

## **World Evangelization by AD2000 —Is It Possible?**

—by Ralph Winter

**A**nyone seriously investigating the mission scene today confronts two apparently conflicting impressions. On the one hand, a straggling band of underpaid, overworked, independent-minded missionaries over the past one hundred years with the help of God opened 85 percent of the schools of Africa, established 600 hospitals in India, produced the largest women's university in the world—and more.

They've brought Christ into virtually every country of the world. Today, for example, in most nations of Africa and Asia, there are at least one million evangelical Christians, and about a thousand new churches open their doors each week. What a fantastic achievement!

On the other hand, the unfinished task looks mammoth. About half of all non-Christians can never hear the gospel—even if current mission efforts keep expanding.

Most of these non-Christians are Hindu, Muslim, or Chinese. Virtually no churches exist in their culture. They are hidden and unreached. Pioneer missionaries must be sent to reach them.

The situation isn't impossible. With today's abundant Christian

resources, including more than 600 million active Christians worldwide, we can reap a harvest if we focus our prayers and dedication on the unfinished task.

The true tragedy today is that most of the world's non-Christians remain buried out of sight while devout but unaware Christians are concentrating their efforts on those who are already rescued.

This is partly understandable. In any rescue operation, as more and more victims are pulled out, there is an increasing need to care for those victims—medical aid, food, treatment for shock and so on. The cries of those who have been rescued are more apparent than the voices of still-buried victims.

As a result, the preponderance of rescue workers can become involved caring for those already rescued even though the majority of the population remains buried—with time running out.

Today 90% of about 150,000 Protestant missionaries serve 1) the existing churches, 2) the newly founded churches, and 3) the people within cultures where the gospel has already penetrated.

By comparison, there are very few "national" full-time Christian

workers among the unreached peoples; and only one of every 171 full-time workers is trying to reach them. The “visibly” needy have gained most of the attention.

African leader Gottfried Osei-Mensah, former executive director of the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization, has made an electrifyingly simple proposal: Let every 1,000 evangelical believers in the world today select and support one additional missionary couple from their midst and send that couple to one of the 3,000 clusters of unreached people groups (perhaps 12,000 minipeoples total).

This proposal would swell the present number of missionaries by over six times. For the first time in history, three of every five full-time Christian workers would be tending the flocks and reaching out locally and two would be going to unreached peoples. Two of five is far better than one of 171!

The rallying cry of the student Haystack Prayer Meeting in 1805 echoes down the corridors of history: “We can do it if we will!” This was no humanistic aspiration. It was not a presumptuous outburst of exuberant youth. Those students gave a sober, obedient response to the Great Commission.

Ed Hill, a black California pastor, fairly screamed at the 2,700 Lausanne participants: “I don’t care if we need a million missionaries. Let’s send them! I don’t care if every pastor in the world has to leave his pastorate six months out of the year. Let’s get the job done.”

Believer, stop and think.

Never before has the Great Commission been known by thousands of dedicated, articulate spokesmen from Africa, from Asia, from the Middle East—fruits of the modern missionary movement.

Never before have we known so much about the task—precisely how much is left to be done.

Never before have we had such great evangelical resources in almost every country of the world.

Never before have we had so much knowledge and awareness of the challenge of 860 million Muslim people.

Never before have we had so detailed an account of the remaining task in the Hindu world as Donald McGavran’s *Ethnic Realities and the Church: Lessons from India*.

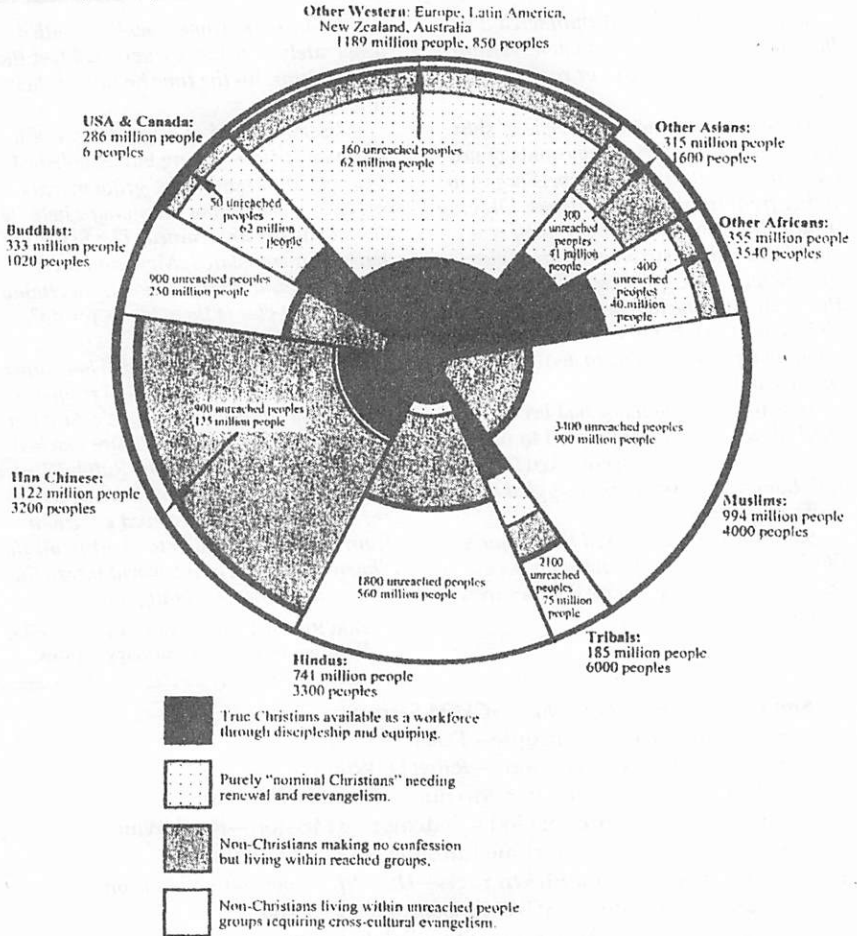
Never before have we had so many Chinese so organized and motivated to reach that great family of mankind.

Never before have we had as strong an emphasis on the tribal peoples as is afforded today by Wycliffe Bible Translators, the Regions Beyond Missionary Union, Gospel Recordings and many other missions reaching out with anthropological and linguistic sophistication.

The pie chart shows that the gospel has penetrated significantly into Asia and Africa as well as the countries of the Western world. What if the resources of the evangelical world were also made available to all the unreached

**The Globe At A Glance**

(1992 data)



peoples? Surely the gospel would penetrate, for that is its power.

We must put the gospel into every tribe, culture, and nation by the year 2000. We must go all out simply out of obedience to the possible. Thus for our generation

the goal must be "a church for every people by the year 2000."

Jesus said, "This gospel must first be preached among all peoples, and then shall the end come" (Mark 13:10/Matthew 24:14). ✦

## LANDSLIDE!

Out of the darkness it thundered down the mountain, engulfing a town. Within seconds, scarcely a street or rooftop could be seen.

No sooner had the last rumble of shifting earth subsided than thousands of people bearing lanterns and shovels began arriving from neighboring villages. Digging frantically through the night, they rescued hundreds of survivors buried alive in their homes. One group of men, digging their way into the mayor's office, retrieved a block-by-block list of citizens of the town, making it possible to account for all the missing.

By sunrise every name had been checked. Survivors were moved to neighboring towns; victims were taken for burial. Bone-weary rescuers straggled home.

Then it happened.

Someone double-checked the mayor's file. To his horror, he founded an overlooked sheet. A dozen more families were still missing!

"Come back! Come back!" he called desperately, but the rescuers had lost their momentum. By the time he rallied them, it was too late.

Missions stand in equal danger of losing momentum. Young but established churches and seminaries grow increasingly independent of missionary help. National pastors are trained. The Scriptures have been translated. More and more missionaries (and their missions) inevitably ask: "What else is there for us for do? Shouldn't we just go home?"

But the job isn't finished. Thousands of peoples are "buried"—hidden from our eyes—and from the gospel. We dare not lose momentum before they are reached.

Over the past years Dr. Ralph Winter, formerly a missionary and then a professor of missions, has received a burden from God—the burden to identify all the "buried" peoples of the world before the rescue workers start going home.

—Don Richardson, author of *Peace Child*,  
Regions Beyond Missionary Union

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