I recently heard from Salim Munayer, "My future is bound to my enemy's future and my enemy's future is bound to mine." Munayer is the founder of Musalaha (arabic for reconciliation), an organization that works towards reconciliation in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Mennonites have learned through the Somali encounter how closely tied enemies are to each other and that solutions for peace are bound up in mutual relationships of respect and honor.

"What can it possibly mean when someone identifies as a Somali Muslim Mennonite" (220)? This question appears in the opening chapter and the concluding one. Sensenig argues that this is not an oxymoron if Mennonites are understood as a peace clan providing the imaginative framework for Muslims and Mennonites to partner together. He is proposing that the peace clan is different than the church. The peace clan centers its identity on peacemaking. The church's identity is centered on Jesus crucified and resurrected. If this is the case, then a Somali Muslim Mennonite makes sense . . . it is an identification with the peacemaking commitment of Mennonites. From my Anabaptist theological perspective, peacemaking without Jesus who entered into suffering and carried the cross is powerless to bring forgiveness and reconciliation. Peacemaking is not singularly based on just the teaching of Jesus—Jesus lived it. Jesus absorbed violence and hatred and returned grace and mercy. Mennonite peacemakers in Somalia lived what Dr. Larycia Hawkins calls "embodied solidarity"; knowing their suffering Lord Jesus, they were empowered to enter fully into the life of their communities.

Sensenig quite rightly and clearly makes the point that Mennonite peacemakers should draw on any and all sources for peacemaking. He makes a strong case for the resourcefulness of Sufi peacemaking traditions and an appeal to draw on Qur'anic sources as well. The partnership between Mennonites and Muslims in Somalia is a remarkable example, of which peacemakers of all backgrounds must take note!

**H**e is proposing that the peace clan is different than the church. The peace clan centers its identity on peacemaking. The church's identity is centered on Jesus crucified and resurrected.

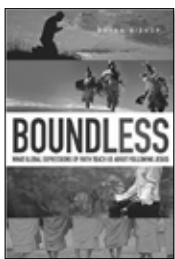
The peace clan is described as “a salty, yeasty minority identity” (230)! Anabaptists embodying a Jesus-centered pacifism represent a challenge to the larger evangelical movement that gives theological assent to the use of violence in certain contexts. Studying the Somali Sufis with their strong connections to pre-Islamic peacemaking traditions is important. Such a minority-witness is vitally important to finding peaceful solutions to complex, intractable conflicts.

Mennonite institutions should consider making this text required reading for anyone engaged in theology, missiology, peacemaking, service or witness in their many forms. Peacemakers from other traditions will also benefit from this research. Why?

Mennonites have understood rightly that the seeds of peace are sown in relationship, founded on the hope that God is calling out a peace clan who can teach one another how to walk in the light of the Lord. (235)

*Boundless: What Global Expressions of Faith Teach us about Following Jesus*, Studies in the History of Christian Missions, by Bryan Bishop (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015, pp. 240)

—Reviewed by Darren Duerksen



**D**iscussions about global Christianity, including religious “insider movements,” are often of great interest to missionaries and scholars. They are not, however, a regular topic of conversation for most regular western and American Christians. For the latter, information about global

Christianity often only comes through short “mission reports” in newsletters or at church. Those who have gone a little deeper and have become familiar with controversies such as insider movements may only hear of them through the impassioned summaries and critiques of certain pastors, Christian leaders, or website blogs.

Bryan Bishop’s book seeks to fill the gap between the Christian academy and the Christian sound bite, providing for western Christians an introduction to Christ-followers from various cultural and religious contexts. He focuses on those who have not followed traditional, western patterns of

worship and have instead been influenced by (and utilize) various local patterns of worship and community. He has a particular, though not exclusive, interest in “C5 movements” (as introduced by John Travis on his C-scale), or those who follow Christ but remain a part of their Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Native American, or other religious communities. He wants to understand these and similar movements that challenge the traditional western patterns of doing church.

Although he seeks to understand these movements, his deeper question regards what these movements might teach the western Church in a time of declining membership. As more and more Christian young people leave the churches they grew up in, and claim that their religious affiliation is “none,” Bishop wonders,

Might some of the unaffiliated “nones” in the United States come back to Jesus if they didn’t have to enter traditional evangelical Christian culture to find Him? ... Could they also benefit from other insights from overseas? Could they find ways to follow Jesus that fit within their own styles and meeting places? (19)

To explore these questions in more depth, Bishop introduces us in Part 1 to “the insiders” from a variety of contexts. Chapter 3 starts in India where he describes some Hindu followers of Christ who meet together for *satsang*, or truth-gatherings. One of them is Pradip, a young man who miraculously began following Jesus exclusively while remaining a part of his Hindu family and hosting a Christ-centered *satsang* in their home. Bishop then describes in chapter 4 his interactions with a few of the many Christ-focused Muslim *jamaats* (mosques) in Bangladesh. Some of these maintain a Muslim identity and others have a more Christian identity. However, all of them, as Bishop describes them, seek to maintain good relationships with their Muslim families and communities in unique ways. In chapter 5, Bishop shifts to Thailand and describes his conversations with believers from Buddhist backgrounds. Though most of the believers Bishop describes have chosen to be “Christian” in their identity, they are also seeking to integrate Thai Buddhist traditions into their Christian faith in ways that are perhaps unique from traditional Thai churches. Finally, in chapter 6, Bishop describes some Native American Christ-focused powwows in the US and Canada. I particularly enjoyed the discussion he has with “Sarah” as she articulately shares the way her journey of faith and her Native American identity have converged. Though brief, each of the moving personal vignettes in these four chapters give a helpful introduction to diverse movements to Christ: peoples’ own stories told in their own words. This section is certainly a strength of this book.

*B*ishop becomes uncomfortable with some of what he encounters in insider movements, but, instead of turning to quick and unequivocal conclusions, he acknowledges that his discomfort may stem from his own cultural location.

In Part 2, Bishop seeks to synthesize all he's seen into four basic principles that he feels, "demolish unnecessary barriers that believers in Jesus have built up around God, barriers that aren't biblical at all" (101). The first is the centrality of the Bible for these groups, the pervasiveness of which is often doubted by skeptical outsiders. He goes on to talk about the ways in which these and other groups are oral and value the art of storytelling. The second is the centrality of Christ. In this regard, Bishop discusses Paul Hiebert's concept of "centered sets" to help explain the self-described "focus on following Jesus" rather than on "changing religious communities." The third principle concerns turning the "pagan into holy," and Bishop tracks the various ways in which God's people have appropriated (and consecrated) rituals and symbols from various cultures and religions in order to worship God. In this he rightly notes how Christians (and Protestants in particular), in our under-emphasis on ritual, have missed out on the richness that such rituals often add to faith. A final principle is the desire to seek the whole truth. Here Bishop suggests, along with evangelical theologians such as Gerald McDermott, Christians can learn important things about God by respectfully listening to other religions. In this Bishop seeks a confident-but-humble posture, asserting, "We're not saying we know nothing. We're just saying we don't know everything" (152).

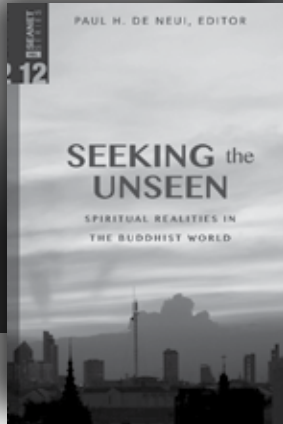
Part 3 is perhaps the most interesting, eclectic, and slightly frustrating part of the book. In chapters 12 and 14 Bishop returns to his question of what these movements and themes might teach western churches and ministries among the "nones" of the millennial generation. He suggests that we could adapt our religious words and vocabulary, find new locations to meet, find ways to partner with other religious groups on common causes, and adapt ways of praying that reflect those of other religions, while still focusing on Jesus. Each of these are intriguing applications, but each could use more elaboration.

In chapter 13, Bishop makes an interesting shift. Through some further research, he finds and acknowledges that some of the insider movements he has seen are sometimes "messy." He also dives more deeply into questions that he previously skirted, such as how insider movements relate to other churches and their long-term witness and viability. He also discusses the "western-styled" churches in many countries and their apparent popularity with certain segments of society. How is it that some want a "western-looking" church while others in their same country are drawn to an insider approach? While brief, Bishop is to be commended for acknowledging and discussing tough issues, even if they are often too briefly addressed.

Still another strength, in my opinion, comes when Bishop starts to become uncomfortable with some of what he is encountering in insider movements. He voices some of his questions but, instead of turning to quick and unequivocal conclusions, he acknowledges that his discomfort may in part stem from his own cultural location. He recognizes that Christian norms continue to change, and that we need to place much more trust in the mysterious (to us) work of the Holy Spirit than we sometimes do.

The book does have some weaknesses. One of the main weaknesses is Bishop's characterization of non-western, non-insider movement churches. To make his point about the legitimacy of and need for more contextual expressions of church, he sometimes refers to anything non-insider as exported or western Christianity. For example, he uses the example of the West's export of the hamburger as an (unfortunate) analogy about how non-western countries have received and accepted a homogenous "hamburger" Christianity. Despite some of the well-known ethnocentric legacies of missionaries, it does a disservice to non-western churches to claim that they are all homogeneously western or, as Bishop claims, that "the format for faith in Jesus appears pretty much the same all over the world" (28). This does not do justice to the enormous amounts of cultural and theological diversity that exist in global Christianity. In addition, it implies that the leaders and members of these churches simply accepted and continue to use a western version of the faith wholesale without adapting it. It is this kind of portrayal that Lamin Sanneh and others have skillfully critiqued, helping us see that from the earliest times new Christians have had agency, adapting and making the faith their own, even if retaining some of the practices taught by western missionaries.

But this is not to negate Bishop's overall point: Christianity *is* often experienced as foreign (and "Other") in various cultures and religions, and fresh expressions of faith that flow from and remain inside cultural communities are certainly one reaction to this. Also, there is most certainly a need for western Christians to appreciate and learn from the diverse ways these Christ-followers express their faith. In this, Bishop's work shines, and will provide an accessible introduction to these little-known and often-misunderstood moves of God's Spirit. **IJFM**



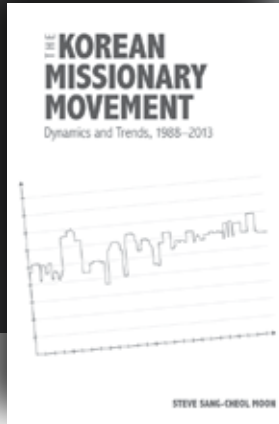
## Seeking the Unseen (SEANET 12) *Spiritual Realities in the Buddhist World*

Paul H. De Neui, Editor

Buddhism claims no god, yet spiritual realities abound in popular practice. What are these realities? What do they mean to the practitioners? How can understanding these realities inform Christ-followers seeking to communicate the good news of Jesus in ways that all can understand and relate to? In answer to these and other questions, SEANET proudly presents its twelfth volume, *Seeking the Unseen: Spiritual Realities in the Buddhist World*. Christian practitioners from thirteen different Buddhist cultures share insights gained from their wide ranging experiences and perspectives. From Sri Lanka to Japan, from China to the Philippines, these women and men, Asian and Western, present on a topic that is often missing in mission literature today. And for readers seeking personal insight into the growing spiritual complexities of their own place in the postmodern world, lessons from these authors will guide you with practical principles from engaging, firsthand cultural encounters.

List Price ~~\$17.99~~ • **Our Price \$14.39**

ISBN: 978-0-87808-046-5  
Paul H. De Neui (Editor)  
WCL | Pages 340 | Paperback 2016



## The Korean Missionary Movement

*Dynamics and Trends, 1988-2013*

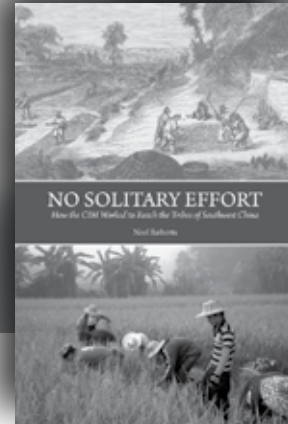
Steve Sang-Cheol Moon, Author

This book provides the most thorough, penetrating analysis of trends in Korean missions to date. Seasoned researcher Steve Sang-Cheol Moon maps the relatively recent rise and explosive growth of the Korean missionary movement, studying the mission force and significant themes in its experience over a twenty-five-year period. These articles and papers supply data on every facet: mission fields and ministry foci; finances; age, marriage, family, and general demographics; training and credentials; burnout and attrition; education of missionary children; leadership trends; and global partnership.

These chapters do not merely catalogue statistics—they probe beneath the surface to ask hard questions and set priorities for Korean missions. Moon explores painful subjects such as the 2007 hostage incident involving short-term workers in Afghanistan, and chronic concerns like workaholic and missionaries' retirement. Ultimately, however, he finds much to commend and celebrate, tracing God's providence in making Korea, within the span of a few decades, a dynamic leader in global missions.

List Price ~~\$24.99~~ • **Our Price \$19.99**

ISBN: 978-0-87808-487-6  
Steve Sang-Cheol Moon (Author)  
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## No Solitary Effort

*How the CIM Worked to Reach the Tribes of Southwest China*

Neel Roberts, Author

*No Solitary Effort* describes how members of the China Inland Mission engaged the tribes of Southwest China as part of their comprehensive plan to evangelize all of China from 1865 to 1951. That endeavor required the combined lifelong efforts of numerous missionaries, spanned several generations, and was invariably affected by events and decisions that occurred thousands of miles from where the actual ministry was taking place. The task was incomplete when the missionaries were forced to leave, but the foundations for the Church which were laid have stood. This book addresses the great challenges to cooperation that faced the missionaries. It also reveals the rich rewards that were obtained by the united efforts of committed Christians who had no timetable for withdrawal, but only an unwavering commitment to work together until the task was accomplished.

List Price ~~\$14.99~~ • **Our Price \$11.99**

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Neel Roberts (Author)  
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# In Others' Words

*Editor's Note: In this department, we highlight resources outside of the IJFM: other journals, print resources, DVDs, web sites, blogs, videos, etc. Standard disclaimers on content apply. Due to the length of many web addresses, we sometimes give just the title of the resource, the main web address, or a suggested search phrase. Finally, please note that this April–June 2016 issue is partly composed of material created later in 2016. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience caused by such anachronisms.*

## Historic Globalization Backlash Parallels To Today?

An interesting post from *The Economist* entitled “[Globalization Backlash Revisited](#)” (September 20, 2016) takes a historical look at the backlash to globalization in the late 1800s and draws comparisons with today: the rise of terrorism, restrictions on immigration, industrial agitation, and the rise of giant corporations. Are these parallels missiologically significant?

For example, why do some waves of immigrants assimilate, while others do not? What impact does this ultimately have on a democratic society? On freedom of religion? Or on the reception given to refugees? These questions and more are examined by looking at both France and Israel in an interesting August 31st article: “[France's Multicultural Dystopia](#)” in *The American Conservative*.

## A Post-Postmodern Missiology?

The July 2016 issue of *EMQ* contains a short article by George Yip entitled “[Introducing Post-Postmodern Missiology](#).” In just a few paragraphs, Yip introduces readers to a flurry of newer anthropological terms and concepts. This necessary attempt to critique an essentialist view of culture and people groups issues an important call for more nuance across the board. Still, some of Yip's assessment is surprisingly reductionist: Can one really blame foreign missionaries for the emergence of a “lost tribes of Israel” theology in a Krygyz church because of an overemphasis on contextualization and essentialized culture?

## More Refugee Trauma—and a Conference About Refugees and the Church

Here are three follow-ups to IOW's focus on refugees in *IJFM* 33:1. [The Economist](#), September 10, 2016, relates that

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, it triggered one of the largest refugee outflows since the second world war. For every year after until 2014, Afghanistan was [the world's biggest source of refugees](#). Most of those who fled crossed the border into Pakistan. By the end of last year 1.5 m Afghans were living in Pakistan. Only Turkey hosts more refugees. Now Pakistan's government wants to send the Afghans back.

*Christianity Today* (August 22) paints a vivid picture of the deteriorating Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon, where

one out of every three persons is now a Syrian refugee (1.5 million out of Lebanon's total population of 4.5 million): <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/september/grapes-of-wrath-syrian-refugees-lebanon-bekaa-valley.html>.

“[Evangelicals Ignore G.O.P. by Embracing Syrian Refugees](#)” is an encouraging article from *The New York Times* (September 6th) on the response of American evangelicals to the thousands of Syrian refugees finally arriving on US soil.

“[The Refugee and the Body of Christ](#),” a consultation held this past June in Beirut and sponsored by the Institute for Middle East Studies, has some thoughtful responses from participants to the event. Also, check out the other perceptive blogs on [the IMES website](#).

## New Book About Diaspora Missiology Just Published

On his [Borderless](#) blog, Cody Lorange calls our attention to *Scattered and Gathered: A Global Compendium of Diaspora Missiology*. This April 2016 publication, which is filled with practical ideas and the biblical theologies that underpin them, contains many presentations from the March 2015 Lausanne Movement's Global Diaspora Forum in Manila. You can peruse [the table of contents](#) at amazon.com.

## Is Religion Just a Post-Enlightenment Construct?

In Warrick Farah's most recent post on [Circumpolar](#) (August 12, 2016), he mentions the dialogue surrounding the concept of religion as a post-enlightenment construct, superimposed on ancient peoples and traditions. He refers to Brent Nongbri's 2013 book called *Before Religion* (Yale University Press). [Read Nongbri's excellent introduction free online](#). Farah also suggests H. L. Richard's recent *Missiology* article “[New Paradigms for Religion, Multiple Religious Belonging, and Insider Movements](#)” as well as Richard's earlier article in *IJFM* 31:4 called “[Religious Syncretism as a Syncretistic Concept: The Inadequacy of the 'World Religions' Paradigm in Cross-Cultural Encounter](#).”

## *The Image of God in an Image-Driven Age*

[Indigenous Jesus](#) blog discusses Victoria Emily Jones' review of *The Image of God in an Image-Driven Age*. Missiologists will find Philip Jenkins' essay of particular interest:

Drawing its title from [the Dutch Calvinist word for the iconoclastic riots of the sixteenth-century](#), “The Storm of Images: The Image of God in Global Faith,” (chapter 12) by Philip Jenkins touches on visual images of the divine but is more broadly about conceptual understandings of God and their dependency on culture. “The task for theologians in the modern world,” writes Jenkins, “is to strip away the Western accretions to recover a gospel in its natural social setting. Put another way, we are, in our specific culture and cultures, made in God's image” (253). **IJFM**



Whether you're a Perspectives instructor, student, or coordinator, you can continue to explore issues raised in the course reader and study guide in greater depth in **IJFM**. For ease of reference, each **IJFM** article in the table below is tied thematically to one or more of the 15 Perspectives lessons, divided into four sections: Biblical (B), Historical (H), Cultural (C) and Strategic (S). *Disclaimer: The table below shows where the content of a given article might fit; it does not imply endorsement of a particular article by the editors of the Perspectives materials.* For sake of space, the table only includes lessons related to the articles in a given **IJFM** issue. To learn more about the Perspectives course, including a list of classes, visit [www.perspectives.org](http://www.perspectives.org).

## Articles in IJFM 33:2

	Lesson 7: Eras of Mission History (H)	Lesson 9: The Task Remaining (H)	Lesson 13: The Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches (S)	Lesson 14: Pioneer Church Planting (S)
<b>Defining "Unreached": A Short History</b> Dave Datema (pp. 45–71)	X	X		X
<b>Editorial Reflections: The Unfortunate Unmarketability of "Unincorporable"</b> Brad Gill (pp. 72–76)		X		X
<b>An Evaluation of Church Growth</b> Paul G. Hiebert (pp. 77–81)		X	X	

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## Digest

# VARANASI

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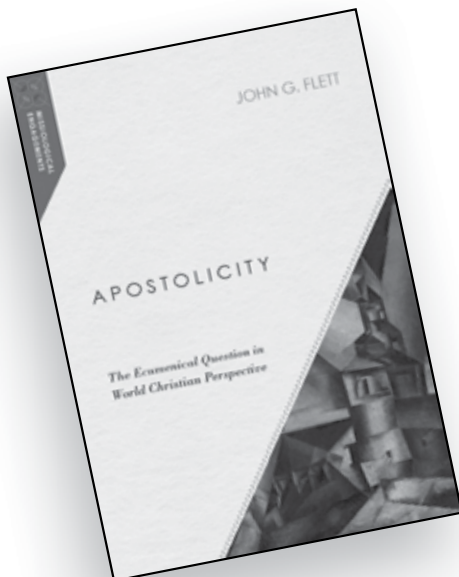
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