

## UNREACHED PEOPLES

### Part I: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT

The Bible practically begins on the subject of the peoples of the world and the problem of their "unreachedness." Only a few pages into Genesis we are confronted by a table of the world's peoples and the fact of God's central concern somehow to reach them: Abraham was to become a nation, more specifically a "blessed" people, and quite explicitly he and his lineage were in turn to be a blessing to all other peoples (Gen. 12:2,3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14,15; cf. Acts 3:25 and Gal. 3:8). \*1

Having said only this much we are immediately catapulted into two of the most profound dimensions of the Christian faith, reflected as they are in the two words of our topic: Unreached Peoples. The concept of peoples, almost unknown to Americans, sees mankind as a set of molecules, not atoms, that is, an aggregate of "peoples," not individuals. It is not a concept that refers merely to the individuals that make up the population of our planet nor does it have much to do with a list of the geographical territories called "countries." \*2

The other concept within the phrase of our topic echoes the concern of God for these peoples to be somehow "reached," "redeemed," "blessed," whatever. It sets us wondering "Precisely in what way were Abraham and his lineage to "be a blessing" to all the peoples of the earth?" "Was the effect of his reaching out to be a spiritual experience analogous to Abraham's own relationship of faith to the living God?" "Was this blessing to be similar to God's blessing promised to Abraham himself?" For example, were the other nations also to be given land perhaps in the sense that "the meek shall inherit the earth?" Were they merely to be spiritually blessed? Or is this hypothetical? Did the Gentiles have to wait until the time of Christ in order to be brought into a living relationship with God the way Abraham was? \*3

### CONCEPTS VS LABELS

Before going on to these concepts, however, a warning is in order in regard the shifting meaning of the terms themselves. For Westerners in general, and especially American evangelicals, the relevance of the sub-concept here called "a people" is pretty much a recent rediscovery. Americans are much more likely to be heard talking about world population than about the peoples of the world. Worse still, in terms of the history of the English language, the recent phrase United Nations constitutes the final, irretrievable hijacking of the word nation making it mean country. No wonder American missionaries are more

likely to speak of "winning souls" in this or that "country" than to speak within the terminology of the Matthew 28:19 phrase where Jesus commands His followers to "go and disciple the peoples of the world." \*4

One mission retains as a corporate objective the planting of the gospel "in every country of the world" without any reference to the more specific, Biblical concept of "peoples." A recent pamphlet by another mission speaks of "unreached people" and "reaching the unreached," and in this particular case the context clearly indicates that the reference is to the winning of individuals. The word people has come to mean persons. Only the grammar of phrases like a people or unreached peoples forces the word people to refer to a group. Unfortunately, as a result, phrases like the Chinese people are increasingly ambiguous grammatically. Thus Americans on hearing the phrase may more likely think of one billion Chinese individuals rather than a single, mammoth ethno-linguistic bloc consisting of thousands of peoples. By contrast, the Chinese peoples and a Chinese people (referring to sub-groups) represent uses of the word that sound just a bit strange to modern ears. \*5

Similarly, then, our American senses are programmed to assume that similarly ambiguous phrases like the Gentiles, or even the nations, in the Great Commission passages simply refer to masses of individuals. In English "a Gentile" means an individual, while in the Bible and in the whole non-Western world, a Gentile, an ethnos, means a group. \*6

For a quite different reason, the term unreached is slippery. In British English it may predominantly be used in a spatial or geographical sense, like "untouched." David Barrett, for example, speaks of unreached people as "groups without previous contact..[who have] not yet had the Gospel brought to them." Thus, being consistent, he defines untouched as "a..group.. not yet..reached..unevangelized" and unevangelized means "the state of not having had the Gospel spread or offered" (1982:847). \*7

On the other hand, the term unreached among American Evangelicals has for years been an adjective with theological (not spatial) flavor, and it has been applied only to an individual: that is, "reaching people for Christ" has meant "winning persons to faith in Christ." Thus when we use the phrase "Unreached Peoples" we sense a tug to read "unreached people", (e.g., persons). If on the other hand we force ourselves to think of a group, we must realize that most Evangelicals do not possess an accepted meaning for the concept of an unreached group. That is, most Evangelicals do not think in terms of an unconverted group, or of group conversion as being the same phenomenon as individual conversion. Thus the need for a deliberately new definition for the word unreached, if it is to mean more than unexposed or untouched. \*8

However, before proceeding any further, I must take the space to point out that in this paper it is not my main purpose to trace the development of the meaning of the two words unreached and peoples, nor even that of the term resulting from the two linked together. My purpose will be to trace the development of what I believe to be a widespread contemporary consensus regarding a certain concept underlying these words, and I will trace the concept no matter what terms have been used along the way in the conceptual developments leading to the present. That is, I believe it is important to recognize and rejoice that there has now recently come into being fairly wide agreement about a certain concept. As a result of a gathering in 1982 (to be mentioned further

below) many people now intend precisely the same concept whether they employ the term Hidden Peoples, Frontier Peoples, By-passed Peoples, Unpenetrated Peoples or Unreached Peoples. Thus I understand my assignment to be to comment on the development of this now well-accepted concept, rather than to trace all of the history of the usage of the two specific words with which it is now identified. For example, this concept to whose meaning the phrase Unreached Peoples has recently been applied happens to be the concept to which David Barrett applies the label Hidden Peoples in the dictionary section of his master work (1982:829). Unfortunately, in another section he employs a quite different meaning for Hidden Peoples (p. 19). \*9

## THE FIRST AND SECOND ERAS

If we go back to consult mission thinking in the modern Protestant period, ©1° we will note that the earliest writings by British and American mission scholars betray very little concern for the intrinsic significance of the Biblically important concept we are here calling "peoples." I have found it helpful to recognize a First Era in which William Carey and others in his train pushed clear out of the Western world to the coastlands of Asia and Africa. Carey in particular certainly confronted the vast spectrum of linguistic barriers, doing something with at least ninety different languages. But he did not effectively grapple with the significance of non-linguistic caste distinctions. Neither do the writings of Henry Venn nor Rufus Anderson in this First Era deal clearly with the people entity, much less see it as the specific target of strategic Biblical and missionary concern. \*10

On the other hand, we have all read about the Indian "praying towns" resulting from John Elliot's work in the mid 1600s in Massachusetts. Too bad Elliot's countrymen later destroyed most of his work by force of arms. Furthermore, Tippett, with his incomparable grasp of the Pacific, points out that as early as 1815 English missionaries in the Pacific islands had nevertheless actually precipitated what were later to be called people movements, and that there were many such occurrences by 1850. But those movements were not quite recognized for what they were. Tippett (1971:30) quotes a British leader who in 1847 wrote apologetically that such occurrences of rapid growth were unaccompanied by "civilizing," which is what he felt readers in England were waiting to hear and what he himself apparently regarded as the essential goal. \*11

By 1864 the much celebrated Christian movement among the Batak people had begun. The missionary Nommensen, trying to keep ahead of the advancing Islamic front in Sumatra, was unwilling to try to slow a Batak people movement down. By now facts about people dynamics became too prominent to ignore, and began to filter back to Europe, at least to Germany. Mission leaders like the great German missiologist, Gustav Warneck, took note. But meanwhile a new emphasis was arising in England. \*12

The Second Era is characterized by a new awareness of another kind of geographical frontier which gradually came to dominate the consciousness of the mission world as J. Hudson Taylor led the way in stressing the necessity to forge inland. He himself worked seriously in three of the many different Chinese languages. Yet I believe he too would have been surprised to encounter the contemporary concept underlying the phrase "unreached peoples." He did at least break China down into family units as targets--he figured the need for

1,000 evangelists to work only 1,000 days and by touching 50 families per day (!) to reach the 50 million families he guessed to populate China. \*13

Incidentally, Gustav Warneck pronounced such calculations "unspiritual." Obviously he could not possibly have imagined the massive wave of American and British response to this and similar appeals in the Second Era. The response came principally through the mechanism of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, a movement which would in fact largely ignore his and other missiological writings of the First Era. \*14

Warneck had, however, kept his eye on things more comprehensively than Anglo-American mission leaders in regard to people dynamics on the field. ©2° He was well aware of the Batak developments by virtue of his own Rhenish mission involvement. Drawing from such empirical data he, along with other German scholars, advanced concepts of the "Christianization of peoples" over which, on the continent, there had been much discussion and disagreement. \*15

For example, Verkuyl (1978:193) quotes Warneck's classical statement, "When Jesus speaks of the need to Christianize all peoples, He means that they must be made Christian on the basis of their natural distinctiveness as a people." But Verkuyl goes on to describe Hoekendijk's (1948:93) disapproval of the basic methodology of both Keysser and Gutmann. Verkuyl summarizes, "Without exception every German missiologist writing since the Second World War has given up this naive notion of Christianizing the volk; in fact they resolutely avoid using the term," (1978:193). \*16

In any case, at least two of Warneck's students, Christian Keysser, working in what is today Papua-New Guinea, and Bruno Gutmann working in today's Tanzania, ©3° took people dynamics very seriously, and their work and writings in the next generation (1920s and 30s) are now becoming classic. Unfortunately, the interruption and alienation of two world wars, as well as the barrier of the German language itself has kept most of these ideas from the English-speaking world. \*17

For these 19th and early 20th century observers, Pietism, despite all its precious and authentic spiritual blessings, had nevertheless interposed an essentially new perspective. In all honesty, it is very difficult to wed the concept of individual conversion, so significant in the Pietist backgrounds of the vast majority of all Protestant missionaries, and the concept of a whole tribe or "nation" or people being converted. Yet both did happen, and Warneck tried very hard to hold to both. Gutmann may have tended to value the Christianization of the national leadership over the conversion of any one person. Bavinck at the opposite extreme is very suspicious of the attempt to Christianize pagan social structures. According to him: \*18

Gutmann does not sufficiently recognize that although the tribal bonds which are still found...perform a restraining function in the sphere of morals, they are, nevertheless, completely connected with demonic, collective self-deification, so characteristic of heathendom...The tribe must undergo a deep and drastic change. And it is in this sense that the heathen who are converted must join the "new folk," those who know an entirely different form of community from that of the tribal

relationship, a form of communal life that the tribe never dreamed of (p. 119). \*19

We must understand that these Dutchmen (Verkuyl, Hoekendijk, and Bavinck) were acutely aware of the longstanding existence of a volkskirche in Germany itself, the spirituality of which did not seem to be able to thwart the demonic element in the rise of Naziism, or the invasion of the Netherlands. \*20

Meanwhile, although the International Review of Missions had functioned since 1912 as an agent of the cross-fertilization of concepts, not even Christian Keysser's article on his work printed there in 1924 aroused much attention in the English speaking world (Keysser, 1924). \*21

In his foreword to the first English translation of Keysser's major work, A People Reborn, McGavran recognizes that "since Hitler's day the term has come into disrepute...but if volkskirke is understood rightly as a genuine Church (a congregation) of a people, it will be accepted as a thoroughly good term" (Keysser, 1980:x). \*22

However, whether it was Williams, Nommensen, Keysser or Gutmann, and whether a particular indigenous Christian movement being discussed was rapid or merely relatively fast, in all of this literature the discussion focuses mostly and rightly upon the nature of the movement of a people (or within a people) rather than upon the nature of a people (group) itself. We do not have space to sketch the various earlier, mainly German, discussions of the phenomenon, but we must at least acknowledge in passing the great relevance of all this for contemporary discussions about structural social change, and contextualization, as well as the ongoing concern about churches in, of or out of peoples. We will turn to contemporary debate below. \*23

Here I must pause once more and put on a different hat. Out of deference to the plain meaning of the scriptures consulted at the outset, we must reflect on the great work in mission the German people achieved in the 19th century, and to the extent the wars allowed in the 20th. What great blessing German Christians might have continued to spread to many nations had their own volk not gotten caught up in the two world wars. Those wars appear to me to be basically strident efforts to save their volk, to find their own sufficient lebensraum. What a warning this is today as equally strident variations of Americanism flit through our churches and as the USA now lavishes 99 percent of its wealth upon itself and its own self protection! The relatively generous people of the United Presbyterian denomination, for example, give out of what they earn through their church for the blessing of peoples outside the USA not even two cents per dollar but something like two cents out of every hundred dollars. Yet this is a fairly "good record" as mainline denominations go. Is there any hope for a nation so dulled by affluence, crazed by insecurity, so impotent in reaching out with blessing to other nations? I submit that the future of America depends more upon the theme of this conference and what we do about it than it does upon any kind of arms build up or nuclear freeze. \*24

### THE THIRD ERA

Back to the story. I believe a genuinely new, Third Era began once again as another trickle of new frontier awareness appeared, this time in two places.

This new awareness began to define the nature of the final frontiers. A handful of missionaries from the English speaking world working in Guatemala, H. Dudley Peck, Paul Burgess, and W. Cameron Townsend, confronted the durability of the various Indian languages they encountered. The Pecks came from John Eliot's territory where he had translated the Bible for Indians in the Boston area back in the mid 1600s. They and the Burgesses each concentrated specifically on one particular language (the Mam and the Quiche, respectively). Cameron Townsend, worked on Cachiqual, but later decided to tackle the more general problem of getting the Bible into the mother tongue of all other tribes. He guessed there were about 500 on the face of the earth(!). Due to his diplomatic and organizational efforts in the generalization of the problem, it is fair to associate him more than any other human being with the spiritual need of the specifically tribal peoples of the world. The mission he founded in 1934, Wycliffe Bible Translators, presently sends out twice as many missionaries as are sent out by all of the member denominations of the National Council of Churches put together. Tribal peoples are not easy to reach, and to this date embarrassingly few agencies have substantially followed his lead. \*25

Meanwhile, however, as a result of mission work in India, non-tribal "mass movements" had sprung up within some of the lower castes. These phenomenal breakthroughs were not exactly sought for originally. They seemed to dim the hopes of the Gospel reaching higher levels of society, and, as a general phenomenon they potentially pictured once again the meaninglessness of nominal Christianity. But the phenomenon provoked both concern and fascination. \*26

Thus, during the same period in which the missionaries in Guatemala were confronting the "horizontal segmentation" of tribal movements, missionaries in India were confronting the "vertical segmentation" of vast non-tribal movements for which they had not planned. By 1928 the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon brought things to a head, and John R. Mott and William Paton, president and secretary respectively of the International Missionary Council, who were present at the meeting, formulated a resolution that appointed "a study of the work in mass movement areas," (Pickett, 1933:11). The purpose of this study was later described in part as to help mission agencies "to think through the existing maze of conflicting opinions and experiences of the movement" (p. 12). \*27

Out of this came Christian Mass Movements in India, the monumental (370 page) work appearing in 1933 written by J. Waskom Pickett, who had been appointed to do the study. This book in turn attracted so much attention that the Mid-India Provincial Christian Council invited Pickett along with Dr. Donald A. McGavran and Rev. G. H. Singh to look further into the phenomenon. The result of their further study inevitably confirmed and consolidated the importance of vertical segmentation, that is, the existence of another (non-tribal) type of unit which can equally be called a "people." \*28

This further study was published in 1936 and immediately attracted international interest. John R. Mott, in 1937, wrote the introduction to the second edition, and a new concern for taking the concept of peoples seriously went world wide. In many places the many "non-growing mission station churches" began to look more closely to see just what disparate peoples might be represented ineffectively within the same congregation. \*29

Kenneth Scott Latourette, active in the SVM, close to Mott and Paton, and later to become the greatest of all historians of the development of the Christian movement, inevitably drew on these documents when he wrote, in 1936:  
\*30

More and more we must dream in terms of winning groups, not merely of individuals. Too often, with our Protestant, nineteenth-century individualism, we have torn men and women, one by one, out of the family or village or clan, with the result that they have been permanently deracinated and maladjusted. To be sure, in its last analysis conversion must result in a new relation between the individual and his Maker --in radiant, transformed lives. Usually the group, if won, is brought over by a few of its members who have found, singly, the truth of the gospel and have begun the new life. Experience, however, shows that it is much better if an entire natural group--a family, a village, a caste, a tribe--can come rapidly over into the faith. That gives reinforcement to the individual Christian and makes easier the Christianization of the entire life of a community (p. 159). \*31

However, in reviewing this literature, it must be admitted that we do not quite discern the mood of a rediscovery of the reality of peoples as the true structural fabric of humanity and the true target of Great Commission focus. Rather, we do find again and again an understandable jubilation in the discovery of how churches can begin to break out of decades-old static mission station "conglomerate" congregations and begin to grow rapidly along the lines of people groups. It is, of course, not exactly a criticism to point out that this literature stresses more the growth of the church than the penetration of all peoples. However, the concept of a people is clearly there, even if we do not find a closure theology built upon the winning of peoples. ©4° \*32

Pickett, for example, cannot describe such movements apart from the groups within which they occur. In a crucial statement he observes: \*33

The distinguishing features of Christian mass movements are a group decision favourable to Christianity and the consequent preservation of the converts' social integration. Whenever a group, larger than the family, accustomed to exercise a measure of control over the social and religious life of the individuals that compose it, accepts the Christian religion (or a large proportion accept it with the encouragement of the group), the essential principle of the mass movements is manifest. The size and distribution of the group are of immense interest, but do not affect the principle. A mass movement, which we would prefer to call a group movement, may comprise either a large or a small group (Pickett, 1933:22). \*34

As he says here, Pickett is not pleased with the perjorative phrase mass movement, which says nothing in itself about the group within which the movement takes place. Pickett himself observes, "The so-called mass in these

movements consists of homogeneous groups, thoroughly accustomed to joint action" (p. 22). Yet Pickett, despite this generalized definition never applied this brilliant insight to the high and respectable castes nor to ethnic, economic or linguistic groups in other lands.

McGavran, in 1956, in preparing an amplified edition of the joint study published in 1936 (under the new title, Church Growth and Group Conversion), gained permission of all the authors to employ the phrase people movement. In his own new chapter one, he says, \*35

Basic to the entire point of view is the concept of a people..if becoming a Christian..means 'leaving my people and joining some other people' then the growth of the church will be very slow..Thus it happens that Christianity, as long as it remains outside a people, makes very slow progress, but, once inside, it flows readily throughout it (p.5). \*36

But in this new chapter and in his classic, Bridges of God (1955), McGavran internationalized the concept and it became a general widely discussed missiological concept, most often referred to as "the homogeneous unit principle."

Almost all discussion has focused on the empirical and practical significance of these groups in evangelism. Getting inside is the key thing. Once inside the purpose is plain: to get on through to the rest of the group. This practical fact, of ease of communication within the group, is the basis of my own recent thinking. Early in 1982 this present writer began to realize that we could define such groups as "the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church-planting movement without encountering barriers of acceptance or understanding." I agree with Robert Recker's very practical point: \*37

We must remember that no matter how transitory one would view the phenomenon of peoplehood, the gospel of Jesus Christ is addressed to and finds people where they are. It addresses flesh and blood people who are more or less communally oriented and who function more or less in communal fashion. \*38

#### THEOLOGICAL INTERLUDE

However, no matter how "practical" our concern, theological problems unfortunately surface whenever we begin to talk about "group conversion." It is admittedly a complex phenomenon. In 1953 McGavran set out to explain it further under the title How Peoples Become Christian, (which was the original title of his classic work The Bridges of God, appearing in 1955. The publisher didn't like the intended title, rightly feeling that the average Britisher or American would think the word "peoples" a mis-print!) This book, for which McGavran is most famous, further documents the simple fact that where great growth occurs, it does so with the peoples involved retaining their cultural integrity. Some estimates suggest that 3/4 of all Non-Western Christians have been won within peoples. \*39

By now, however, it is clear that in all such discussions the deep rooted feelings of American readers, for example, are often tied up in knots. Dutchmen and Germans may conjure up fears of nominalism or even a Nazi state church. For Americans, paying attention to the differences between peoples may on the one hand seem like racism. Yet ignoring those differences will also seem like a certain kind of racism. For Americans it is thus both a practical and a



theological question whether we should encourage people coming into the United States from Mexico to retain their Spanish, or encourage them to give it up. Or do we help them do what they want, whatever it is, going along with them both linguistically and ecclesiastically? ©5° \*40

There are a few verses in the Bible (e.g., Zech. 2:11, Acts 15:14, and Eph. 2:15) that might allow Americans to assume that God will ultimately unite all believers into one new people consisting of one new cultural tradition. But there would seem to be far more references on the other side. Take, for example, Rev. 7:9, 11:9, 17:15, 21:3 where in all four cases "peoples" in the plural describes redeemed but differentiated humanity at the very end of time. But as we note the translation of the Greek, we begin to understand how difficult a concept this is for Americans, and thus we are not totally surprised that in only the first three passages is the consistently plural Greek word rendered by a plural English word. In the fourth case of Rev. 21:3, most American translators (and apparently even some ancient copyists) falter, rendering in the singular God's people what is plural in not only the three previous contexts but what has the best manuscript evidence, (see Metzger, 1971), namely God's peoples. In other words, powerful cultural forces may affect our missiology even on the exegetical level. \*41

History displays many subterfuges in the dealing with scriptural injunctions. Luther was just as capable of nullifying the contemporary significance of the New Testament Great Commission as New Testament Jews were able to ignore the significance of the Old Testament Great Commission. Luke 24:46 clearly implies that Jesus could have expected them to understand. \*42

Intentions often bleed through a variety of different wordings if we will let them. If a Christian family was told to relocate in a city slum and to "be a blessing" to all the families of the neighborhood, does this wording necessarily conceal the obvious intention of evangelistic initiative? \*43

But centuries of misunderstanding weigh us down today just as they did New Testament Jews. The subtle and supreme failure to understand is typified by the widely held assumption that Christ came to change the game plan from a passive "air wick" goodness to an active reaching out. Yet the "go" in Gen. 12:1 is no less definitive than the "go" of Matt. 28:19. In all ages we are told very simply to "go and be a blessing," all the while counting on God's willingness to be our own sufficient blessing, guaranteed by His very presence with us until the end, (compare Gen. 24:15 and Matt. 28:20). \*44

De Ridder's book (De Ridder, 1971) is absolutely foundational for a full appreciation of the essential meaning of the Biblical story. I believe it is of significance that the earlier title of the book, The Dispersion of the People of God, (which in effect makes no comment about the purpose of that dispersion), would in a later edition have been restated much more boldly and significantly as The Discipling of the Nations. That is, the dispersion was neither meaningless nor merely punitive. It was purposeful in the fundamental sense of Abraham's calling, and as is common in history, we see God fulfilling His purposes with or without the wholehearted obedience of His people. It is and always has been a case of very simply "Go or be sent" or "Give blessing and blessing will be given to you," but also clearly implied is Jesus' warning, "Seek to save your life and you shall lose it." \*45

## MOMENTUM INCREASES

In any case, the literature of the 1933-1955 period does, in fact, lean upon a concept of peoples which is in effect defined operationally as that type of group within which a people movement can occur. We see in this literature again and again the phenomenon of "peoples" patiently described to the perturbed Western observer. But the bulk of the material is very simply and practically devoted to how people movements to Christ can be justified and promoted. \*46

In other words, those men were much more sure about the reality and need of movements to Christ than they were ever bothered over details about the definition of a "people." Pickett described, explicated and rejoiced about the movements occurring in India. Mott, Latourette and McGavran surmised that these breakthroughs had general significance for the whole world. But a great deal changed when McGavran returned to the States in 1954. His strong conviction about the general significance of people theory in missiology now gained the backing of institutional force. His 1952 manuscript How Peoples Become Christian, already mentioned, was not only published (as The Bridges of God) in 1955 by the National Council of Churches (USA) but carried the backing of the Institute of Church Growth, which he founded in association with the Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon. He then republished the 1936 book in 1956, adding the chapter "The People Movement Point of View." Soon Fuller Seminary would discover him and assist him in boosting his concerns into larger orbit. \*47

From this point on, the profusion of views is so great it would be unduly wearying to try to recount all that has happened. Much of the subsequent history has been described elsewhere. For example, the so-called Church Growth school of thought has produced thousands of pages within which some of these ideas are quite basic, and a great deal of interchange has resulted with virtually all sectors of the mission world. \*48

## THE LAUSANNE TRADITION

One unanticipated tailwind in the development of the people concept has been that winsome, irenic stream of energy called the Lausanne tradition. Here again we are assisted as we trace this movement since many others, including Ed Dayton, very recently, have done so (1983:23). \*49

At this point we must zero in more narrowly on the precise concept which I have described earlier as being widely accepted as the denotation of the phrase unreached peoples. It was McGavran's coming to Fuller that brought the writer of this paper as well as many others including Ed Dayton, Peter Wagner, Art Glasser, etc., into dramatic and forceful contact with a man who was convinced that we are in a sunrise and not a sunset situation with regard to the preaching of the gospel to the ends of the earth. His irrepressible optimism has been contagious to all those who have had very much to do with him. \*50

I hope a few biographical references will be helpful at this point. In spite of my ten years of field experience among a tribal people group surrounded by other groups without a church, nevertheless it took me almost ten years clearly to fathom, formulate or understand the contemporary meaning of the phrase unreached peoples. (I will call it the "Chicago 1982," or the "C-82"

concept.) I am pained as I look back at my own published writings. I helped to promote the Theological Education by Extension movement. I was well aware of the fact, clear back in 1961, that such a movement would allow a multi-cultural denomination to foster its disparate subcultures, allowing and promoting theological education within those cultures rather than demanding a centralized or field-wide, culturally-defined standard for ordination. I had, myself, worked within just such a people group, a (somewhat repressed) cultural minority in Guatemala.\*51

But my earliest burst of insight engendered by McGavran's perspective is what I have often called "The Incredible Achievement," and I wrote of it in my little book, The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years, which was published in abridged form as a new chapter for Latourette's seventh volume in his History of the Expansion of Christianity. However, in that book written in 1969 I merely note with appreciation the great importance of cultural minorities and cultural pluralism (pp. 16, 23, 31 and 82). I do not speak of peoples as such. \*52

I also for my own part had discovered and written extensively about the significance of what Latourette had called a sodality, a structure just as churchly as that of the local congregation. But there is nothing in these writings either about people groups or unreached peoples. Another growing concern was to do something about the inadequate and fast decaying home base of missions. But again this had no unreached people content as such. \*53

Anyone close to McGavran would inevitably have begun to think in terms of harvest theology and even what I call closure theology (e.g., looking toward the end of the task). I happened to be involved in a panel discussion late in 1965 which was one of many discussions leading to the formation of MARC. The 1966 Berlin Congress on World Evangelism had an upbeat emphasis, and McGavran attended the congress, (but was not utilized as a major speaker until the 1974 meeting). As MARC got started and as David Barrett's concerns for tracing indigenous movements of all kinds came into the picture in the period prior to the publication of his first major work, Schism and Renewal in Africa (1968), most of the discussion, as I recall, revolved around the growth of the church around the world, and its health and vitality in many remote places. The concern was to document the Christian movement. MARC produced "Country Profiles." Barrett was tracing Christian movements and soon plunged into the work which led to his truly monumental World Christian Encyclopedia. I recall at that time beginning to speak up occasionally for an equal concern for the peoples that were not yet reached. \*54

In late 1972 I experienced some kind of new burst of insight and wrote a little article for the tenth anniversary issue of Evangelical Missions Quarterly entitled "Seeing the Task Graphically." My assignment at the Fuller School of World Mission was probably the only one absolutely requiring a grasp of the overall extension of the Christian faith, my professorship being "The Historical Development of the Christian Movement." As a result it had finally broken in upon my attention, as I then explained at Lausanne in 1974, that there were massive amounts of people yet unreached in certain specific huge blocs--Chinese, Muslim and Hindu--and that the reason these massive blocs were in the main unwon was that individuals within them were "mainly beyond the ordinary evangelism of existing Christians reaching their cultural near-neighbors.. That is, they were at an E-2 or E-3 distance.." (Winter,

1975:218-225). That is, the vast majority of their people were walled off from Christian outreach by the protective barriers (maintained by peoples that were as yet unreached). But I didn't add that last part in parentheses, nor did I count or even guess at the number of groups, e.g., unreached peoples. I was counting individuals. All my charts done in those days portray masses of people, not numbers of peoples. ©6° \*55

The little article, "Seeing the Task Graphically," framed as it was in terms of masses of individuals yet to be reached, was employed as the basis for the opening audiovisual at the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne. In both my own plenary paper, written closer to the time of the Congress, and also in my own presentation at the Congress I do mention (in passing) the need to think in terms of peoples. At the Congress I even introduced the concept of people blindness. \*56

A malady so widespread that it deserves a special name..let us call it people blindness, that is, blindness to the existence of separate peoples within countries..which prevents us from noticing the sub-groups within a country which are significant to the development of effective evangelistic strategy..Until we recover from this kind of blindness we may confuse the legitimate desire for church or national unity with the illegitimate goal of uniformity (ICOWE 1975:221). \*57

I don't believe, however, that I was the one at this juncture who was pushing hardest for the significance of unreached peoples as peoples. I was more concerned about the breat blocs of unreached in the Muslim, Hindu, Chinese spheres. The emergence of massive planning for the Lausanne Congress provided the occasion for a greater emphasis at MARC on the unreached peoples. Their Country Profiles had documented the existence of the churches in country after country. Now Don Hoke and Paul Little, directing the ICOWE, asked the Fuller School of World Mission, which in turn asked MARC, to do a \$25,000 study preparatory to the Congress on unreached peoples. Even though I was asked to write a brief, popular essay, "God Has Always Sent the Gospel to Peoples," introductory to the Unreached Peoples Directory which was given out at the Congress, I think I felt at the time that this fact was so obvious I even wondered why I was asked to stress it. Charlie Mellis was one who could see further ahead at that point than I could. Others did too. I had a former missionary, Ed Pentecost--now teaching at Dallas Theological Seminary--working under me on a master's thesis later published under the title Reaching the Unreached: An Introductory Study on Developing an Overall Strategy for World Evangelization. That book (Pentecost, 1974), although now out of print, is still the best thing of its scope that I know of on the subject. Pentecost is one of the early ones to suggest the idea of defining unreachedness in terms of 20% of the individuals being Christians. Working with MARC, he was the Research Coordinator for the Unreached Peoples study presented at Lausanne. \*58

In the explanatory introduction of the Unreached Peoples Directory passed out at the Congress, the definition of "unreached people" is not firmly established. Both the 20% figure is mentioned and also the phrase, "(where) there is no appreciable (recognized) church body effectively communicating the message within the unit itself," (MARC 1974:26). But the Directory goes on to say that "for those who prefer a single criterion, 20% is a reasonable

dividing point" and that "for the purposes of this directory we consider that a people is unreached when less than 20% of the population of that group is part of the Christian community" (p. 26). Note that there is not yet a reference here to "practicing Christians." \*59

Clear proof that the problem of a definition of unreachedness was not terribly impressed on my mind is the fact that in 1976 I was invited to address the joint meeting of the IFMA-EFMA executives on the subject of our overall progress in world missions. My talk on that occasion, "The Grounds for a New Thrust in Missions," employed a new type of graphics to highlight the enormous amount of work yet to be done and the fact--very crucial in my own thinking then--that only mission agencies could best penetrate those remaining frontiers, that is, the peoples where the church was not yet established. In my mind it was very simple that all individuals who could not be brought into existing churches must then be part of other groups where there was no existing church. That was a good enough definition for me. But at that point I had not yet attempted to define or count the remaining peoples to be penetrated. I was more interested in the protection and development of that endangered species, the precious mission mechanisms (which I felt were alone able effectively to cross those frontiers) than I was in the definition of those frontiers. I recognized that some mainline denominational thinking warred against the very idea of a cross-cultural mission structure other than those which would exchange personnel with groups where there were already churches. \*60

However, in early 1977 the 20% criterion suggested in the MARC Directory at the ICOWE in 1974 became in early 1977 with one fatal change the published definition of the Lausanne Committee's Strategy Working Group (Wagner and Dayton, 1979:24): "An unreached people is a group that is less than 20% practicing Christian." In my own biased recollection, the change to "practicing Christians" was almost instantly criticized. I had not paid much attention to the question before then. I had felt that so many groups were so obviously unreached that any precise definition was unimportant. But when the new 20% definition came out, I remember calling my friend Peter Wagner, who was the chairman of the Strategy Working Group, and saying, "This is a great mistake. Almost all groups everywhere are now classified as unreached!" But it was too late. The Strategy Working Group was an international committee, and everyone had already gone home. \*61

The emphasis on 20% did have the merit that it was relatively easy to quantify. I say "relatively" because most evangelicals thought they knew how to recognize a practicing Christian when they saw one, but might not have been so readily able to assume that they could recognize the presence or the absence of the other criterion (mentioned back in 1974, as above): "no appreciable church body." \*62

By now I was heavily involved in the development of the U. S. Center for World Mission, which was first mentioned in public at the IFMA-EFMA mission executives retreat in 1976--a project stressing exclusively the remaining task. \*63

(I spoke of) the need for the establishment of a major mission center (in each country), the primary purpose of which would be to focus major attention on the Chinese, Muslim and Hindu groups. If every mission agency represented here were to lend one key person,

such a center could jump into being. The idea to which I refer has been talked about now for two years, and an open discussion tomorrow noon will take it further. It involves the availability of a major former college campus in Pasadena, and would be in no way bound to any denomination, school, or mission structure. I would hope that it might beautifully complement, in the area of the work of the world's mission agencies, the emphasis of the Billy Graham center on the evangelistic outreach of the world's churches. One of the novel aspects of the center will be its avowed attempt to bring about a wedding between the professional missionary tradition and the university tradition within which more and more missionaries are being processed and formed (Winter, 1977:20,21). \*64

In view of this presentation at the IFMA-EFMA meeting in 1976, and partly due no doubt to all the attention claimed by the actual founding of the USCWM late in 1976, I was asked to address a group of mission leaders which was to meet in December 1977 at the Overseas Ministries Study Center in Ventnor, New Jersey. I was told, "You have made your point about how many people there are yet to be reached. We'd like you to come and tell us how you think they can be reached." Others were to speak on the same subject. \*65

The Strategy Working Group's new 20% "practicing Christians" definition came into the picture at about this moment. Thus in my presentation to the executives at OMSC (published as a booklet in 1978 under the title "Penetrating the Last Frontiers") I struggled to respond to the SWG's official unreached peoples definition. I said what I have already said above about the difficulties inherent in the word unreached. But being reluctant to launch a counter definition for the same phrase, I proposed another concept under another label--Hidden Peoples, a phrase suggested by a member of our staff, Robert Coleman. By hidden he did not mean people were physically hidden, but hidden due to our "people blindness." Until we identify their peoplehood, they may seem to be within reach. Thus, the concept as I defined it: \*66

Any linguistic, cultural or sociological group defined in terms of its primary affinity (not secondary or trivial affinities), which cannot be won by E-1 methods and drawn into an existing fellowship is a Hidden People...(Winter, 1978:42. Also in Wagner and Dayton 1979:67.) \*67

At this point I was unaware of the fact that this "presence or absence of a church" concept had, in fact, been mentioned (and yet at the same time left secondary), as we have seen above, in the MARC Unreached Peoples Directory distributed at Lausanne in 1974. Thus, if this concept is inherently more useful, I certainly can take no credit for first mentioning it. \*68

But unfortunately, a great deal of confusion still remained. In Unreached Peoples '79, one chapter presents the SWG 20% definition of the unreached peoples term (p. 24) while the next chapter (an abridgment of my "Penetrating the Last Frontiers" presentation in 1977) presents, big as life, the "presence-or-the-absence-of-a-church" definition for the Hidden Peoples label (Wagner, Dayton, 1979:67).

By the time of the publication of Unreached Peoples '80, my chart in the '79 Annual indicating the 16,750 estimate of the number of Hidden Peoples was somehow misunderstood as the number of peoples in the total world population. Furthermore, the phraseology of Hidden People groups in the same introductory essay is utilized as equivalent to the 20% definition of Unreached Peoples. ©7° \*69

#### EDINBURGH 1980

Meanwhile, the preparations for the Edinburgh Conference (the 1980 World Consultation on Frontier Missions) began to boil up in late '78. While I had very little to do with the actual organization of that conference, I was certainly willing for the convening committee (involving a wide range of mission executives) to hammer out a slightly improved definition of the concept I had already proposed for the phrase Hidden Peoples: \*70

Hidden Peoples: Those cultural and linguistic sub-groups, urban or rural, for whom there is as yet no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize their own people (Starling 1981:61). \*71

Furthermore, the Consultation itself equated this term with the phrase frontier peoples.

Thus, as a result of this October 1980 meeting, the basic concept here expressed, whatever the label (Hidden or Frontier), went to the ends of the earth with all of the various mission agency and youth delegates who went back to their home countries. Meanwhile, the Unreached Peoples phrase, employing the new 20% ("practicing") definition was now reinforced worldwide in the same year at the Pattaya Conference of the Lausanne tradition. \*72

It is significant to note that the 171 youth leaders who attended the sister conference, the International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions, eventually sponsored three new student organizations, 1) the on-going International Student Coalition for Frontier Missions, which early published a newsletter and later introduced the International Journal on Frontier Missions, 2) the Theological Students for Frontier Missions, born six months later, which utilized the Edinburgh definitions unchanged, and 3) the National Student Missions Coalition, born 13 months later, which developed a slightly modified definition: \*73A

Unreached Peoples are definable units of society, with common characteristics (geographical, tribal, ethnic, linguistic, etc.) among whom there is no viable, indigenous, evangelizing church movement. \*73B

More mission agencies sent delegates to the Edinburgh 1980 Consultation than to any other meeting in history. Exactly one-third of the delegates and one-third of the agencies sending them were from the Non-Western world. Also, three out of four of the major plenary papers were assigned to Non-Western mission leaders. This was indeed the first large world level conference (consisting of mission executives) in which Non-Western mission executives could rub shoulders as equals with their Western counterparts. Larry Keyes' diligent

work in rounding up data on Non-Western mission structures helped assure a larger attendance from that sector. At the very origin of the proposal for the Edinburgh conference, back in 1972, and in the formal call drafted for it in 1974, it had been unthinkable that the unreached peoples challenge should be considered on a world level without the major participation of the growing number of outstanding Non-Western mission leaders. (Due to the welcome presence of 171 younger leaders, it became equally unthinkable, I hope, for another world level meeting to leave them out!) \*74

Although the Edinburgh conference focused exclusively on the frontiers defined as the Hidden Peoples, the Pattaya conference certainly had strong emphases on Unreached Peoples, and by now it is unquestionable in almost all mission circles that the forward looking vision of Christians today must be focused more and more on places where the light is darkest. One of the three simultaneous consultations planned for June 1983, convened by the World Evangelical Fellowship, is on Frontier Missions. \*75

Looking forward to the Edinburgh meeting in 1980, the Evangelical Mission Alliance in London in 1979 invited the writer to address them on the subject of Hidden Peoples. At the 1981 meeting of the IFMA a new committee on Frontier Peoples was created. Early in 1982 the writer was also invited to address the Association of Evangelical Missions in Germany, at a conference whose entire theme was, interestingly enough, the English phrase Hidden Peoples. In the fall of 1982 the annual meeting of IFMA mission executives took the theme "Penetrating Frontiers" while the EFMA executives focused on the same subject under the theme "The Challenge of the Remaining Task." \*76

Meanwhile, Sam Wilson, working with Ed Dayton at MARC, had been involved in both Pattaya '80 and Edinburgh '80 and rightly insisted that the use of a 20% definition had always been merely a method of achieving a reasonable likelihood of the presence of an indigenous, evangelizing church. In the 1981 Unreached Peoples Annual, presenting ongoing thinking of the Strategy Working Group, the "presence of a church" concept was newly acknowledged (Wagner, Dayton, 1981: 26): \*77

When was a people reached? Obviously, when there was a church in its midst with the desire and ability to evangelize the balance of the group. \*78

Also, three new categories of Unreached Peoples were suggested, as the result of ongoing thinking in the Strategy Working Group: initially reached, 0-1%; minimally reached, 1-10%, and possibly reached 10-20%. The word possibly, I believe, especially suggests the basically predictive purpose of the percentage approach. In the same treatment a new, divergent definition for Hidden Peoples was suggested. \*79

Thus it was only reasonable to assume that some standardization of terminology was desirable. Late in 1981 Ed Dayton, representing the Lausanne Committee, took the initiative to invite Wade Coggins and Warren Webster to convene a meeting near the Chicago O'Hare airport which I have already called the "C-82" meeting. A wide representation of leaders very willingly gathered, coming from IFMA, EFMA, Intervarsity, NAE, Southern Baptist, APMC, Billy Graham Center, Dataserve, Gospel Recordings, SIM, NAM, MARC, USCWM, and Wycliffe. The sole purpose of the two-day meeting was to settle on a standard terminology



which would foster more effective thinking and action in regard to the world's darkened peoples. A number of additional terms necessary to conceptualize the reaching of peoples were defined, such as reported, verified, evaluated, selected, supported, engaged, as well as, reached and unreached. \*80

For our purposes here, the key accomplishment of this meeting was the abandonment of the 20% concept for the unreached peoples phrase and the adoption of a modification of the presence-or-absence-of-the-church definition further refined for the Edinburgh '80 Consultation. What came directly out of the meeting was: \*81

Unreached peoples: a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group. \*82

The result was in effect to employ the Unreached Peoples phrase from the Lausanne tradition and the Hidden Peoples concept from the Edinburgh tradition. However, in continuing to use the Unreached Peoples phrase, this meant the old definition would continue to circulate for awhile at least. \*83

There is no reason to assume, of course, that everyone will choose to follow the lead of the C-82 meeting in thus underscoring the presence-or-absence-of-the-church concept. There are in fact other concepts that are also valid. The 20% active Christian achievement is still a useful measure. David Barrett has focused attention on whether or not as many as 20% have been "evangelized" (rather than incorporated into the church). His 1982 master work defines such as Unreached Peoples (p. 19). This corresponds to no definition mentioned here thus far. On the other hand, the phrase is elsewhere defined in his dictionary (p. 847) as \*84

Unreached peoples: ethnic, linguistic and other groups without previous contact with Christianity, who have not or not yet had the Gospel brought to them. This is equivalent to his term untouched peoples (p. 847). \*85

In regard to evangelization, Barrett has an enormously sophisticated list of all the possible ways the gospel can be "brought," which is perhaps his main concern. In his Encyclopedia he devotes various tables and one entire section, "Part 5," although short, to "Evangelization." Curiously, it was his earlier work, Schism and Renewal in Africa (1968:13) which first mentioned the significance of 20% of the population being adherents, (not merely evangelized) which significantly affected Pentecost's thinking as he advanced the 20% percent definition for use in the Unreached Peoples Directory distributed by MARC at the 1974 Congress. \*86

## CONCEPTS AND LABELS REVIEWED

- 1) Barrett, 1968:137. "By the time the number of Protestant or Catholic adherents in the tribe has passed 20%...a very considerable body of indigenous Christian opinion has come into existence." \*87
- 2) Pentecost, 1974:30. Unreached peoples: "We consider that a people is unreached when less than 20% of the adults are professing Christians." (Note: This definition does not require "practicing Christians.") \*88
- 3) MARC, 1974:26. "Unreached Peoples are those homogeneous units (geographic, ethnic, socio-economic or other) which have not received sufficient information concerning the Gospel message of Jesus Christ within their own culture and linguistic pattern to make Christianity a meaningful alternative to their present religious/value system, or which have have not responded to to the Gospel message, because of lack of opportunity or because of rejection of the message, to the degree that there is no appreciable (recognized) church body effectively communicating the message within the unit itself. \*89
- 4) MARC, 1974:26. Unreached Peoples: "For the purposes of this initial Directory, we consider that a people is unreached when less than 20% of the population of that group are part of the Christian community." (Note: does not require "practicing Christians.") \*90
- 5) LCWE/SWG, 1977 (See Wagner, Dayton, 1979:24). Unreached Peoples: "An Unreached People is a group that is less than 20% practicing Christian." (Note: In demanding "practicing Christians" almost all groups become unreached.) \*91
- 6) Winter, 1978:40,42. A Hidden People: "For both spiritual and practical reasons, I would be much more pleased to talk about the presence of a church allowing people to be incorporated, or the absence of a church leaving people unincorporable..Any linguistic, cultural or sociological group defined in terms of its primary affinity (not secondary or trivial affinities) which cannot be won by E-1 methods and drawn into an existing fellowship, may be called a Hidden People." (Note: the first published definition of Hidden Peoples.) \*92
- 7) Edinburgh Convening Committee, 1979 for the World Consultation on Frontier Missions, "Hidden Peoples: Those cultural and linguistic sub-groups, urban or rural, for whom there is as yet no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize their own people." This concept was also called Frontier peoples. \*93
- 8) Wagner, Dayton, 1981:26. "When was a people reached? Obviously, when there was a church in its midst with the desire and the ability to evangelize the balance of the group." \*94
- 9) LCWE/SWG, 1980 (in Wagner, Dayton, 1981:27). "Hidden People: no known Christians within the group.

Initially Reached: less than one percent, but some Christians.  
Minimally Reached: one to 10 percent Christian.  
Possibly Reached: ten to 20 percent Christian.  
Reached: twenty percent or more practicing Christians." (Note:  
suggests a different concept for the phrase Hidden Peoples. \*95

- 10) NSMC, Jan 1982: "Unreached Peoples are definable units of society with common characteristics (geographical, tribal, ethnic, linguistic, etc.) among whom there is no viable, indigenous, evangelizing church movement." (Note that this definition introduces a geographical factor.) \*96
- 11) IFMA Frontier Peoples Committee, Feb. 24, 1982: Agreement to use the Edinburgh 1980 definition (#7 above) for all three phrases, Hidden Peoples, Frontier Peoples, and Unreached Peoples. (This action was taken in light of advance information regarding the mood for change on the part of the MARC group. This mood was officially expressed at the C-82 meeting, see #12.) \*97
- 12) LCWE/Chicago, Mar. 16, '82. Unreached Peoples: "A people group (defined elsewhere) among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group." \*98
- 13) LCWE/SWG, May 21, Same as #12 except that the SWG voted to replace "able" by the phrase "with the spiritual resources." \*99
- 14) LCWE/Chicago, July 9th: further revision of #12 and #13 by second mail poll. Unreached Peoples: "A people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance." (Note new phrase underscored.) \*100

#### SIZING IT UP

At this point we must try to look back and ask whether or not we are heading in the right direction. Underlying all these definitions (except perhaps the first, which is given only to show where the 20% idea may have had part of its origin) is the concern for evangelistic outreach to function in such a way that people (individuals) have a "valid opportunity" to find God in Jesus Christ. As evangelicals we tend to think this will normally take place as the response of an individual without any believing community in the picture. Yet we know better. \*101

Slightly to exaggerate McGavran's view perhaps: it is no more likely that that fish will crawl out on the land to get the bait than will individuals embedded in a social matrix (especially a Non-Western one) be likely to walk out to become Christians. It is rather our duty to move into their world and win people within it, not to be modern members of "the party of the circumcision" by demanding directly or indirectly that people ignore the social and family bonds within which they have grown up. In the New Testament, Jews did not have to become Gentiles, nor vice versa. \*102

However to create the realistic, culturally relevant, "valid opportunity" for people to accept Christ is not the easiest path, because it ultimately

forces us to take "peoples" seriously. Reaching peoples is thus merely the process whereby the realistically valid opportunity is created. Unreached peoples are groups within which individuals really don't have that opportunity. It is not good enough to send a message or even extend an invitation people cannot accept without passing extra-Biblical tests. \*103

This need for a "valid opportunity" highlights the existence in these definitions of the word indigenous, and the phrase believing community. But it does not settle the question of the validity of people-churches. End note #5 shows some glimpses of the current debate. In passing, let it be noted that the reality and integrity of a people tends to supercede at least for awhile the geographical distribution of the group. That is, a group is not unreached or hidden just because it happens to be a geographically isolated non-Christian portion of a reached people. Reason: it can be evangelized by a geographical strategy rather than requiring a new missiological breakthrough. \*104

Also to be noted is the trend in the final definition above (#14) which stresses the factor of the existence or not of need for outside help to finish the job, and stresses that factor more than any previous definition. In the writer's opinion, as hinted at in concept #6, the crucial question related to the work of a classical mission agency is whether or not there is yet a culturally relevant church. From that point of view it is the unique burden and role of a mission agency to establish an indigenous beachhead, to achieve what I would call "a missiological breakthrough," not the cessation of need for further work from elsewhere. \*105

Thus, for the writer, whether the indigenous community possesses "adequate numbers and resources" is not the crucial point, practical though it may be in another sense. The chief question would seem to be whether or not the missiological task has been done. In turn, that should mean, in my opinion, more than even the Bible in a people's own language. It should mean at least a handful of believers who had become consciously part of the world fellowship, capable of drawing upon the life and experience of Christian traditions elsewhere, and even capable of consulting the Bible in the original languages. In short, an Unreached People needs very urgent, high priority missiological aid until it is quite able to draw on other Christian traditions and is substantially independent, as regards holy writ, of all traditions but those of the original languages themselves.

Indeed, it would seem to be a great strategic error for all cross-cultural aid to cease before the new church begins to lend at least some aid to the cross-cultural task of reaching all remaining Unreached Peoples. Perhaps every indigenous church can have, must have a role to play in the classical missionary endeavor. Note well that this perspective is fundamentally different from preoccupation with the "three-self" type of wholly autonomous national church. History shows that autonomous, isolated, national churches become stagnated and/or heretical. \*106

Furthermore, the writer considers that enough mischief has by now been done by the "disengagement syndrome," which was highlighted by Henry Venn's "euthanasia of the mission" concept in the 19th century. I do not believe any church anywhere can ever get so mature that it has no need of continued

contact and interchange with other church traditions. The "bailing out" of Hawaii in 1865 by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions certainly was only an armchair victory. Why could not the mission have foreseen the need for at least a few Christian attorneys to defend the Hawaiian believers against the aggressive land hungry mainlanders who were already arriving in force, not to mention the pressures of the not so holy descendants of some of the missionaries themselves? \*107

It is certainly reasonable to question whether a mission agency as such should continue to be linked to the younger church. It would likely be better once classical mission work concludes for home church lay people, pastors and leaders to take over an on-going liaison through a regular program of interchange mediated by another kind of office. The mission then should be related, if at all, only to the corresponding mission structure within the younger church. We must face the fact that many younger Churches (like many older Churches) get sealed off and spend not more than one percent of their income on evangelizing their own people, and NOTHING in evangelizing other peoples who live physically intermingled with them. But to pursue this would take us beyond the scope of this paper. \*108

Suffice it to say, the writer would prefer to stress the unreachedness of a people in terms of the presence or absence of a church sufficiently indigenous and authentically grounded in the Bible, rather than in terms of its numerical strength vis a vis outside help. That is, the writer has all along felt in his own mind that the phrase of the Edinburgh formulation (#7), "able to evangelize their own people," referred back to the indigenous quality of the believing community rather than to the numerical strength of the indigenous movement. If this interpretation is acceptable, then the concepts expressed in definitions #7 and #12 should be considered basic. \*109

We are gratified that the ultimate unity of mind and heart in all these discussions is the attempt to hasten the completion of the task. In that we must not grow weary. In due time we shall reap if we faint not. Providentially, the "we" here includes a vast, unprecedented world family of believers whose final citizenship is in heaven, whether or not that heaven preserves the magnificent diversity of the world's peoples--a diversity still irritating so often to our fellow Americans unless they too can come to see these cultural barriers as potential bridges. \*110

## Part II: THE WHAT, THE WHERE AND THE WHY

In Part I, by way of review, we recall that various definitions have been given in recent years for the term Unreached Peoples--a term now synonymous with two others--Hidden Peoples and Frontier Peoples. In March 1982, a number of major entities involved in Unreached People research reached a consensus to the effect that an unreached people group should be defined as a people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group without outside (cross-cultural assistance). We shall proceed on this basis.

### I. Unreached Peoples: What Are They?

Traditionally the task of the church has been defined in terms of extending the Gospel of Christ. In our circles evangelism has so often been said to be the main business of the Church of Jesus Christ that I do not believe I need to discuss the concept of unreached peoples further from a philosophical rationale, but rather from a pragmatic standpoint. We need to know which peoples are unreached, not so much to be able to separate out Christians from non-Christians nor even to count how many unreached peoples there are, but primarily in order to know how the church should go about evangelizing them. The practical premise upon which all this thinking is based is simply the necessity of "giving everyone a valid opportunity to accept Christ." To know what groups are unreached, then, relates to question which is very pragmatic.

"Reach" should mean "incorporate," Some will remonstrate, however, that if we are simply trying to give everyone a valid opportunity to accept Christ, why is it necessary to emphasize the presence or absence of the church(as does our definition of an unreached people). In my thinking, and in the thinking of all those who employ this criterion, there is no such a thing as "a valid opportunity to accept Christ" apart from the indigenous presence of His church. Don't misunderstand me! What I am saying is rather technical. I agree that conceivably a person can accept Christ apart from a church in his context. But normally this is not the way people become Christians, and even if they do, it is not ideal. People do not simply turn on a switch in their hearts or minds in some kind of direct relationship to God and then proceed to grow spontaneously in their new faith. Normally, they need to be incorporated into His fellowship, into His Church. That is the reason why the trend has been for the various definitions of unreached peoples to take into account the presence or absence of an indigenous church.

Reaching groups is faster. Apart from the fact that it is more Biblical to emphasize the salvation of peoples, not individuals only, it is also true that it is easier to give individuals a valid opportunity to accept Christ if you can get to them within their community on their own wave length through a fellowship of believers that they can understand and by whom they will be understood. That strategy is both a better and a faster way to reach people. Some today may think it is more efficient to evangelize the world by spraying the globe with electromagnetic radiation in the form of radio or television. Such efforts are all to the good. But evangelizing at arm's length by radio

is not the same as reaching people on their own personal wave length and within their own culture. Someone once said to me, "It's possible today by satellite to project a message into every home in the world." And I answered, "What language are you going to use? Muslims alone speak 580 different languages." He paused, as he should have, because we are not speaking of mass communication when we evangelize. Jesus was not content with merely a public ministry. He poured most of His energy into one people group, and became himself a part of that group. Ultimately we are dealing with very, very specific communication to the heart, a communication that constitutes an invitation to become part of an existing fellowship of believers, within the same people group.

Reaching groups is better. Clearly, the main reason for working with unreached people (individuals) as members of people groups is that only when they as new believers can fit into a group of their own kind will they become firmly established in the faith. In this sense, the only valid church is one which is understandable to people because it fits them culturally--that is, in language and custom it belongs to their people group. In the Pauline sense of the word, there is no other kind of church. The church is by definition a church which is understandable to the people involved. It isn't just an arbitrary mixture of people from different kinds of backgrounds. The Bible cries out that people deserve to be met on the level of their own language, tongue, people group. Most mission leaders today agree.

People groups are permanent. Finally, we speak in terms of a church within each people group because peoples as "nations," "tribes" and "languages" may be permanently with us. I won't take the time to elaborate on this point. Pragmatically it isn't that important. But let me say in passing that one of the factors in the picture today is a new appreciation of the fact that peoples as distinct groups are God's creative intent. We are coming to realize that all peoples are potentially of equal beauty to Him. Actually, this change of perspective is now coming to be seen as more Biblical than the typical American "melting pot" psychology, in which we are to become all alike, somehow. All modern versions of the New Testament, for instance, have retranslated Mark 16:15 to say we are to preach the Gospel "to all creation" rather than "to every creature," as the King James puts it. What is God's "creation?" Part of God's creation is what we find in Genesis 1--the heavens, the earth, the trees, animals, birds, and so forth. Another part is what we read in Genesis 10, the table of the nations --the mishpaha of the earth, the families of the earth, the lineages of the earth.

I am only saying that it is futile for us to ignore the people distinctions. God created them, and according to the book of Revelation, these distinctions will be with us until the very end. Our task is to see how God expects us to use these distinctives as a means of bringing mankind to Himself. And the first step in that process is to recognize which peoples now have a viable witnessing church in their culture, reaching out to those still without Christ. These are what we have called the reached people groups. On the other hand, which peoples do not have this internal witness? It would seem that once the people group is clearly distinguished, it would be relatively simple to tell if it has a viable, indigenous, witnessing church. But the facts are not quite so simple. Let me elaborate.

Pseudo-unreached groups. What are unreached peoples? There are some people groups which seem to be unreached, but really aren't, and some that seem to be reached but really aren't. First let us take up the pseudo-unreached peoples.

Let us say that among the refugees from Southeast Asia in the United States today there are 1000 members of a certain tribal group who now live in Philadelphia. Among them there is not one Christian. Moreover, nobody in Philadelphia can speak their language. Are these people an unreached people? We cannot say either yes or no until we ask a further question: "Has there been somewhere else a missiological breakthrough into this same people group?" We must recognize that the 1000 people in Philadelphia may or may not be the entire "people." Who knows, maybe in New York City there are 100,000 more from the same tribe. The subgroup in New York may have strong, fast growing churches and well educated pastors, and the Bible may be in their language. In that event, it would be folly to treat the Philadelphia people group, 1000 strong, as though it were an unreached people. Wouldn't it be foolish for an ordinary American to try to learn their language and translate the Bible into their tongue if someone, somewhere else, had already done this? Thus, a group of people among whom there is no church or Christians is not an unreached people if the same group elsewhere is reached. Such a people we can call a pseudo-unreached people.

Pseudo-reached groups. You can also go wrong in the opposite direction. That is, a people may be pseudo-reached even though they have a church. Let us say, for example, that there has been a church for 1,000 years in a particular culture, but the church is invalid in a very practical sense. Its rituals and traditions not only do not lead the people to Christ but actually create a barrier to finding Him. There is such a thing as a dead church; indeed, deadness and liveness are the essence of which we are talking. A pseudo-reached group of this sort may have some missionaries, and some Christians, but it lacks a vital church. The church present in that culture is unable to reach out and evangelize the people of the culture because the church itself needs to be evangelized. Unreachedness is thus not defined on the basis of whether there are any Christians or not, or whether there are any missionaries working among them or not. It is defined on the basis of whether or not in that culture there is a viable, culturally relevant, witnessing church movement.

People distinctives; cultural or genetic? Finally, it is not always easy to clearly determine one's own "people group." There are some people who believe that in determining people groups we should only consider ethno-linguistic distinctions. I will not argue with them, but I do think that the label "ethno-linguistic" combines in the phrase itself both genetic and cultural factors. If, therefore, we are going to combine genetic and cultural factors in our descriptions of peoples, why not admit it from the outset? Does anyone believe that genetic relationships between people are ultimately the factor we're groping for when we're trying to preach the Gospel? We're trying to get through to people, and to be able somehow to get through to a group of people who are part of the same tradition, linguistically and culturally, is more significant than to get through to people who are accidentally related genetically. I heard the other day that when a group of Mennonites left South Russia, somehow one of their babies was left behind and grew up as part of a Kazakh group of people. By the time this blond, blue-eyed boy was 15 or so years old, he realized he didn't belong to these people. But that was only a genetic awareness. But culturally,



linguistically, he was very much a Kazakh. For someone to urge that he should now go back to his people turns out to be an ambiguous statement. Who are his people? As far as the Gospel is concerned, were he to become a Christian, he would be a superb messenger to the Kazakhs compared to his ability to witness, say, to the rest of his own genetic family. Thus, as far as I can see, the phrase "ethno-linguistic" is a useful term, but it should free us, not limit us, in our understanding of cultural realities.

#### HOW BIG IS A PEOPLE?

What are unreached peoples? Let us talk now in terms of the size of these groups. American traditions have so redefined the English word "people" that it only rarely means a group, and even then does not give a clue as to size.

Does English help or hinder us? For example, the English statement "John looked out the window and saw the 'people'," is ambiguous because it is not clear whether he sees an affinity group or a crowd. Does he see a family, a group of people who identify with each other, or does he see merely a large crowd of people who are complete strangers to each other? Ordinarily in English "He saw the people" means merely a lot of people or persons. Rarely does "He saw the people" refer to a people group. Thus the English language doesn't ordinarily suggest a group meaning for the word "people." While the phrase "a people" requires a group meaning, it is a very rarely used phrase. Therefore, all our exegesis, all our agonizing about the word "ethne" is, I believe, strikingly accompanied and subtly influenced by our own cultural American English vocabulary and semantic structure. I'm not sure we're well qualified to ask whether in the New Testament when people spoke of pante ta ethne they were referring to a mass of individuals other than Jews who didn't obey God or whether they were thinking of a mass of peoples. We wouldn't think of a mass of peoples. Maybe they would. One thing we never find in the New Testament is the phrase "a Gentile." That it is possible for us to say it in English betrays the possibility that we have similarly pressed the English translation of the Greek word ethne into the English paradigm of people = individuals.

Thus our subconscious perspective makes our exegesis exceedingly difficult. In the Bible, however, you do have different words that are used depending on the size of these groups. In Gen. 12:3 and Gen. 28:14 (the first and last of those five backbone vertabrae in the book of Genesis that have to do with the Great Commission), the word mishpaha is often translated improperly as the families of the earth. It would be much more accurate to say all the kindreds of the earth. In any case, the word mishpaha is translated ethne in the Septuagint. Then when you move to Gen. 18:18 and 22:18 (two more cases where Abraham is reminded of his responsibility to all the peoples of the earth), the word goyim is used, but ethne is still the translation. When Isaac comes into the picture in Gen. 26:4, the same happens. But, as we have seen, when Jacob comes into the picture in Genesis 28:14, mishpaha is used again (ethne in the Septuagint). I cannot detect any contextual reason why there is that shifting back and forth unless, in actual fact, these are synonymous terms, and indeed they are in part. There were 60 mishpaha that went into the promised land--these are smaller groups.

But several of these mishpaha belonged to single tribes since there were only twelve tribes. One of these mishpaha happened to be a tribe all by

itself. Thus a small goyim is sometimes called a mishpaha. Here I am drawing on an unpublished paper by Richard Showalter.®1®

Megapeoples, macropeoples, minipeoples and micropeoples. Even in English when you speak of the Chinese people, you refer to a billion people who represent many, many peoples in terms of missionary strategy. In groping for a terminology to define strategic units more precisely, I have tried to press into duty the following unpronounceable series of words. If, for example, we refer to the Han Chinese, we are speaking about only the "Chinese-ish" citizens of China. The tribal peoples of China would not be included in this category. But the specifically Han peoples include not only those in China, but also the Han peoples outside of China. Thus, politics and political boundaries are of lesser significance in this study. More important is what we could call "peoplehood"-- a sense of belonging to each other. The Han Chinese, then, could be considered a megapeople-- which is my largest category of definition of peoples. (Note: There are small megapeoples, too, such as small tribes unrelated to any other.) So, let us refer to the category of all Han peoples as the Han Chinese megapeople. Likewise, we may speak of a Hindu megapeople including all those for whom the primary orientation of their lives has come from the impress of Hinduism. But the large megapeoples have significant subdivisions.

Thus, we may proceed to notice that within that massive megapeople called the Han Chinese there are macropeoples--smaller groups such as all those who are native speakers of Mandarin. I have heard that in China only 14% of the population speaks Mandarin in the home. Certainly many more understand Mandarin, since it is the official language of the country, but at home many who understand Mandarin may usually speak Shanghaiese, or Fukien, or Minnan, or Hakka, or Swatow or Cantonese, etc. Cantonese speakers, for example, make up one of the large macropeoples within the Han Chinese megapeople.

However, even within the Cantonese macropeople there are still many mutually unintelligible dialects and thus significant barriers to the communication of the Gospel. Scholars studying the Chinese seem strangely reluctant to confront the linguistic diversity of China. I don't know why this is true. Perhaps the fact that one writing system unites them all, throws us off and gives us a false impression. But to speak of all the dialects of Chinese as the same language is like speaking of all the European languages as a single language, and asking, "Do you speak European?" or "How many of you speak European?" Is European a language? No. There is, of course, a large family of languages called "Indo-European." Russian and English are both part of the Indo-European language family. But so what? I don't understand Russian very well, nor do most Russians understand English.

Now, maybe the differences within the Chinese family of languages are not quite as great as are differences between certain of the various languages of Europe. But nevertheless they are very great. Just because many different kinds of Chinese people can read the same writing system doesn't of itself reduce those differences. The Koreans and the Japanese, whose spoken languages are utterly distinct from Chinese, also use the same Chinese writing system. That doesn't make their languages the same, or even related. As English speakers, we could also learn to use the Chinese writing system to write English, if we wanted to. And we probably would if, for example, we were

conquered by China! In such an event, we would probably never use a fixed symbol typewriter again since dot-matrix computer printers can easily print Chinese symbols. Why else is it Japan doesn't bother much with letter-quality printers, as they are called, with symbols that strike one at a time?

Granted, then, that the Han Chinese make up what I call a "megapeople," within which are a number of macropeoples. In turn, the Cantonese macropeople, for example, comprises many minipeoples due to the existence of very different Cantonese dialects. Finally, within such minipeoples there are extended families and clans, etc., which I would call micropeoples.

The missionary target, the "unimax" level. The important thing is that somewhere along the line we have to ask ourselves, "Which of these size levels is the missionary target?" I have proposed that the easiest way to determine this is to say that it is the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of acceptance or understanding. (This phraseology was accepted at the Lausanne sponsored meeting in March 1982.)

In other words, the value of these distinctions is to help us evangelize. Once a group is penetrated by the gospel, to what extent can the Gospel spread automatically? What size group makes for greatest efficiency? That is, what is the largest group within which the gospel can spread without bumping into linguistic or cultural barriers that are for practical reasons insuperable? We ask this because we simply want to get the gospel to everyone. If in order to get at the reality we have to work in terms of megapeoples, macropeoples, minipeoples, etc., fine! For want of a better word, I have suggested the term "unimax peoples" to refer to the maximum sized still sufficiently unified group within which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding. I don't love this term, but for the time being I have come up with nothing better, and we do need some definition that deals with this particular unit of peoples. Otherwise, we end up with a megapeople like the Han Chinese, a people in almost anybody's language, but not an entity which is in itself an efficient missionary target in the sense we would like an unreached people to be.

#### DO PEOPLES OVERLAP?

Finally, we need to ask, what about individuals who seem to belong in more than one people group? It seems obvious that practically everyone in the world is part of more than one group. And in each group, whether a sports group, a vocational group, or a genetic relationship, there may be avenues of communication that are superior to all others. Nonetheless I think that what we are really trying to do when we evangelize is to choose that avenue that will maximize the impact and acceptability of our message. It seems to me logical to assume that we are all trying to find that one maximally approachable group for any given individual. We can then say that for every person in the world there is only one people-oriented approach that, to the best of our knowledge, is the best way to reach that particular person. That way no one will be counted twice. Of course we might find that out that our guesses were wrong, and we will have to reclassify that person. Let me give you an example. When we talk about a Chinese Muslim, is he primarily Chinese and secondarily a Muslim, or vice versa? We need

first to ask, "On which basis should he be evangelized?" Should he be approached as a Muslim? Or should strategies effective with Chinese be used? In a given case the person might be classified in either group, but not both. Personally, I think it is better to approach most Chinese Muslims as Muslims. However, it may be that for some Chinese Muslims it should be the other way around. Whichever it is, it will not be both.

The point is that to do effective evangelism, we must ordinarily approach individuals with full recognition of their peoplehood and deal with them in the group where they can best be approached. We may therefore assume that everybody in the world is in only one group, and we can then count up the groups that result without counting anyone twice. In doing things this way I have arrived, along with the advise of many people, at about 16,750 groups that can be called "unreached" by the definition given here.

#### HOW MANY PEOPLES ARE THERE?

But is the number 16,750 at all exact? When people challenge its accuracy, I invite them, just for fun, to add up the same column of people groups and see if they get a different total. The total, at least, is absolutely precise! I will admit, of course, that the sub-totals being added are pure guesses! Take a look at the column. You will find that we have listed 5,000 tribal, 4,000 Muslim, 3,000 Hindu, 2,000 Han Chinese, and 1,000 Buddhist groups. These are clearly round numbers. In each case those three zeros are supposed to announce to everyone that these are guesses--careful guesses, but guesses, nevertheless. At this hour of history it is too bad no one can do better than guess. This is what MARC does. This is what the different research agencies on our campus are doing. Everyone is guessing. We are all pleading for help. And every time we guess we are constantly refining our grasp of what the task really is. Thus, when it comes to the total number of unreached peoples, I think we have to realize that once we settle in our minds that everybody belongs in only one group--which for that person is the most reachable context--then we can count the groups without counting anyone twice. Some groups are already reached (about 6,550) and some (16,750) are unreached, for a rough total of 23,300.

Somebody may remonstrate, "But David Barrett says there are only 8,990 people groups, not 23,300." (By the way, his is a book you all need to own, a truly monumental study.) True, his book speaks of some 8,990 distinct ethnolinguistic peoples, and it lists specifically 432 larger clusters of peoples, most of which I would consider macro- or even mega- peoples. (Even he does not list all 8,990 by name.) However, we also need to make sure what it is he refers to when he speaks of a people.

It is clear in his table that his listing is almost identical to the number of languages he figures need translations. Now let's see where that leads us. Wycliffe Bible Translators, for example, goes into South Sudan and counts how many languages there are into which the Bible must be translated, and presented in printed form, in order to reach everybody in that area. Wycliffe's answer is 50 distinct translations. What does 50 mean in this instance? Does it mean 50 groups of people? Certainly not, if we are speaking of unreached peoples, because in many cases quite alien groups can read the same translation.

How do I know this? Gospel Recordings also goes into South Sudan and counts the number of languages. Their personnel, however, come up with 130. Why? Because they put the gospel out in cassette form, and those cassettes represent a more embarrassingly precise language communication than does the written language. I know how this works because where I worked in Guatemala one translation of the New Testament was used for about 300,000 Quiche Indians, a good portion of the entire tribe. But when the church leaders started producing radio programs, all of a sudden they got negative feedback from all over the Quiche area with the exception of the one valley from which the radio speaker came. Quiche Indians in all the other valleys resented the twang they heard on the radio. They understood it, but they didn't want to listen to it. It "hurt" their ears.

It is perfectly reasonable that if Barrett is thinking along the same lines as Wycliffe, he too will also get the smaller number. In fact, if you use the same proportion,  $130/50 \times 8,990$  you get almost exactly 23,300, which happens to be the total number of peoples in the world Bruce Graham and I have indicated on our Unreached Peoples 1983 chart. I'll admit that the number just happens to come out the same. I didn't derive the 23,300 total in this way, nor did Barrett vice versa. But I do think the close correspondence is reassuring. Of course if someone really wants to manufacture disagreements, look in Barrett's book under the chapter on India. There he points out that there are 26,000 different castes in India alone (the sort of thing I would call micropeoples). Yet in our Unreached Peoples 1983 chart we list only 3,000 (unimax) peoples for India. Thus we really appear to be in disagreement there. In this case we seem more conservative whereas he had a smaller number in the other case.

If, however, you were to take his 26,000 people groups in India and multiply that figure by all the other countries in the world, in proportion to a reasonable similarity/diversity factor, you would get a world total of at least 100,000 to 200,000 peoples by that definition. Do you see what I mean? Different authors for different reasons and different organizations for different purposes are counting different things. It isn't as though nobody agrees on anything. I think there is a great deal of interesting and valuable correlation between these different studies. I find Barrett's book of immense value. Obviously, if you are counting peoples specifically for the purpose of estimating how many different printed New Testaments are necessary, you get one number. If you are trying to estimate how many different tapes are necessary, you get a larger number, closer to the unimax size, and similar to our figure of 16,750 out of the 23,300.

## II. Unreached Peoples: Where Are They?

Now let us turn briefly to the question "Where are the 16,750 unreached peoples."

Five thousand of them are the tribal peoples (not counting 1000 already reached). They are all over the world, in every country. There are certain areas of the world like the island of New Guinea, the country of Nigeria or Peruvian Amazonia, where there is a large number of different tribal groups. The so-called "tribals" are often basically refugee populations. For example, in a space of 50 by 200 miles in West Cameroon

there are 200 different languages, many of which have no similarity. It is a mountainous area, the English part of a country which is otherwise French speaking. That little neck-of-the-woods, so to speak, happens to constitute an area representing "mountains of refuge" for people of all kinds, from all over Africa. For example, there are groups there that trim their hair so that they have only one lock of hair falling down one side, like you see in the pictures in King Tut's tomb. Apparently these people hailed originally from Egypt. But there they are, in a little mountain valley of West Cameroon, too scared to go in any direction because everybody in every direction is hostile to them.

This constant fear of all others groups, this imprisoned situation, is typical of tribal peoples. This trait, even if it were a common denominator, is too tenuous to make the tribal category into a cultural bloc. The tribals of the world are a far bigger task than if they were a single megapeople.

Four thousand of the worlds Unreached Peoples are in the Muslim sphere. Here we find a massive megapeople scattered all over the world, but nevertheless also concentrated in a number of places. As Americans we tend to think of the Middle East when we think of Muslims. Yet the Middle East is the smallest part of the Muslim world today. Only 7% of Muslims speak Arabic. We find larger concentrations of Muslims both east and west of Arabia, and they speak 580 major different languages. Note that although, like the tribals, many different languages are spoken, the evangelistically significant unifying factor of Islam makes the huge Muslim category a megapeople, not just a large category like the tribal group.

Three thousand are Hindu groups, mainly concentrated in India. But again Hindus are scattered all over the world. For example, in places like Trinidad and Guyana in the Caribbean or Fiji in the South Pacific, people with Hindu orientation constitute the majority of the population.

Two thousand are part of the Chinese megapeople. Although these peoples are perhaps a bit more concentrated than any other group, nevertheless they can be found in 61 different countries of the world. Since that statistic is probably two weeks old by now, we should add another five countries.

About 1,000 are Buddhists, in a primary sense, and for vast millions of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism is certainly a secondary factor. The heartland of Buddhism is no longer the India in which it was born but in Burma, Thailand and Cambodia, for example, where its missionary influence was more virile.

In no case above do we refer to reached peoples, only unreached. Then it is not true that the Chinese peoples or tribal peoples are unreached, although the vast majority in all five categories are unreached. Furthermore, of these five large collections of related peoples--these megapeoples--four are not located in their own distinct geographical area. Nevertheless there are certain parts of the world where each of these largest categories tends to concentrate. Highly significant to Americans is the fact that from each of these five major groups there are thousands upon thousands of individuals in the United States. Of course not all of the specific peoples within

these larger megapeoples are represented in the United States, but many of them are, especially the reached peoples. One result of migration in the modern world is simply that we can no longer make any valid home/foreign distinctions. Once we see the world as 23,000 or so unimax peoples, it no longer matters where these peoples are, whether there is an ocean between us and them, whether even the peoples themselves are separated by an ocean. The question rather is whether the church is yet "domestic" within them or not. It doesn't really help us, therefore, for our mission boards to continue to be structured along geographical lines. It is like going fox hunting. If the fox jumps over the fence into a different person's yard, what do you do? We have to be able to track that fox, wherever he goes. And if there are 60,000 Gujaratis in Vancouver, Canada, well that's where they are. Peoples are where you find them. And if the Los Angeles public schools record 109 different languages spoken in the homes of their pupils, then we had better take a good look to make sure that in our evangelistic strategy we're not overlooking those that have no internal witness within their group either here or elsewhere.

The phrase "Hidden Peoples" was suggested originally (by Robert Coleman) because unreached peoples are normally overlooked. Even though one or two of their culture may be sitting right there in church, as a people group they are mainly outside the awareness of the church. Paul faced this situation. At the synagogues he visited he noticed that in the back rows were a few "God fearers", Greeks who represented a people which could never be first class citizens in a synagogue. And one of the most dramatic scenes in the New Testament occurred (in Acts 13) when Paul was forced to start the first Gentile synagogue. The Jews didn't mind a few Greeks on the fringes, but when crowds of Greeks responded to Paul's message they were furious. Paul was a missionary because he could see these Greeks as a people. To others they were visible only as individuals. Taking seriously their peoplehood created the explosion of the Pauline missionary effort and brought into the New Testament perhaps its most radical concept, a reflection and clarification of the meaning of Gen. 12:1-3 and Isa. 49:6. He quoted the latter verse in Acts 13:47, the former in Gal. 3:8.

Finding the peoples, then, is not easy. Take, for example, the Kazakhs. According to David Barrett's ethnolinguistic classification, the Kazakhs speak one language and consist of only one of his 8,990 ethnolinguistic groups. Perhaps one printed translation might suffice. But, let's be realistic! The Kazakhs number more than 10 million. It is quite likely that they are, in fact, a macropeople comprising many minipeoples of the unimax definition. To be content to observe merely that they speak one language and are one people is wishful thinking. Even geographically they are scattered. Today they are found in Northwest China, and in Southeast and South Russia. Large numbers live in Afghanistan and Iran. There are a million Kazakhs in Turkey, refugees who walked back and forth across the Russian-Afghan or Iranian border going in and out of the U.S.S.R., finally ending up in Turkey. Today, because of the European Economic Community, we find 10,000 Kazakhs in Munich. So, if you want to reach the Kazakhs (perhaps more than one variety of them) go to Munich, Germany. Do you see what I mean? Geography is not as important as peoples. Once that is clear, the question of where they are is a very exciting one. It is very significant what can happen in Munich, Germany, once we focus on peoples instead of countries.

### III. Unreached Peoples: Why?

Finally, what about the why? This is the question that energizes me the most. These other questions of what and where I would call simply technical questions. But why this subject is important is the mandate of the Gospel itself. But it is more than that. Let me recapitulate a bit.

I think we are in the Third and final era of mission history. Speaking of only the Protestant tradition, the first era missionaries went out to the coastlands of the world, and after a number of years the work became somewhat stagnated. People seriously did not believe it was useful or save to go inland. Finally a few missionaries broke through the resistance to opening new inland fields. As a result a whole new wave of awareness engulfed the Protestant world. All the mission agencies had assumed it was impossible to go inland until Hudson Taylor and his followers actually did it. Then, gradually, after about 25 years of respectful watching and waiting, the older mission boards in England and America rapidly retooled, motivated to a great extent by the impact of Moody and the rising demands of the Student Volunteer Movement. And a new rush of recruits went out to these new inland frontiers, epitomized by the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, which made as its focal point the unreached areas of the world.

However, because they weren't invited to that conference, thousands of missionaries and dozens of mission boards were outraged. the most offended were working in Latin America. The conference leaders, those young Student Volunteers, now grown up, hadn't looked carefully enough at Latin America. They didn't realize the separate challenge of aboriginal peoples in Latin America nor take with sufficient seriousness the fact that many of the Europeans in Latin America are only superficially Christianized. But the frontier zealots at Edinburgh didn't want to be bothered with Latin America. They were thinking geographically, not with "people-vision." They wanted to go to the predominantly non-Christian areas of the world. However, their hearts were right--their motive and their zeal in 1910 was clearly for the frontiers. A frontier mood epitomized that second wave. As a result the inland areas of the world, especially in Africa and Asia, were their main thrust.

Nevertheless, at the very end of this second, Student Volunteer, era some of the younger missionaries once more began to tinker around and broke through to still another reality, which in the earlier stages was too small to be bothered with. In my earlier paper I have mentioned the whole sequence: Eliot, Nomenson, Keysser, Gutmann, then Pickett and preeminently for the English speaking world, McGavran and Townsend. Cameron Townsend as a colporter for the American Bible Society in Guatemala noticed that the Indians were considered almost wallflowers, part of the environment. Everyone assumed that eventually they would learn Spanish and become "real" Guatemalans. But somehow it didn't work out that way. In the United States, for example, every year for the last 38 years a higher and higher percentage of the Navajos have not spoken English. Likewise among the U.S. blacks the so-called "black power" tradition of self-determination has blown sky high our easygoing American assumptions of integration. We now must face the fact that these small groups are not blowing away that easily, and we must confront the fact of their reality.



Townsend symbolizes attention to "horizontally segmented" small groups in Guatemala and later as head of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, to tribal groups in general. Townsend, recently deceased, was a wonderful man with a wonderful career and a wonderful impact. More than any other person on the face of the earth he has been responsible for the evangelization of the world's tribes. His "fields" are less easily contested or ignored than McGavran's, although McGavran's more generalized concern includes far more peoples--tribal plus all the rest, whether horizontally or vertically segmented.

Today, Townsend's organization sends out twice as many missionaries as all the member denominations of the National Council of Churches combined. Such a fact calls into question the sense of mission and the alertness of those National Council denominations such as my own. But, I believe that the older boards will eventually retool massively as they did almost a century ago at the beginning of the second era.

In a two week period recently our campus was visited by denominational leaders of the Methodist, United Presbyterian, American Baptist, and the Reformed Church in America churches. Among all of them there is a tremendous new awareness, in particular within the residual mission-minded minorities of those groups. I don't believe we need to worry that the mission agencies of the world, especially those of the United States, will continue to overlook the final "Unreached people" frontiers. It is a wonderful, wonderful achievement that a new awareness is here. No one agency can be credited with this accomplishment--not the USCWM nor MARC nor any other, although the Lausanne tradition can certainly take a great deal of credit. I believe this new interest in frontiers is the work of the Spirit of God. This is the thing that makes you tingle, the overwhelming sensation that we are watching God at work, bringing the theme of our conference, Unreached Peoples to the fore among us. The mission agencies, I think, are a clean sweep in this area.

However, the question is, how can the mission agencies operate without an increasing awareness among the people, the people in the pews? Once again, I think the people concept helps a great deal. For years people in the pews in my denomination have been told that the job is over; we've turned it over to the nationals; we're going home. But the so-called "nationals" turned out to be, for instance in Pakistan, part of a very tiny sub-community of former Hindus in that country. They have no significant ethnic or cultural connection to the vast bulk of Pakistanis, even though their language is more or less the same. But if my church were to assume that the Presbyterians in Pakistan were able to effectively evangelize the rest of the country it would be about as absurd (and I use the word advisedly) as to suppose that if Navajos were the only Christians in the United States, seven Navajo-speaking congregations--one in Chicago, one in Seattle, one in Portland, and so forth--could be expected to win the rest of the country by themselves. I'm not stretching the truth. Those Navajo Indian congregations could try their best and could accomplish a great deal. But it is absolutely folly to assume that the job is done because among certain peoples we have gotten in and made our missiological breakthrough. How foolish to assume we can now wash our hands and go home without even communicating a sense of external mission to our mission field churches!

The people back home can't easily understand this complexity. We can project the countries of the world on the screen, and they will recognize them. What we need to do now is to project on that screen the peoples of the world. On the map of Africa we would have to show that 800 of the people groups are split into 2 or perhaps 3 pieces by a political boundary. Take, for example, the Massai. Half of them are in Kenya, half in Tanzania, although at any given point you're not sure which side of the border they are on because they do migrate back and forth. Those in London in their "drawing rooms" drawing the political boundaries on their maps missed completely the significance of the peoples thus affected. Somehow those politicians saw Africa as geography to be divided rather than as a mosaic of already long existing people groups.

But as missionaries we are concerned for the peoples, and we must not be dazzled by the boundaries of countries any more than God is. People back home can be brought to understand this fact. One book which helps is The Refugees Among Us, produced by MARC. Another way for people in the pew to understand this "peoples" point of view is to get them to read Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, which has an accompanying 175 page Study Guide. Together these two books constitute a four-unit college course, for which a number of schools will give credit. Geneva College, for example, is offering credit to a group of about 55 students at Carnegie-Mellon who are taking that course (and nothing else) from Geneva College. They study right on their own campus, and Geneva College simply handles the academic arrangements and the audiovisuals that week after week are sent in to go with the 20 lessons. An Inter-Varsity staff member on campus at Carnegie-Mellon actually coordinates the course. In Pasadena we have now set up a one-week intensive program to train these coordinators. Right now there are perhaps five or six hundred students studying through that course, but we hope that within the next two years at any given moment there will be 10,000 students studying that book. It can be done. It doesn't take any money. It doesn't take any more people than are now involved in the educational enterprise. It simply takes management.

Then I want to recommend the little booklet to which I referred earlier. It is part of the Frontier Fellowship movement, and I assure you, is not just an invention in California. Its basic idea of praying daily for the unreached peoples of the world came from Burma. That is why every copy each month has a little picture of a village in Burma and refers to the Burma plan. It was from a tribal Christian from Burma that we got the idea of a daily devotional discipline that will carry vision, excitement and inspiration into the lives of the average person.

Let me leave you with one last thought. Is there any way that you can more rapidly and more profoundly influence the vision and the purpose of an individual than to get into his hands something which he will read every day? I'll answer my own question. Every other thing we've ever done--even these courses I've mentioned, which are really hefty--carry people into an experience, but time wears that experience away. We've tried everything from Hidden People Sundays to day-long seminars and courses and all kinds of things. We often collaborate in truly wonderfully annual mission conferences. But we have concluded that all other activities that we have ever launched are by comparison hit-and-run activities if it's vision that you want to implant deeply in the lives and hearts of people. "Nothing that does not occur daily will ever dominate a life."

Oh, if it were possible for people to realize how nearly within our grasp it is to evangelize the unreached peoples of the world, it would be a revolution of new hope for people all across this country! The reason our mission boards are not receiving the candidates and the funds that they need is that people in the pew have lost hope. If 30,000 missionaries are going to retire in the next 10 years and, as somebody has guessed, only 5,000 are going to replace them, then the present level of giving and going needs to be multiplied many times over. Research is necessary on those statistics as well if we are to turn this situation around and be the blessing to all the families of the earth which God expects us to be simply because He has so greatly blessed us. But we need to communicate hope to people. We need to tell them that 16,750 people groups is not that many after all. Do you know, I don't care if it's 10,000 or 20,000 or what the number is, but it's a finite number. And whatever the number you come up with, just divide it into the number of dedicated evangelicals on the face of the earth today (258 million). You'll get at least 10,000 Bible believing, committed believers who are ready, if awakened, to reach out to each one of these people groups--10,000 per group.

Let me ask you, is that an unrealistic goal for the year 2000? Every week there are 1,000 new churches in Africa and Asia alone. But all these churches are new churches where there are already churches. All we need is to found 1,000 per year within these untouched groups and we'll be through with this initial job of penetrating the remaining frontiers by the year 2000. I'm not going to tamper with your eschatology, but at least we ought to try to do this. That's my eschatology. We at least ought to try to do what is plain in scripture, what we are expected to do in terms of the blessings we have received. I don't believe there is any hope for this country if we cannot get beyond the syndrome of only accepting and trying to preserve and protect our blessings with MX missiles and horses and chariots and not realize that our only real safety is to give the blessings that God has given to us to those for whom he intended them.

## NOTES

1. To omit the entire post-apostolic period prior to 1600, as well as the Roman Catholic tradition since 1600, is really not fair, and in fact we do ourselves a great deal of harm to do so. But both space and the expectations of our own tradition edge us away from the many luxurious examples in this sphere on which we could well draw. \*111
2. Unfortunately G. Warneck's greatest work, Missionslehre, his multi-volume treatise on missiology, has never been translated into English. \*112
3. Christian Keysser's classic work describes his fascinating experiences in Papua-New Guinea. First published in German in 1929, the English translation is entitled A People Reborn (Keysser, 1980) and is introduced by a superb essay by Donald A. McGavran. The best treatment in English of Bruno Gutmann's work in Africa is a chapter by Donald C. Flatt in Beaver, 1973. Per Hassing, 1979, unaware of Flatt's article, undertakes a critical review of Gutmann's thinking and writing, endeavoring to balance out the purely favorable treatments. \*113
4. It is not as though the leaders of the Student Volunteer Movement did not have preeminently a closure theology built into their thinking. The most famous of all missionary slogans,--"the evangelization of the world in this generation"--was surely a closure theology. What I do not see in their literature specifically is the wedding of the people concept as a missionary target with a restatement of their closure goals as basically a reaching of unreached peoples. I have been slow to do so myself. \*114

They did, however, faithfully parcel out the necessary remaining task as they saw it. Comity agreements were intended to encourage some attention to every part of the world. They (Ellis, 1909:304) boldly conceived of a "Distributed Responsibility:" \*115

### THE DISTRIBUTED RESPONSIBILITY

Most of the mission boards of North America have accepted a distinct responsibility for a share of the mission field. This has done much to remove the vagueness from missionary presentation. It has been figured out also by the men best informed how much money it will take to meet this responsibility. Consequently, some churches have determined the amount they should raise. The figures in the former case, so far as they are available, are given below. \*116

Denomination	Accepted responsibility in population
Canadian societies	40,000,000
Congregationalists	75,000,000
Dutch Reformed	13,000,000
Foreign Christian Missionary Society	15,000,000
Northern Baptists	61,000,000
Northern Methodists	150,000,000
Northern Presbyterians	100,000,000

Reformed Church in the U. S.	10,000,000
Southern Methodists	40,000,000
Southern Presbyterians	25,000,000
United Brethren	5,000,000
United Presbyterians	15,000,000

5. There is by now a large contemporary literature that argues back and forth about churches within peoples and vice versa. Space will not permit more than a few quotes. \*117

a) Robert Recker in his superb essay, "What Are People Movements?" (Conn 1976:78) quotes the theologian of India, D. T. Niles, who seems to question even McGavran's idea of a "church of a people:" "It is so easy to slip from a concern to build a church for the nation into a desire to build a church of the nation" (Niles 1962:256). \*118

b) Rev. Theodore Williams in a letter to the editor of India Church Growth Quarterly (Oct.-Dec., 1982) says:

"The statement in the April-June issue of ICGQ attributed to Dr. George Samuel: 'Caste can be considered as a bridge for groups of people to embrace the Christian faith without fear of social dislocation'--is very objectionable. Caste is the curse of this land. If we advocate caste in the name of Church growth, we will lose our credibility. Caste attitudes have created endless problems for the Church in south Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In my opinion, the reason for the stagnancy of the Syrian Church is its caste consciousness. \*119

"Western church growth leaders and missiologists aver that caste is a harmless tool to be used in evangelisation. This may be because they do not understand our country. But those of us who are Indian must watch our words. A faith that does not break caste barriers and emphasize the oneness of people in Christ cannot be the Christian faith. Any proclamation of the Gospel which does not enable people to come into unity in Christ is lopsided proclamation. \*120

"Finally, let people not think that all Indians involved in mission accept the viewpoint that caste has its advantages in evangelisation." \*121

c) "Dr. Donald McGavran's definition of a HU [homogeneous unit] is 'a section of society in which all members have some characteristic in common.' Used in this way the term is broad and elastic. To be more precise, the common bond may be geographical, ethnic, linguistic, social, educational, vocational, or economic, or a combination of several of these and other factors. Whether or not members of the group can readily articulate it, the common characteristic makes them feel at home with each other and aware of their identity as 'we' in distinction to 'they.' \*122

"We are agreed that everybody belongs to at least one such homogeneous unit. This is an observable fact which all of us recognize. Not all of us, however, consider that it is the best term to use. Some of us prefer 'subculture,' while others of us would like to explore further the biblical concept of ethnos (usually translated 'nation' or 'people') as

enjoying a 'solidarity in covenant' by creation, although in rebellion against its Creator. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this statement we shall retain the more familiar expression 'homogeneous unit.'" (Quoted from the Lausanne Occasional Paper #1, "The Pasadena Cbnsultation--Homogeneous Unit.") \*123

d) "We recognize the validity of the corporate dimension of conversion as part of the total process, as well as the necessity for each member of the group ultimately to share in it personally." (From "The Willowbank Report--Gospel and Culture," Lausanne Occasional Paper #2.) \*124

e) "Do we or do we not tell new converts to break down the old barriers and break out of the old castes and ghettos right away? Some say no, because that would put an unnecessary precondition or roadblock in the way of the conversion of others. Better to keep new converts in their own social and ethnic units, prejudiced as they are, for the sake of winning others.. \*125

"On the other side, however, we find those who say that Paul was quite blunt about the necessity of breaking down social, religious, economic and ethnic barriers..Paul specified that converted slaves and masters must radically change how they feel toward and treat each other. \*126

"In short, "the new man" who now possesses a divine nature and knowledge, becomes part of a socially identifiable body that simply puts Jesus Christ and the common life in him ahead of all human, earthly, sinful, "old man" divisions and social cliques.. \*127

"As one weighs both sides of the debate, it appears that pragmatics tends to obscure the apostolic demand for hauling down ethnic, racial religious, and social barriers..Must we really accept the social status quo to see more people saved? I think not.. \*128

"It would not be too far amiss to suggest, even on the basis of pragmatics, that more people are won to Christ by converts breaking down ethnic, social, national, religious, and racial barriers than by keeping those distinctives intact. Who knows?.. \*129

"We must resist the temptation to justify church and mission tactics on the basis of what appears to bring in the most people..we cannot deemphasize or make less important the experience of God's new creation in a new family that transcends the old family. By trusting in Christ, the convert enters a new social unit--bearing God's own image--and thereby explodes in a very disrupting way the old social unit. \*130

"If that gets in the way of someone else's conversion, or even drives family, friends, and neighbors away, that is the price of radical obedience." \*131

Jim Reapsome, (1983) expresses in this lengthy quote from EMQ the sincere concern of a U.S. pastor whose role is to pick up the pieces of splintered

American families and try to weld them into the new surrogate family of the local church. Church people tend to begin with a warm vital fellowship which is the pre-conceived destination of their converts. It works. But the context within which it works is more typical of America than any place else. \*132

By contrast McQuilkin (1973:35) expresses a view more common in mission circles:

...some would question the sincerity of almost any decision unless it is validated by a clean break and open opposition to one's family and society. Such is often necessary and, when necessary, is clearly a test of genuine faith. Furthermore, when present, such courage is a highly praiseworthy attitude. But we must not extend this principle and make such a position the sine qua non of genuine faith. We are clearly unbiblical when we demand radical individualism, which is a western rather than a biblical concept. The cohesiveness of family and people, their inter-responsibility are strong emphases of Scripture. \*133

The very most recent statement by McGavran on this subject is his article, "The Primacy of Ethnicity" (1983). \*134

6. Our most recent pie chart, "Unreached Peoples '83," makes a distinct shift in the direction of emphasizing the number of Peoples in the different categories rather than the individuals. It is available in two sizes: 12" x 16" for \$.75 post paid (quantity discounts available) or in large, untearable size 19" x 25" for \$1.50, both from the U. S. Center for World Mission, 1605 Elizabeth, Pasadena, CA, 91104. \*134

7. In the following year Unreached Peoples 81 over-corrected things and defined the Hidden Peoples as groups where there is "virtually no Christian group,".."virtually no Christians,".."no known Christians within the group, e.g. zero Christians" (pp. 26-7) even though on pages 140 and 141 there is a reproduction of a statistical table and a pie chart in which the original definition of Hidden Peoples is preserved. Thus, neither in the 80 annual, where Hidden Peoples was made to mean 20%, nor in the 81 annual, where it was assumed to be 0%, was the concept presented for Hidden Peoples the same as what was set forth all along ever since the original article was printed in the '79 annual. \*135

8. See Warren, 1971, pages 28 and 172. \*136

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