

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

by Alan Johnson



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hidden peoples were defined as:

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

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

Definitions and Concepts

Defining frontier missions

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

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

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

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

A distinction between frontier and regular missions

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

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

Defining missiological breakthrough

Missiological breakthrough is the process:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Defining hidden peoples

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

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

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

Developments in Key Concepts

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

Defining people groups

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

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

A people group is a significantly large sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation etc. or combinations of these. From the viewpoint of evangelization this is the largest possible group within which the gospel can spread as a viable, indigenous church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.¹⁷

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

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

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

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

Defining unreached and reached

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

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

A reached people group then is:

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

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

group is actually reached.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How many unreached people groups are there?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Movements, Organizations and Applications

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

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

Initial People Group Research

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

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

The U.S. Center for World Mission

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



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

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

The Decade of the 80s

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

The AD 2000 and Beyond Movement

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

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

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

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

The 10/40 Window

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

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

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

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

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

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

People Group Adoption

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

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

Joshua Project 2000

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

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

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

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

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

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Endnotes

¹Donald McGavran, introduction to *The New Macedonia: A Revolutionary New Era in Mission Begins*, by Ralph Winter (World Wide Publications, 1975), 5.

²Ibid.

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

⁴Ibid., 45.

⁵Ibid., 48.

⁶Ibid., 50.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 48.

¹⁰Winter, "Frontier Mission Perspectives," 65.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 64–65.

¹³Ibid., 65–66.

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

¹⁵Ibid., 64.

¹⁶Ibid., 60.

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

¹⁸Ibid., 37.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Dan Scribner, "Step 1: Identifying the Peoples Where Church Planting is Most Needed," *Mission Frontiers Bulletin* (November–December 1995): 13. Scribner describes the list as "ethno-linguistic-political, meaning that it recognizes cultural, language and national differences. For example if a people speak two distinct languages they are considered two separate peoples, or if a people live in two separate countries they are considered two distinct groups. (Although similar in culture and language, the methods to penetrate these groups could be very different depending on the national political environment.)"

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

²³Johnstone, "People Groups," 37.

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

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

²⁶Ibid., 8–9.

²⁷Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices*, 53.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Winter, "Frontier Mission Perspectives," 60.

³⁰Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices*, 53.

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

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

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

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

³⁵Johnstone, "People Groups," 36.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

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

³⁹Ibid., 20.

⁴⁰Scribner, "Identifying the Peoples, 12.

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

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

⁴³Ibid., 8.

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Johnstone, *The Church*, 213, 215.

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

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Johnstone, *The Church*, 215.

⁵⁸Ibid.

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

⁶⁰Frank Kaleb Jansen and others eds., *A Church for Every People: The List of Unreached and Adoptable Peoples*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse, 1993), n.p.

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

⁶²Ibid., 14.

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