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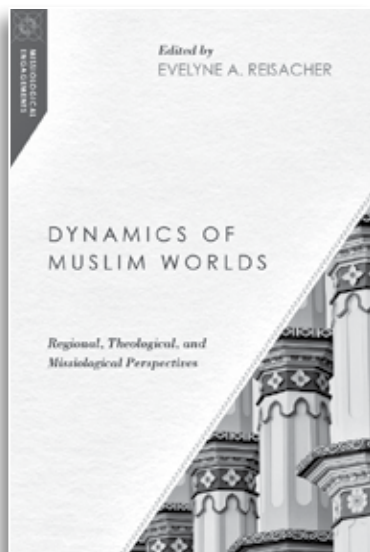
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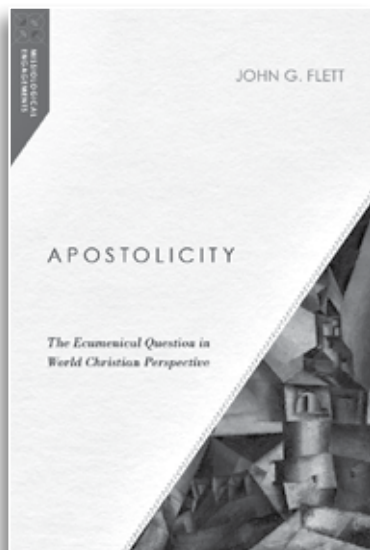
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Slide Rule Missiology in an Age of Globalization

When I arrived at Fuller Seminary in the mid-70s, I noticed something surprising: the missionaries at the School of World Mission carried slide rules. The personal computer would soon arrive, but until then this nifty little mechanical ruler would calculate growth rates of church movements across the world. Missiologically very progressive in its day, it gave the school a bit of a nerdy ethos. Quantifying church growth was a new way to track responsiveness among peoples, one that indicated where your mission might want to shift more of its personnel and resources.

This focus on measurement, combined with his anthropological and historical acumen, ultimately led Ralph Winter (the slide rule personified) to promote a statistical breakdown of the world's unreached peoples. Although his initial 1974 assessment has continued to be updated and reinterpreted, demographers of mission have attempted to keep this same unreached emphasis before the church with even more graphic precision.

But, when it comes to statistics, the way we interpret the data is crucial. Quantitative analysis is only as good as the definitions we use to filter the data. Over the past year and a half, R. W. Lewis has been discussing with mission demographers the definitions they use to count unreached peoples. Her article (p. 5) argues that something is missing in some of our definitions, and that this something has grave consequences for how we understand the frontier mission task. She offers a comprehensive rationale for rethinking our statistical understanding of the unreached and suggests a re-labeling of her own: "frontier peoples."

Numbers aren't everything. Some at the ground level of more recent movements to Christ recognize the shortcomings of mere quantification. Kevin Higgins argues for qualitative criteria that have biblical warrant and have been field-tested (p. 21). He boils it down to four characteristics that will ensure the growth of such movements.

Ken Chan's assessment of the Bible translation issues in the minority languages of China (p. 29) alerts us to the complexities of multilingualism, pluralism and urbanization today. Translation strategies for minorities must take into account the "dotted lines" around peoples, lines once considered more solid. If the global migration of peoples shows us anything, it's that traditional boundaries of identity are porous. As "peoples" interact with new languages and cultures in new settings, their

Editorial continued on p. 4

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sense of ethnic “groupness” expands. But rather than melt down in the heat of globalization, an ethnicity will likely become more elastic—stretching across a continuum of identities, cultures, and languages with remarkable hybridity and dexterity. In other cases, the opposite will occur: it will become more rigid, defensive, and xenophobic, stiff-arming assimilation and accommodation. The subtleties of that continuum are a bit too elusive for quantitative analysis; more thorough qualitative research is needed.

Chan's comments about translation and minority languages remind me of the profound insights found in Willie James Jennings' recent book, *The Christian Imagination*.¹ While Jennings focuses on Africa and on the origins of racial imagination in the colonial project, we can apply his theological and historical study to all that Chan claims is happening on the frontiers of China. Jennings contends that any focus on translation can be too narrow, hiding the crucial reality that Chan is actually studying in his article: the *joining* of peoples.² The mapping out of minority peoples can make Bible

translation a simple bridge between two distinct groups, but Jennings would applaud Chan's effort to broaden the issues. We must be aware of the concurrent flows, influences, distortions, tragedies, frustrations and confusion that accompany the joining of peoples. These dynamics complicate translation strategy or any attempt at a missiological breakthrough. And they add a realistic fuzziness to the boundaries of unreached people groups.

Our understanding of unreached peoples must draw upon the insights of both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The deductive reasoning behind a slide rule approach to mapping unreached peoples will fall short of perceiving all the phenomena that surround these peoples and their contexts. As migration and mixing accelerate in this globalizing age, we must embark on a journey³ to discover the full and relevant dynamics surrounding unreached peoples.

Any reassessment of unreached peoples stands on the shoulders of thrilling kingdom advance. Gene Daniels and John Becker summarize the recent

Vision 5:9 conference in Thailand (p. 39). More than one thousand seasoned field personnel met this past October to celebrate and confer on future ministry in the Muslim world. Over half of the participants were from the Global South (and a quarter from Muslim backgrounds). Our reassessment of unreached Muslim peoples stands to gain from the perceptions emerging from these global workers.

Put the ISFM 2018 conference (in conjunction with the EMS 2018 National Conference) on your calendar—October 12–14, 2018. Keep tabs on registration and the program at emsweb.org.

In Him,



Brad Gill
Senior Editor, *IJFM*

Endnotes

¹ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2010).

² *Ibid.*, 154–161.

³ Richard L. Starcher, Leanne M. Dzubinski and Jamie N. Sanchez, “Rigorous Missiological Research Using Qualitative Inquiry,” in *Missiology* Vol. 46, Issue 1 (2018): 50–66.

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.

Reassessing the Frontiers

Losing Sight of the Frontier Mission Task: What's Gone Wrong with the Demographics?

by R. W. Lewis

I stared in shock at the bar graph. It was on the website of one of the most extensive databases of *unreached people groups* (UPGs) in the world. “How can the Scottish people group,” I thought, “be the largest *unreached but engaged* people group in the world?” I was baffled. A quick search on the Internet revealed that Scotland not only has many churches but also has renewal movements going on within the Church of Scotland and other Protestant denominations. But further down on that same bar graph were the Japanese with far fewer churches. Even farther down were some large Muslim and Hindu people groups with no believers whatsoever and very few missionaries trying to *engage* them.

All of these people groups were in the same category: unreached but engaged—engaged because at least one missionary is working with them. Today people groups with high numbers of Christians are being classified as unreached people groups in some databases, simply because less than 2% of the Christians are in separate evangelical denominations.

The unintended consequences of these kinds of data representations are alarming: unreached peoples groups with no believers among them will not receive the witnesses they need if they are not clearly distinguished from those with thousands of believers already. For example, let's compare the needs of the 46 million French people in France¹ and 45 million Shi'a Muslims in India.² Both are categorized as unreached but engaged. But the Shi'a Muslims have few believers, no known fellowships and only a handful of people trying to reach them. Meanwhile, France has 1.2 million Protestants, including 500,000 evangelicals who make up 1% of the population. The country has thousands of evangelical churches (2,263) and a reported average annual evangelical growth rate of 2.4%. Finally, there are some 1500 Protestant (mostly evangelical) foreign missionaries working within its borders.³ The relative need for help is extremely different but is being lost in current data representations, with the result that many missionaries go to France but very few go to the 300 million Muslims living in South Asian countries.

R. W. Lewis studied the history of Christian missions in both her undergraduate and graduate degrees, and in the 1970s helped her missiologist father, Dr. Ralph D. Winter, map unreached peoples. She is a missionary scholar-practitioner who has ministered with her husband among the Muslims of North Africa and South Asia for over thirty years.

Somehow the frontier mission task has become confused and obscured. How did we lose sight of the *frontier people groups*—namely, those that have not yet had any missiological breakthrough with a resulting movement of believers in their people group?

Discovering the Frontier Mission Task

Over four decades ago, demographers at World Vision's MARC and mission scholars at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission (SWM) realized that there remained thousands of cultures without a witness to Christ. One of those SWM professors, my father, the late missiologist Dr. Ralph Winter, chose the term *hidden people groups*⁴ to refer to overlooked people groups that had neither any indigenous movement of believers in Christ nor many witnesses coming from other cultures.

Dr. Winter showed the desperate plight of these hidden people groups graphically on the pie chart called "Penetrating the Last Frontiers."⁵ As a recent graduate of Caltech, I worked with my father to show the statistics on that pie chart. He wanted to clearly distinguish between those non-Christians who could be reached by Christians in their own culture and the people in hidden people groups, which were *culturally distant non-Christians*—those who were so sufficiently different culturally and linguistically from any Christian church that they could not realistically be assimilated into existing fellowships but needed their own fellowships.

The term *frontier missions* was coined at that time because the word missions was being applied broadly and legitimately to many different mission endeavors. The term frontier missions sought to specify the pioneering or frontier mission task facing those going to people groups "where Christ has not been named . . . not building on another's foundation" (Rom. 15:20). This task was to be distinguished from the very legitimate evangelistic and discipling task of those missionaries

who were trying to help Christians in people groups that already had their own churches—whether or not they were active or in need of revival or reformation.

In the early 80s, the term used for people groups requiring frontier mission efforts was changed to unreached people groups, which meant "people groups without an indigenous church-planting movement." A number of agencies arose (e.g., Joshua Project and Adopt-a-People Clearing House) to try to figure out and illustrate which people groups were unreached people groups so that missionaries could be sent to them. However, as chronicled in David Datema's recent article,⁶ this initial definition of UPG was quickly broadened and eventually has led to the confusion I wish to address in this article.

Why are most missionaries still going to people groups that have strong churches and movements to Christ?

The Purpose of Frontier Missions Demographics: Strategic Deployment

The frontier mission task is to catalyze self-sustaining indigenous movements to Christ in every people group that does not yet have one. I will refer to these people groups as frontier people groups.⁷ This task includes identifying and overcoming barriers to that goal.

The purpose of unreached people group demographics is strategic deployment of missionaries: to mobilize churches and agencies to send workers to the people groups where they are most needed, specifically frontier people groups—unreached people groups

with a) no movements to Christ of their own and b) virtually no laborers to bring them the message.

Yet after forty years, far less than 1% of the global mission workforce is going to these frontier people groups that make up roughly one third of the world's population. The vast majority of missionaries are still going to people groups that already have strong churches and movements to Christ. Why?

I believe the primary cause of disproportionate sending is a lack of clear demographics. The frontier people groups, those which have never had any movement to Christ, are not being distinctly highlighted. Changing the criteria of unreached people groups, such as including all people groups with less than 2% evangelical in this category, has resulted in the inclusion of many people groups with strong national movements to Christ.

Today many maps and charts of unreached people groups do not clearly distinguish between:

1. people groups that have not had any movements to Christ (frontier people groups);
2. people groups that now have sustainable indigenous movements among them, though small, and;
3. people groups with a lot of non-evangelical or even nominal Christians who still need help with renewal and outreach to their own group.

These three types of people groups need different missiological approaches. Notice that it is possible to partner with indigenous/national churches in the latter two kinds of people groups, but not in the first kind. Although all three are being classified as unreached, only the frontier people groups (#1) require a cross-cultural effort by any witness, even if that witness is coming from adjacent people groups with believers but distinct cultures and identities.

Since most churches prefer to send people to partner with existing Christians

and church movements, the frontier people groups are inadvertently eliminated from deployment options. The result is that the areas with the most Christians receive the most missionaries: Oceania receives 300 foreign missionaries per million people, Latin America receives 162, Europe 146, North America 113, and Africa 93. However, all of Asia receives on average only 13 foreign missionaries per million people, with India coming in very low at only 7 foreign missionaries per million.⁸

Current UPG demographic databases do not prioritize clearly the people groups with NO existing churches—let alone no believers—with whom to work. So recruitment and deployment of missionaries around the globe is not taking into account this crucial difference. As a result, hundreds of large frontier people groups (who do not currently have sufficient help to catalyze an indigenous movement to Christ in their midst) are being completely overlooked.

This problem shows why we need a new term, one that cannot be stretched more broadly, that would refer *only* to those people groups that have never yet had such an indigenous movement. Because the already-established term, frontier missions, refers to this pioneering task, I believe that frontier people groups is the best term to use for these groups. Having a new term will help us to keep clear the distinctive needs of frontier people groups and the different kinds of problems faced in pioneering work.

Re-Clarifying the Frontier Mission Task: How Demographics Have Changed the Criteria for Success

Shifting the definition of unreached people groups has also confused the frontier mission task. So, not only are frontier people groups no longer clearly distinguishable, which impacts deployment, but mission strategies have also been inadvertently affected by changing criteria for success.

Having a new term will help clarify the distinctive needs of frontier people groups and the different problems faced in pioneering work.

Several problems confusing the frontier task will be discussed in detail below, but here is one quick example: the Scottish people have a long history of indigenous movements to Christ and a high percentage of Protestant adherents, but few separate evangelical denominations. Currently the IMB people groups website⁹ does not track the percentage of a people in a given group who consider themselves Christian (whether Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox, etc.), but only the percentage who consider themselves evangelicals. They use *new evangelical churches planted* as a key sign of progress. This means people groups like the Scottish will continue to be classified as unreached people groups even if renewal movements completely transform and fill up their existing churches and denominations with new believers. In order to succeed in getting the Scottish people off the IMB list of unreached people groups, it is painfully apparent that indigenous renewal movements are not sufficient. New separate evangelical churches must be planted.

The Joshua Project is more selective and they have eliminated from their lists of UPGs any people group with more than 5% Christian identification. However, their site also uses the 2% evangelical cutoff, a criterion that lumps frontier people groups, that have had no movements to Christ, together with UPGs that have strong movements to Christ. Again, we are inadvertently losing sight of the frontier mission task.

It has been a mammoth task to develop the brilliant tools needed to track the progress of the gospel among the people groups of the world. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to organizations like Joshua Project, the Southern Baptists (IMB), Finishing the Task, and many others, for paying the price

to develop resources that have helped us refocus the mission movement on reaching every people group on earth. Mission agency leaders, like my husband and me, and mobilization organizations have been very dependent on their data to determine strategic deployment. Having spent the last couple years discussing the need for clearer demographic representations of that task, I have been impressed by the deep commitment of all involved in the frontier mission task. I present now some of the main concerns that have come out during those discussions.

Barriers to Understanding the Frontier Mission Task

Problem #1: Confusing the Term Unreached People with Unreached People Groups

At a recent conference on global missions, one of the speakers said,

There are many areas of Los Angeles where less than 2% of the people are evangelicals. Unreached peoples are all around us.

All people who do not know God through Jesus Christ are equally lost and in need of a witness and can be considered unreached by the gospel. There are a lot of unreached people all around us, even in many of our churches. However, unsaved people do not belong to an unreached people group if they are part of a people group with vibrant churches that can help reach them. Maybe no church or missionary is reaching out to them, but they are still not part of an unreached people group.

In his 1984 article, “Unreached Peoples: What Are They and Where Are They?” Dr. Ralph Winter stated that,

Unreachedness is . . . 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.¹⁰ (emphasis mine)

Some people claim such a distinction is unbiblical. But Paul himself makes this distinction in the book of Romans, though it is sometimes lost in English translations. Paul says of himself, “Paul . . . called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God” (Rom. 1:1) adding sometimes “not by the will of man” (Gal. 1:1) making clear that his calling is directly from God. He goes on to clarify “we received grace and apostleship from Jesus Christ our Lord to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles . . .” (Rom. 1:5). In the Greek this phrase, *pasin tois ethnesin*, means “all of the ethnic groups.” It is not referring to all the lost or all unsaved people. In Romans 15, Paul explains that he will be passing through Rome on his way to people groups that have still not heard the message, saying, “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ is not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation” (Rom. 15:20). He asserts “now there is no more place for me to work in these regions” (v. 23), presumably not because everyone had been saved, but because there had been established enough of a culturally-relevant Greek movement to Christ in the regions he had passed through that his apostolic work was done there. He wants to move on to frontier mission areas.

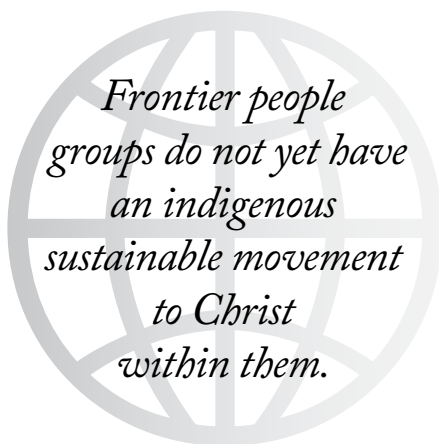
The frontier missions task is to continue to push the kingdom forward at its edges, into the UPGs that are truly frontier people groups, where Christ has never been preached. Like Paul, many workers will have to leave behind places where there are already movements of indigenous believers, and move on to places where they will not be building on foundations laid by others.

Since unreached people are completely different from unreached people groups, it will help to have the term

frontier people groups to uniquely mean ethnically distinct people groups that do not yet have an indigenous sustainable movement to Christ within them. The demographers do not make this mistake, but it is becoming increasingly common in American churches. So the way we present our data must not obscure this distinction.

How UPG Demographics Confuse Unreached People with Unreached People Groups

1. Special interest people groups *are being added on to lists as completely new UPGs*. Blind people, deaf people, or other similar groups are being added to some lists as brand new people groups—even though



they are spread across multiple languages and cultures. Joshua Project lists ten to fifteen million deaf people in India, but they belong to multiple religions and castes, so should they be listed as a distinct people group that can or should be reached separately from their families? I’m not so sure. Yes, they need specialized training and education in order to communicate with others and most likely a specialized evangelistic outreach. But, should deaf people have their own churches separate from those of their families? The deaf in any country are unreached people with special needs, but not, in my opinion, a distinct unreached

people group that cannot continue to function as part of the people group identity of their hearing family and friends.¹¹

2. *Pockets of people groups who have become political refugees or economic migrants (diaspora people) are being added onto lists as new UPGs*. Global trade and difficult conditions have caused many families to move to another country. Increasingly, these new small communities of diaspora people are getting added on as new unreached people groups, sometimes even when these groups are as small as fifty people. As long as they maintain their ties with their families in their homelands, these representatives of unreached people groups are not really a new UPG.¹²

If a movement to Christ happens in a *homeland people group* it is very likely to spread to connected diaspora people. However, winning people in diaspora communities does not usually impact the same people groups back home, who view them as traitors.¹³ So adding on small diaspora communities as “new” UPGs diverts attention from the core missiological problem of starting an indigenous movement that impacts the bulk of the population of that people group. Therefore, diaspora communities that continue to identify with their homeland should be tracked as part of those core people groups, not as new UPG groups. The Kazakhs, then, would show up as one people group with twenty-seven diaspora locations, for example, instead of twenty-seven distinct UPGs.

These types of unhelpful additions to lists of unreached people groups in our databases confuse unreached people with unreached people groups and greatly increase the perceived remaining task. They lead to erroneous conclusions and presentations. For example, some

mobilization presentations say that the USA has the most UPGs of any country in the world, after India. While the USA might have more *representatives* of different unreached people groups than any other country in the world, the total population of representatives of especially frontier unreached people groups in the US is very small. So if people from these diaspora groups come to Christ, they usually drop their old people group affiliation and become culturally American Christians, which makes it far less likely that they will be able to successfully reach out to relatives in their home country.

Problem #2: Misusing the Terms *Unengaged* and *Engaged*

The terms unengaged and engaged came out of an important attempt to keep mission agencies and churches from sending teams that were piling up on top of each other in some unreached people groups while completely ignoring other unreached people groups in more difficult or remote areas. This worthy distinction was designed to help get the frontier mission task back on track, and get more people deployed into what I am calling the frontier people groups. It sought to identify which people groups had not yet been engaged—in other words, where there were neither believers from that people group, nor any concerted strategic effort by missionaries (from any country in the world) to bring the gospel to that people group.

This initiative is extremely important and very helpful for highlighting the frontier people groups. However, in the rush to identify unengaged people groups and to send missionaries to them, several things have become clouded or confused. These consequences were not expected but resulted from the way the unengaged data was defined, collected, and represented. Finishing the Task (FTT), an organization that focuses on collecting data on unengaged

While one team might engage a group of less than 100,000, five million would need 50 times as many teams to be equally engaged.

people groups, counts a people group as engaged if it has at least *one* full-time worker engaged in church planting, while unengaged refers to unreached people groups (with populations as small as fifty in number) among whom there are no known full-time workers involved in evangelism and church planting.

Ways Engagement Demographics Confused the Frontier Mission Task

1. *The size of the UPGs was initially ignored.* From the beginning, very large people groups were taken off Finishing the Task's "Unengaged Unreached People Groups" (UUPGs) list if they had at least one person engaging that group with a long-term missionary effort. But, while one apostolic team might realistically be able to engage a people group of less than 100,000, a people group of five million would need *fifty times as many teams* to be equally engaged. This is especially true if the people group is spread throughout a large area or across several countries, or divided by other barriers such as caste. Encouragingly, FTT has recently begun to make a list of larger *under-engaged* people groups that have way too few people reaching out to them, with a new goal of at least 1 worker per 50,000 people. This change will significantly help the larger frontier people groups, taken off at the beginning, which now need to be added back on to the original list.
2. *Engagement became the goal or sign of success.* Let me emphasize that tracking engagement has been a significant help in moving deployment towards frontier people groups. Unfortunately, engaging an unengaged group has taken on more status or significance

with some churches and donors than persevering until movements are started in frontier people groups that are already minimally engaged. Those promoting engagement clearly state that it is just the beginning of what needs to be done to actually finish the task. However, agencies are being compared and judged by the number of new engagements they've begun rather than by success in establishing indigenous, reproducing movements to Christ.

3. *Contact began to be reported as engagement.* Since engagement was now the goal and sign of success, people who did not clearly understand the criteria began claiming to have engaged a people group long before they had even learned the language or made any progress in effectively sharing the gospel within that people group. Furthermore, the term engaged translates very poorly into other languages. So some national churches believe they have engaged a distinct unreached people group in their town simply because someone from that people group (a Sikh or Muslim) attends their church. They might even count all fifty people in their church as involved in engaging that people group, whether or not they are on a team committed to starting a movement among that people group.

So a frontier UPG can be reported as engaged without even one mission team among them with a long-term commitment to learning the language and seeing an indigenous movement to Christ started within that people group. Even committed mission teams can abuse the term in order to seem successful. A mission team

who over time has developed relationships with people from different people groups is tempted to report that they have engaged all of those people groups. I myself saw this happen on a team of which I was a part. Mere contact should not be counted as engagement.

4. *Small diaspora communities have been distinctly labeled unengaged.* As mentioned earlier, this practice diverts attention from the full people group. For example, if 500 Indian Sikhs living in Paris are defined as a distinct unengaged people group, while 80 million Sikhs living in India are considered engaged, it might seem more strategic to churches to send a team to the unengaged Sikhs in France. But it is not. There has been such a rush to engage all of the unreached people groups that even tiny diaspora representatives of unreached people groups, as small as fifty people in size, are now getting priority over huge frontier people groups.

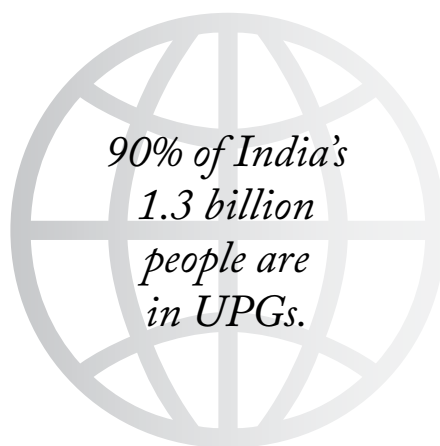
Unwittingly, a false impression is being given that a noteworthy beach head or inroad has been made into many large frontier people groups, by moving them into an engaged category, when in fact *no such noteworthy inroad has actually been made.* So, unfortunately, teams have been redirected and even reassigned on the basis of misleading information.

A Demographic Case Study: Engagement in India

Indian strategic demographer, Yashwant Koli, has called the OBCs (Other Backward Castes) of India¹⁴ the “elephant in the room” of the frontier mission task. Over 30% of all people living in UPGs *in the world* are in India. 90% of India’s 1.3 billion people are in UPGs—more than the entire population of Africa, or of North and South America added together. Over 600 million of these people are members of OBCs living in roughly 2,500 people groups who will not

inter-marry and who each have their own clan gods.¹⁵ These OBC people groups (farmers and artisans who work with their hands, in the Shudra caste of Hinduism) make up over two-thirds of caste Hindus in India.

Using their definition, Finishing the Task reported in 2016 that fewer than a couple dozen people groups in the entire country of India (population 1.3 billion) are unengaged.¹⁶ However, in addition to the thousands of Hindu OBC people groups, there are also close to 200 million Muslim people in India also in thousands of people groups when you take into consideration languages and castes and sub-castes. On-the-ground experience shows that there are certainly no



sustained, targeted, strategic teams focused on the vast majority of India’s Muslim or Hindu people groups.

Thousands of dedicated teams are required to effectively engage the thousands of large OBC and Muslim people groups of India, not even including the many Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, and other groups. But foreign teams *focused on Muslims* are in the mere dozens, and teams of national believers from elsewhere in India do not number significantly more. According to the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, as of 2010, the USA receives 32,000 foreign missionaries, Brazil, 20,000 foreign missionaries, the Democratic Republic of the Congo receives 15,000, and France receives 10,000—however, with more than

twice as many people as all these other countries added together, India receives only 8,000 foreign missionaries.¹⁷

I have often heard it said, “Let the Indian church reach India. It is easier for them.” However, less than 2% of India’s population is evangelical,¹⁸ and 95% of the Christians are from Dalit (outcaste background) and tribal groups, with hundreds of distinct languages and cultures. As Koli pointed out, there are many significant barriers to reaching the UPGs of India.¹⁹ One particularly unfortunate barrier is that the OBCs historically refuse to even associate with Dalit and tribal people, because they fear defilement—and there is mutual prejudice with Muslim people groups, too. It is not realistic to expect that India’s Christians can reach the 1 billion people in UPGs in India on their own, even with outside resourcing.²⁰ Did we expect the earliest Christians in Africa (the Ethiopians and the Egyptian Coptic believers) to reach the entire continent of Africa by themselves? The task is just as great, if not greater.

Indian Christians still have huge numbers of unevangelized people among their own people groups. According to a former executive director of the Indian Mission Association (IMA—comprised of some 200 agencies), most Indian agencies are focused on reaching their own people group or people groups of similar tribes and castes.²¹

Many of the middle class urban churches in India are not yet indigenous in their own cultures. In larger cities, these churches meet in English because that is the language they have in common, with believers coming from distant tribes or other language groups.

Establishing indigenous movements in the 3000+ remaining frontier people groups of India will require a huge cross-cultural effort (E2 and E3 evangelism),²² learning new languages, changing eating habits, etc.—even for India’s Christians. They need to have long-term commissioned teams with the know-how to work cross-culturally.

For 1,700 years any outreach to new unreached people groups was done by those we would have considered non-evangelicals.

It is not as simple as having huge tent evangelistic campaigns, or inviting a Hindu or Muslim neighbor to church or Bible study in a trade language.

In India, where people groups have resisted intermarriage for millennia, more people group divisions are revealed as further research is done. It is highly unlikely that these thousands of people groups are being *effectively* engaged by anyone from anywhere, making them essentially unengaged even if some group reports being in association with them.

Problem #3: Replacing *Indigenous Movements to Christ* with *Planting of Evangelical Churches* as the Criteria for Success²³

On the face of it, these two phrases may sound the same, but in fact they are not necessarily the same at all. There can be many evangelical churches planted, yet with no progress made in the establishing of an indigenous movement to Christ, and vice versa. A subtle distortion of the frontier mission task has resulted from measuring success by counting new churches planted instead of counting movements started. Let me give a couple clarifying examples.

Why Counting Churches Planted Instead of Indigenous Movements Has Confused the Frontier Mission Task

1. *Non-indigenous evangelical churches are counted as if they are indigenous movements to Christ.* What if 3% of a certain Hindu people group have become believers? They have planted a number of evangelical churches in the last few years. Sounds good. But, what if those churches are in the English medium, the people sit in pews, sing Western songs, and are seen by the other 97% of that Hindu people group as completely irrelevant traitors to the people group,

whom they should oppose at all cost? Is this people group really reached now? Do they have an indigenous movement to Christ²⁴ among them? No, not really. A non-Christian people group should not be classified as reached on the basis of significant numbers of evangelical churches among them, if those churches are not a growing indigenous movement.

2. *Indigenous revival movements are not counted as movements to Christ unless new churches are planted.* What if a group listed as a UPG has considered itself Christian for many centuries, has a Bible or even multiple Bible translations in its language, and has a growing renewal movement happening *within* its historical churches? They are Anglican, Lutheran, Armenian, Orthodox, Coptic, or even Presbyterian, and are genuine believers but do not identify with the term evangelical. They may oppose the establishment of distinct evangelical churches, and will not count as part of 2% *evangelical* if we count only those who have left their historic churches. But do they have an indigenous movement to Christ, capable of sustaining itself without outside help? We would have to say “yes.”
3. *Many disciple-making movements (DMMs) will not be counted.* There are an increasing number of movements among unreached people groups from other religious backgrounds, such as Islam. These movements do not plant churches that fit Western criteria, and so the growth in believers may not be recognized and added into the demographic databases. So the goal needs to remain indigenous movements to Christ, even if new

separate evangelical churches are *not* being planted. The IMB is currently moving toward using the existence of movements to Christ as the criteria for unreached people groups, which should help significantly. Any people group should be classified as reached if they have a viable, indigenous, self-sustaining movement to genuine faith in Christ.

4. *Narrowing the definition of “true faith” down to “evangelical” nullifies the successful expansion of Christianity throughout history.* A vital historical excursus is required here. We wipe out almost the entire history of Christian missions if we assert that the only movements to Christ that “count” are those starting new separate evangelical congregations. This point will require much further treatment, but suffice it to say that for 1,700 years any outreach to new unreached people groups was mostly done by those we would have considered non-evangelicals. Most movements to Christ in history in UPGs, such as the Celtic movement in Ireland or the Presbyterian movement in Korea, have *not* fit our modern Western evangelical model of adult-only baptisms and congregational church ecclesiology. Even the American Protestant mission movement of the last 100–150 years does not completely fit the modern church-planting model.

Likewise, renewal movements within older denominations throughout history have happened on a regular basis, and almost no century is without the Spirit of God moving in some way within these older Christian groups. Many monastic movements in the Catholic Church brought renewal and missionary outreach. Separatist renewal movements renewed churches by dividing them or by starting new churches, like the Waldensians,

the Hussites, and the Menonites, or the Pietists, Puritans, and Baptists. These were also part of God's plan. But for our comparison here, it should be noted that separatist movements were not as effective in bringing renewal to Christianized populations as internal renewal movements, which did not divide the existing church. This pattern is also seen in the Protestant Reformation and the evangelical awakenings (the first of which was internal to the Church of England under John Wesley, who planted no new churches).²⁵

While the modern evangelical model of church planting has been successful in some areas, it has largely been unsuccessful in high-identity, global-religion, multi-cultural areas, where people struggle to preserve their unique people group identity amidst an encroaching Western Christendom or threatening melting pot. God has used many other models throughout history, and our evangelical sympathies need to be opened to what he may want to do today.

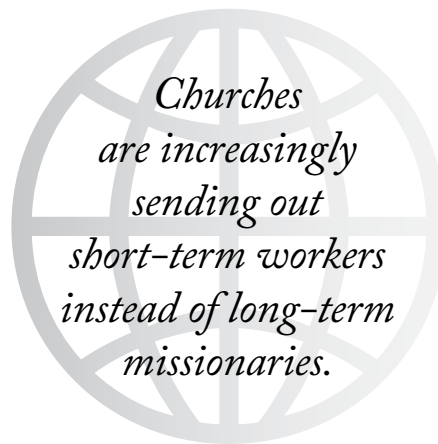
Problem #4: Sending Churches Have Lost Sight of the Frontier Mission Task Because of Demographic Presentations

We cannot hold the global sending churches entirely responsible (or even mission agencies) for not sending people to frontier people groups or for faulty strategies when their view of success has been shaped by mobilization based on the demographics presently coming out of people group databases.

1. *Churches are confused about which people groups have the least help, and so continue to send missionaries to places with many missionaries.* The databases do not clearly show which people groups are frontier people groups, and many people groups that have strong movements to Christ in them are still included on lists of unreached people groups. While some databases assume

churches can figure things out for themselves, other compilations remove people groups if they have even minimal engagement. The result is that even mission mobilizing organizations are putting out false impressions that lead to unhelpful deployment, which militates against any progress among the least-reached.

2. *Churches are increasingly bypassing mission agencies to plant churches overseas modeled on churches in their home culture.* Church mission committees assume that church planting methods that work in an American pluralistic society will work in the highly clan-oriented, stratified societies of the



remaining frontier people groups. So, churches bypass mission training and send out missionaries to plant churches in UPGs without understanding the problems and the consequences of planting new aggregate churches. The access to global communication and quick travel gives churches confidence that they can successfully supervise their own missionaries directly. But they rarely understand the complexities of cross-cultural outreach.

3. *Some churches are increasingly sending out short-term workers instead of long-term missionaries.* The number of short-term missionaries has exploded recently reaching

1.6 million in one year from the USA. An increasingly large percentage of foreign mission funds is being spent by US churches to send people for less than a month.²⁶ Meanwhile, this increase has not led to an increase in long-term workers as hoped. Very few short-term workers go to frontier people groups; instead they are sent to help existing churches. However, long-term commitment is normally needed for an indigenous movement to arise in a frontier people group. Perception and skill are acquired by learning the language and culture so that believers can be effectively disciplined to reach out to others. My father told one pastor who promotes sending every church member on a short term, "It would not help short-staffed hospitals to have your church members come for two week shifts."

4. *Churches increasingly insist that their missionaries partner with local, national churches.* Of course, among the frontier people groups there are no such churches. But that is not being made explicitly clear by the demographic presentations.

Five Problems Resulting When Missionaries are Required to Partner with Local Churches in Frontier People Groups

1. Since there are no national churches within frontier people groups, missionaries trying to reach them are forced to partner with churches from other geographically-adjacent people groups. They then try to get church members from the adjacent people groups to reach out (often cross-culturally) to these unengaged and under-engaged frontier people groups who are proximate to them.
2. Frequently the local, national church partner never wholeheartedly adopts the neighboring frontier people group despite years of urging by the missionaries. This partnering strategy was used for nearly 300 years in an attempt to

reach the Kurdish people. Missionaries to the Kurds didn't go directly to the Muslim Kurdish people themselves but instead worked to revive Christian churches in Iraq and Turkey, hoping that the national Christians would reach the Muslim Kurds. However, they only succeeded in splitting churches and starting new denominations. Unfortunately, neither the older nor the newer congregations ever reached out to the Muslim Kurds who were more resistant than existing Christian-affiliated people groups.²⁷

3. Missionaries will have to choose between learning the language of the partner national church, or mastering the heart language of the frontier people group they hope to eventually reach. Most never learn that heart language, making it more likely that the local national believers will follow suit. Without specific training otherwise, nearby believers are the least likely to recognize that they need to alter their culture and language to effectively reach neighbors of another people group and religion. How many people in American churches would take on a foreign culture and language to reach a nearby immigrant diaspora group?
4. Missionaries try to train their partners in local churches to do something that they have never done themselves, namely start a movement in a frontier people group. In India, such training is often done in English on short training trips. The sending churches expect this to impact the hundreds of millions of people in middle and upper caste Hindu, Muslim and Sikh UPG groups, who mostly refuse to associate with Christians from lower castes or tribal groups.
5. Missionaries falsely assume that it will be automatically easier for people from the local partner church to reach out to

T*he next generation is not conscious of the thousands of people groups still waiting to hear for the first time.*

neighboring people groups. It's more likely that Christians from adjacent people groups will try to extract individuals from these neighboring families and communities into their own Bible studies and churches. Or they may expect themselves to lead and run the new churches in these neighboring communities, which is the very same assumption that foreign workers make when they hamper movements.

These problems can be minimized if the foreign missionary has already been successful in starting a movement in a different frontier people group. It also helps if an otherwise inexperienced foreign worker has taken training from a successful movement-catalyst, who then works long-term alongside the believers from a proximate Christian people group to establish a distinct indigenous movement to Christ among that particular people group.

Conclusion

New Demographic Presentations Are Needed

The question now is: is there a way to change how we present our demographics so we can lead churches to refocus on the still-great need for long-term workers to the one third of the world in frontier people groups?

1. *How can we distinguish between different types of UPGs?* Some of the data websites are designed for showing what progress the gospel has already made, and others for showing where unreached people groups are, without making a clear distinction between frontier people groups (those with no movement to Christ) and other unreached people groups. Others show

unengaged people groups but do not take into account their size when calculating true need. Still other sites show all unreached people groups, regardless of size, with one dot representing a group from less than a thousand to tens of millions. Small diaspora groups are given as much weight as large homeland groups.

2. *How can we show where all the workers are going?* Most of our demographic UPG sites do not even show where all the workers are going, or not going. The 1978 pie chart, called "Penetrating the Final Frontiers," arrested people by showing them that the vast majority of missionaries were going to work with Christians, regardless of the continent or the context. This statistic is not currently being shown on any website at all.
3. *How can we distinguish between those people groups with a movement able to continue reaching them (E0 and E1 outreach) and those peoples still waiting for outside help (needing cross-cultural E2 and E3 outreach)?* These tasks are significantly different and require different training for those sent, and different kinds of help/support from outside the people group. Churches need to be clear about the differences, and then challenged to adopt or help send some people long-term to frontier people groups. They need to understand that they cannot insist that their missionaries partner with local churches in people groups where there are no churches.
4. *How can our data collection and representation encourage the best mission strategies?* Demographic website developers need to

realize how their measurement and reporting of people groups is determining the strategies being used on the field. How can our statistical representations help agencies and churches to understand and work toward a replicating, indigenous movement to Christ? Is there a way to present this data in graphs, charts, videos, or other media that will improve their strategies?

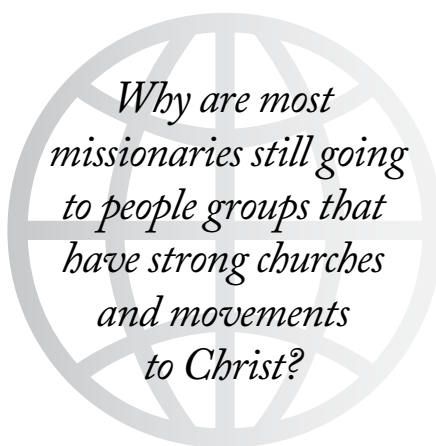
How Can Our Graphic Representations Show Truth-at-a-Glance?

Most Christians do not know how to interpret our graphs and charts. Some websites even show that the people making them do not know that the charts are giving false impressions. How can we make clear the need for thousands more long-term workers to frontier people groups? Churches and agencies think we are making progress among unreached people groups, and we are, as currently defined. However, they are not taking into account decades-long trends that are crippling progress towards reaching frontier people groups. These subtle shifts add many people groups to UPG lists that are not frontier people groups, divert funds from long-term workers to short-term mission trips, bypass frontier people groups by requiring workers to partner with existing national churches, and plant aggregate churches instead of replicating movements.

My conviction is that there must be Truth-at-a-Glance demographic representations if a new generation is to comprehend this remaining mission task. Mobilizers should be able to easily access and show only the frontier people groups that will never hear without long-term commitment of believers from other cultures. If people are using Joshua Project and IMB maps and data for deployment, the accuracy on the detailed level is not as important as giving people the right impression about where workers are most needed and what kind

of outreach is needed in that people group (E0-E3). The interaction of mission demographers over the last year and a half is encouraging, and these misunderstandings I have listed here in this article are being addressed. But sending churches cannot be expected to sort through the data to figure out what is going on.

The next generation is not conscious of the thousands of people groups still waiting to hear for the first time. I believe a new generation will arise to this exciting opportunity to help fulfill God's promise to "bless all the families of the earth" if the need is made clear to them. **IJFM**



Endnotes

¹ Joshua Project shows of the approximately 65 million people in France, 46 million are native French. By France we mean metropolitan France in Europe, or France proper, not including its overseas departments and territories.

² <http://www.shianumbers.com/shia-muslims-population.html>.

³ The number of Protestants (1.2 million) and the average growth rate of evangelicals (2.4% yearly), *Operation World*, 7th Edition, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 340-341. The number of evangelicals (500,000) and number of evangelical churches (2,263), *Annuaire Evangélique 2017* (Marpent, France: BLF Editions, 2016), 290. The number of missionaries from 2001, *Operation World, 21st Century Edition*, 6th Edition, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 750.

⁴ The term *hidden peoples* was later replaced by *unreached people groups* (UPGs), but then the meaning was slowly changed to include many people groups that already have ongoing indigenous movements to faith in Christ.

⁵ "Penetrating the Last Frontiers." This mapping of demographic statistics will be taken up in my second article in an upcoming issue of the *IJFM* (35:2, April-June 2018).

⁶ www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/33_2_PDFs/IJFM_33_2-Datema.pdf

⁷ After two years of discussions regarding the term UPGs, which is too easily confused with unreached or lost people, I am proposing using the term *frontier people groups* to clearly specify only those UPGs that have never had an indigenous movement to Christ.

⁸ Using data from the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross, eds., (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 267-283.

⁹ www.peoplegroups.com maintained by the IMB (International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention)

¹⁰ Ralph D. 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, 1984), 47.

¹¹ New people groups are formed when part of a group develops a distinct enough identity that it will no longer intermarry with the original group. Unfortunately, sometimes those becoming believers will break off from their people group, refusing to associate with or intermarry with pre-believers from their own culture, either joining a Christianized people group or forming a new people group. Rodney Stark points out in his book *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1996), 111-115, how much the growth of the church in the early centuries depended on ongoing intermarriage between the believers and non-believers in what he termed *open networks*. <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/sharing-the-gospel-through-open-networks>.

¹² So reaching the 900 Japanese people in Moscow is probably not a completely new missiological problem but needs to be resourced and coordinated with the larger effort to reach Japanese in their homeland. Only large independent immigrant or refugee populations, like the Swahili-speaking Indian diaspora in East Africa, should be considered a newer people group.

¹³ See discussion in a Pushtun context: http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/27_3_PDFs/refining_bartlotti.pdf.

¹⁴ From an email exchange with Yashwant Koli, Feb. 5, 2018: “In official Indian terminology OBC is the acronym for ‘Other Backward Classes’ as the British used the term ‘class’ as synonymous with ‘caste.’ After independence, India finds it convenient to carry on with that terminology to cover up for the caste composition of such constitutionally defined categories. I prefer using Other Backward Castes to highlight that this large bloc of people groups are primarily (though not exclusively) made up of people from the fourth Indian caste group, the Shudras.”

¹⁵ See article by Yashwant Koli, “Other Backward Castes (OBCs): The World’s Largest Megabloc of UPGs,” *IJFM* 32:1 (Spring 2015), 20–21. http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/32_1_PDFs/IJFM_32_1-Koli.pdf. From “Other Backward Castes,” 20: “It gets far more complex when we realize that OBCs are an artificial constitutional construct. In fact, people self-identify by their *jati* or traditional occupation sub-caste they are born into—regardless of their current occupation. Each *jati* is endogamous (you can only marry within the *jati*) but made up of many lineage clans called *gotras* that are exogamous, i.e. you have to marry outside the *gotra*. Very few *jatis* are even called by the same name across the state and language boundaries. Each *jati* is therefore an ethnolinguistic endogamous people group. A 2002 compilation of both the central and state lists (‘schedules’) of OBCs show totals of 2,176 and 2,551. These numbers can rightly be interpreted to say that the bloc of Hindu OBCs is made up of between 2,176 and 2,551 people groups.”

¹⁶ FTT defines an engaged group as having at least one full-time worker engaged in church planting, while unengaged means those unreached people groups with populations as small as fifty people that have no known full-time workers involved in evangelism and church planting.

¹⁷ Johnson and Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 2009, 267–283.

¹⁸ In an email exchange, Feb. 5, 2018, Yashwant Koli added, “The latest Indian Census reports that *all* Indian Christians represent no more than 2.3% of the population. The evangelicals would not even represent a third of that. However, both the Hindu nationalist RSS and church planting movements dispute that figure. My own assessment is that Indian Christians represent closer to 5% of the population. Since most of that is

among Dalit (Scheduled Caste) groups, there is little to no reporting of this change of religion for fear of losing government affirmative action (‘reservation’) benefits.”

¹⁹ “Challenges to Reaching OBCs” in Koli, “Other Backward Castes,” 21.

²⁰ In a separate piece Yashwant Koli would suggest some such indigenous and other collaborative strategies to engage India’s middle and upper castes.

²¹ In email correspondence, Feb. 5, 2018, with Yashwant Koli, he wrote: “Many of the larger, South India based and staffed agencies like Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB) have sent cross-cultural missionaries to central and north India over the decades. However, they almost without exception concentrated with varying success on the low hanging fruit of Dalits and Tribals (SCs & STs). Hence, even people group movements of tribals like the Oraon has only solidified the existing caste demographic of the Indian church: 70% Dalit + 25% Tribal.”

²² E0 = renewal/discipleship of nominal Christians in your own people group, E1 = outreach to non-believers in your own culture/people group. E2 and E3 refer to evangelism of people of a different culture, E2 if the culture and language is similar, and E3 if the cultural distance is very far.

²³ The IMB criterion for unreached is less than 2% evangelical, and the most-unreached peoples are identified as those among whom there has been “no active church planting within the past two years.” (http://public.imb.org/globalresearch/Documents/GSEC-Overviews/2014-09_GSEC_Overview.pdf). These criteria are a major departure from the original definition put out by Dr. Ralph D. Winter which is still stated clearly on the Joshua Project’s FAQ web page: “An unreached . . . people is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize that people group” (<https://joshuaproject.net/help/faqs>).

²⁴ See criteria listed under footnote #23. *Indigenous* is no longer a common term, but captures well what is needed, namely a movement of people who are still identified as “one of us” by the people group.

²⁵ The Protestant Reformation stands as the greatest example of church renewal accomplished through the splitting of churches. It also stands as the greatest example of a movement that led to massive bloodshed between religious/political factions, and a change of church allegiance by many for political reasons without necessarily a change

of allegiance to Christ as Lord and Savior. (This was not Luther’s or Calvin’s intent, of course). The English Reformation itself is the classic example of the changing of church affiliation that did not necessarily lead to genuine new faith on the part of the converts. On the other hand, a huge movement that *did* revitalize the faith of the Church of England, later called the Evangelical Awakening, began under the leadership of John Wesley in 1738. *By design*, the movement remained within the “dead” Church of England until after Wesley’s death in 1791. It had a much greater impact on the faith of the British people than any of the separatist or Anabaptist-type churches that were being planted in England both before and after that time period. Notice that John Wesley did *not* plant any churches when he started the Evangelical Awakening. He only started support groups and Bible studies, and left all the sacraments to the established “dead” churches. He encouraged people to become more active in their Anglican churches, not to leave them. He did not baptize any adults or children. He himself, an Anglican minister, regularly attended an Anglican church. As a result, the movement was able to revive the Anglican churches, which have living elements in them to this day. Because of the wisdom of Wesley’s advice (“not to leave their churches”), this movement was able to spread throughout the Anglican communion with much less opposition and condemnation than the various separatist church planting movements in England were experiencing.

²⁶ Don Fanning, “Short Term Missions: A Trend that is Growing Exponentially” (2009), *Trends and Issues in Mission*, 4. http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=cgm_missions.

²⁷ This “Great Experiment,” as Bob Blincoe calls it in his book, *Ethnic Realities and the Church: Lessons from Kurdistan*, (Pasadena, CA: The Presbyterian Center for Mission Studies, 1998), 23–39, was practiced repeatedly over a 300-year period, first by Catholics (partially winning the Nestorians to Catholicism), then by the Reformed (Anglicans and Presbyterians, winning both Nestorians, Armenians, and Catholics), and then by non-denominational evangelicals who split all of those churches, both ancient and reformed.

Excursus: How Church-Planting Strategies Can Derail Movements to Christ

by R. W. Lewis

I have discussed previously, in my article, “Losing Sight of the Frontier Mission Task” (p. 5), how counting churches planted instead of indigenous movements leads to the inaccurate categorizing of unreached people groups. However, much more serious problems result when we consider how this change affects mission strategy.

Church planting is a term promoted for decades in the American church-growth movement. Typically, it assumes an *aggregate attractional church-formation model*—winning people to Christ, then aggregating these former strangers into a group. In this model, church planters hope to create a church large enough to attract more non-believers who then come to faith in church meetings. Individuals coming to Christ are inadvertently extracted from their families and friendship networks.

Forming a new community becomes the goal of church-planting—a community based on meetings and programs. In many non-Western contexts, these new communities rarely replace all that the family networks provided, such as jobs and spouses. If there is conflict, these believers may be forced to recant to survive.

In the church-planting model, individual believers, instead of winning their families, often become alienated from them. Then the job of reaching out to non-believers is unconsciously transferred to the church and its leaders. Focus is diverted away from natural evangelism and discipleship; instead, it becomes a priority to have a worship team or a preacher good enough to attract new people.

A distinctly different missiological strategy is needed in achieving the goal of reproducing movements among frontier people groups. We need to see how church planting can actually derail new infant movements to Christ.

Ways Church Planting Can Undermine Movements in Christian-Identity People Groups

I want to first show how this has happened among Christianized people groups. I will try to quickly synthesize some general missiological observations from Christian history, though brief and therefore perhaps a bit simplistic.

1. *Church planting tends to add denominations instead of starting movements.* Historically, missionary outreach to extensively Christianized areas has mostly consisted of setting up competing churches. This method has typically been followed regardless of the denomination

sending the missionaries (Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical, etc.). Having many different types of churches is sometimes helpful, if the new churches are reaching disaffected and unchurched segments of the population—especially if good relations instead of acrimony can be attained between the new and old denominations, and it is not seen as “sheep stealing.”

2. *Church planting can increase opposition to the gospel.* Greater resistance to the gospel can result by using oppositional approaches to unrevived churches. For example, when the Reformation caused a split, opposition triggered the Catholic Counter-Reformation, which set in cement centuries of Catholic antipathy toward Protestant theology, practice, and even Bible translation. The separatist church movements in Europe, such as the Anabaptists, Pietists, and Puritans were persecuted by both Catholics and Protestants.
3. *Church planting undermines the potential for movements by extracting individuals from their families to create new communities.* Planting evangelical churches, in the typical way described above, can be very counterproductive because it extracts people from their nominally-Christian families and existing Christian denominations. By creating antipathy to renewal in their families, the possibility of a movement taking off is decreased. Even with house churches, starting competing fellowships often splits not just churches but families as well. We need to try to avoid increasing the resistance to the gospel that we so often lament in these nominally Christianized people groups. If widespread opposition results in the people group, it shuts down the possibility of starting a movement and can get the missionary expelled from the country.
4. *Church planting diverts mission efforts, perpetuating flawed strategies instead of starting renewal movements.* Unfortunately, the recent emphasis on church-planting has increasingly encouraged evangelical missionaries to see success *only* in terms of a *new* church. The former faith community is seen as inadequate for salvation and the new faith is seen as genuine; the other denominations are “old wine skins” and the newer church plants are “new wine skins” (Luke 5:37). The assumption is that new denominations are *required* for revival, which is not the case.
5. *If we focus on counting churches planted, even large movements will not affect the unreached status of these Christian-identity groups because there are no new church structures to count.* Therefore, people belonging to renewal movements within Anglican, Lutheran, and Mar Thoma Indian Churches, who all have orthodox Protestant Trinitarian beliefs, would not be counted as a percentage of the evangelicals—much less the charismatic renewal movements within Orthodox or Catholic groups.

T *True evangelical faith does not have to be separatist. A new faith does not need to establish its own separate churches in areas where people already have an existing Christian identity.*

Alternatives To Church Planting Successfully Launch Renewal Movements in Christianized Cultures

1. *Direct evangelism of church members by their leaders who have themselves come to a renewed faith is the most common form of renewal movements in older denominations.* The best modern examples are the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, which have spread into multiple denominations and are the fastest growing form of Christianity today (according to Philip Jenkins in *The Next Christendom*¹). Other recent examples are the Welsh revival or the revivals under Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, or D. L. Moody. Though fervor rarely lasts more than 50 years, all have had a long-term impact.

Regardless of the current secularization and deplorable state of faith in post-Christian Europe and other previously-Christianized peoples, they are nevertheless not in any worse state than has existed many times before in history. These groups have hundreds of years of exposure to Christianity and the Bible in their own languages and God is faithful to revive these groups. Historically, in such people groups, revivals have not come from foreign missionaries but through God raising up leaders among them to bring revival, like he raised up prophets in Israel.

Therefore, finding and supporting the people who can become the seeds of renewal in their own denominations is crucial, and here I include both Catholic and Orthodox parishes as well as Protestant. God is already working in many denominations through Spirit-led or charismatic movements. The Alpha Course has been very helpful in renewing faith from within. We can support Bible study movements in these churches, and publication of materials, etc., whether we join that church or not.

2. *New structures that develop within the older churches are the second most successful source of renewal of older denominations.* To be most successful, such structures need to develop alongside the church while affirming church membership, like disciple-making Bible studies and prayer movements. My grandparents were won to the Lord through the Christian Endeavor movement, an interdenominational youth revival movement that began in 1881 in one church and subsequently grew to over a million in a decade. It went global, impacting 67,000 churches by 1906,² and is still in existence today, though its impact has been almost eclipsed by the hiring of professional youth pastors in local churches.

The Evangelical Awakening (mentioned previously in footnote 21) is an excellent example of an effective renewal movement that can be copied. Winning hundreds of thousands, it transformed England and even led to the abolition of slavery. The German Pietists tried to get Wesley to split off his movement early on from his denomination, the Anglican church, but he refused to start new churches, or to baptize or marry people, and for fifty years he worked towards the revival of people within the Church of England. When the movement jumped to America, it formed a distinct denomination, which eventually caused the English “Methodists” to also form their own denomination. However, to this day, the Anglican Church of England bears evidence of the blessing of this movement, especially in its overseas churches.

Therefore, I suggest we can take a lesson from Christian history that *true evangelical faith does not have to be separatist*. A new faith does not need to establish its own separate churches in areas where people already have an existing Christian identity. The five pillars of evangelical faith (only scripture, only faith, only grace, only through Christ, and to the glory of God alone), and the hallmarks of the Evangelical Awakening (personal conversion, revivalism, and deep, lasting social reform), are seen in the global Protestant missionary movement that began in the wake of these revivals. Over the last 200 years, these characteristics of renewed faith have impacted the entire world and are still being used as vessels of renewal within formerly dead churches.

Ways Church Planting Can Undermine Movements in Frontier People Groups

Now let’s turn to planting churches in frontier people groups, which is significantly different than planting churches where there are already believers. These frontier people groups still need cross-cultural evangelism—either cross-cultural mission work by those from nearby cultures (E2) or by cross-cultural missionaries from distant cultures (E3). This need is very different than what is needed in post-Christian and Christianized people groups, who need E0 and E1 evangelism (renewal and outreach by the believers from within their culture).

1. *Tracking churches planted gives a false impression of progress toward movements.* If our demography is tracking the number of evangelical churches planted then that is what our missionaries will seek to do. Most evangelical church plants still consist of aggregate churches, made up of people who have been extracted or expelled from

Most evangelical church plants are aggregates of people who have been extracted or expelled from their families and communities. Little influence remains, and movements are unlikely to result.

their families and communities and who as a result have little remaining influence with them. Because this is the case, movements are unlikely to result no matter how contextualized the new church is.

For example, in North Africa, my husband and I discovered it was fairly easy to pull together random unrelated believers into a small Bible study group and call it a church. Coming from the West, where church-planting is usually seen as a gathering-of-a-group process, our flawed ecclesiology set us on a doomed course. We thought we were making progress toward a movement.

We wrongly assumed that a contextualized church, even if members were extracted from their families/networks, was the same as an indigenous church and would automatically spread. Not true. We found that such aggregate church-groups, made up of former strangers, no matter how contextual, were born sterile. They did not propagate. They did not turn into a self-sustaining indigenous movement. Most aggregate groups died in less than ten years or hung on without multiplying.

2. *Forming a new contextualized church competes with the maintenance of familial relationships.* As it turned out, helping new believers maintain their existing relationships with their family and friends was more important for replication than contextualizing religious forms to the culture. Until the yeast of the gospel begins to spread through whole families and whole communities, the people group itself will not be reached, no matter how many church plants are started.

We did not understand that the most important thing is not what *forms* are being used, but *how* the gospel is spreading and is perceived. The people group is reached when they see the gospel as “our faith” not “the foreigners’ faith,” and spreads rapidly from family to family, as finally happened in China.

3. *Our demographics can inadvertently promote extraction evangelism.* The irony is that genuine indigenous movements to Christ are less likely to be recognized or show up as progress in our databases if we singularly track churches planted. Only aggregate churches of extracted believers will look like progress, even though they actually are not. So, tracking the number of evangelical churches planted leads to inaccurate conclusions and flawed mission strategies in *both* Christianized and unreached people groups.

Dan Scribner of Joshua Project has rightly pointed out that we can think of “reached-ness” in terms of the capacity within a people group to evangelize the rest of that group. This capacity requires that those becoming believers are still considered belongers and have ongoing relationships with the rest of their people group. They may not even look like “real Christians” since they don’t appear like the other extracted Westernized Christian believers who may have come from their people, though their faith is equally genuine.

Even if believers reach 2% of the population in an unreached people group, it has proved insufficient to result in ongoing movements if they are a part of encapsulated churches of extracted believers. Unfortunately, this result happened in Japan and in a number of Indian people groups, where the gospel then ceased to spread. After a few generations, Christian Japanese have become essentially a new separate people group. For a people group to be reached, it must acknowledge at some point that many of their own people are following Christ, even if there is ongoing resistance.

In Conclusion

If current definitions of progress with UPGs narrowly define progress in terms of planting new churches, they inadvertently promote extraction evangelism because the only way to succeed in getting a people group off of the UPG list is to draw people out of their families and communities into new distinct, evangelical churches. So, for example, in Scotland, France, or Spain, no movement to Christ will count (on some of these demographic databases) unless extracted evangelical churches are being planted. In Hindu or Muslim areas likewise, workers will be encouraged to pull disparate believers together into churches that can be counted rather than to start disciple-making movements of witnesses with no traditional church structures.

All this is to say that counting the number of evangelical churches planted sets us on bad missiological rails in both Christianized/post-Christian people groups and in frontier unreached people groups. It distracts from the only definitive question: is there a self-sustaining indigenous movement to Christ in this people group, capable of reaching the rest of the whole group, or not? It is very encouraging to hear that the IMB is moving toward using this criterion for unreached people groups.

Although there has been some attempt lately to explain the term church planting in ways that would include indigenous

movements in both these types of people groups, there is still an unhelpful expectation that at some point these movements need to become distinct churches. It would appear that a reproducing evangelical faith is insufficient. Some say these movements must separate themselves from their communities, forming a new and different body of believers rather than continuing as yeast in the dough. According to Rodney Stark, in his book *The Rise of Christianity*, the Jewish believers of “the Way” remained in non-believing Jewish synagogues for over 150 years before leaving and joining the Gentile churches. As a result, his research indicates that nine out of the ten million Jews of that period came to faith. Once they left the synagogues, animosity between the Jews and the Christians increased greatly.³

Separating part of the people from the rest of their people group and community has *not* been the way most people groups have been won to Christ in mission history, or even in modern evangelical outreach, for example in Korea or in tribal groups. Doing so has, in most cases, resulted in Christianity ultimately being rejected by the people group, and then a new generation of missionaries has to start over again. Christ himself said that the kingdom of God would spread quietly and inexorably like yeast in the dough . . . so why can't we expect that is how he plans to build his church? **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹“As Harvey Cox showed in *Fire From Heaven*, Pentecostal expansion across the Southern Hemisphere has been so astonishing as to justify claims of a new reformation . . . by most accounts membership in Pentecostal and independent churches already runs into the hundreds of millions...Within a few decades such denominations will represent a far larger segment of global Christianity and just conceivably a majority. . . . Since there were only a handful of Pentecostals in 1900, and several hundred million today, is it not reasonable to identify this as perhaps the most successful social movement of the past century?” Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 7–8.

² *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavour,” last modified November 8, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_People%27s_Society_of_Christian_Endeavour. *Wikipedia* referenced Mark H. Senter III, *When God Shows Up; a History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2010), 151–168.

³ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1996), 49–71.



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Reassessing the Frontiers

Measuring Insider Movements? Shifting to a Qualitative Standard

by Kevin Higgins

In the world of mission, the topic of movements is in vogue. Books about movements, training programs to equip people to produce movements, and organizations claiming to catalyze movements are a major growth industry. We might even say we're in the midst of a "movement-movement."

L. Waterman recently inquired into this development when he asked a very appropriate question: do insider movements actually qualify as movements?¹ His inquiry was framed by the descriptions of movements put forth by David Garrison, David Watson and others,² and focused on how we can know if the movement aspect of insider movements was true.

This article is intended as part of the ongoing discussion of that question.

Let me be clear: I am not addressing the insider aspect of such movements, but I'm asking instead just what sort of criteria we should use to evaluate the movement aspect.

I begin with a quick overview of recent thinking about movements to provide some context. Then I want to narrow down the many crucial questions to the two that seem to me to be at the heart of all our measurements of movements. After examining those questions, I conclude with the criteria that I see used in the New Testament, and apply this to my own assessment of insider movements, as movements.

The Movement-Movement

While this appears to be quite a recent development, historically the fascination with movements seems to stem from the work of Donald McGavran and his research in India a generation ago.³ McGavran was a missiologist. He had lived and worked in India, the son and grandson of parents and grandparents who were also missionaries in India. And his concern was for how the gospel might spread throughout the great land of India. He noticed that it did spread in some cases, and not in others and asked, "Why"?

Kevin Higgins has served in the Muslim world in two countries of South Asia, helping to develop work in emerging movements to Jesus that now extend to more than a dozen language groups. While serving alongside local leadership, he served as International Director of Global Teams from 2000 to 2017, and today continues to coordinate their ministries in the Asia region. He also oversees their involvement in Bible translation, the subject of his doctoral study (PhD, Fuller School of Intercultural Studies). In 2017 he became President of the William Carey International University. Kevin and his wife, Susan, have three grown daughters, Rachel, Sarah, and Emma.

The initial impact of McGavran's work was felt more deeply in the western church, particularly the North American church, than it seems to have been in the mission world. This impact is evidenced in what came to be known as the church growth movement (that word again). It seems ironic to me that his thinking about movements created a movement, but not the sort he was likely to have imagined.

For critics, there were a number of controversial elements in McGavran's thinking: his heavy reliance on social science-based research, an apparent emphasis on numbers, the homogeneous unit principle,⁴ and his promotion of the idea of focusing mission resources on responsive fields while holding less responsive ground with minimal personnel until a responsive season might emerge.

The church growth movement focused on trying to figure out how to apply some of McGavran's principles to western churches. Almost all of these controversial aspects just outlined made their way into the church growth movement's application of McGavran. In particular, his methodology of asking why some churches grew and others didn't, became a key point of focus.

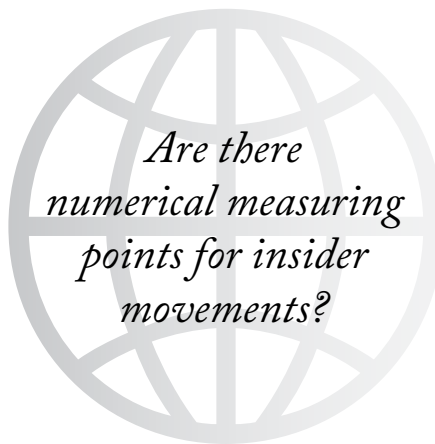
Later, church planting became a priority within the church growth movement. This developed for a very practical reason: more unchurched people came to be "churched" as a result of church planting than through other methods.

More recently the range of how movements are described and defined has multiplied: church planting movements, disciple making movements, house church movements, simple church movements, insider movements, less frequently, mission planting movements, and even more rarely, movement-planting movements.

Most of these recent examples do not trace their lineage intentionally to McGavran, at least not in published

versions of their work. Perhaps some don't even realize that there is a family tree connection between current movement thinking and McGavran, much less the church growth movement.

While I would suggest that there are major differences between current expressions of movement thinking and the former church growth movement, including what I believe is much more sophisticated missiological and cultural reflection, there is at least one major trend in common: the DNA of the earlier church growth movement is evidenced in the present tendency to apply numerical measurement to whether something is or is not a movement.



Numbers and Movements

Church growth analysts in the early days spent a fair bit of time having to justify for critics their use of numbers in measuring the health of a church. Today movement proponents and researchers are asked to explain movements in terms of numbers, or to establish the legitimacy of their research with certain numerical markers.

That last point brings us full circle, back to Waterman's questions about insider movements: given that most other movement descriptions have numerical measuring points, and the ability to unequivocally determine whether there is a movement, is there something akin to this for insider movements? Waterman's

initial survey of insider literature uncovered no examples of such numerical criteria. He states,

We can understand...that in an Insider Movement, the believers remain within their prior socio-religious group. But I couldn't find any numerical criteria for a "movement."⁵

Before assessing things further, I will include here the types of numerical measurements Waterman *did* find in his exploration of other types of movements. Waterman has summarized two of the most widely known. He writes,

For example, David Garrison begins *A Wind in the House of Islam* with this definition [of a movement]: "...at least 100 new church starts or 1,000 baptisms that occur over a two-decade period." (p. 5).⁶

And,

David Watson... "...a minimum of one hundred new locally initiated and led churches, four generations deep, within three years." (p. 4) In both cases, their definition enables them to offer a clear estimate of the number of CPMs in the world at the time of their writing (Garrison: 70 among Muslims; Watson: 68 total).⁷

The two examples cited by Waterman are clear, concise, and numerical. But there is a core question buried inside these statements, and the answer is not universally agreed upon among movement proponents and trainers. In fact, the answer to the buried question has yet to be universally agreed upon between denominations.

Questions Behind the Questions

Clearly one element that both these definitions seek to answer is:

How many churches does it take to know you have a church planting movement?

That question makes sense. These are after all, examples of *church* planting movements. But this begs a question about which the Christian world has

been divided for centuries. Here is how I would phrase it:

How do we know when a given "fellowship" or study group is a church?

This will include a number of factors, just one of which would be how many people need to be in a church before you can count it as a church for the purposes of answering whether there is a church planting movement?

In this article I will not be able to thoroughly explore this crucial question about what it is that enables someone to call this or that group of believers a church. So, for practical reasons, I will reference another article by Waterman on this topic, and will use his conclusion as a working definition:

A biblical church is a significant group of Jesus' followers having an identity as a church (ekklēsia) who gather together regularly on an ongoing basis, with recognized leadership under the headship of Christ, to worship God and encourage one another in obeying all his commands (including, but not limited to baptism and the Lord's Supper).

Several things are worth noting, in my opinion, before moving on. First, there is not a specific numerical criterion other than the statement "significant group." Second, there is an assessment included which is based on the intention of those gathering: "having an identity as a church." Third, and finally, the criteria are essentially qualitative in nature.

As I mentioned above, I will use this as a working definition of "church." This article is not aiming to discuss "church" but rather the criteria for assessing the "movement" aspect of insider movements. This definition is sufficient for accomplishing that purpose.⁸

Before moving further into my main purpose, it seems wise here to pause and address a potential misunderstanding. I have mentioned above that the church growth movement was critiqued for, among other things, its apparent emphasis on numbers. I have here clearly shifted from quantitative to

I see the emphasis of the New Testament to be qualitative in nature. This is the case when evaluating a church or a movement.

qualitative measurements as a working assumption. What about numbers?

Is Counting Wrong?

I am not arguing that counting is always wrong, or that it is an inappropriate exercise. There is a whole book in our canon, after all, which has been titled "Numbers" in English texts. While the census of Israel undertaken by David in the Old Testament receives mixed reviews, there is no question that the numbers Luke provides in his account of the growing Jesus movement in Luke-Acts is an example of counting and reporting. There is nothing wrong with counting, unless—depending on how one reads the census accounts—one's motivation or inspiration is wrong.

Where does that leave us relative to using numbers to measure a movement, or to assess if in fact it is a movement? That aspect of the question is after all the real crux of the matter.

I read the accounts in Luke-Acts as reporting growth, certainly. But I would be hard pressed to assert that Luke's numbers are being used as evaluations or assessments. They are reported almost casually, and I sense no hint of "proofs."

Thus, I don't have a strong objection to counting and measuring, but I do not assign numbers as the essential measurement of a movement. Since I also assume that Waterman, Garrison, and those promoting disciple making movements (DMM) would probably agree with me on this point, an additional word is probably warranted to explain further why I have not emphasized or exercised numerical measurements in the movements I have witnessed (and let me be clear, this includes both insider and non-insider expressions of movements within my organizational sphere and ministry).

First, in my experience there has been a major issue when we have tried to assess a work numerically. In the cultures with which I am the most familiar, it is very difficult to ask about numbers without giving very subtle messages that more numbers are better, and thus that one's success and honor as a leader is tied to the numbers one can report. This can lead to a very subtle pressure to inflate and make things sound good. When this dynamic is added to the very common element of wanting to please others by reporting what will make someone we respect happy, the pressure can become more than subtle.

Another reason for my approach is the principle that if the qualitative measures are healthy, the quantification and numerical growth will take care of itself. I understand the parables of Jesus about the Kingdom to suggest this.

The third element in my thinking about this is that I see the emphasis of the New Testament to be qualitative in nature. This is the case whether we are evaluating whether a disciple is healthy, a church is healthy, or a movement is healthy (more on this assertion below). This brings me back to the main discussion.

Criteria for Assessing Insider Movements

As someone who is known as an advocate for so-called insider movements,⁹ I am often asked questions such as "How do you know these movements are real? How many believers are there? How many churches?" These questions have been indirectly influenced by the history I reviewed earlier: numbers, church growth, assessment.

The survey above has hinted that there has been a parallel emphasis as well. I have already mentioned that I

appreciate Waterman's definition of church as essentially qualitative in nature. I am going to argue for a similar approach in assessing movements.

In fact, even in some of the examples already mentioned, which use numerical measurements for movements, qualitative assessments are included as well. So, for example, in addition to clear quantitative measurements, Garrison also describes qualitative characteristics of movements:

- Effective, reproducing bridges that lead to massive gospel witness
- Effective, reproducing gospel presentations
- Reproducing discipleship that turns new believers into CPM partners
- Rapidly reproducing churches
- Reproducing leadership development¹⁰

Another example of this qualitative trend comes from a more recent articulation of disciple making movements. Note these qualitative descriptors:

Disciple Making movements are supernatural acts of God. They are outside of human control. They are not institutional, tradition-bound, managed, or owned. Disciple Making movements are often characterized by young believers still in a Disciple Making and maturing process themselves, passionately in love with Jesus, who go from their newly established community of believers to make new disciples in a new region from which a new community of believers quickly emerges. This rapid multi-generational self-replication of churches in a given region or population segment defines church planting movements.¹¹

Each of these qualitative lists certainly includes numerical growth assumptions, and thus logic might lead to definitions and thresholds. As we have seen in Garrison, this is what does take place. And for such research to be published, this may be necessary.

But in my case, and the case of how our organization approaches things, we are not primarily assessing the health of

movements in order to report, or prove, or support an argument.¹² Instead we are primarily seeking to help a movement emerge, grow, and then catalyze more movements. So, we look primarily at the dynamics, the qualitative elements that seem to make this happen.

Where do we find those elements?

Looking for Qualitative Criteria

Actually, while I would love to be able to say that our organization bases its assessments of movements completely and only on criteria we have discovered in the New Testament, the reality is a little more messy and less direct. In fact, we had already started using certain criteria and teaching others to use them



before we began to apply what I think is a more fully biblical set of lenses.

We began by modifying a set of criteria based on the “Three Self” criteria developed by both Henry Venn (Anglican) and Rufus Anderson (Presbyterian). Later a fourth “self” was suggested, I believe by Paul Hiebert, and so we in mission began to speak of “Four Self” Movements, which included:

- Self-Propagating
- Self-Governing
- Self-Supporting
- Self-Theologizing

We developed definitions and a tool for assessing progress in movements among the unreached. But over time, a

number of things made my colleagues and me increasingly uneasy about these standards.

First, all of the first three selves were developed in response to the felt need for handing over already functioning mission churches to local leadership. They were primarily used, in other words, to address developments in a relatively established mission situation, instead of a context looking to foster newer movements.

Second, as such, there is a sense in which these selves were in fact not part of the original vision or purpose of the churches they were now trying to encourage to be independent. The selves were never really criteria to measure a movement, but were employed to assist in a hand over.

Third, the emphasis on self created more of a focus on just that, the dimension of self, and not on those dynamics of propagating, governing, supporting and theologizing. The ultimate aim of that thinking was to get younger mission churches to do these things *themselves*.

Fourth, and closely related to this, we became convinced that the implanting and repeating of the word “self” in our day was a not-so-subtle message that smelled of western individualism. This seemed directly counter to the picture of koinonia and partnership so deeply rooted in the New Testament movement(s), which served to connect churches in ways that were interdependent.

Fifth, that fourth self, “self-theologizing,” created huge misunderstandings, not only among those outside of our organization, but also among those within our agency. This was so much the case that often we were unable to overcome the resulting static, doubt, and confusion merely by the constant redefining of what we meant by “self” and “theologizing.” We concluded a different term was needed.

Finally, the tool we had developed was complicated, wordy, hard to use and

difficult to pass on. One result of this difficulty was a clear resistance to its use, even among our leaders.

Four Signs of Healthy Movements

In addition to these considerations, we as trainers were being affected by our own delivery of our programs. That may sound strange, but allow me to explain. One component of our second level of training is a series of five studies focused on Luke and Acts. In a short period of time we go through those books five times, each time asking questions related to healthy movements. The aim is to help those we train to identify the dynamics that help movements grow and spread and mature and remain healthy.

As a result of these repeated readings, those of us in leadership found that these texts kept speaking to us. The dynamics which we had discovered inductively in Luke and Acts were actually quite different from the four selves we had been telling our trainees to use in applying the training. There was a growing sense of disconnect.

For all of these reasons, we felt a change was needed and decided to try to rethink, simplify, and re-express. We asked several people from different cultures within our organization to suggest changes.

As a result, we came to speak of “Four Signs of Healthy Movements.” Figure 1 is a version of the tool in a simplified format. The statements in italics are the “signs,” and the bullet points are the descriptions. We discuss whether a team is seeing these dynamics, and if so, how developed are they. The sub-sections end with a space for open-ended comments, and there is a space in our form to indicate whether the particular sign is or is not yet indicating strength and health.

There are several important changes here from the previous tool we had developed. But, in the interest of this article, my main point in sharing this tool is to explain the sort of qualitative assessment approach we have elected to take.

Are there *quantitative-numerical* details that could surface in the answers to these qualitative descriptors? Certainly: how many disciples? How many churches? How many leaders? How much funding and resources? And so on. But in our view, if the dynamics are healthy, if we receive positive answers to the descriptors above, then there is a movement, regardless of the size or numerical measurements.

Doubtless, there are many other qualitative dynamics of movements we could have included and perhaps still should. As we continue to grow and develop, perhaps we will do so.

Scriptural Quantitative Criteria?

I will conclude this section with a brief look at some other New Testament passages that might speak to this topic. As I continue to probe the New Testament and seek to understand what makes for a healthy movement, I have come to appreciate Paul more and more in this regard. I offer some citations as examples, but not as a comprehensive list for every topic.

Spreading of the Gospel

1 Thessalonians (the word went forth from you), Colossians (how to treat outsiders, asks for prayer for his own witness), Philippians (sees the Philippians as partners in the gospel as Paul

Figure 1. The “Four Signs of Healthy Movements” Assessment Tool

<p><i>Sign 1: Multiplication: A movement with the vision to reach others.</i> Matt. 28:16ff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believers share their faith with others regularly (resulting in more disciples and churches). • At least some believers have begun to reach out to other UPGs. <p>Comments: _____</p>
<p><i>Sign 2: Leadership: A movement empowered to lead.</i> 1 Tim. 3:1, 2 Tim. 2:2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders have been equipped to organize the movement. • Leaders from within the people group train other leaders. <p>Comments: _____</p>
<p><i>Sign 3: Raising Resources: A movement equipped to thrive.</i> 1 Tim. 5:8, Acts 18:1ff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders teach believers to be good stewards and generous givers. • When needed, believers in the movement have started small-scale businesses in order to create local resources and sustain the movement. <p>Comments: _____</p>
<p><i>Sign 4: Scriptural Engagement: A movement able to use the Scriptures well, and teach others to do so.</i> 2 Tim. 2:2, 15; John 5:39</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders are able to understand Scripture and apply it to their culture. • Leaders are able teach these truths to others. <p>Comments: _____</p>
<p><i>Summary Assessment:</i></p> <p>Overall Status: Movement (Yes, or Not Yet):</p> <p>Overall Comments: _____</p>

shares it in Rome and rejoices in many expressions of others' preaching as well), Romans (Paul's own vision and passion for the gospel in unreached areas)

Leaders

This is seen again in his own practice, his lists of coworkers (Colossians 4 for example) and in commands such as those in 2 Timothy 2:2 and in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Relationships, Unity, and Resolving Conflict

Relationships are probably mentioned in every letter. The most famous examples include the "one another" commands and 1 Corinthians 13. Paul goes to great lengths, as well, to call believers to a high level of unity in diversity: he expects the Romans and Corinthians for example, to be able to truly accept without judgment brothers and sisters who differed in conscience over some significant issues.

Gospel and Sound Teaching

This includes explaining the gospel positively and correcting false expressions, too. Paul lists this as one of his motives for the writing of almost every one of his letters.¹³

Living in Christ, and Christ Living in Us

This is such a frequently mentioned theme in Paul that I cannot even begin to list all the references. There is a deep and profound spiritual mystery behind and beneath the cognitive truths we sometimes associate with truth.

Generosity

For example, see 1 Corinthians 16, 2 Corinthians 8–9, Philippians (one of the first "missionary prayer letters" thanking partners for their giving). There is also the example of him using his own resources.

Partnership/Koinonia

Philippians comes to mind again, especially in the use of koinonia: "in the gospel," "in the Spirit," in "the suffering of Christ," and in "the ministry of giving and receiving." We could add Paul's use of "co-," "with," and "fellow" in compound words describing his

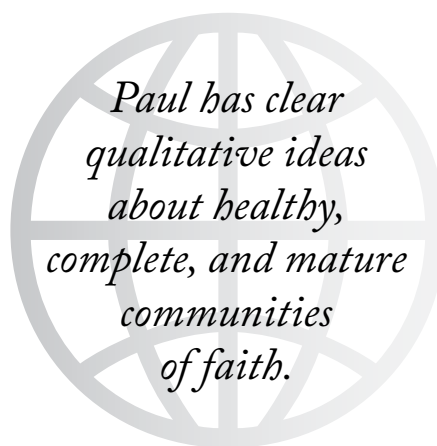
coworkers. And this perhaps suggests as well that for Paul "leadership development" and "partnership" were overlapping elements of his service.

The list could be much longer, but suffice it to say that Paul seems to have clear qualitative ideas about the criteria of healthy, complete, and mature communities of faith.

Before I conclude, two questions might come to mind:

1. Does this mean we are right to apply these to a movement?
2. And if we do, is it inappropriate to suggest more quantitative criteria?

My reply to the first question runs the risk of opening a new controversy—perhaps!



I am convinced that the distinction between "churches" and "movement" is a distinction not really made within the New Testament. This conviction raises implications for the closely related topic of "modality and sodality,"¹⁴ an assumption about two distinct ecclesial structures that is prevalent in modern mission thinking. I do not have space to argue this thesis, but I only wish to observe from Acts and Paul's epistles that what we may distinguish as movement, church, churches, mission structures, sodality, and modality, etc., are actually all just emphases within *one actual reality*: the gospel spreading and bearing fruit in more and more lives, churches, and places (see Colossians 1). And, based on this thesis, I do

conclude that the criteria in the epistles are quite rightly applicable to movements.

What about other criteria, such as numbers, etc.? I think it would be a mistake to argue that the absence of such criteria in the New Testament means we are wrong to develop and use such today. I see why others have done so. I see the value of its place in research. I see the need, when preparing a book about movements, to be able to describe how one decided *what* to look at and *what not* to look at.¹⁵

My point, essentially, is not that it is wrong or inappropriate to use numbers in order to *measure*, but simply that they are not essential *criteria*.

In Conclusion

Initially I introduced the historical context for what today can easily be characterized as a movement-movement, and then focused this article on assessing the "movement" aspect of insider movements. After weighing numerical/quantitative criteria, I have suggested that qualitative measurements are sufficient and, in my opinion, to be preferred as criteria for evaluating movements.

I suggested that quantitative measurements tend to foster inflated reporting and the need to please (and to avoid personal shame as well). I have noted that while the Bible provides examples of counting and numerical measurement, it seems to be more by way of citing examples and giving testimony, as opposed to measuring and assessing. And I have shared both biblical and organizational examples of qualitative measurement.

I will close by returning to Waterman, whose queries prompted this article:

I began wondering: How large is a "small" insider movement? How large would an *average-sized* Insider movement be? How many people, fellowships (*ekklesia*), or *somethings* would be needed for something to properly qualify as an Insider Movement? I couldn't find an answer anywhere in the [*Understanding Insider Movements*] book. (Waterman 2016)

I understand and sympathize with the question. We who advocate for insider movements have not clearly articulated the criteria we use in determining how or when a given movement is in a fact a *movement*. And that criteria must go beyond measuring how large or small it may be.

In my organization, we have studied the qualitative aspects of movement(s) in the New Testament and narrowed our assessment down to four major criteria: more multiplication, more leaders, more generosity and more engagement in scripture. We measure these as best we can via observation, questions, and discussion with those closest to the ground level. I realize that “more” may imply numbers. But the difference is that we have not set some sort of a minimum threshold that enables us to say, “more than this, there’s a movement, but fewer than this, no movement.”

The church (in its local, catholic, and movement expressions) is the Body of Christ. It is a living thing. This suggests an analogy to my mind. We cannot say that prior to this or that “line” a person is or is not human. The fact that human DNA is present means this is a person, a human being, who will grow, develop, and become mature.

In the same way, I am suggesting that if the right DNA is in place, then we have a movement. The primary job description, then, for pioneer church planters is to disciple and coach from day one with the aim of fostering this DNA. Healthy, growing movements flow from the right DNA. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ L. D. Waterman, “When Does a Movement Count as a Movement,” 11 March 2016; <http://btdnetwork.org/when-does-a-movement-count-as-a-movement/>. Accessed August 15, 2016

² As a general reference to the nature of more modern mission movements, one can sample David L. Watson and Paul D. Watson, *Courageous Disciple-Making: Leading Others on a Journey of Discovery* (Thomas Nelson, 2016); David Garrison, *A Wind in*

the House of Islam (WIGTake Resources, LLC, 2014).

³ McGavran acknowledged reliance on the earlier research of J. Waskom Pickett, whose book *Christian Mass Movements in India* (Abingdon Press, New York, 1933) greatly influenced him. See McGavran (1982) and Wilson (2000).

⁴ The Lausanne Occasional Paper 1: Pasadena Consultation: The Homogeneous Unit Principle. <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-1#1>. Accessed January 29, 2018.

⁵ Waterman blog, 11 March 2016.

⁶ Waterman blog, 11 March 2016.

⁷ Waterman blog, 11 March 2016.

⁸ In articles exchanged with Timothy Tennent I explored the nature of church and insider movements more fully. I can’t repeat that discussion here and refer the reader to Tennent 2006 and Higgins 2006.

⁹ I say so-called because I would prefer different terminology. But the term “insider” is firmly entrenched in the literature, including in my own articles, so in spite of my wish that we could find a better term, I see the need to use it. For descriptions and definitions of insider movements, see Higgins 2004 and 2006, as well as a much longer overview from many different disciplines in Talman and Travis 2015.

¹⁰ Cited in *Mission Frontiers*, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/church-planting-movements-what-have-we-learned>. Accessed August 2016.

¹¹ See <http://www.idisciple.com>. Accessed August 2016.

¹² These statements do not imply that those who use more quantitative approaches are trying to prove what they measure exists or that certain approaches are better.

¹³ I find it significant, relative to Paul’s approach to sound teaching and correction, that there seem to be no examples in which he sent a letter that *either* corrected doctrine, *or* focused on relationships and character (ethical concerns). Instead, he wrote letters which did *both*. Every letter we have addresses both doctrinal and relational/ethical concerns. The typical pattern (except in the so-called pastoral letters and the Corinthian letters), is that Paul first addresses what we might call doctrinal themes, and then turns the corner to apply these to relationships, ethics, and so called practical matters. The letters of Ephesians and Colossians exhibit this at about exactly the mid-point (see Ephesians 4:1 and Colossians 3:1ff.). Romans and Galatians each, in very different ways and in different tones, spend longer on the doctrinal issues. But both turn to life issues before closing (see Romans 12:1ff.).

¹⁴ See Ralph Winter’s article “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library), 2009.

¹⁵ Though even in these cases, more qualitative criteria can be developed and applied in ways that would suit the needs for many of the examples I just cited.

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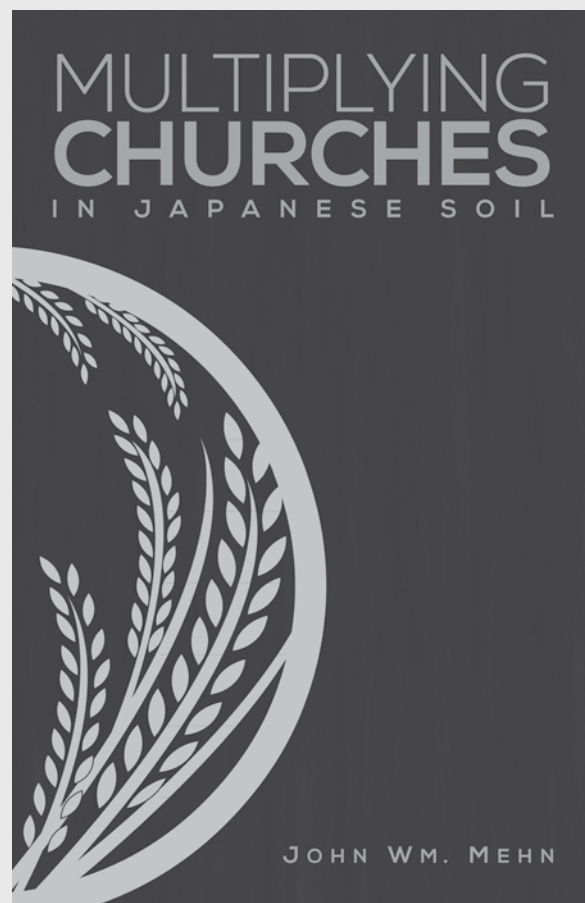
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Reassessing the Frontiers

Searching for the Impact of Bible Translation among the Minorities in China

by Ken Chan

There was a time when the monolingual tribal peoples of Latin America's many rainforests could not communicate with outsiders at all. It was obvious that they needed the gospel in their own languages; to reach them, Bible translation was essential. However, the globalization of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has led to questions about the continuing need for this sort of Bible translation. Whereas rural communities were once isolated, increased ease in communication and transportation have shaped a different world. People are becoming increasingly multilingual. Minorities, in particular, face both internal and external pressures to integrate into the mainstream and speak the national or major trade languages. According to *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, a widely cited and annually updated reference work maintained by SIL International, roughly a third of the world's 7,000 languages are now endangered.¹

Historically, Bible translation has been an extensive, even at times protracted, process. Translation projects have traditionally included research (linguistic and anthropological); translations (oral and written); literacy (where implementation is viable); and scripture use (both teaching and discipling.) Is all this effort still necessary among minority peoples who are daily becoming more at home in the dominant trade languages? What, then, is the need for Bible translation now?

Bible Translation and Closure Theology

I want to respond initially to this strategic question of Bible translation by exploring *closure theology*, an orientation that suggests that church planting and Bible translation be a high priority among ethnic and linguistic minorities. Ralph Winter's plenary address at the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization alerted the evangelical world to the imbalance of having too many missionaries working with Christians and too few with non-Christians.² In particular, he highlighted the need for new efforts to cross geographical, linguistic, sociological, and cultural barriers, the implication being that a massive redeployment of missionaries to the unreached peoples was required.

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Frank Severn was a leading voice who criticized Winter's position. Severn suggested that an extensive redeployment would slow down the momentum of progress made in countries where Christianity had made inroads, but where many villages, and a great number of unsaved, unreached persons lived (of various classifications) who still needed to hear the gospel.³ The task of evangelization was not finished in a country until all had had a chance to hear.

The problem, as I see it, is that Severn misread Winter. In an early part of his Lausanne address, Winter cited Pakistan as a country with a national church where the job was not done, even though they had a substantial 3% Christian presence. The Muslims, who comprised 97% of the country, still needed the gospel. When Winter went on to say that "normal evangelism will not do the job," he was not neglecting Severn's point. But Winter was saying that the church should devote more resources to the tribes, castes or cultures designated as unreached peoples,⁴ which in many cases are considered the minorities. Somebody must go in and ensure that the least-reached have a better chance to hear the gospel and receive the word of God. These large ethnic groupings (some of them numbering in the tens of millions) need cross-cultural missionaries from the global church (not just the western church) to come with the gospel.

Other missionaries have also opposed Winter's prioritization.⁵ I am unable to locate a single article in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* which supports Winter's perspective, and I suspect this may have to do with the former editor, Jim Reapsome.⁶ To him, it appears futile to speed the coming of Jesus. Jesus will come again like a thief in the night when people least expect it. And even when every people group is reached, there are far more people yet within each people group who still need to be saved, disciplined and sent out.

Bible passages can be adduced to support Reapsome's view. The church cannot predict or speed the second coming of Jesus through worldwide evangelism. Only when the end comes will people know the eschaton has arrived (1 Thess. 5:2). And if the kingdom's growth works like fermentation, it happens invisibly (Matt. 13:33), so there is no point trying to predict or direct its course.

But Winter's view is not heretical,⁷ for he would agree with Reapsome's orthodox view that no one can predict the precise timing of the end (Matt. 24:36). What is unique about Closure Theology is the biblical insight that we can actually see clues as Christ's return nears (Matt. 24:3). In particular, the



gospel has to be preached to all peoples before he returns (Matt. 24:14). God is building his church, which consists of all peoples, and this will include peoples living on the remotest islands or deserts (Isa. 42:10–12). Hence, there will be representatives from all of these peoples in heaven (Rev. 7:9; 21:24). God's compassion for all, including the little peoples of the world, is foreshadowed by Yahweh's care for the widows and orphans (Deut. 14:29; 16:14; 26:12; Ps. 146:9; Isa. 10:2; Mal. 3:5; James 1:27). The sheep in the parable of the lost are the peoples of the world, and the hundredth sheep is the people group that has not had any chance whatsoever to hear God's word. This is the context for the great commission (Matt. 28:19–20).

This is what motivated Paul to carry the gospel far and wide (Rom. 15:20). This is what should also motivate the church. It should have the heart of Ps. 57:9–10; 67:1–5 as it fulfills God's mandate to reach the world.

In this view, Bible translation is indispensable to this push to reach and disciple the world. When Paul linked believing to hearing and preaching (Rom. 10:14–15), it was also a call for the church to make sure that the word of God—the very basis of that preaching—be made available in the languages of the world. Winter's agenda to reach the least-reached is important because it is high on God's agenda.⁸ And the need for Bible translation is just as important. Secular linguists independently corroborate that "some 4,000 of the world's languages have never been described adequately."⁹

The concern for the least-reached in the world began much earlier with William Carey's "An Enquiry . . ." (1792).¹⁰ Carey was a brilliant English Baptist missionary who went to India and translated the Bible into many Indian languages.¹¹

Closure theology back then, even in its embryonic form two centuries ago, was probably the backdrop that gave Bible translators in China the strength to suffer as they served. They believed what they did was an essential chapter in the history of world missions. This was certainly the case with Robert Morrison, who arrived in China in 1807 and became one of the first Protestant translators of the Bible into a Chinese language in that country.

Lesser known Bible translators made just as much of a personal sacrifice. One of their number was Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, originally a Lithuanian Orthodox Jew who studied for the rabbinate in Germany before he became a believer and a missionary translator in China. He finished the Beijing Version of the Chinese Bible in 1899. His translation was well received not only because his knowledge of the

The growth of cities along with the accompanying multilingualism appears to have made Bible translations less necessary for minority languages.

Hebrew language was impressive but also because he could speak Chinese fluently. After a stroke, practically paralyzed and also suffering from severe Parkinson's, he toiled on until he finished his translation.¹²

Fast forward to today, when volunteers are signing up to carry on that tradition for reaching the least-reached. This closure theology is evidenced in the mission partnership called Table 71,

a loose association of Christian organizations committed to working together in partnership among the remaining unreached people groups in the world.¹³

Major partners include big names in Protestant missions like the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Jesus Film, and TransWorld Radio. Not surprisingly, Bible translation associations like Wycliffe Bible Translators, and Seed Company have also joined this alliance.

Some Bible translation organizations go a step further; they say that Bible translation is needed in every language of the world that does not have it yet. The passion of Wycliffe Associates, for example, is “equipping the local church to translate God’s Word into every language by 2025.”¹⁴ But this momentum in closure theology is encountering resistance today, and a *counter closure theology* has arisen that grounds itself biblically and socio-logically as an alternative perspective.

Counter-Closure Theology: Bible Translation is Not Necessary for Church Planting

The drive for the closure of the church age and the heralding of the return of Christ is commendable because it springs from love. But as Winter was advocating his version of closure theology at Lausanne in 1974, another

plenary speaker at that same venue, Michael Green, was questioning its value in his remarks. Green implicitly countered Winter’s position because he could not discern such a push for “missions to the least-reached” in the early church.¹⁵ Green’s perspective has gained more traction over the past four decades, and his general points still continue to ring true to many people. Specifically, a counter-closure theology seems to have emerged based on (blurred) definitions, common practices influenced by global and urban migration patterns, and the linguistic dynamics we see in the book of Acts.

First, in terms of blurred definitions, it is unclear what exactly constitutes a least-reached people group.¹⁶ This makes it hard to operationalize and execute a frontier missions strategy. A comparison between the coding systems used by the partners of Table 71 reveals discrepancies in how they classify the least-reached groups.¹⁷ On the language front, for example, intelligibility is one way to tell whether two language communities speak the same language. But the definition of intelligibility is itself contested. Another problem is that it is notoriously hard to obtain accurate information in remote places.

Second, globalization and the growth of great urban metropolises, along with the accompanying rise of multilingualism, appear to have made Bible translations less necessary for smaller minority languages. Take China as an example: unpublished interviews show that church leaders in China are not giving a high priority to the least-reached within the country. It is not that they do not care about the minorities, but they tend to believe that this problem will take care of itself as urbanization increases. This thinking

is not ungrounded. Roads, water, electricity, and communications systems are constantly improving, even down to the townships and villages. The quality of education of rural primary schools is going up. Because Mandarin Chinese is the lingua franca of these schools, minority youths are rapidly integrating into the mainstream.¹⁸ It is a fact that many young people in minority communities are learning and acquiring fluency in Mandarin Chinese. For some, Chinese may even supersede their native tongue to become their dominant language. Smart, enterprising young people are furthering their education and climbing the social ladder nationally. They want to get ahead in life and not be despised by others as inferior. Their success in this direction should be applauded.

Some Chinese minorities will go to an extreme fostering this language shift. Parents and grandparents will sometimes only speak the national language (to the extent that they can speak it) with their children and demand the same from their children. Some minorities will lie and deny their ethnic heritage to outsiders out of shame.

Perhaps the subsequent rise of bilingualism makes it expedient to eliminate Bible translation for minority languages. Many church leaders understand this positively as God making it possible for the minorities to hear the gospel without having to wait for long translation projects to finish. They see this as God being creative. Since the presence of language barriers slows down church growth, maybe God is using globalization as a tool to speed up the spread of the gospel before Christ’s second coming.

Evangelism can be done through Chinese dialects. There are older folks and uneducated (women) who are monolingual. But many minority youths are going into cities to look for work. When they find jobs, they may meet Christians and hear the gospel. After becoming Christians, they are

discipled in Chinese. They then can take the gospel back to their relatives in the rural minority areas. This is not merely wishful thinking, for reports of this process are accumulating.

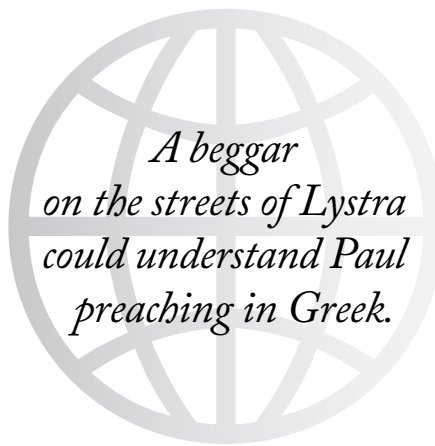
The First Century Context

I would like to treat at length a third point central to the emergence of a counter-closure theology. There's an assumption that goes something like this: if Bible translation in every language is required for church planting, it would have been the case in the early church. Yet, it seems quite the opposite was true in that first century context. The book of Acts demonstrates that God can reach all peoples through trade languages as the gospel moves naturally through multilingual believers. Is this true? Let's reflect on some of the linguistic dynamics we see in Luke's narrative.

Propagation of the gospel was not a problem when the church was just starting because other Hebrews (or people who could understand Hebrew) were the recipients. Aramaic and liturgical Hebrew were probably the languages Peter and the other apostles used to preach to the other Jews. These occurrences would have included: Peter's first major speech (Acts 2:14–36); the preaching trip of Peter and John in the villages of Samaria (8:14, 25); Philip's talk with the Ethiopian eunuch after he had come to worship in Jerusalem (8:27); and Peter's conversation with Cornelius (Acts 10).

The book of Acts assumes that the gospel could spread not only within the confines of Judaism but also throughout the languages of the Roman empire. Rome had formed a political empire through arms and diplomacy, but the Greek language and culture was ascendant across the Roman empire.¹⁹ Peoples who crossed cultural boundaries were able to talk to each other in koine Greek. The formation of local churches did not have to wait for tribal Bible translation to take place.

As the church spread to Gentiles abroad, Greek was relied on increasingly for evangelism. Either Aramaic, Hebrew or Greek was the medium of communication when Paul talked to the hellenized Jews and Greek God-fearers (Acts 18:4), and to the Jews at Ephesus (19:1–7). Judas (Barsabbas) and Silas from the church at Antioch either spoke Greek to the Gentile believers at Antioch (15:32), or they spoke in Hebrew which was translated into Greek for those who did not know Hebrew. This kind of bilingualism was practiced by cosmopolitan Jews such as Aquila and Priscilla (18:2), who had lived in Rome and Corinth, and by Apollo, a Jewish scholar born in Alexandria (18:24). When Paul and Silas



were praying and singing in prison (16:25), they might have been doing that in any one of three languages (Aramaic, Hebrew, or Greek) so other prisoners could understand them. The prison guard who believed was a local employee of the Roman government. But since he was living in a colony, he probably spread the gospel to his family in Greek (v. 32). The outcome of the Jerusalem council was drawn up in a formal letter (15:23–29). This was probably done in Greek, which explains why the Gentile believers were able to read the letter straight off (v. 31).

Greek was the language medium Paul used with Gentile nonbelievers. This was the case when Paul received the

Macedonian vision (16:9), and when the demon possessed girl at Philippi yelled and Paul chided her for it (16:17–18).²⁰

One of the reasons he chose Timothy to be his co-worker was because he could speak Greek. Timothy's mother was a godly Jew (16:2), but his father was Greek. His bilingual background would later help him to pastor his Gentile flock.

Paul was a Roman citizen, and it appears that he may have even spoken Latin. His Latin helped him communicate in more officious settings. In Acts 13:9, he probably talked to the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus Anthupato in Latin.²¹ Paul's Latin helped him to get out of tough spots when he was persecuted by the Roman authorities (e.g., 16:37). The book of Acts assumes, in the process of Paul's trial from Jerusalem to Rome, that he faced no language barrier.²²

Smaller local languages and dialects were not wiped out by Latin. Inscriptions that place Latin and other local languages, such as Oscan (spoken in south-central Italy), side by side still exist. Tomb markers in Anatolia into the second or third century AD show the use of Phrygian alongside Greek. There is also good evidence for the survival of the Galatian tongue.²³

Again, according to counter-closure theology, Paul did not need to pursue a strategy to target the least-reached. Nor did the existence of these small local languages and dialects hamper the spread of his ministry. Instead, he worked mostly in the larger cities and towns. His strategy was to plant footholds in those places where people from diverse places came together, so that the gospel could then go back out into the smaller places nearby.

Even at a smaller place like Lystra, a beggar on the streets could understand Paul's preaching in Greek (14:9–10).²⁴ In Acts 14:8–19, though Paul could not understand the Lystra language

that they switched into (v. 11), he could still negotiate a theological dispute with them in Greek. When he healed the lame and the locals thought he was a god, he explained he was not Zeus but only human like them (v. 15). He then got across the idea that Zeus did not do the healing, and the forces of nature they worshipped were not the first principles. Rather, God created everything for the benefit of people (v. 17). These were complicated ideas that he was able to convey.

At Malta, Paul did seem to be lost for words. In his brief stay there (28:1–10), the narrator takes on an omniscient point of view and reports in Greek what the locals said to each other in the local dialect (vv. 4, 6). This episode does not report what Paul said to them. Maybe he did not say anything back to them because he did not know their dialect, and they lived such isolated lives on that island that they could not understand Greek either. It appears that they dropped off the pages of the New Testament, and there is no indication Paul went back to reach them for Christ.

The movement of multilingual believers helped to bring the gospel across cultural boundaries. How else was the great missionary church at Antioch started? People from Cyprus and Cyrene who had believed (11:20) came to Antioch and spoke to the Greek-speaking people there. They in turn commissioned Paul and Barnabas for their famous missionary journeys. One of the early believers from Cyprus, by the name of Mnason, was also instrumental in bringing the gospel to Caesarea (21:16).

This biblical picture of a fluid movement of the gospel across language and cultural boundaries does not begin with the New Testament, but we see it even in the Old Testament. People from various nations could still talk to each other after Babel. This assumes there were people who were multilingual. While it does not mean

Cost efficiency is causing supporters to channel resources to other kinds of missions that have the potential to create more immediate impact.

everyone had those abilities, international communication was still taking place. Abraham was a prime example. He traveled extensively, and he could communicate with people who spoke the various languages of that time. He negotiated with Hittites to purchase the burial ground for Sarah (Gen. 23). Examples abound in the many encounters between Israel and the international communities among whom they lived. By the time of Nebuchadnezzar's empire, international communication was well codified (Dan. 3:4; 4:1).

Finally, the case for planting and growing churches without pursuing any intentional closure strategy for the least-reached strengthens even more when one considers Acts 2:4–11. There, we see a reversal of the tower of Babel. God's power was at work to enable God-fearing Jews who had come to Jerusalem from diverse places, from "every nation under heaven," to hear in their own mother tongue the disciples—Galileans all—praising God in multiple languages. This was a fulfillment of the prophesy in Joel where God's Spirit was promised to be poured out unto all mankind, irrespective of race, gender, age, and social class (Joel 2:28–32).

We can conclude that the church in Acts was propagated through the major trade languages of the time, and by oral translations (into mother tongue languages) through the empowerment and superintendence of the Holy Spirit. Why can't we expect that to happen now?

Spiritual Impact in the History of Bible Translation in China

While church members may not be explicitly conscious of counter-closure theology when they think along these lines, it is precisely these assumptions that may account for the trend that

devalues and questions the necessity of a Bible translation in every language. Churches and individuals that have traditionally been supportive are now wondering whether an expensive, multi-year translation project can benefit a language community when the gospel can spread in a globalized world without such a translation program. The concern for cost efficiency is causing supporters to channel resources to other kinds of missions that have the potential to create more immediate impact.

While counter-closure theology appears to show that God was able to grow the early church without a concerted effort in Bible translation, this overlooks the very real impact of the Septuagint LXX (Greek) Old Testament which had been translated from the Hebrew 300 years earlier. With Greek being the language of education everywhere (except perhaps in Israel), it can be concluded that most of the disciples in the early church did have intelligible scriptures available to them. Nevertheless, it does not follow that doing further Bible translation is not somehow helpful. If we widen our perspective, the history of Bible translation in China shows just how integral a part of church growth it was.

Scripture Use Was Key to Discipleship in China

One reason that the Chinese church began to grow, and kept on growing, was because local translators who worked on Bible translation were themselves disciplined through the process. They were experiencing the effect of scripture use as they were translating and in so doing, many of them acquired the spiritual capacity to lead the church.

Chinese translators fell in love with the Bible early on. Two Christians from Guangdong, Feng Ya Sheng (冯亚生)

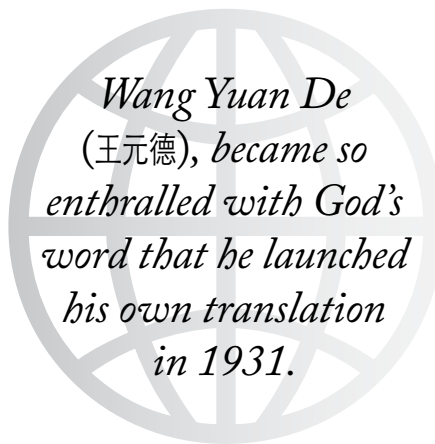
and Feng Ya Xue (冯亚学), went to Germany and became sinologists at Halle.²⁵ They could have studied and published on any topic; yet the project they chose was to translate Mark and Luke into a German-Chinese diglot (bilingual book) in 1826.

The vibrancy of the Christian faith engendered in the lives of local translators was palpable in some cases. One of those who worked on the Chinese Union Version was Wang Yuan De (王元德), who later became a professor at what is now Shandong University (齐鲁大学). He became so enthralled with God's word that he launched his own translation in 1931. He was able to finish it quickly because he would get lost in the Word to the point of forgetting to eat or sleep. It was reported that he would read out his drafts 50–60 times to make sure they sounded fluent.

Protestant Bible translation majored on deepening the Bible knowledge of the local translators. They were not low-level helpers, employed to brush up on the Chinese defects of the foreign translators.²⁶ Rather, those who were linguistically gifted were encouraged to learn koine Greek and biblical Hebrew. As they delved into the original texts, they were forced to confront Christian truths deeply. The local counterpart of Medhurst, Wang Tao (王韬, 1828–97)²⁷ for example, had the liberty to propose any emendation to the translation committee. This was possible because his grasp of the Bible was good enough to warrant that kind of trust. His proficiency in turn was driven by his love of the Bible.

Some of these translators became key figures of the Protestant church in China, not the least of whom was Ho Tsun-Sheen (何进善). His story showed that it was Bible translation, in particular, that had the most impact on his spiritual development. Early on, he had a negative reaction to foreigners. Though he was fortunate enough to receive the best western education

possible for a Chinese at the time—at the Chinese-Anglo College in Malacca—the wife of his English teacher discriminated against him. Her bad Christian witness could have turned Ho away from his newfound faith.²⁸ This danger was more acute because he was struggling to choose between being a Confucian scholar or a Christian.²⁹ But his work with James Legge and Medhurst on Bible translation galvanized his resolve to follow Christ as a disciple. As he confronted the issue of whether he should marry the non-Christian girl his father had arranged for him, he conceded in order to honor his father, but he refused to worship idols during his wedding ceremony in honor of Christ.³⁰ His maturing faith



that stemmed from Bible translating and reading eventually led his wife to become a Christian, also. She was baptized at the Union Chapel in Hong Kong where he had become pastor.

The link between an available, understandable translation of the Bible, the reading of the Bible (scripture use), and discipleship shone brightly for minorities in China. For them, it was not a job-creation program. They believed in God for God's sake. Far from receiving handouts from the missionaries, the Lisu, though poor, would give lard, rice and fuel to the traveling evangelists to advance the cause of Christ.³¹ Bible reading led to serious faith. They saw how God

was displeased when they sacrificed to idols, and they stopped. The spiritual change went deeper yet. The China Inland Mission reported that the Lisu

were constantly led to pray for the Han Chinese in Yunnan and in other provinces who were faced with starvation because of famine or flood, even though they have themselves suffered so much at their hands in the past.³²

The Promotion of Literacy Led to Scripture Use

A second reason that churches in China grew was literacy. The minorities lived marginal lives and were not literate in either Chinese or their own tongues. But that changed for the Miao when Samuel Pollard sought to bring about wholistic transformation. He helped to bring about what is now called a people movement.

The number of Methodist members recorded in Southwest China had risen from three when Pollard arrived (all of them missionaries' wives) to 5,458 when he died, with 12,000 more under instruction.³³

That last phrase "under instruction" is telling, because the immense growth was only possible when there was replication. Believers could not rely solely on oral instruction for edification, nor could they mature into church leaders that way. They had to have the Bible in print and be able to read it for personal growth. And the Bible had to be in place for the community to grow together through corporate worship and small group discussions. So, it was no surprise that Pollard viewed the promotion of literacy, together with Bible translation, as vital components for organizing this people movement into a network of local churches. This was made easy because the Miao wanted to learn how to read, and they asked Pollard to teach them.³⁴ Even women, who had low status in that society, took to literacy readily and scored well on literacy tests.³⁵ Literacy and church growth marched forward in lockstep.

As schools (17 of them by 1915) were opening, the Miao were baptized in droves. Morals began to change for the better. The trysting places of young people, which existed in every village, were burned down.

This pattern was repeated among the Lisu. J. O. Fraser firmly believed that planting a vibrant local church required literacy. He even taught older people how to read the Fraser script.³⁶ A Lisu scholar estimated that about 60,000–70,000 could read the Fraser script in an area that had a lot of Lisu churches.³⁷ Further south, Ola Hanson planted the church among the Kachin (known as the Jingpo in China). They were illiterate, and Hanson felt that was an impediment to church growth. One of the first things he did was to publish a book in Kachin, using a romanized alphabet.³⁸ Again, the church grew as literacy grew.³⁹

But it was among the Han where scripture use made the biggest impact. There is absolutely no doubt that China has had a long, and distinguished, literary history. But the church played a crucial role in furthering the penetration of literacy into society and the church communities. From the beginning of Protestant church history, Liang Fa (梁发), who was the first ordained Protestant Chinese pastor, felt more work had to be done in promoting literacy. Education was available, but it was not prevalent because it was expensive. Usually, only those who had money or family connections were able to place their children in one of the learning centers (书院). Up until 1907, there were only 923 *quanxueso* (a type of learning center), 1,621 lecture halls, and 262 education associations in all of China.⁴⁰ Seeing that the status quo prevented the masses from knowing God through the Bible, he opened the first Protestant school for boys in China. Not all the students came from Christian homes or became Christians, but the Protestant effort in making literacy open to all made it possible for more people to know God and the Bible.

Liang Fa's idea for mass literacy inspired Li Duanfen (1833–1907) and Zheng Guanying (1842–1923) to propose a national school system for all children.⁴¹ This massive literacy effort by the church coincided with the period when local churches sprang up all over China. By 1919, "only 106 (about 6 per cent) of China's 1,704 *xian* (counties) were without some form of missionary presence."⁴² God grew his church through heroic missionaries. But if literacy had not become available for the rural churches, it is doubtful the church in China could have grown the way it did.

Discipling through Bible Translation

As we reach the end of our biblical and historical discussion, two opposite pictures come into mind as we consider the need for Bible translation now.

T*he assumption that bilingual Chinese Christians can translate the gospel message spontaneously into their native tongues underestimates the difficulty.*

The first picture tells us that doing Bible translation is not a necessity. The theology of Acts shows that God can grow his church his way. All the language and cultural groups that he wants to be represented in heaven will somehow find a way to know the gospel and be admitted to the kingdom. God may use Bible translation to bring that about, but some trends indicate this might not be necessary. The *Ethnologue* shows about half of the language communities in China are on the path of making the switch from monolingualism to bi- (or) multilingualism.⁴³ The size and vitality of many least-reached languages now is shrinking and these least-reached languages have less vitality today than the Chinese language had 150 years ago.

But this article wishes to draw another picture of Bible translation. The reason Bible translation is needed is not

primarily because of a closure theology, but for two other reasons.

First, a strategy that relies solely on oral translation is not conducive to discipleship. The assumption that Chinese minority Christians who are bilingual can translate the gospel message spontaneously into their native tongues underestimates the difficulty. It is hard to find equivalent words or concepts that can capture the original even after intentional study. In practice, oral translators often resort to inserting a phonetic transliteration of a phrase from the trade language (e.g., Mandarin Chinese) to convey the key terms which are new. The target audience typically has no idea what point is being made and offers a blank stare in response. Or the oral translator will paraphrase the meaning of a passage in a highly generalized way, such that the critical nuances are lost.

Wayne Dye's seminal research in scripture use listed the availability of scripture in an appropriate language as a key factor for impacting an emerging church.⁴⁴ While people can hear enough about Christ to make a decision to follow him, they need to have the Bible to understand Christ in sufficient depth to become disciples.

Even when people understand the Bible in a second language, the truth often loses its impact because hearers perceive God as distant and Christian faith as of little relevance to their daily lives. Good Christian living is about interpersonal relations, about emotion, about the deep springs of human life. Teaching that is all in the LWC [Language of Wider Communication such as a trade language], suggests that Christian living is only for one's public persona, and internal spiritual growth is seriously hindered.⁴⁵

In the history of Bible translation in China, many of the principal local

translators could have lived their whole Christian life reading only the English Bible. But it was not so for the other Christians in China, those who had less English. It was not reasonable for them to rely on oral translation only in their Christian growth. Because of Bible translation and literacy, they were disciplined as they translated. This made it possible for them to become Christian teachers and leaders. This in turn made it possible for them to train the subsequent generation of teachers and leaders. This was true for the minorities and the Han Chinese churches alike.

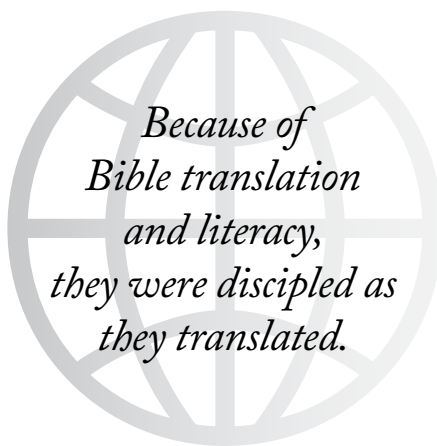
People prefer to worship God in their native language. Language in the religious domain and in poetics is more effective in one's heart language. Discipleship is a process that requires the breaking down of existing traditions and the reconstructing of a new worldview. This reflects back on the issue of Bible translation for the least-reached people groups: it is still best for them to have the Bible in their heart languages because most of them don't know the trade language well enough to understand the finer points of what God is saying to them.

The great commission, the command to go and *make disciples*, is not done until the church is fully prepared as the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). This requires Christians of all languages to reach a certain level of maturity in faith and practice. Bible translation and literacy are essential to the growing of God's church. Conversion needs to take root and not remain one inch deep.

The oft-made criticism of Bible translation is that it is not cost efficient, but that's not true in light of history. Had Robert Morrison and the subsequent translators not poured their lives into these massive projects that only bore fruit slowly, one can imagine a greatly diminished church in China now, two centuries later.

Secondly, more areas need Bible translation than one thinks. It's incorrect

to say that urbanization in China will clear out its villages.⁴⁶ Yes, the large cities in China are growing larger; but, there is now a trend where third or fourth tier cities are depopulating because they offer few benefits and impose a higher cost of living compared to villages. Unskilled villagers who had gone there to look for seasonal work now make more money back in townships as micro business owners. There is a huge increase in ecotourism. Cake shops, once a cosmopolitan marker, are popping up in townships. As rural land is being privatized in the second decade of the twenty-first century, more commercial opportunities will open up for the minorities of China in their ancestral lands.



Many of the minority autonomous provinces, prefectures, cities, counties, townships, and villages in China were independent geopolitical entities a century ago. They have retained their language and culture to such a degree that visitors would think they are in a neighboring country. It's obvious these places need Bible translation.

Many languages make good candidates for Bible translation projects. So why has not more been done? The stretches of Bible-less territories in the west and the northwest await brave souls who are technically equipped and called to go. More has not been done up to now because of severe restrictions and persecutions. It is highly unlikely that

counter-closure theology, as I have outlined it, is the reason why people do not do Bible translation. Rather, other reasons inhibit the long and hard process of Bible translation. People are not willing to sacrifice the time and suffer the costs. Laziness sets in and inertia grinds. Minorities who come from the fringe of society typically have low self-esteem and lack the confidence it takes to do a complex literary project. The "King James Version syndrome" is also prevalent, where the minorities think that God originally spoke the exact words encoded in the Chinese Union Version, and it only is sacrosanct.

Bible translation is an act of discipling the church. As a standalone, this statement sounds trite. But history shows the cost of not heeding this advice—many Bibles translated at great financial and human cost are sitting in warehouses gathering dust. Once a church planting movement reaches a certain stage, a church planter for a minority language community will realize that some form of Bible translation needs to be done. Without it, church growth slows. It is one thing to evangelize a people or plant a small local church. It is another thing for the emerging church to take root, survive, and become a house of praise for his fame and renown (Isa. 26:8). That is the time when the church planter will reach out and ask Bible translation agencies to come in and help. This is the best time to start a translation project. The evangelist needs to make the request.⁴⁷ When there is that felt need, translated portions will be used. The feedback gathered from the use of such scripture portions is fed back to the translators. This improves the translation quality and increases spiritual impact.

In this view of Bible translation, closure is harder to define because the last mission frontier is discovered only as church planters find concrete needs for Bible translation. Translation will take place piece-meal, and how far it progresses

will depend on the number of people in a least-reached community, their demographic structure, and their level of interest in having their vernacular scripture.

A lot hinges on the church planter. And the question is: Are there enough of them? The answer circles back to Winter's original observation: No, there are far too few of them working among the remaining least-reached peoples. Unless the global church intentionally sends missionaries to evangelize and disciple these peoples, we must surrender to a counter-closure theology. God could do it non-linearly, mysteriously, and without Bible translation. But the student of history can see that God has called the church to work alongside him in this endeavor.

The technical expertise built up in the past century by translation

A lot hinges on the church planter. And the key question is: Are there enough of them? The answer circles back to Winter.

organizations is a "select arrow" in the Lord's quiver (Isa. 49:2). The Forum of Bible Agencies International, "an alliance of more than 25 leading international Bible Agencies and other mission organizations," is "working together to maximize the worldwide access and impact of God's Word."⁴⁸ Here Bible translation is not the end goal, but a means to disciple minority language communities. In particular, the connection between discipleship and Bible translation is highlighted in the mission statements of the Wycliffe Global Alliance (the umbrella organization of the Wycliffe family of organizations),⁴⁹ Seed Company,⁵⁰ and Pioneer Bible Translators.⁵¹

This leads us to a final question: will leaders who shape missions in China lead the spiritual transformation of the least-reached through Bible translation?⁵² **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 20th ed., www.ethnologue.com, accessed November 22, 2016. Languages become endangered for a variety of reasons. Language shift, endangerment, and death are taken as facts by linguists. For an example, see David Bradley and Maya Bradley, eds., *Language Endangerment and Language Maintenance* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002).

² Ralph Winter, "The Highest Priority: Cross-cultural Evangelism" in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 213–41.

³ He argues "mission should focus on reaching every sociolinguistic group of people where the church does not exist" (Frank Severn, "Some Thoughts on the Meaning of 'All the Nations'," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 33:4 (1997): 419.

⁴ Winter, "The Highest Priority," 213–14.

⁵ For a review of opposing views, see Michael A. Rynkiewicz, "Corporate Metaphors and Strategic Thinking: 'The 10/40 Window' in the American Evangelical Worldview,"

Missiology: An International Review, Vol. 35, no. 2 (2007): 217–41.

⁶ See his most clear apologetic against Winter's closure theology in, "Why I don't Believe in Closure," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (1996): 262–63.

⁷ Malcolm Hunter traced the major points of Winter's views in "The Omega Connection," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 20:1, 2003: 20–24. But Hunter did not focus on the theological aspect of the discussion.

⁸ McGavran was another leading missiologist who was instrumental in this "frontier mission movement." See Alan Johnson's review of the history of this movement's development in "The Frontier Mission Movement's Understanding of the Modern Mission Era," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 18:2, 2001: 82.

⁹ See Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, *The Extinction of the World's Languages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 28.

¹⁰ "An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion

of the Heathens" (1792). For online access, see: <https://www.wmcarey.edu/carey/enquiry/anenquiry.pdf>.

¹¹ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/missionaries/william-carey.html>.

¹² Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version* (originally Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 1999; trans. Daniel Choi; Hong Kong: International Bible Society, 2002), 138–39.

¹³ See www.table71.org (Accessed on November 8, 2016).

¹⁴ See www.wycliffeassociates.org (Accessed on November 8, 2016).

¹⁵ "There does not seem to have been anything very remarkable in the strategy and tactics of the early Christian mission." See his "Methods and Strategy in the Evangelism of the Early Church" in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 165.

¹⁶ R. W. Lewis has addressed this issue of definitions in her article in this issue of the *IJFM*, "Losing Sight of the Frontier Mission Task: What's Gone Wrong with the Demographics?" *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 35:1, 2018: 5–19.

¹⁷ Alan Johnson also points out that "it has been hard to reach consensus on the precise indicators" ("Critical Analysis of the Missiology of the Frontier Mission Movement," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 18:3 [2001]: 122). Todd M. Johnson also avers: "artificially airtight twentieth-century taxonomies of race and language have been rightly deconstructed by the academy" ("Globalization, Christian Identity, and Frontier Missions," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 27:4 [2010]: 167).

¹⁸ The autonomous province of Tibet and the northwest are exceptions. These language groups have retained their mother tongues due to special historical and social factors.

¹⁹ This was no doubt aided by the spread of Greek culture through the Alexandrian library. Even Philo, the Jewish historian, wrote in Greek rather than in Hebrew.

²⁰ The Jews, who were trying to discredit Paul before the noble women and the aristocrats of Pisidian Antioch (13:50) and at Iconium (14:2), probably also spoke in Greek.

²¹ Sergius's position as a government leader and the form of his name recorded here, Sergius Paulus Anthupato, (a Latinism), both suggest this conversation might have been in Latin.

²² The mix of language use of Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic is detailed in Bernard Spolsky, *The Languages of the Jews: A Sociolinguistic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), esp. 30–32. The spoken language seems to have changed from Hebrew to Aramaic by the time of Jesus. Epigraphic evidence “such as marriage and divorce papers were in Aramaic” (p. 43). Hebrew was still the language of religious teaching and liturgy. Greek was increasingly adopted by the Jews. Even at Qumran, which paid the utmost attention to ritual purity, “twenty-seven texts are in Greek,” beside the 750 Hebrew texts and 150 Aramaic (p. 48). Latin was not forced on the non-Latins. But Latin inscriptions were put up as a sign of imperial rule: 190 of these have been discovered in Caesarea, and 530 “from the rest of Israel” (p. 59).

²³ See James Clackson, “Language maintenance and language shift in the Mediterranean world during the Roman Empire,” in Alex Mullen and Patrick James, eds., *Multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman Worlds*, pp. 36–57 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 41–46. “Inscriptional evidence for all ‘local languages’ (other than Greek in the south) disappears from the Italian peninsula by the end of the first century AD” (p. 42). But as smaller languages died off close to the heart of the Roman empire, the rate of language survival increased with distance from it. Coptic in Egypt and Palmyra, in what is now Syria, were examples of that principle (p. 48).

²⁴ Lystra (of Pisidia) was not close to Tarsus (of Cecilia) by ancient standard. It was unlikely that Paul would have known the local language spoken there.

²⁵ Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version* (originally Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 1999; trans. Daniel Choi; Hong Kong: International Bible Society, 2002), 125–127.

²⁶ There were locals who were not as gifted and who did perform this function. And it was short-sighted for people like Thomas Hall Hudson (1800–76) to see the locals’ roles as nothing more than making the foreigner’s translation sound more fluent (see Zetzsche, 112–14).

²⁷ Walter Henry Medhurst was a British Congregationalist missionary to China and one of the earliest translators of the Bible. In 1840, together with three other missionary colleagues (Charles Gutzlaff, E. C. Bridgman, and John R. Morrison), Medhurst began translating

what became the famous Delegates’ Version, the first Chinese Bible in a standard classical Chinese, and acceptable as Chinese literature. Wang Tao was his co-translator who worked with him on the Delegates Version. For more information on them see: Hanan, Patrick, “The Bible as Chinese Literature: Medhurst, Wang Tao and the Delegates’ Version” in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 63:1 (2003). <http://www.oalib.com/paper/1508932#.WmZEL6inE2w>.

²⁸ See Lauren Pfister, “A Transmitter but not a Creator: Ho Tsun-Sheen (1817–1871), the First Modern Chinese Protestant Theologian,” eds. Irene Eber, Sze-kar Wan, and Knut Walf, *Bible in Modern China*, 139–44.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 134, quoting SOAS Library, “Sketch of the Life of Ho Tsun-Sheen,” CWM/South China/Personal/Legge/Box 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 147–50.

³¹ *China’s Millions*, London ed., Apr 1932: 77; July 1932: 131. It was the policy of the China Inland Mission for local Christians “to secure their own preaching chapel” and “to support their own preachers” (*China’s Millions*, Australian ed., May 1, 1932: 73).

³² Tien Ju Kang, *Peaks of Faith: Protestant Mission in Revolutionary China* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 53, quoting *China’s Million*, North American ed., 1907: 106.

³³ John Pritchard, *Methodists and their Missionary Societies: 1900–1996* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 70.

³⁴ Pritchard, 68–69.

³⁵ *China’s Millions*, Aug 1933, 122.

³⁶ Isobel Miller Kuhn, *By Searching* (London: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1966), 55.

³⁷ Tien, 47. The subscription of *Nuji-angbao*, a newspaper printed in this script, had a circulation of 2,500.

³⁸ Up to recently, *Tuanjiebao*, a newspaper published in Jingpo, was “published only in the missionary script.” See Tien, 47 n. 24.

³⁹ Hanson wrote: “several hundred boys and girls have been educated in mission and Government schools.” Ola Hanson, *The Kachins: Their Customs and Traditions* (Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press, 1913), 97.

⁴⁰ See Paul J. Bailey, *Reform the People: Changing Attitudes towards Popular Education in Early Twentieth-Century China* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 101.

⁴¹ See Bailey, 20–21.

⁴² See Robert A. Bickers, *Britain in China: Community Culture and Colonialism, 1900–1949* (New York: Manchester

University Press, 1999), 69, quoting Albert Feuerwerker, *The Foreign Establishment in China in the Early Twentieth Century* (Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies 29; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1976).

⁴³ This is counting languages that score 6b or above on the EGID scale. For a definition of this, see www.ethnologue.com (accessed November 9, 2016).

⁴⁴ T. Wayne Dye, “Scripture in an Accessible Form: The Most Common Avenue to Increased Scripture Engagement,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 26:3 (2009): 123–28.

⁴⁵ T. Wayne Dye, “Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement: Social and Cultural Factors Necessary for Vernacular Bible Translation to Achieve Maximum Effect,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 26:2 (2009): 90.

⁴⁶ It is common in China for people to say that nobody is left in the villages except for a few elderlies and children who are not old enough to enter school. In reality, many adults live in the villages of the least-reached language communities. They cannot be spotted easily because they are working in the fields (that are widely scattered) in the daytime.

⁴⁷ Offering money to start a translation project is not a good strategy. It is often seen as a job creation program by the minorities. Little impact comes out of it.

⁴⁸ See www.ifoba.org (accessed on November 8, 2016).

⁴⁹ “We believe Bible translation is an essential component of the Church’s responsibility as they participate in God’s mission to redeem and restore His creation. Access to and use of Scripture in a language and format that can be easily understood is essential to the spiritual formation and growth of individuals and of local bodies of believers.” See www.wycliffe.net, “More about the Alliance: Important Facts” (accessed November 9, 2016). Wycliffe USA’s (www.wycliffe.org) own vision statement, which does not preclude discipleship, is less clear on this issue.

⁵⁰ See www.theseedcompany.org (accessed November 8, 2016). Its vision statement is: “God’s Word transforming lives in every language in this generation.”

⁵¹ See www.pioneerbible.org (accessed November 8, 2016).

⁵² This article was written in celebration of the 30th anniversary of Wycliffe Bible Translators (Hong Kong) in 2017.

Reassessing the Frontiers

Abide, Bear Fruit: Combining the Spiritual, Strategic, and Collaborative Dimensions of Reaching the Muslim World

by Gene Daniels and John Becker

What happens when you gather mission leaders and practitioners from over one hundred passport countries, mix in five days of Bible teaching and prayer, then add strategic thinking about the Muslim world? Just maybe it is a tiny insight into the vision of Revelation 5:9:

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (ESV)

This celestial vision is what launched the Vision 5:9 network over fifteen years ago. The same vision compelled a group of almost 1,000 people to gather this past October 2017 in Thailand in a ten-year follow-up to the 2007 consultation in Pattaya that resulted in the well-known book, *Seed to Fruit*. This year's consultation was titled, "Abide, Bear Fruit" (ABF), drawing on Jesus' well known words from John 15:4–5:

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

At the core of this gathering was a desire to practice and model the essential union between the spiritual and strategic dimensions of our joint calling to reach all Muslim people groups. This required more than *talking* about the importance of abiding in Christ. Mark Kim, a Vision 5:9 Steering Team member from South Korea, put it this way, "we *practiced* abiding every day because abiding in Christ can never be understood without practice." This praxis of abiding was woven together with many different threads: exhortation from Scripture, insights from history, private and corporate prayer, and workshops on fruitful practices from around the Muslim world. Speakers and workshop presenters, hailing from two dozen different countries, were a diverse group.

The demographics of those attending this consultation were a beautiful expression of the global nature of mission in the Muslim world, and

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John Becker is the International Coordinator of the Vision 5:9 Network and the Director of Ministries for AIM International. He has been serving unreached peoples in Africa, Europe, and North America for the past 22 years and is passionate about launching collaborative missional efforts. John takes great joy in sharing the love of Jesus with people of other faiths, especially those displaced by war or violence.

exceeded the expectations of even the planning committee:

- Delegates were from 103 different home countries
- Over 400 organizations and networks were represented
- Global North: 49%
- Global South: 51%
- Muslim Background Believers (MBBs): approximately 25%¹

It was a fairly even mix of workers with regard to field tenure² and region of service,³ as well as a very fruitful group—a remarkable 42% of those in attendance had planted at least one church in the Muslim world.

We rejoiced in the contagious enthusiasm of many who had never before participated in a global consultation. Nine leaders of an indigenous church denomination in Ethiopia—with nine million members and over 5,000 congregations—came bearing gifts. They wanted to express their appreciation for being invited to take part in this historical gathering focused on taking the gospel to the whole Muslim World. Many others shared similar sentiments.

Another highlight was the fellowship that emerged between the 200+ Muslim background delegates. These believers were meeting others from many different nations and contexts, yet were finding common experiences, challenges and vision for reaching the Muslim world in their own context. In the elevator, an elderly MBB gentleman, grey bearded and isolated, said with shining and smiling eyes,

For all these years, I thought I was the only hammer chipping away at a giant mountain. Now I know there are a multitude of other hammers helping me.

Spiritual

Sometimes the mission community projects a false dichotomy between our spiritual calling in Christ and the strategic use of our human, financial, and intellectual resources. The “Abide,

Bear Fruit” consultation strived to do the exact opposite, that is to remind us that all of our practical efforts can and should be expressions of the life of the Vine moving through us, both individually and corporately. Each day participants practiced our connection to Jesus in different ways. Biblical exhortation was a major component of this, and it was expressed from a truly global perspective. Brothers and sisters from Latin America, South Asia, Africa, North America, and others, shared different facets of the common theme of abiding in Christ as the central “work” of mission. This was intended to be, and received as, a gentle corrective to what is sometimes an overemphasis on methodology. One MBB leader



from Central Asia expressed this well when he said of his own ministry,

We really needed to hear this. We have so focused on methodology that we have neglected prayer. We will go back to praying first, then making plans, rather than planning and asking God to bless what we have already decided to do.

Practicing spiritual disciplines at the same time we are discussing strategic actions helps overcome the Western tendency to compartmentalize. Therefore, we believe ABF modeled the idea that strategy and collaboration can be a natural and healthy result of intentionally abiding in Christ.

We were also blessed to have some amazing “old lions”—veterans of

Muslim ministry in their 70’s, 80’s, and one who is 90, Don McCurry. We also had Dudley Woodberry, Stuart Robinson, Safia Mirza (MBB), Farida Saidi (MBB), Victor Hashweh (Jordanian), David Shenk, and Greg Livingstone. They shared, helped us discern what the Holy Spirit was saying to the delegates, but most of all stood among us as examples of being faithful to the call.

Strategic

One of the main ways that mission strategy was engaged at ABF was through a diverse group of workshop offerings. But to be effective, strategic thinking must take place in a context, so we very intentionally offered a historical framework in which our planning could take place. The second half of each day was committed to global trends in mission to Muslims. We broke out into workshops to learn fruitful practices from each other: we looked back to learn from the past in order to inform us for the future. In all, there were forty-two workshops offering a wide range of topics, including titles such as these: Christian Peacemaking, Developing Family Ministries, Honor and Shame, Ministering Amidst Suffering, Media to Movements, Younger Leaders, and many more. For the most part, these were not seminars *per se*; they were designed to be interactive learning experiences. Not only did this model fit adult learners better, but it was also a better fit for a consultation of experienced practitioners. In other words, there was not a single expert speaking from the front, but a room full of experts who were being led by colleagues in sharing and collaborating across geographic regions, cultures, and even languages.

Collaborative

Providing space for collaboration was an important part of “Abide, Bear Fruit.” From the beginning of the planning process, the organizers anticipated there would be a burst of synergy once the delegates began to interact. To help set a collaborative tone, each morning’s time of corporate abiding was followed by round

table discussions—97 tables in all—in which we drafted a corporate statement of commitment about the orientation of our hearts as we live and minister in the Muslim world. The English version can be found here: https://gallery.mailchimp.com/23a698ce5efe8ebdbdf0d1e52/files/9b0e6904-4f28-4742-803a-8b849706f7ca/Abide_Bear_Fruit_Commitment.pdf; or you may email us (laurie.hawley@vision59.com, subject: Translation of Abide Commitment) for translations into French, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic.

Furthermore, the planning committee not only provided space but also built in specific time dedicated to collaboration—not only longer meal breaks, but also strategic blocks of time that were opened up for spontaneous regional or topical meetings. This was greatly facilitated by a brilliant app created just for the consultation by David Caballero and Eldon Porter. This excellent tool enabled important dynamics such as immediate feedback on plenary content, or connecting with spontaneous interest groups. Many attendees mentioned how helpful this was. For example, one MBB couple from Africa who used the app put it this way,

The best highlight for us was to meet other [MBB] Christian ministry leaders who came from different countries, that we didn't know were coming and never met them before. We made contact with them and agreed to work together to reach out to Muslims [in our country].

Follow-up Initiatives

Following the completion of an event that was two years in the planning, the tendency might be to relax and enjoy the moment. However, the leadership of the Vision 5:9 network is keen to capitalize on the synergy coming out of Chiang Mai. Already two important follow-up initiatives are beginning to take shape.

First, a team of researchers who were present began gathering material for a consultation book that would be a follow-up to the 2007 book, *Seed to Fruit*. With such a wide representation

The “10/10 Initiative” asks people to pray and fast for ten percent of the Muslim world to turn to Christ in the next ten years.

from across the mission world, this was a unique opportunity to learn from the many ways that God is working in the Muslim world today. Therefore, the authors of this new volume will take the material from “Abide, Bear Fruit,” dig deeper, and then make these insights available to the wider mission community. A multi-national team of writers has already begun working on this with the anticipation of a book release sometime in 2018. There are also discussions about how to best make some of the material accessible to workers who are more oriented toward oral learning.

Second, we believe the Lord birthed a vision for a new prayer movement while we were together. The “10/10 Initiative” is quite simple, and asks people to pray and fast for ten percent of the Muslim world to turn to Christ in the next ten years. The consultation steering team recognized the dangers of acting out of triumphalism or naiveté and presented the idea to all the delegates in a plenary session. This was followed by table discussions, feedback, and ultimately a poll in which a strong majority affirmed the idea. Of course, there are always many details to be worked out, but the Vision 5:9 leadership decided to shepherd this vision forward. The particulars can be found at <https://1010prayerandfasting>. Besides these two immediate outcomes, we believe God will birth many other collaborative efforts as practical expressions of the *koinonia* of the Spirit felt by all those in attendance at “Abide, Bear Fruit.”

Legacy

On the last night, Dudley Woodberry shared his story of how he was called into missions as a young man in the 1940s under the preaching of Samuel Zwemer. Dudley shared that in 1951, Zwemer came back to his church to preach but collapsed mid-sermon, had to be carried

out of the church, and never finished the message. Dudley exhorted us that collectively we are the next link in a chain that passes down from the apostles, through a myriad number of missionaries including Zwemer, then to these “old lions,” and now on to us. He ended by asking who would finish Zwemer’s sermon? As we finished concluding our time together, “the elders” were stationed all across the front of the hall, each with a bowl of olive oil. Delegates came forward, as a sign of their commitment to the vision of the consultation, to be prayed for by the elders. It was a beautiful image as these faithful veterans of ministry lavishly anointed the delegates with oil and prayed over each one, blessing them and commissioning them to go back to their field of labor to proclaim Christ among all Muslim peoples. By the time all was said and done, many of the elders literally had oil running down their arms.

The Steering Team for the “Abide, Bear Fruit” consultation believes this was a prophetic image of what the Lord was doing that night, pouring out his Spirit on all those present, for the sake of the Muslim world. And we pray that the entire consultation was a prophetic demonstration that abiding with Jesus, together in mission, will release the strategic and collaborative efforts needed to bring the gospel to every tribe, language and people of the Muslim world. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ Because of language barriers, over 100 delegates did not complete the registration survey, thus the exact total of MBBs is not known.

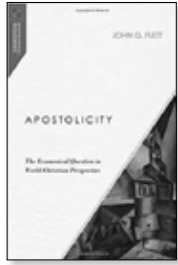
² 1–5 years service: 22%; 6–10 years: 17%; 11–15 years: 14%; 16–10 years: 15%; 20+ years: 29% (3% skipped).

³ Middle East & Turkey: 18%; Sub-Saharan Africa & the Sahel: 23%; North Africa: 10%; Central Asia: 8%; South Asia: 17%; Southeast Asia: 16%; North America: 4%; Europe: 3%.

Book Reviews

Apostolicity: The Ecumenical Question in World Christian Perspective, Missiological Engagements, by John Flett
(Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016, pp. 393)

—Reviewed by Brad Gill



A brake light usually goes on in any discussion of movements to Christ among the religious world of the Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim. Suspicions arise and theological armament is readied prior to examining any particular case. In Muslim contexts, the focus has usually been on key theological terms or the way believers express their own

ecclesial identities. It's more like an emergency brake has been applied.

But, by contrast, there is less frequently an examination of our own assumptions in evaluating these movements. We more easily assume our own faithful appropriation of the gospel and the way we have conserved it through Christian history. Do we as a Christian movement actually need an audit of our own presuppositions before we try to discern what's valid or invalid in these movements?

Mission theologian John Flett enters this vital discussion from a promising angle—from the perspective of a 21st century world Christianity. His recent book, *Apostolicity: The Ecumenical Question in World Christian Perspective*, is a lengthy meditation on how the burgeoning pluriformity of world Christianity tests the way an historic, “apostolic” church understands its faithfulness to its origins (i.e., apostolicity). By highlighting the one term “apostolicity,” Flett exposes how the church's sense of faithfulness to its biblical roots carries an underlying *logic of continuity*—and that logic can limit the diversity of world Christianity.

Apostolicity, defined as faithfulness to origins expressed in the continuity of mission, often prioritizes historical continuity and its associated institutional means. *Precise limits are consequently applied to cross-cultural engagement and appropriation of the gospel.* (my emphasis, 16)

For 336 pages he examines how and why the Western church's understanding of apostolicity can inappropriately restrict the parameters of Christian identity in culturally diverse settings. It's those parameters, that delimiting of cross-cultural engagement, that reflects an underlying logic that Flett intends to expose. He cuts through any superficial

celebration of world Christianity and analyzes the deep structure that can constrict the freedom to appropriate the gospel in non-Western settings. Fortunately, he goes beyond mere critique and recreates a new sense of apostolicity (i.e., historical continuity) that's emerging amidst world Christianity. He concludes by grounding our historic continuity in Jesus Christ in a way that revitalizes our perspective on frontier mission today.

The “problem of apostolicity,” according to Flett, is essentially the tendency of the church to prioritize the *cultivation* of the faith over the *communication* of the faith (chapter 1). Faithfulness and continuity with our historic origins requires a maturity, which then favors pastoral concerns and all the accompanying structures, practices and interpretive measures of that maturation. Mission (communication, extension) is a derivative of that cultivation, and therefore is shaped by the cultural presumptions which can reside in a territorial (Western) church.

Flett believes the most prevailing cultural presumption that colors any discussion of apostolicity is the Protestant-Catholic concerns for ecumenicity (chapter 2). A deep suspicion of difference and the fear of schism cloud the debate and Flett addresses this predisposition by mapping out the conciliar church's discussion over the past century. It's a rather unfamiliar world of persons, conferences and arguments for the typical evangelical; but, by introducing us to a parallel world, I believe Flett is able to bring into relief that same logic in our own evangelical orientation.

Flett identifies at the core of a misguided apostolicity an understanding of the church as a culture (chapter 3). It's a belief that as the church progresses through history it doesn't just take on a culture—*the church is a culture*. Presumably, it's this that is supposed to maintain continuity faithfully. Flett introduces this perspective by analyzing the work of an ecumenical theologian, Robert Jenson, whose writings make explicit the ecclesiological premises which must undergird any true continuity of the faith. That legacy is a culture of doctrine, liturgy and institutions that has matured in a particular territorial church and must be repeated faithfully as it extends into other geographical and cultural areas.

The power and success of this church-is-a-culture logic is evidenced in its ability to unify and colonize over the centuries (chapter 4). This church's specific institutional form is required to answer the modern forces of globalization which threaten to fragment the cultural legacy of our faith. Flett reveals the plausibility of this apostolicity, and readers can easily identify its effects in the attitudes and practices of their own churches and mission situations. But, again, the problem is that it blinds us to the new questions being raised as the gospel is appropriated among new peoples.

The church's apostolicity, its continuity through history, has occurred only as the gospel has moved across cultural boundaries and been appropriated in the language, thought forms and structures of this other history.

So Flett shifts and uses the second half of his book to explain how world Christianity is forcing us to reconfigure our fidelity to New Testament origins. In chapter 5, he pivots with a rather surprising plunge into the work of J. C. Hoekendijk, a controversial Dutch mission theologian whose post-WWII writing for the emergent World Council of Churches was considered far too radical. Flett, whose meticulous studies have woven together insights from both American and continental missiology, recognizes how Hoekendijk's views begin to offer an answer to the deficiencies of this apostolicity. He insists we can't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Hoekendijk's cogent assessment of what he calls the "residential" tendencies of the Western church's apostolicity is summed up in an analysis of ecclesiocentrism, i.e., to make the church the alpha and omega of mission. The problem lies, according to Hoekendijk, in the sending church's ecclesiology. He introduces an alternative perspective and terminology in the "apostolate," which is "to conceive of mission in relation to history" and to focus on "God's faithfulness to his promises, his sending of the promised Messiah and his eschatological calling of all nations to himself" (189). His emphasis on the church-as-instrument in the Kingdom of God demotes the church in a way that causes great reaction; but Flett believes Hoekendijk's shift in perspective is a significant step towards a more positive definition of apostolicity. His insights are able to move the discussion from a Christianity defined by the cultural and historical closure of one territorial, residential church to one that engages with the multiple histories we now see in world Christianity.

Flett's last three chapters offer a reformation of our sense of historical continuity. He first takes us through a keyhole into world Christianity (chapter 6) by reviewing the historical perspectives of Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako. They take up the baton from Hoekendijk and help us see just how Christianity is actually a non-territorial religion that is embodied, concrete, and visible in diverse cultural settings. It's a reinterpretation of apostolicity in which

the church, according to this argument, has been historically continuous *only* because it has moved across cultural borders. The very non-territoriality of the church is the nature of its historical continuity and so the nature of its embodiment. (243)

World Christianity forces us to overturn the church-is-a-culture logic and replace it with a gospel-is-in-cultures perspective. Rather than one continuous, territorial history,

apostolicity is a redemptive course which involves a constellation of histories.

Continuity lies not in place, language or institution. It is found in the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ, in a certain understanding of history, including the consciousness of belonging to a community connected across time and place, and in the use of Scripture, bread, wine and water. (248)

Flett moves from this historical re-interpretation to reorient our apostolicity to the person of Jesus Christ (chapter 7, "Jesus Christ, the One Ground of the Apostle"). He re-examines the biblical material surrounding the apostles and their strategic role in grounding the church in the Risen Lord. Other reviews of Flett's New Testament interpretation will critique his hermeneutical work here, but he offers a wonderful picture of how the gospel is appropriated locally and then released globally in the Acts. The phenomena of a world Christianity may not be enough to reform those who grip ever so tightly their paradigm of apostolicity, but this burgeoning global movement is transforming our ability to see what is actually happening in the book of Acts. Flett will help you appreciate the church as a "movement toward the ground in which it exists," and that is the risen Jesus Christ. That grounding is releasing, revitalizing and reorienting for the frontier missionary.

Flett concludes by offering frontier missiology a new definition of apostolicity (chapter 8).

The church's apostolicity, its continuity through history, has occurred only as the gospel has moved across cultural boundaries, and been appropriated in the language, thought forms and structures of this other history. (334)

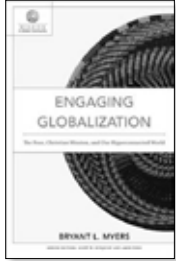
Apostolicity is the community's participation in Jesus Christ's own history. (335)

Jesus Christ's history is self-multiplying. His own apostolic movement into the world means the integration of multiple histories into his. The church finds its identity not in itself and the gifts given to it, but beyond itself in the history of Jesus Christ. (336)

This renewal of our imagination when it comes to the church apostolic—non-territorial, embodied, multiple, continuous, grounded in Jesus Christ—may require new and creative use of terminology, especially as we engage new religious frontiers. But changing terms is not enough. We need to wrestle with John Flett's thoroughgoing analysis of the ecclesiological superstructure that inhibits the appropriation of the gospel across these remaining frontiers. Any assessment of the movements happening today among other religious worlds must be based on the kind of keen self-assessment Flett provides us in this survey of our own apostolicity.

Engaging Globalization: The Poor, Christian Mission, and Our Hyperconnected World, Mission in Global Community, by Bryant L. Myers (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017, pp. 304)

—Reviewed by Dave Datema



The last two hundred years of globalization represent as significant a historical transition as did the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, the radical economic and social transformation of Britain, or any other historical watershed.

That statement will be much more believable after reading Bryant Myers' new book, a primer on globalization for Christians. Myers is eminently qualified to write the book, having worked for thirty years with World Vision International and the last eleven years as professor of Transformational Development at the School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary. Using complex adaptive social systems as a framework to understand the inextricably complex nature of globalization, it is presented as an uncontrolled yet influence-able system. Myers portrays globalization as an amoral reality with inseparable dimensions of both original good and original sin. Equally important are the "globalisms," influential political, economic or religious value systems that shape its direction, of which Christianity is a primary one.

Historically, the book is comprehensive, covering globalization throughout history, yet also specific, looking more closely at the last two hundred years. Theoretically, it is significantly descriptive, giving up-to-date overviews of globalization theory, development theory, and Christian engagement theory, yet also original in the final chapter where Myers sets forth his own agenda for encouraging Christians toward engagement, his chief concern throughout the book. Here is Myers' passion: that evangelicals today, like those of the Victorian era, regain the confidence to take their place in helping provide the missing moral ecology of globalization within their sphere of influence. Myers says that the individual Christian in the pew is the place to begin, by helping ordinary Christians discern between the good news of the gospel and the good news of the two dominant globalisms of our day: modernity and neo-liberal capitalism. Surprisingly, Myers sees the key to this discernment in discipleship and formation which help ordinary Christians live out the good news in their context.

Compared with other macro-missiological books with massive subject matter, this contribution of Myers is refreshing. As a working man's scholar, one senses that he could have said much more but that he refrained in order to place the material on an appropriate shelf. It is an introduction not a theological treatise. In so doing, it avoids getting into so much detail that it loses punch and practicality. At the same time, it is a superb synopsis of a vast literature and a timely call for Christians to be found "engaging globalization." **IJFM**

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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.

Photo Galleries of Refugees and Protests

On February 2, 2018, *The Guardian* published a [gallery of haunting photographs](#) taken in four Rohingya refugee camps across the border from Myanmar in Bangladesh. With nothing in view but an enforced return to hostile regions of Myanmar, close to 700,000 Rohingya refugees (400,000 of them children) now face more devastation from flooding when the monsoons come. See "[Rohingya Refugees on the Myanmar-Bangladesh Border.](#)"

For a disturbing look at the diminishing prospects for a peaceful resolution for the Rohingya, read an excellent background article in *The Diplomat*: <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/rohingyas-and-the-unfinished-business-of-partition/>. For up-to-date information on refugees all over the world, (including an impending disaster in South Sudan), check out the UNHCR's *The Refugee Brief*.

Business Insider's February 4, 2018 article on Iranian protests features compelling photographs and looks at the provocations that triggered the current mass demonstrations: "[5000 Were Arrested During Iran's Bloody Month of Protests.](#)" *The Atlantic* ran a story January 27, 2018 evaluating three different generations of popular uprisings in Iran. See "[The Fire that Fueled the Iran Protests.](#)" From George Thomas of *CBN News* comes a different emphasis that is also part of the mix of what is happening in Iran. Take a look at "[Jesus Is Building His Church Inside Iran](#)" (January 28, 2018).

China: New Surveillance and Regulations

A significant uptick in high-tech government surveillance in China has everyone concerned. Calling President Xi "the most powerful leader in the People's Republic of China since Mao," *The National Review* lays out a tightly-reasoned case for alarm in "[The Digital Emperor of China's Surveillance State.](#)" January 25, 2018. Further complicating matters for the burgeoning Christian movement are new regulations for religious affairs, circulated last fall, which go into effect February 1, 2018. One house church leader, Wang Yi of the Early Rain Church in Sichuan Province, published a statement in September 2017 (in Chinese but translated here into English) spelling out five areas to keep in mind:

Over the last fifty years, house churches in China have constantly endured political and legal pressure from this regime. Even so, they have not decreased or lost influence. On the contrary,

they have been constantly reviving and growing. In fact, they have assumed many cultural functions in society. On the other hand, as society has progressed and there have been limits on administration and enforcement, the government has lessened its use of barbarous, unlawful methods such as physically torturing and eliminating the church. The church, meanwhile, is much more willing and ready to pay the price for its faith and freedom of conscience than the government at all its levels is willing and politically able to pay...Ultimately, my position is simple. As far as faith is concerned, these new regulations are evil. As far as the constitution is concerned, they are illegal. As far as politics are concerned, they are foolish. (China Source, "[Why Christians in China Must Prepare Themselves for the New Regulations on Religious Affairs](#)" Jan 30, 2018)

Controversial Vatican-China Agreement

Vatican negotiators are nearing an historic agreement that would give over the choice of Catholic bishops in China to the communist Chinese government. In a January 29 article in the *New York Times* ("[Vatican, Eager for China Ties, Asks 'Underground' Bishops to Step Aside](#)"), Ian Johnson (author of the recent *The Souls of China: The Return of Religion After Mao*) writes that two legitimate bishops have already been asked by a Vatican delegation to step aside in favor of Chinese government-appointed bishops. See the report on the Cardinal of Hong Kong's news conference in *Reuters* "[Cardinal Says Vatican-China Deal Would Put Catholics in a Communist Cage](#)" (February 9, 2018). A leading conservative Catholic magazine, *First Things*, has a piece about the implications for religious freedom in China going forward in "[The Vatican's China Whitewash](#)" (February 12, 2018) and *The Atlantic* refers to a possible parallel in Hungary in the late 1940s in its article, "[Catholics Have a Messaging Problem in China.](#)" February 9, 2018:

In a recent *Washington Post* op-ed, Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian compared the situation to communist Hungary in the late 1940s. When the Vatican struck a similar deal there, allowing the government to select its own bishops, the Hungarian Church started to shrink. "There was a lot less energy in a church run with the Communist Party pulling the strings," Piotr Kosicki, a professor of modern European history at the University of Maryland, told Ebrahimian. If history provides any indication, the Vatican's moves in China may backfire.

A New Wave of Chinese Missions

Even more remarkable, given these conditions, is the determination on the part of the unregulated churches to send out their own Chinese missionaries: 20,000 by 2030. See "[The Great Call of China: Churches Poised to Become Major Exporters](#)" in *Christianity Today*, November 27, 2017. This fervor goes forward despite the abduction and [murder of two young Chinese tentmakers](#) in Pakistan last June 2017. Here are four recent blogs, all at this link, that look at the promise and pitfalls facing China's future missionary force, "Missions from China: A Maturing Wave": <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/series-index/missions-from-china->

[a-maturing-movement](#). Brent Fulton, president of China Source, evaluates some of the macro changes in China and forecasts pressure points in the future. See *The Gospel Coalition's* "China's Rise and the Church's Call," January 30, 2018.

Self-care for Practitioners in Severe Trauma Settings

The Oct 2017 *EMQ* issue has some real jewels of articles. Here are a few standouts. For a thoughtful yet practical article filled with hope about how to minister in a situation of severe trauma (in this case the aftermath of the 1994 Rwanda genocide) don't miss John Steward's article "Managing Trauma's Effects on the Practitioner (as Tested and Tried in Rwanda)." Steward sets the context for us in just a few words. It's a gripping account:

In terms of human and material loss, it equated to three New York Twin Tower collapses per day for one hundred consecutive days without the external logistical and emergency medical support which accompanied that disaster. Over 800,000 Rwandan people died, both Tutsi and moderate Hutu, mostly by hand-held weapons, in 100 days among a population of seven million living in an area the size of Maryland.

Global Mapping Closes with Grace

For an inspiring article—visionary and full of hope—about an organization ending well, read Jon Hirst's personal remarks about the closing of Global Mapping: "When Endings Lead to Opportunities: Lessons from the Closing of Global Mapping International," *EMQ*, October 2017.

Can "People Groups" Lead to Rigid Thinking?

In light of this *IJFM's* article by R. W. Lewis rethinking the terminology of "People Groups" (p. 5), read Ken Baker's (of SIL, International) important article cautioning missionaries against rigid ways of thinking: "Beyond 'People Groups': Why the Term 'Communities' May Be Preferable" (*EMQ*, October 2017). He gives a startling example:

A few years ago... I encountered a young missionary couple who were entirely focused on a people group that made up less than five percent of the local population. Gifted in language, they were deeply integrated, but exclusively in relationships with this people. Although "their" people group mixed well with the local population, this couple didn't, because they didn't want to become "distracted." They viewed their approach as missiologically faultless. However, other people in the community viewed them as cold, unfriendly, and haughty. To me, this seemed like a classic case of missing the forest for the trees. I asked them what gospel they were modeling before "their" people, as well as the community, reminding them that we are always ambassadors of an all-inclusive gospel, even if we concentrate upon one people.

In ethnically-diverse contexts, attention toward a single people group risks rendering others in their context invisible, whereas a focus on community turns invisible people into neighbors (McKnight 2014, 70)...there are clearly ethnic groupings in this world; however, this is not necessarily how people would self-identify, or how they actually live. Likewise,

there has always been mixing of groups through migration, marriage, and social networking. More recently, urbanization and globalization have accelerated these phenomena such that blurred ethnic lines are the norm in many places.

New Questions and Statistics about World Christianity

From the website of the [Center for the Study of World Christianity](#) at the University of Edinburgh School of Divinity, comes a Guest Editor's blog on a conference about World Christianity held at Princeton Theological Seminary this past January 2018. Author Jason Bruner comments,

Dale Irvin, in a keynote address, argued for the importance of recognizing the three intellectual streams of ecumenics, mission studies, and world religions as being historically constitutive of the field and formative of its present shape. He positioned World Christianity as an inherently "subversive" discipline.

Don't miss the rest of this interesting post for various reflections on the singularity of World Christianity, the impact of religious demography, whether Orthodox or Catholic Christianity are represented correctly, and whether global expressions of Christianity need to become more open to self-theologizing from the edges of kingdom expansion. (See the book review in this issue *IJFM* 35:1 p. 42 on *Apostolicity*.)

A new YouTube video has been posted with a 30-minute talk entitled "The Changing Demographics of Protestantism from 1517 to 2017" by Dr. Todd Johnson from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC). Given in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, it begins with an excellent historical focus on Bible translation. Also from the CSGC, new statistics have just been published for the status of global Christianity in 2018, taking a long range comparative look from 1900 to 2050. The fastest annual percentage increase is in slum dwellers, who currently number 1 out of every 6 people in the world. By 2050, their numbers will have increased (from 700 million in the year 2000) to 1.9 billion (or 23% of the world's population—almost 1 out of every 4 people in the world), according to Patrick Johnstone (*The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends, and Possibilities*, p. 7).

"... As a Fire Exists by Burning"

From *Missiology* January–March 2018, in the perceptive article "Ecclesiology Today and Its Potential to Serve a Missionary Church," by Kristin Colberg in which she quotes from *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* by Bevans and Schroeder (2004, 7–8):

Therefore, it is the process of evangelization that is the *raison d'être* of the church. Adrian Hastings has written how the church does not so much *have* a mission—as if the church somehow existed *prior* to its task—rather it *is* mission as such, indeed, as the phrase goes, the church of Christ does not so much have a mission as the mission of Christ has a church. Perhaps, most memorable of all, theologian Emil Brunner is often quoted as saying "the Church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning." *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.

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Abide, Bear Fruit: Combining the Spiritual, Strategic, and Collaborative Dimensions of Reaching the Muslim World Gene Daniels and John Becker (pp. 39–41)		X			X

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