



In a “missiological breakthrough” patterns emerge that both conform faithfully to the Bible and swim effectively within the new believers’ own culture.

Ralph D. Winter



Dear Reader,

I need to connect for you the tie that binds the two major themes of this issue – the mystery of “insider movements” and the nitty-gritty of prioritizing some people groups above others. Let me approach it this way:

The “Reached Peoples”

Suppose we track a person who comes to Christ within a so-called “reached group.”

In that case several things are true:

1. In that group there are already other believers who have both a spiritual union with Christ and yet are still at home in their native culture.
2. The new believer will be different in some ways. He will still speak the language, eat the food, and dress the same way. That is, in this “reached group” the Gospel itself has become at home in the culture of that group.

(Oops, doesn’t the Gospel change that culture? Yes, as more and more of that group become believers, the culture will no doubt gradually change.)

The “Unreached Peoples”

How very different it is when a person comes to Christ within an “Unreached People!”:

1. In that case there is not yet any established pattern for the one who wants to follow Christ. That’s why the first believers in the unreached people group may be desperately confused. They may feel it is desirable or safest to adopt the missionary’s culture even though it may clash with their own culture – in food, dress, family life,

etc. However, that option may appeal only to a few brave (or perhaps odd) souls or to individuals enamored of the Western world.

2. Eventually, hopefully (but not always), a “missiological breakthrough” will occur. In that case both intellectual and behavioral patterns will emerge which will both conform faithfully to the Bible and at the same time swim effectively within the new believers’ own culture. Once that happens the Christian faith can gain ground very rapidly.

No matter how small an authentic missiological breakthrough (meaning a people movement to Christ), no missionary will need to start from scratch again. The group is now defined as a “reached” people. From now on it is an “insider movement.” It’s like the Greek believers in the New Testament who did not need to embrace Jewish culture. Once Paul made it clear to them, thousands embraced the faith almost overnight. Paul explained that they could accept the Jewish faith without accepting the Jewish culture.

Note, once a group is “reached”, to start from scratch would be unnecessary and inefficient. Even a tiny earlier breakthrough can become a “Bridge of God,” the phrase coined by the most influential missiologist of the 20th century, Donald McGavran. He is the one who first defined what today we call insider movements. In his terms he spoke of “people movements to Christ.”

McGavran is also the one who came up with this classical criterion (necessary but not sufficient) of a true “people movement to Christ” or a “Christward movement”: ask someone within the same culture who is not part of the Christward movement if those in the movement are still part of his group. Only if he says “yes” can the new movement truly represent a missiological

breakthrough, people movement to Christ, or insider movement. If the answer is “no,” the new church movement will not likely grow rapidly.

What About “Insider Movements”?

Gary Corwin, an outstanding missiologist of our time, has very helpfully (within the conversation on pages 16-23) raised some reasonable questions about this whole mysterious matter. Take a look at what Gary and others have to say.

Can a new believer within an “Unreached People” follow Christ without leaving his culture? That is the pattern in the New Testament with Greeks. Wow, were Greeks different from Jews! The Jews allowed plural marriage and abominated homosexuality, while the Greeks hated plural marriage but accepted homosexuality and revered celibacy. As masses of Greeks and Latin-speaking Romans became followers of Christ, “Christianity” resulted. Almost predictably, for certain leaders celibacy began to appear and plural marriage correspondingly disappeared.

Changes of Clothing

Pretty soon the faith got completely out of the control of biculturals like Paul and Barnabas. Eventually the Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox traditions were hammered out and the Jewish beginnings were forgotten, ignored or despised. As the Roman tradition became belligerently “Christian”, the entire Semitic sphere predictably developed its own form of the biblical impetus, despite scant access to the Bible. This was Islam, which had no difficulty sweeping up many other societies that were enemies of the Roman empire.

A few centuries later Protestants took the ball (the faith) and ran within their culture, and for them the Catholic tradition was now forgotten, ignored or despised. Today multiplied millions of Africans, Indians, and Chinese are taking on our faith – but not necessarily the culture of our Western Christianity – within their own cultural traditions. Today, however, unlike much of the past, the Bible itself is so much more available that new forms of the faith are arising all over the place. The Bible is “out of control”!



Ralph D. Winter is the Editor of Mission Frontiers and the General Director of the Frontier Mission Fellowship.

Getting Practical Today

In recent years the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention has given more and more emphasis to unreached peoples. That kind of outreach requires the achievement of the missiological breakthroughs I've just been recounting. Scott Holste's and Jim Haney's description of the IMB's tangible moves forward, and of the ripple effects on others (see pages 8-15), is both fascinating and encouraging, although their definitions on page 9 fall short of the precision of the definitions hammered out in 1982 in a two-day meeting of 35 mission leaders, sponsored by the EFMA and the Lausanne Committee. Those semi-official 1982 definitions (to which we adhere) make no use of percentages, and in addition they take prejudice barriers into account.

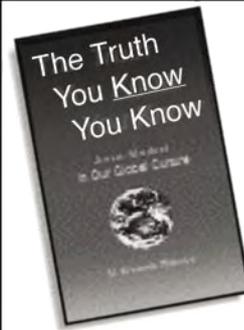
Note that for practical reasons it simply isn't convenient to adhere strictly to the theory behind the IMB's analysis. Several departures must be taken into account:

1. Country boundaries often divide

groups. Eight hundred peoples in Africa live on both sides of some political border. Sometimes they become two (or more) groups and sometimes not, but are usually counted at least twice.

2. It may be that not all those on the IMB's list of "Unengaged Unreached Peoples" of 100,000 or larger are truly "Unreached" since the handy, "less than 2% Evangelical" criterion, while relatively easy to verify, could mean these groups contain anywhere from 2,000 to 800,000 Evangelicals (since the groups range in size from 100,000 to over 40 million). What may be "handy" may have very severe weaknesses.
3. On a very positive note, while the article estimates there to be 2,700 groups smaller than 100,000 in the "less than 2% Evangelical" category, it also indicates that only 141 groups have no Evangelicals and that the combined population of these groups is only one-fifth the population of California! This would seem to be spectacular news. 🌐

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In response to November-December 2005: "Do Some Agencies Mislead Donors?"

Dear Friends:

I just read through your November-December issue. All I can say is Amen! I have had personal contact with "native evangelists", and my experience has not been a good one. Our family served as missionaries to an unreached tribal group in the Philippines, so our observations were up close.

I am the Executive Director for FARMS International, Inc. We set up indigenously-run loan programs for Christians in 12 countries. We firmly believe that we can help the church carry out evangelism without the downside of dependency with our approach. The Christian Aid approach is harmful in many ways....

Joseph Richter
FARMS International
Knife River, MN

Dear Dr. Winter,

Thank you so much for dealing with the debate regarding the "sending of missionaries" vs. the "support for the nationals." I know this has been a legitimate issue for missiologists for a long time. Personally, I see the need for both. I have also read the pitfalls and criticisms of both extremes. I have also seen the differences of the benefits and shortcomings of both within more than one specific culture.... I appreciate what you wrote and handling it all in one issue for comparison and reflection....

Darrel L. Anderson
Romanian Missionary
Society
Wheaton, IL

We just received the November-December issue of *Mission Frontiers* magazine, and I was not able to put it down until I had carefully and thoroughly read pages 5-17. My wife and I are retired from serving in SE Asia and

several regions in South Asia for 33 years, and we fully support your position regarding missions. We retired in 1993, and we've observed the shoddy and dishonest tactics of some national leaders [primarily from South Asia] who are 'collectors of funds'. Many of the stories they tell are far from the truth, and in most instances the money they collect seldom reaches the field. They become rather quiet and try to disappear in the crowd when I ask for specifics because in most instances I have been in the location[s] they so graphically describe.... You took a big risk in dealing with this thorny subject and you did it well. I will likely use some of your material to share with some churches in our area - some who have been 'used' by agencies who have a habit of misleading their donors.

In His tender grip,
Sidney P. Schmidt, Ph.D.

Dear Dr. Winter,

I want to thank you for addressing the question "Do Some Agencies Mislead Donors?" in the November-December issue of *Mission Frontiers*. Your response to the opinions expressed by *Christian Mission* magazine was very insightful and well written. Your support for the cross-cultural missionary validates the work of Wycliffe and others in the worldwide ministry of Bible translation, and I believe your comments will help us respond to questions about Bible translation strategies....

Bob Creson
President, Wycliffe USA
Orlando, Florida

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Dear USCWM,

Great issue of MF! I lead a church-planting team in India and recently read K.P. Yohannan's book *Revolution in World Missions* that is essentially the same in nature as Bob Finley's book. In it Yohannan brow-beats American pastors, resorts to name-calling (referring to western missionaries as modern-day colonizers, which in itself is an unscientific term used to generalize and deride), and shares many half-truths with his readers. He challenges them to only support organizations doing it right, and (by the way) there is a tear-out card in the back of the book so you can get started. Is this not a conflict of interest? More needs to be written on this subject. Aren't there any current books on the subject? A book entitled *Revolution in World Missions Exposed: What Proponents of 'Native Missionary' Strategy Don't Want You To Know* would be timely.

Blessings,
Jordan Keller
Pioneers

Dear Ralph Winter and the Mission Frontiers Staff;

Superb job on the November/December issue! I, too, read the Christian Aid Summer 2005 edition and was appalled! You handled it well in this most recent issue. Thanks for your bravery and code of ethics in handling the situation as wisely as you did....

Steven A. Mowery
Penns Creek, PA

My wife had just finished a deputation talk which described a very tumultuous term of pioneer work in Central Thailand. As she finished, a church member approached her, slipped a crumpled \$20 bill into my wife's hand and whispered, "I am so glad that you went to Thailand ... *that means that I don't have to go myself.*" This basic mentality pervades our modern society to the point that in politics, business, and yes, even in missions, all you have to do is throw more cash at a problem to solve it.

Writing a check will always be easier than actually rolling up your sleeves and personally sacrificing to get the job done.

Over our 25 years connected to ministry in Thailand we have seen first hand the dangers of this philosophy. After numerous painful experiences, many mission agencies in Thailand are cutting down on direct financial support to national workers. This is not an easy transition, especially when the recipients come to expect their foreign remuneration as their due and are hurt when you suggest they develop their support from local sources. Their true colors are often exposed as the seemingly unending spigot of foreign support is slowly closed down. That is not to say that there are not strategic areas which foreign funds can be used effectively to spread the gospel, but the wisdom of Solomon is needed in order to distribute those funds in the most efficient way.

Dr. Larry Dinkins
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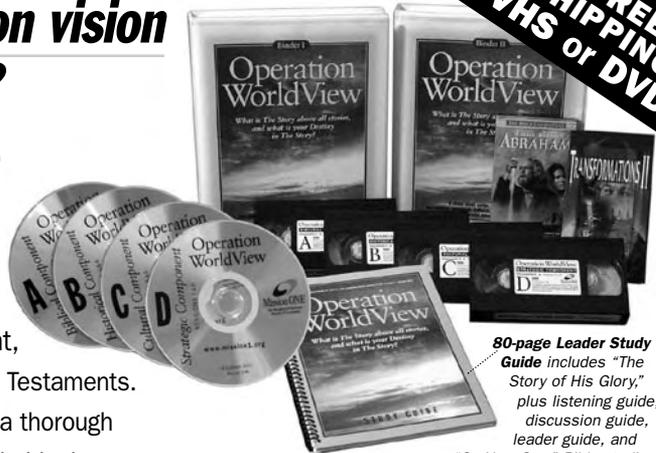
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Which Peoples Need Priority Attention?

The Global Status of Evangelical Christianity

A Model for Assessing Priority People Groups

Scott Holste and Jim Haney

Editor's note: the following article constitutes part 3 in our occasional series on "Which Peoples Need Priority Attention?" Dan Scribner (of Joshua Project) took the lead in part 1 (in our November-December 2004 issue), while Todd Johnson (of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity) took the baton for part 2 (in our January-February 2005 issue). As you read part 3, keep the preceding two in mind, and compare and contrast the recommendations offered. You can find parts 1 and 2 on the Mission Frontiers Website (under "Back Issues").

On May 8, 1845 in Augusta, Georgia Southern Baptists formally constituted their vision:

We, the delegates from the Missionary Societies, Churches and other religious bodies of the Baptist denomination, in various parts of the United States met in Convention, in the city of Augusta, Georgia, for the purpose of carrying into effect, the benevolent institutions of our constituents by organizing a plan for soliciting; combining and directing the energies of the whole denomination in the sacred effort for the propagation of the Gospel.

It shall be the design of this Convention to promote foreign and domestic missions and other important objects connected with

the Redeemer's Kingdom and to combine for this purpose such portions of that Baptist denomination of the United States as may desire a general organization for

the Christian benevolence which shall fully respect the independence and people's rights of the churches.¹

The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has a long history of evangelism and church planting around the world. Over the past 160 years we have witnessed significant increases in the numbers of churches mobilized, missionaries appointed, individuals baptized, believers disciplined, indigenous churches established, and local leaders trained. With our many Baptist partners and other evangelicals, we have watched with amazement the advance of the Gospel across the nations.

The Ultimate Priority—All People Groups

Despite such progress, we are inexorably drawn to those people groups who have not yet had an adequate opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel. As IMB president Jerry Rankin has asked, "By what criteria should any people be deprived of hearing the gospel?"²

Consequently, a primary focus of the International Mission Board is the engagement of these remaining unreached people groups. Our immediate goal is the engagement of all unreached people groups (UPGs) greater than or equal to 100,000 in

Our immediate goal is the engagement of all unreached people groups greater than 100,000 in population by the end of 2008.



Dr. Scott Holste, a former missionary to unreached people groups in Southeast Asia and in northern Africa, serves as Associate Vice President for Research and Strategic Services in the International Mission Board's Office of Overseas Operations (sholste@imb.org).



Dr. Jim Haney, a former missionary among peoples in West Africa, currently serves as Director of the International Mission Board's Global Research Department (jhaney@imb.org).

population by the end of 2008. This certainly does not mean that we intend to do this alone. We are encouraged that many others with the same heart are working to “finish the task” of engaging these groups as well as those with populations less than 100,000.

We certainly recognize, along with other writers in this series, that prioritization can be controversial.³ Prioritization does imply emphasis and no one wants to see his or her people group de-emphasized. With other evangelicals around the world, however, we affirm that there are bountiful resources available for the *whole* harvest of the nations. We believe that God has provided all of the resources necessary to accomplish the mission He has given us. The challenge, however, is the mobilization and appropriate deployment of these resources to ensure that *all* of the world’s people groups have adequate opportunities to hear and respond to the Gospel. To address that challenge, it is helpful to identify those people groups requiring additional attention. Thus, our motivation for prioritization is one of *focus*, not *limitation*. Our ultimate goal remains: *all people groups*.

Some Definitions

We also agree with writers in this series that our task is served well by research which examines God’s activity among each people.⁴ However, before describing our research model and data acquisition process, we should clarify the meaning of some key terms that reflect our understanding of and emphases regarding our task:

People group – “an *ethnolinguistic group* with a common self-identity that is shared by the various members. There are two parts to that word: *ethno* and *linguistic*. Language is a primary and dominant identifying factor of a people group. But there are other factors that determine or are associated with ethnicity. Usually there is a common self-name and a *sense of common identity* of individuals identified with the group. A *common history, customs, family and clan identities*, as well as marriage rules and practices, age-grades and other obligation covenants, and inheritance patterns and rules are some of the common ethnic factors defining or distinguishing a people.”⁵

For strategic purposes, a people group is the largest group through which the gospel can flow without encountering significant barriers of understanding.

Unreached people group – a people group whose population is less than 2% evangelical Christian. This definition is consistent with that used in

evangelical circles for many years. [*Editors note: see the editorial commentary on page 5.*] It differs in that it does not exclude those groups with 5% or more “Christian adherents.” Unfortunately, there are various “Christian” traditions that neither articulate nor embody a clear, uncompromised understanding of the Gospel. Consequently, it is difficult to argue that the majority of adherents within such traditions really understand the Gospel, really believe it, and are really committed to propagating it.

Evangelical Christian – a person who believes that Jesus Christ is the sole source of salvation through faith in Him, has personal faith and conversion with regeneration by the Holy Spirit, recognizes the inspired Word of God as the only basis for faith and Christian living, and is committed to Biblical preaching and evangelism that brings others to faith in Jesus Christ.

Evangelical Church – a church characterized by these beliefs.

Engagement – a people group is engaged when an evangelical church-planting strategy is underway. While Christians are involved in many significant ministries (e.g. radio broadcasts, literature distribution, relief and development, evangelism, discipleship, etc.), we believe that the gathering of believers and establishing of churches is the key to establishing an effective, on-going, evangelizing, discipling, nurturing and ministering presence among any given people group.

The Global Status of Evangelical Christianity Model

Our model for describing the progress of the Gospel among the world’s people groups is called the Global Status of Evangelical Christianity Model. It considers:

1. The extent to which a people group is evangelical Christian.
2. Accessibility to the Gospel.
3. Evangelical church planting—whether localized or widespread church planting has occurred within the past two years.

As noted in Table 1, levels 0 – 3 are *unreached*. All four of these levels describe people groups in which evangelical Christians comprise less than 2% of the population. Level 0 describes a relatively small subset of unreached people groups for which there are no evangelical resources available whatsoever. Level 1 people groups have some resources available, but

Our motivation for prioritization is one of focus, not limitation.

have had no new church plants within the past two years. We call Levels 0 and 1 people groups, *Last Frontier people groups*. Levels 2 and 3 people groups are also unreached, but have had localized or widespread church plants within the past two years. As the percentage of evangelical Christians within a people group rises to 2% and greater, the status of

Table 1: Global Status of Evangelical Christianity Model

Status	Description
0	No evangelical Christians or churches. No access to major evangelical print, audio, visual, or human resources.
1	Less than 2% Evangelical. Some evangelical resources available, but no active church planting within the past 2 years.
2	Less than 2% Evangelical. Initial (localized) church planting within past 2 years.
3	Less than 2% Evangelical. Widespread church planting within the past 2 years.
4	Greater than or equal to 2% Evangelical
5	Greater than or equal to 5% Evangelical
6	Greater than or equal to 10% Evangelical
7	Unknown

{ Last Frontier (Statuses 0, 1)
{ Unreached (Statuses 2, 3)

that people group progresses from levels 4 – 6.

Data Acquisition

For many years, IMB missionaries have reported on various missions-related activities through annual reports. Over time, these reports grew to include numerous reporting categories. In 2000, the International Mission Board chose to limit the number of reporting categories, focusing on those which measure the effectiveness and health of our church planting efforts. Today, these and other related measures are called *Church Planting Progress Indicators* (CPPI).

To effectively monitor the CPPI, a software pro-

gram was developed and distributed to the field. IMB missionaries, national Baptist partners, other evangelicals, and other field researchers are the sources of CPPI data. Each of the IMB's eleven administrative regions has a regional research coordinator who is responsible for maintaining updated information for all overseas entities (people groups, urban centers, and other strategic population segments). This information includes:

- Entity Name
- Languages (Coded to the Registry of Languages⁶ provided by SIL)
- Religions
- Locations (Coded to the Registry of Geographic Divisions provided by GMI)
- Universal People Group Link (Coded to the Registry of Peoples provided by IMB)
- Engagement Status (Baptist, Others, Not Engaged)
- Population
- Evangelical Believers
- Evangelical Congregations
- Evangelical Church Planting Activity
- Evangelical Resources (both human and ministry resources)
- Team Progress
- Baptist Work Statistics
- Supplemental Information (Origin Information, Assimilation Status, Education and Orality)

A robust, real-time reporting solution enables personnel to enter research and then run reports to verify that the data in the system reflects the reality of their field. The IMB's Global Research Department runs these same reports and others to monitor and analyze field progress. Recognizing that data quality is a function of data usage, reports are regularly distributed to IMB leadership, strategists in other evangelical organizations, churches and the public. Such widespread dissemination and use of these reports generates considerable feedback and discussion, resulting in an increasingly accurate picture of field reality.

Monthly updates of many of these reports are available from www.imb.org/globalresearch and www.peoplegroups.org. Feedback is welcomed and needed. A link is included on www.peoplegroups.org for those with well-sourced information. When such information is received, we create an ad hoc research group that reviews the information and provides us with a working decision. The research group normally is comprised of the individual submitting the information, an IMB staff researcher, the regional research coordinator responsible for that region, and other

evangelical researchers or field personnel that might have relevant information.

The November 2005 Global Status of Evangelical Christianity Report

Because of publishing deadlines, the following information is excerpted from the November 2005 GSEC report. The current and complete monthly report package can be downloaded at www.peoplegroups.org.

Table 2: Global Status of Christianity—Status Level by People Groups and Population (November 2005)

Status Level	People Groups		Population	
0	141	1.3%	7,669,234	0.1%
1	5,769	51.2%	1,630,665,849	25.0%
2	536	4.8%	1,724,955,708	26.4%
3	28	0.2%	279,213,173	4.3%
4	924	8.2%	610,998,134	9.4%
5	1,138	10.1%	1,591,459,386	24.4%
6	1,850	16.4%	311,022,438	4.8%
7	875	7.8%	377,951,964	5.8%
Total	11,261		6,533,935,886	

Table 2 summarizes the status of the world’s people groups.

The following may be gleaned from this summary:

- More than half of the world’s population⁷ is found in Unreached people groups (Levels 0 – 3)
- More than half of the world’s people groups are Last Frontier people groups (Levels 0 – 1).
- More than a quarter of the world’s population is found in Last Frontier people groups (Levels 0 – 1).
- Although 5,769 Last Frontier people groups have evangelical resources available to them, no recent evangelical church planting is taking place among them. They continue to remain less than 2% evangelical Christian with no new churches in the past two years. (Level 1)

Undoubtedly, the availability of evangelical resources is an important factor in reaching a people group, but the last bulleted observation above clearly demonstrates that there are many people groups that have no active church planting underway *despite* the fact that resources are available. Why? The fact that a resource is available does not mean that it is being used or being used effectively. For example, a Bible translation may exist in the heart language of a given

people group, but no one is distributing it. Perhaps the translation is rather old and no one really understands it anymore. Perhaps the vast majority of the people group is primarily non-literate communicators. They couldn’t read the Bible, even if a current translation of it was placed in their hands. Missionaries may even be serving among a people group, but they may not use their ministry to proclaim God’s word and invite people to know Christ as Savior. If so, does this people group actually have access to the Gospel?

Clearly, an overemphasis on the “availability” of resources (as an indicator of progress) is problematic. For this reason, while we recognize resource availability as a factor in our model and as an important component of our strategies, we do not give it significant weight as a measure of progress. More significant for us is whether or not church planting is actually taking place and whether or not people are coming to saving faith in Christ. Thus, progress is measured as people groups move from Levels 0 and 1 to levels 2, 3, 4, and beyond. For this to occur, evangelical Christians must effectively engage these unreached people groups.

An over-emphasis on the “availability” of resources (as an indicator of progress) is problematic.

The Global Status of Evangelical Christianity map displays the status of each people group in their country and habitat. Unlike previous maps, this map only portrays the status of people groups in places where people actually live. Status indications on the map correspond to the categories in Table 1. A poster-size version of this map will be available to the public from the Missions Atlas Project in the spring of 2006 at www.worldmap.org.

According to the November 2005 report, there are approximately 6,500 unreached people groups in the world. As noted earlier, a goal of the International Mission Board is to ensure the engagement of those unreached people groups with populations exceeding 100,000. Table 3 notes a total of 1,995 such groups. Of these, only 645 are currently unengaged. These are people groups who need priority attention.

Continued on Page 13

Table 3: Unreached People Group Engagement (100,000 and Larger Population)

Continental	IMB Engaged	GCC Engaged Only	Unengaged	Unknown Engagement	Total People Groups
Europe	76	107	32	0	215
Asia and Oceania	217	363	421	7	1,008
Africa and the Middle East	248	283	184	6	721
The Americas	37	5	8	1	51
Totals	578	758	645	14	1,995

Table 4: Global Status of Evangelical Christianity

Country	Total People Groups	Total Population	Total Unengaged Unreached People Groups (100,000 and Higher)	Total Unengaged Unreached People Populations (100,000 and Higher)	% UUPG (100,000 and Higher) of Total People Groups	% UUPG (100,000 and Higher) of Total Group Populations
India	1,109	1,118,410,676	310	385,406,173	28%	34.5%
Sudan	241	44,053,547	35	15,016,832	14.5%	34.1%
China	437	1,337,397,878	21	11,701,440	4.8%	0.9%
Ethiopia	123	64,602,738	17	10,238,338	13.8%	15.8%
Saudi Arabia	29	21,754,820	13	13,659,089	44.8%	62.8%
Indonesia	692	204,636,623	12	2,939,538	1.7%	1.4%
Pakistan	86	179,681,852	12	11,505,305	14.0%	6.4%
France	107	53,177,752	11	3,817,730	10.3%	7.2%
Nepal	115	27,612,073	10	3,834,997	8.7%	13.9%
Turkey	48	68,805,675	10	9,357,701	20.8%	13.6%
Congo, DR	221	65,678,099	9	2,488,404	4.1%	3.8%
Algeria	37	44,312,723	8	3,271,768	21.6%	7.4%
Chad	158	8,965,339	8	1,136,754	5.1%	12.7%
Libya	28	10,138,226	8	3,201,822	28.6%	31.6%
Laos	138	5,231,352	7	1,047,838	5.1%	20.0%
United Arab Emirates	32	2,892,822	7	1,131,987	21.9%	39.1%
Germany	79	84,968,567	6	1,762,887	7.6%	2.1%
Kuwait	22	2,240,026	6	1,075,150	27.3%	48.0%
Eritrea	16	4,373,418	5	2,031,129	31.3%	46.4%
Iran	78	71,375,461	5	1,169,607	6.4%	1.6%
Iraq	35	26,872,296	5	9,792,912	14.3%	36.4%
Mozambique	50	19,604,157	5	1,714,852	10.0%	8.7%
Argentina	50	35,987,284	4	1,450,000	8.0%	4.0%
Bhutan	26	2,360,194	4	587,358	15.4%	24.9%
Kazakhstan	49	24,630,032	4	954,000	8.2%	3.9%
Malaysia	156	26,637,997	4	842,179	2.6%	3.2%
Myanmar	137	53,953,056	4	552,000	2.9%	1.0%
Nigeria	455	134,179,367	4	1,152,820	0.9%	0.9%
Syria	26	19,857,570	4	3,760,034	15.4%	18.9%
Uzbekistan	52	25,952,222	4	1,500,583	7.7%	5.8%
Afghanistan	48	27,756,997	3	850,068	6.3%	3.1%
Bangladesh	49	144,167,284	3	2,739,765	6.1%	1.9%
Brazil	268	173,405,7083	3	595,000	1.1%	0.3%
Egypt	27	76,449,913	3	1,728,212	11.1%	2.3%
Ghana	96	20,677,611	3	404,610	3.1%	2.0%
Italy	51	54,491,291	3	647,822	5.9%	1.2%
Lebanon	11	4,459,486	3	1,369,009	27.3%	30.7%
Morocco	18	32,885,608	3	953,509	16.7%	2.9%
Oman	30	2,974,216	3	908,468	10.0%	30.5%
Russia	73	159,138,693	3	2,450,300	4.1%	1.5%
Tanzania	137	39,338,991	3	573,460	2.2%	1.5%
United Kingdom	80	57,912,951	3	645,000	3.8%	1.1%
Yemen	18	18,085,076	3	852,043	16.7%	4.7%
Bahrain	12	726,969	2	542,237	16.7%	74.6%
Côte d'Ivoire	83	16,853,318	2	2,024,445	2.4%	12.0%
Jordan	17	6,874,420	2	994,101	11.8%	14.5%
Liberia	32	3,553,244	2	379,174	6.3%	10.7%
Philippines	160	77,544,978	2	1,506,632	1.3%	1.9%
Sierra Leone	27	6,552,300	2	528,735	7.4%	8.1%
Somalia	11	9,145,677	2	2,145,673	18.2%	23.5%
Switzerland	21	7,968,340	2	1,087,120	9.5%	13.6%
Tunisia	11	10,951,103	2	449,411	18.2%	4.1%

Continued from Page 11

Does this mean that we stop doing what we are doing to focus our attention on these 645 groups? If we did so, a number of groups that are currently engaged no longer would be. What we must do is mobilize the vast resources that already exist, enlisting evangelical Christians and churches everywhere to join in the challenge of addressing these groups as well as some 2,700 unengaged, unreached people groups with populations less than 100,000. Toward this end, the International Mission Board, Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth with a Mission, Wycliffe, DAWN Ministries, Walk through the Bible, and others have made these least-reached people groups a priority. (See the "Finishing the Task" article which follows.)

Table 4 provides a listing of countries where there is more than one unengaged, unreached people group (UUPG) with populations of 100,000 or greater. The obvious priority country on the list is India with 310 UUPGs. This one country alone accounts for nearly half of the total number of UUPGs in the world today and more than half of the total population of UUPGs.

The occurrence of France on the list is illustrative of the needed transition from measuring evangelization to measuring evangelical Christianity. In 1996, the IMB's Status of Global Evangelization model characterized much of France as evangelized. No doubt this characterization was accurate; after all France has many resources in French and has been the focus of historical church planting and evangelism efforts. However, as a whole the country – regardless of resources and activity – remains less than 2% evangelical Christian to this day! Whatever prioritization model one uses, **one must consider the results of evangelization** and not simply the process of evangelization or the number of people exposed to some gospel presentation.

A complete listing of Unengaged Unreached People Groups equal to or greater than 100,000 and a complete listing of people groups may be found on the web at www.peoplegroups.org/Downloads.aspx. The GSEC number on these listings corresponds to the descriptions found in Table 1. Both listings are updated monthly.

Conclusion

We look forward to the day that the number of unengaged, unreached people groups will fall to zero, regardless of population size. It is certainly a challenge; yet, we are confident that it *will* happen. Evangelical churches in North America and around the world are reclaiming their role in missions. Believers are praying, giving, and going in record numbers. Local churches in difficult circumstances

are taking seriously the challenge of reaching their Jerusalem and extending themselves to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Who would have thought just a few years ago that some of the great harvests in history would come out of countries in the 10/40 Window? Yet, today there are people groups in that part of the world where churches are starting an average of two or more churches per year *each*. Not only is God moving in the world today . . . He's moving quickly. What a privilege to be part of the adventure!

Whatever prioritization model one uses, one must consider the results of evangelization.

"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev 7:9-10, NASB). 🌐

End Notes

- ¹ Delegates from the Missionary Societies, Churches and other religious bodies of the Baptist denomination. May 8, 1845. Preamble and Constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention. Augusta, GA: Southern Baptist Convention.
- ² In J. Rankin's *To the Ends of the Earth: Churches Fulfilling the Great Commission* (2005). Richmond, VA: International Mission Board, pp. 49-50.
- ³ Dan Scribner. November-December 2004. A Model for Determining the Most Needy Unreached or Least-Reached Peoples. *Mission Frontiers* [online]. Pasadena, CA: United States Center for World Mission, p. 6.
- ⁴ Todd M. Johnson and Peter F. Crossing. January-February 2005. Which Peoples Need Priority Attention? *Mission Frontiers* [online]. Pasadena, CA: United States Center for World Mission, p. 9.
- ⁵ Orville Boyd Jenkins, Ph.D. What is a People Group? Online at peoplegroups.org
- ⁶ The three registries referenced in these points refer to registries provided by the Harvest Information System. (www.harvestinformationssystem.info/)
- ⁷ Unlike some approaches to people group data that artificially force people group populations to conform to country-level census data, we allow field researchers to report the population of individual people groups as their research supports. Thus, the sum of people group populations for a country or for the world may or may not precisely match population estimates based on country-level data. As a point of comparison, the November 2005 estimate of the world's population is approximately 6.45 billion. The November 2005 GSEC estimate summed by individual people groups totals 6.53 billion, a difference of just over 1%.



Churches and Agencies Focus on



“Finishing the Task”

Marcus Vegh with Becky Hill

*Editor’s note: we include this report in this issue of **Mission Frontiers** not only because this event is noteworthy of itself, but also because this partnership has extensively relied on the IMB analysis and recommendations summarized in our preceding article. The tally of 639 UUPGs reported here is an earlier version of the tally of 645 UUPGs highlighted on pages 8-13.*

Eighteen mission agencies – including four of the world’s largest – have challenged local churches to partner with them in “Finishing the Task” (FTT), a strategy to nurture church-planting movements among 639 unengaged, unreached people groups (UUPGs) over 100,000 in population. The “Finishing the Task” campaign was formally launched November 14-17, 2005 at The Cove in Asheville, North Carolina, where agency directors consulted with pastors and other leaders of 59 churches, predominantly from North America.

The 18 FTT partner agencies have trained “Brokers” to assist the partner churches.

At the end of the November conference, 41 of those churches immediately chose 70 UUPGs for their focus. In addition, 19 churches indicated that in the next 18-36 months they will host a regional “Finishing the Task” conference in order to recruit other churches to join them in reaching all 639 of the prioritized peoples.

Churches represented at The Cove included North Point Community Church of Atlanta, Saddleback Church of Lake Forest, California, Bethlehem Baptist Church of Minneapolis, Belmont Church of Nashville, Real Life Ministries of Post Falls, Idaho, and Northwood Church of Fort Worth. The four largest mission agencies in “Finishing the Task” are Campus Crusade for Christ, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Wycliffe Bible Translators, and Youth With a Mission, who represent a combined total of more than 50,000 full-time workers in over 180 countries.

The 18 FTT partner agencies are seeking to equip local churches to take new responsibility for send-

Marcus Vegh is President of Progressive Vision, a partner agency of “Finishing the Task.” He served as Executive Producer of the November 2005 FTT conference.

ing missionaries, including those that they elect to send in collaboration with FTT partners. Partner agencies have trained “Brokers” to assist the partner churches; each broker can represent the strengths and resources of all 18 agencies. As a church engages with any Broker, the church taps into everything the partnership has to offer.

Paul Eshleman, a member of the “Finishing the Task” strategy team, comments, “We recognize

group in China, that’s going to take a different strategy. But whatever it is, our agencies are committed to serving the churches to help them launch

indigenously-led, church-planting movements.

A “Finishing the Task” CD-ROM has been developed to help churches select a UUPG. Also, a customized FTT deck of cards has been created to assist a church in weighing

the seven criteria in selecting a people group, including country, macro-religion, population, evangelical resources, threat level, freedom index, and physical exertion. Audio and video resources from the November 2005 conference

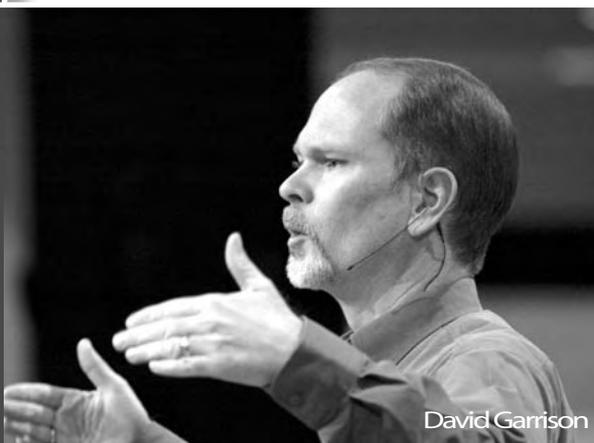


that from within the church, there are people that God will prepare and send that have the ability to go into these peoples. Our agencies are going to serve them and help to train them, equip them, and get those personnel mobilized out of the local church in North America and particularly from in region-national church partners, under the church’s direction and guidance.”

Eshleman adds, “Each church will need to be developing customized strategies for each people group. For instance, if it’s a Muslim group in very difficult terrain and hard to access, that’s going to take one strategy. If it’s in a mega-people

Seven Criteria in Selecting a People Group

1. Country
2. Macro-religion
3. Population
4. Evangelical resources
5. Threat Level
6. Freedom Index
7. Physical exertion



are expected to become available to partnering churches and agencies early in January 2006.

“Finishing the Task” Champions’ Training will be conducted March 14-16, 2006 at the International Learning Center in Richmond, Virginia. This training is offered to anyone seeking to serve as FTT “Champion” within a church, which will include coordination with a Broker, assembly of a team, and other tasks. To read the strategy for “Finishing the Task”, learn about how to engage your local church with a broker, join your agency to the FTT partnership, or register for the “Champion” training event, visit www.finishingthetask.com. 🌐

An Extended Conversation About “Insider Movements”

Responses to the
September-October 2005 *Mission Frontiers*



Editor's note: our September-October cover theme, "Can We Trust Insider Movements?", prompted a lot of response, and in these pages we give you a sampler of the subsequent conversation. The September-October issue included an article by John and Anna Travis, who said, "As we have seen the resistance toward changing religions and the huge gap between the Muslim and Christian communities, we feel that fighting the religion-changing battle is the wrong battle. We have little hope in our lifetime to believe for a major enough cultural, political and religious change to occur in our context such that Muslims would become open to entering Christianity on a wide scale." That comment, and others like it, prompted John Piper, Gary Corwin, and others to write responses. Listen in on the conversation.

Minimizing the Bible?: Seeker-Driven Pastors and Radical Contextualization in Missions

John Piper

*John Piper is the Pastor for Preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church (Minneapolis, Minnesota) and the author of more than 20 books, including **Desiring God**. This article is reprinted, by permission, from www.desiringgod.org.*

I have been pondering a possible relationship between the minimizing of the Bible in so-called seeker-driven churches and in some of the radical forms of contextualization that have emerged in missions. Perhaps there isn't any connection. But I wonder. The common denominator that

I am pondering is the loss of confidence that declaring what the Bible says in the power of the Holy Spirit can create and sustain the church of Christ.

This morning I just read John 2:11, "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and *manifested his glory*. And his disciples *believed* in him." I bowed and prayed, "O Lord, this is how faith happens. People are given eyes to see

your glory in your person and in your deeds. Please don't let me turn away from the ministry that puts all the emphasis on the 'gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God'" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Then I was reminded of another text in John which connected the revelation of Christ's glory to the written word of God. John 20:30-31, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." The signs that reveal the faith-awakening glory of Christ are not mainly new signs being done today, but the signs that are written in the gospels. These are written "so that you may believe." He "manifested his *glory*. And his disciples *believed* in him." That is the way faith comes. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes "He will glorify

The upshot seems to be the minimization of the Word of God in its robust and glorious fullness.

me!” (John 16:14). Therefore we declare the fullness of the glorious Person and Work of Christ in history. That is how the church is created and sustained.

It seems to me that a growing number of pastors and missionaries have lost confidence in this truth. They have concluded that the gap between the glory of Christ and the felt needs of their neighbors, or between the glory of Christ and the religion of the nationals, is simply too great for the fullness of God’s Word to overcome. The upshot seems to be the minimization of the Word of God in its robust and glorious fullness.

This is on my front burner just now because in recent weeks I have received a steady stream of testimonies from aching saints who say in so many words, “Our pastor doesn’t proclaim to us what the Bible says and means. The messages are not revelations of the glory of Christ. They are advice-talks with a religious twist.” And then I have been reading about certain kinds of gospel contextualization in missions that seem to minimize the fullness of the biblical revelation which converts should share with others. So I have been pondering whether there are connections.

I have no desire to naively equate the cultural conglomerate of western Christianity with the true, spiritual body of Christ. I can appreciate avoiding the word “Christian” in a missions context where it signifies degenerate, materialistic, immodest western religion. And I realize that most of the ways we “do church” are culture-specific rather than biblically mandated. But there are other questions that trouble me:

1. Are the essentials of biblical faith embraced by new converts to Christ, and do they make them known in love to others? For example, do they

embrace and make known that the Bible is the only inspired and infallible written revelation of God, and that Christ is God and was crucified for sin and raised from the dead above all authority?

2. Are the former religious behaviors of converts to Christ, which they may retain, communicating regularly a falsehood about what the convert means and believes?
3. Are words being used by converts that mislead people rather than make the truth plain? Are missionaries and converts following Paul’s commitment to candor: “But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s Word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 4:2)?

I may be wrong about a Bible-minimizing connection between seeker-driven pastors and radically contextualizing missionaries, but it is hard not to see a loss of faith in the power of God’s Word when I hear that the Bible is not preached at home, and when I read from the frontiers: “We have little hope in our lifetime to believe for a major enough cultural, political and religious change to occur in our context such that Muslims would become open to entering Christianity on a wide scale.”

Let us pray for the Holy Spirit to come in power in our day for the sake of powerful displays of the glory of Christ in the declaration of the Word of God where those glories are revealed with infallible and converting authority. 🌍

Editor’s note: later in this conversation (see pages 21–22) John and Anna Travis offer their response both to John Piper and to Gary Corwin.

Reviewing the September-October *Mission Frontiers*

Gary Corwin and Ralph Winter

*Gary Corwin is associate editor of **Evangelical Missions Quarterly** and missiologist-at-large for Arab World Ministries, on loan from SIM-USA. Ralph Winter is General Director of the Frontier Mission Fellowship and editor of **Mission Frontiers**.*

Corwin: As a long-time reader of *MF* who has always looked forward to its arrival, I have to express my disappointment with your September-October 2005 issue. Some of the content seemed highly misleading or clearly wrong on the subject of Insider Movements.

Winter: I have read with care your two-page letter on our Insider Movement issue. I can honestly say

that I completely agree with your concerns. But at the same time I honestly don’t believe we intended them to arise from the text.

Corwin: [Your own commentary] seems clearly intended to leave the impression that only inexperienced or ignorant mission leaders have a problem with this concept as it is currently being advocated.... While most would acknowledge that

a Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist might come to faith in Christ yet remain in their religious context for a time of sorting things out and sharing their new-found faith, the vast majority of highly experienced mission leaders today would reject the idea that remaining in one's worship context as a Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist is a viable response for true followers of Christ.

Winter: Include me. I also reject, totally, "the idea that remaining in one's worship context" is viable. I don't think anyone in our issue said anything like that!

Corwin: Believing Gentiles of Paul's day hardly represented an Insider Movement within a competing faith system. Rather, they represented new believers whose continuing cultural practices were hard for many believing Jews to swallow.

Winter: Again, I completely agree. Insider Movements are by definition not "within a competing faith system" but represent merely, as you say, "cultural practices ... hard for (the source faith) to swallow."

Corwin: Most troubling of all, however, is the admission by Charles Kraft that the primary task of contextualization teaching (and by implication, cross-cultural ministry teaching more generally) will need to be on how to change the Christianity we find around the world rather than how to introduce the Gospel among the peoples where it doesn't currently have root. On page nine we read, "Any discussion of this topic needs to take into account the fact that the situations most cross-cultural workers are working in nowadays are seldom pioneer situations. Thus, we who teach contextualization are dealing primarily with those whose major concern will have to be on how to bring about

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change in already existing situations rather than on how to plant culturally appropriate churches."

Corwin: At one level this radically changes the focus from least-reached peoples, contrary to all that MF has always stood for. On an even sadder level, it advocates – in the name of cultural appropriateness (as the writer envisions it) – a new form of western missiological imperialism into contexts where local believers are already believing, living, and applying the Gospel!

Winter: Please don't let this trouble you. Kraft is not de-emphasizing unreached peoples. He is merely noting that most of the current discussions about contextualization are occurring in and among national church movements. What he might better have said is that, say in Japan, without troubling the existing Japanese churches it is urgent and important to develop churches that are far more Japanese. I visited one there recently that had been meeting in a missionary's living room for 46 years and still had only 12 members. They could only sing psalms, and no piano, although before the service they practiced singing with the help of a piano – but not in the church service that followed. It was the precise image of its US counterpart....

Winter: Actually, speaking of a focus on unreached peoples, you may be interested to know that as far back as the Singapore 2002 consultation on unreached peoples I presented a paper (not well understood, I'm afraid) to the effect that countries like Japan still lack a completely indigenous form of our faith. My paper was thus entitled "From Mission to

Evangelism to Mission”, meaning that we settled too soon for a cessation of mission in Japan and went to evangelism from a highly Westernized base, and that we need to begin again in pioneer-mission thinking if we are ever going to win Japan.

Corwin: There are other things that could be mentioned, such as John and Anna Travis’ sad comment that “We have little hope in our lifetime to believe for a major enough cultural, political and religious change to occur in our contexts such that Muslims would become open to entering Christianity on a wide scale.” I would encourage them and others to look closely on the remarkable things the Spirit of God is doing in our day to build His church in the dynamic cultural, political, and religious contexts of places like Algeria, Iran, and Iraq, before concluding that such change is unlikely in their own context.

Winter: I think they are saying that if we expect a billion Muslims to begin calling themselves Christians, there is “little hope in our lifetime” of winning masses of Muslims. If that is what they were saying, then it would be like the situation in Japan. We are not going to win Japan in our lifetime with a Western-form church.

Corwin: In response to the assertion that “today’s proponents of either insider movements or church-planting movements are building on foundations laid by pioneers such as Keysser, McGavran, and others in the first half of the twentieth century”, I would simply remind each of us that any strategy that advocated remaining in the religion of one’s birth while embracing Christ is one which all these pioneers would never have endorsed.

Winter: Again, I am puzzled. No one I know is saying people are to remain in the religion of their birth but merely in the language and culture of their birth. If they want to become accepted as British in culture (lots of luck), that is their freedom in Christ to seek. If they want to be Western Christian (as apparently many Dalits would gladly be), fine. I don’t recall Paul saying that Greeks could not become Jews (lots of luck) if they chose to. But he vehemently opposed that as an expectation or requirement. The current stress on Insider Movements is very Pauline in its insistence that Muslims and Hindus do not need to divest themselves of their language or culture in order to be believers in Jesus Christ with equal standing to any Western believer. To require themselves to do that as a condition of following Christ is exactly what Paul so vehemently opposed in Galatians.

Corwin: Thank you, Ralph, for your expeditious and thoughtful response.... Our primary difference appears to be regarding what the term “insider

movement” conveys, and on whether the MF issue has included material which reinforces the definition with which we both apparently take issue. My own acquaintance with the term comes primarily from the sphere of discussions of Islamic contextualization. In that context it is used pretty much as a synonym for C5 contextualization, which includes not only accommodation to language and culture but to actual religious practice (which, of course, is so intertwined with culture in most Islamic contexts). Advocates of this view argue that continuing to call oneself a Muslim, and long-term participation in mosque worship, including recitation of the creed (*shahada*) and performance of the ritual prayers (*salat*), are appropriate. It is this kind of thinking with which I strongly disagree.

Corwin: While I am greatly pleased and relieved that this is not your own understanding of insider movements, I do believe that this is a common understanding. I also believe that there are sections in the MF issue which are clearly written with this view in mind. You say, “Again, I am puzzled. No one I know is saying people are to remain *in the religion of their birth* but merely in the language and culture of their birth.” This, I find puzzling. For example, John and Anna Travis are asking “From a biblical perspective, can a person be truly saved and continue to be a Muslim?” And again, “Can a Muslim follower of Christ retain all Muslim practices, in particular praying in the mosque toward Mecca and continuing to repeat the Muslim creed?” They go on to articulate ten premises in support of answering those questions yes.

Corwin: Further on, John and Anna Travis write, “If Bosch had it right that faith in Christ wasn’t meant to be a religion, could it be that we are witnessing some of the first fruits of vast movements where Jesus is causing the Gospel to break out of “Christianity”? *Where those who know Jesus remain as a sweet fragrance inside the religion of their birth*, and eventually the number of adherents grows so large that a reform movement from inside that religion is birthed?” [Emphasis mine.]

Corwin: Two more items, this time from Frank Decker, will suffice to make the point. While the statements here may simply reflect a loose usage of language rather than intent (as the actual practice of the individuals is not discussed in any detail), what is said is still what is said. Of Salina, a recent believer, we read, “She told us that in order to share Christ with her family, *she now identifies herself as a Muslim rather than a Christian.*” And again, of Asif and other Muslim-Background Believers it is written, “*These are Muslims* who walk with Jesus and openly share

with their Muslim friends about the Lord....” [Emphasis mine.] Whether these individuals are simply making appropriate cultural accommodations here, and the language being used in the article is simply too loose, or they continue to actually practice the religion of their birth in addition to believing in Jesus, I don’t know. But coupled with the final two paragraphs of admonition in the article, it certainly looks like an endorsement of what is being said.

Winter: Once again, I have to say that you have brought out a blind spot in my reply to you, and I agree with your concern. Let me give one example. You are concerned by someone continuing to call himself a Muslim, fearing what this could mean. I on the other hand, recognize that concern but at the same time feel strongly that the use of the word is in itself not necessarily a bad thing. The Muslim cultural tradition, including much of the religious aspects of their culture, constitute a sturdy and in many ways fine tradition, as human social traditions go. However, I will admit that calling one’s self a Muslim could cloak a good deal of syncretism. I just don’t feel that to quarrel over the word is central to the dangers you (and I) fear.

Winter: The main thing with Muslims (as with

people who call themselves Christians) is to know Jesus Christ more intimately, and to continue to love and respect their own people and to respect at least their cultural (as opposed to faith) traditions. After all, it is not whether calling oneself a Muslim or a Christian could cloak syncretism, since both words are all too capable of that. It is the fact that neither the word *Muslim* nor the word *Christian* necessarily hides syncretism. Paul himself, in a voluntary case took a Greek, Timothy, through circumcision – which in Galatians he had so strongly declared unnecessary. Note also, that while to us the label Muslim may fearfully imply a jungle of objectionable religious rituals, the daily reality may in many cases be quite otherwise. Perhaps 30% of the people in Turkey pay no attention to at least the first four of the five pillars of Islam and yet insist they are Muslims.

Corwin: Thanks for the feedback once again on this, Ralph. A believer calling him/her/self a Muslim may indeed be less troubling in many ways than some of the other practices being approved, simply because it can be, and perhaps often is, nuanced with accompanying explanations – “Muslim follower of Isa,” for example. But even this potentially mitigating factor is not mentioned in the article sections I pointed out.

Beyond that, though, are the more serious issues of continuing to perform Muslim ritual worship: things like reciting the creed, and lining up to say the required prayers in the mosque. It is a significant disservice to the Christian public, I believe, to give the many advocates of this more radical view a free pass, including it under the banner of a more benign definition of “insider movements.” Whether this was the intention of *MF*’s editors, or not, its readers should be made aware of the difference. Thank you, *MF* editors, for making that possible.

Winter: We truly believe it is in fact a service to our readers to know what earnest and faithful Evangelical missionaries are discussing, whether or not they have reached a common perspective. 🌐



Chuck Davis
Professor of
Intercultural Studies

Who I am becoming matters as much as what I am doing...

I left for Mali, West Africa as a missionary with great intercultural communication theory. But theory was like an unsharpened machete: I found I needed the experience of interacting with people from cultures and social structures different than my own. Mali became my laboratory, and I began to imagine a preparation process that encompassed both theory *and* practice.

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Maximizing the Bible! Glimpses From Our Context

John and Anna Travis

John and Anna Travis, along with their two children, have lived in a tight-knit Asian Muslim neighborhood for nearly 20 years. They are involved in contextualized sharing of the good news, Bible translation and the ministry of prayer for inner healing. They are also the creators of the “C1-C6” spectrum, a tool for defining six types of Christ-centered communities found in Muslim contexts; within that spectrum, “C5” believers are those who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior and who remain legally and socially within the community of Islam. John and Anna Travis utilize “C5” and “insider movements” as synonyms.

Two respected Christian leaders (John Piper and Gary Corwin) took exception to the following statement we made in a recent *Mission Frontiers* article:

We have little hope in our lifetime to believe for a major enough cultural, political and religious change to occur in our contexts such that Muslims would become open to entering Christianity on a wide scale.

We hope the full meaning of our statement here will be clear in light of the rest of our article. To make sure this comment is not removed from its context, we quote the very next sentence in the *Mission Frontiers* article:

But we do have **great hope**, as great as the promises of God, to believe that an “insider movement” could get off the ground – that **vast numbers** could discover that salvation in Isa the Messiah is waiting for every Muslim who will believe.

To further clarify what we meant by “little hope”, we see little indication *in our contexts* (we are not speaking for the whole Muslim world) that Muslims will *enter Christianity* (that is, join the religion which Muslims associate with Western materialism, moral decadence, the brutality of the Crusades and current armies in Muslim lands) on a *wide scale* (that is, numbers in keeping with the will of God for “everyone to come to repentance” – 2 Peter 3:9, and Paul’s desire that “as many as possible” be won – 1 Cor. 9:19).

But deeper questions are being asked by Piper and Corwin. Piper wonders if C5 movements minimize both the glory of Christ and the Bible. Corwin contends that C5 should only be transitional; in time, people who accept Christ from non-Christian backgrounds must in time leave the religion of their birth. In response to these important concerns, let us share briefly what is happening right now in the area where we live, where the great majority are Muslim.

Over the years, by God’s grace, we have seen numbers of Muslims come to Christ. Some of these decided to “leave Islam” and “enter Christianity”;

others have remained within the Islamic community living out their faith as Muslims who follow Jesus (*Isa*). Though we rejoice, we have not sensed the momentum of a “movement.”

However, in recent months in the part of town where we live, we are just beginning to see what might be the momentum we have longed for. Extended families are becoming committed followers of Christ without becoming “Christians.” They meet in at least four separate meetings on various days of the week to read the New Testament and pray together. The groups include both men and women from a lower-middle-class background who have found (to quote Billy Graham), “peace with God” through Christ. Some of the people in these groups have been witnessed to and prayed for by us and others for many years, but it is just now they all seem to be coming to faith. The human agent most responsible for this has been a jovial Muslim woman we call Fatima, who has been five years in Christ and is a natural communicator, organizer and avid reader of the Word (a Wesley on a tiny scale).

Of those we know in these groups, true evidence of the good news is seen: they are admitting their sins to each other, they are forgiving each other, they are at peace, they pray for the sick in Jesus’ name, they actively share Christ with their neighbors and relatives, there is no financial incentive to believe, they meet together in their small groups and they are giving to the poor (though they themselves are quite poor!). New leaders are being naturally raised up. We hear of similar situations in nearby areas as well. We are having virtually nothing to do with this, except that we keep praying for it.

In our context, this is feeling like something that could move faster through the masses than the usual process where there is the added step of leaving Islam and entering Christianity after salvation. These extended families are simply getting saved and not adding the extra step. To be sure they are spiritually different from the many unsaved Muslims around

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them. They approach other Muslims saying, "Come, brother, sister, look at this beautiful thing God has revealed to us in his Word about Jesus." It has not entered the minds of those in these groups to go through the cultural and political change required to switch religious institutions. We wish all could see and hear what we are seeing and hearing. The

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handprints of Christ and His kingdom are all over this little outbreak of the gospel.

In response, then, to Piper's comment that the glory of Christ is minimized or slighted in C5 movements of God, we in fact believe just

the opposite is true: our Lord receives incredible glory and honor (not to mention joy!), when he hears one Muslim share with another Muslim how Christ has changed his life. Concerning "minimizing the Bible", we think nothing could be further from the truth, at least among the C5 groups we know of. In fact you might say that these C5 groups are *maximizing*

the Bible! In contrast to traditional churches which normally enjoy regular preaching, worship services with theologically rich hymns, the recitation of creeds and any number of other beneficial activities, these C5 believers have no materials to study other than the Bible. Their growth depends almost solely on inductive Bible study, prayer and small group interaction with other C5 believers.

In response to Corwin's main point, that all non-Christians who accept Christ as Lord and Savior must eventually leave the religion of their birth, we would simply say that this is not so in our context. We and many others on the field are seeing examples like the one just described above. How these Gospel networks will label themselves in twenty years, God only knows. What is clear, though, is that at the moment a vibrant faith is being lived out by many in the environment of another religion, similar to Messianic Jews, who are religiously Jewish yet have received Jesus (Yeshua) as the Messiah. Interestingly, it would appear that the largest movement to Christ among Muslims in the world today is C5 in nature, occurring in Asia. 🌐

Sharing the Gospel Through Open Networks

R. Lewis

*R Lewis spent eight years in Morocco on a church-planting team. She wrote a recent article in the **International Journal of Frontier Missions** on God's use of women's networks to establish the Kingdom in some contexts. Note that, in contrast to the previous article, she advocates that C5 movements and insider movements should be differentiated.*

Some may fear that the discussion about "insider movements" is a new missiological theory promoted by those who have given up on traditional mission methodology. However, it is instead an attempt to discern and explain what God is actually doing today, and has done repeatedly throughout history, when spreading the gospel rapidly

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through new people groups (particularly in socio-religious contexts antagonistic to perceived forms of "Christianity").

I think it is important to remember two things about insider movements:

1. Insider movements are *not* primarily about becoming more "contextualized" and therefore should probably be distinguished from any point on the C1-C6 continuum. Instead, insider

movements *are* about the gospel spreading inside *pre-existing relational or identity networks* (communities or families) and letting it grow up in whatever form those networks choose under the authority of Scripture and the Holy Spirit. *The pre-existing network becomes the believing community or "church"*, while expatriate workers avoid pulling people into new, artificial networks, no matter how contextualized (e.g., Muslims into Jesus mosques), or into foreign structures (e.g., Gentiles into synagogues). As an illustration, we see in Acts that believing Jews kept going to the Temple, not isolating themselves from their non-believing Jewish neighbors – they stayed "insiders." Meanwhile, Paul asserted that Gentiles didn't have to become circumcised (which would have marked them as "outsiders") and that they could even continue to eat meat, which usually had been previously offered to idols, if their conscience was clear, despite the dismay of Jewish believers and the specific prohibition of such by

the Jerusalem council (see Romans 14, Acts 15: 29, Acts 21:25).

2. God has used “insider movements” throughout history, but He has also used other means. To commend the value and validity of insider movements is not to say that other types of church-planting are invalid – this is not an “either/or” prescription. In most cultures there are many people – maybe whole sectors of society (like the Dalits of India) – who are *dissimilating*, trying to move away from their traditional identity. These people are seeking, as individuals or groups, to move *out* of their traditional cultural identity or relational network and into something foreign. That is fine! However, let’s not use these examples to obscure our recognition

of the thousands (if not millions) who would believe if they did not have to align themselves with a powerful foreign religion (“Christianity”) instead of Jesus himself.

Insider movements are as old as James of the Jews and Cornelius of the Gentiles. This is *not* a new phenomenon but a reaffirming of a New Testament pattern, explained clearly as the use of “open networks” by Rodney Stark in his book *The Rise of Christianity*. He explains how the gospel spread through “open networks” – networks of predominantly non-believers – in the fast-growing first 300 years of the early Church. 🌐

The gospel spread through “open networks” in the fast-growing first 300 years of the early Church.

Read More in the *IJFM*

Darrell Dorr

Darrell Dorr is the managing editor of Mission Frontiers.

As you can see from the responses above, part of the challenge is identifying clear and consistent definitions of insider movements. If *Mission Frontiers* readers would like to read more, one good place to continue is with our sister publication, the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (www.ijfm.org). In particular, the back issues of 17:1 (2000) and all four issues of volume 21 (2004) may prove especially helpful. There you’ll find other authors as well as overlapping definitions of insider movements, including the following:

- Popular movements to Christ that bypass both formal and explicit expressions of the Christian religion (David Garrison).
- Movements to Jesus that remain to varying degrees inside the social fabric of Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, or other people groups. This faithful discipleship will express itself in culturally appropriate communities of believers who will also continue to live within as much of their culture, including the religious life of the culture, as is biblically faithful. The Holy Spirit, through the Word and through his people, will also begin to transform his people and their culture, religious life, and worldview (Kevin Higgins).
- Numbers of Muslims who become followers of Christ without changing either their self-perception or their communal identity as Muslims. In such movements, “church planting” is not the introduction of a specific form of organization (no matter how “biblical” it may

be) but merely describes the pattern of believers’ relationships that naturally follow existing social structures (Harley Talman).

To read more, go to www.ijfm.org. 🌐





What is the Church?

Greg H. Parsons



When we hear a new idea or approach to mission work, we may wonder how or if it will work and what the long-term impact will be. Certainly, we wonder if it is true to God's Word. These are necessary questions, and we may not always fully understand the answers or agree with them. At times, this is because we don't understand the context, life experiences and worldview of those involved.

Some, for example, have expressed concern about *Churchless Christianity*, a book we've published. Some assume this book is commending a strategy that some missionary has used in outreach to Hindus in India. In other words, they think the title is *prescriptive* rather than *descriptive*. Actually, this book is primarily *describing* people who long to follow Jesus but not within established forms of Christianity. (We actually considered changing the title to *Christianity-Less Followers of Christ*.) The book concludes with a few suggestions about what these followers might do and what the emerging "church" might look like. *Churchless Christianity* illustrates how some mission leaders are considering afresh how to nurture

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movements toward Christ in the midst of cultures where traditional church-planting has yet to bear fruit. How much of our world is colored by cultural ways of doing church? What is the minimum number of people necessary for a church? Are Paul's methods in Acts prescriptive or descriptive? Unfortunately, the Greek words we translate for "church" don't help us much. Paul's usage alone is both confusing and enlightening: sometimes he refers to the whole Church, sometimes to a church in a whole city (when there must be several smaller fellowships), and sometimes to a household. (See Romans 16 for all of these.)

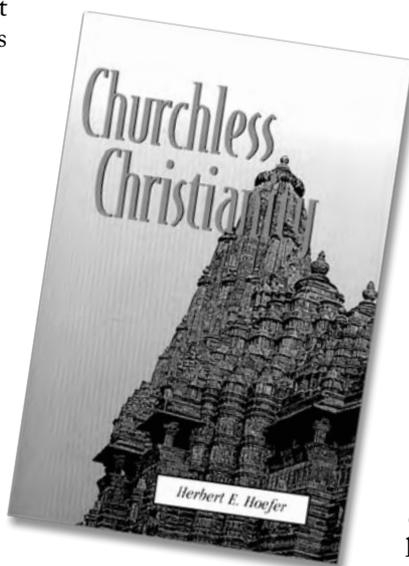
After asserting that He will build His church (Mt. 16:18), Jesus talked about how sin is to be dealt with in His church (Mt. 18). Several of the related parables appear in the context of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom, and they point to the fact that God is the one who will separate people of faith from those are not (Mt. 13:24-30,

47-50; 22:11-14; 25:1-13.) The *NIV Topical Study Bible* notes, "Several parables found only in Matthew show how Jesus' community has both true and false disciples." This deserves much more thought, with implications for pioneer church-planting and the spread of the gospel. We are not in a position to judge who will be acceptable to God and who won't.

Yet believing Jews just after the time of Christ tried to make decisions for God. They were convinced that Greeks could not be a part of Jesus' communities unless they became like Jews. As we follow the story in Acts, the biggest persecution faced by Paul and the early Church seems to come from believers from a Jewish

background – not from unbelieving Jews. Jewish crowds listen to Paul teach about Jesus, his conversion and the resurrection with no negative reaction – they listen attentively. Only when Paul testifies that Jesus told him, "Go! [away from Jerusalem]. For I will send you far away to the Gentiles" that they react and seek his life!

There is no panacea in mission strategy. But given the slowness of the gospel's penetration into Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist mainstreams, we ought to be willing to try – or at least allow – some alternate approaches. 🌐



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