



Why ask what it takes to “engage” a people group? Good news!

Ralph D. Winter



We used to concern ourselves with listing all the “Unreached Peoples” in the world. The cover story this time is “What does it take to ‘engage’ a people group?” Why ask that? Good news!

So many agencies have turned their attention to Unreached Peoples that now the Southern Baptists (as evidenced in our January-February 2006 issue) are trying to list Unreached Peoples which are still “unengaged” by any agency or entity.

Jeff Liverman proposes a four-fold test. Jim Haney tweaks all four, suggesting that it is not necessary to have a resident missionary, and that a foreign missionary may not even be necessary if someone within the culture goes outside and later, as a bi-cultural believer, goes back into his own people.

Bravo! The bi-cultural possibility has often been overlooked by mission agencies. They may not realize that the two most prominent “missionaries” in the New Testament (Paul and Barnabas) were both bi-cultural.

When the Jerusalem Council needed a missionary to go to the new Greek believers in Antioch, they chose a *bi-cultural* (Barnabas). When Barnabas needed help, he sought out another *bi-cultural* (Paul).

Today around the world there are thousands more bi-culturals than at any previous time in history. This is due to massive migration of peoples. Only a handful of the smallest groups locked away in some hidden valleys do not yet have a number of their people in the outside world.



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

Migrating people are a global phenomenon today. When people migrate, they often are much more open to new ideas than back in their homeland.

Thus, we need not merely list Unreached Peoples and Unengaged Peoples and send foreign missionaries. We must assiduously seek out *bi-cultural*s who are already introduced to Jesus Christ and who can reach their own people better than any outsider.

I must add one caution to what both Liverman and Haney have said. *My suggestion: let’s stop talking about “church planting.”* Why? Because of what we often assume a “church” to be.

We Americans live in a country where families are almost expected to drift apart, creating *artificially* “individualized” people. Thus, as a result we produce *artificial* “church” fellowships which collect loose individuals or family fragments (such as “nuclear families”) into a helpful surrogate family — which we then call a “church.”

However, in much of the world our missionaries find that multi-generational families are still intact! Often the only thing they know to do is to pull people out of those families so they can gather in an artificial “church” family. What an astounding contrast to the New Testament! *There worshipping households were the “churches.”*

I am sure that both Liverman and Haney know this. But, in that case, wouldn’t it be better not to continue to use such a misunderstood term as “church” for what they are advocating?

In our last issue Bob Goodmann presented a crucial series of charts talking not about “church planting” but instead about “movements to Christ”, namely, *fellowships built on families, not groups made up of loose individuals.* Way to go!

But, are we finishing the task? (Part 1)

Yes, in a way. However, this issue of *Mission Frontiers* could easily be taken to reinforce the common assumption that if we can see a movement to Christ in every nation, tribe, and tongue, we will have fulfilled the Great Commission and have even fulfilled the final conditions for the return of Christ! Wrong.

Admittedly, Matthew 24:14 does say, “This Gospel must be preached in the whole world as a testimony to every people and then the end will come.” But did you note that I left a word out of that quote?: “Kingdom” — “this Gospel of the *Kingdom*.” This reminds us of the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth . . .”

The most shocking, tragic and incredible delusion built right into contemporary Evangelicalism in many areas is the idea that we are here on earth simply to get more people fixed up for eternity.

That aspiration is basic, of course. But it’s preliminary to a life lived 24/7 in an all-out battle against those things that dishonor God: evil things, disease germs, corruption, dishonesty in industry and government. 1 John 3:8 says, “The Son of God came for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the Devil.” And, as the Father sent Him, so He sends *us!*

In fact, glorifying God by fighting evil is the best way to win people to Christ. Jesus Himself fought evil,

Jeff Liverman and Jim Haney tackle the question, “What does it mean to effectively ‘engage’ a people?” This is a significant question. But the term “engage” takes us back to 1982 to a two-day conference near Chicago convened jointly by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and what was then called the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (now the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies). The Chicago conference came up with six “stages” in the reaching of a people. To “engage” a group is the final stage before a people can be considered “Reached.”

Unreached Peoples / Least-Reached Peoples (Joshua Project)

	Number of Individuals	Number of Groups	Avg. Size of Groups	Avg. # of Adherents per group
(1) pop > 10,000, adherents ≥ 1,000	1,186,352,000	406	3,000,000	21,000
(2) pop > 10,000, adherents < 1,000	1,392,691,000	2,758	500,000	80
(3) pop < 10,000	6,781,043	3,473	2,000	6
	<u>2,585,824,043</u>	<u>6,637</u>		

dishonesty and greed — and disease. He did this to reveal to us the character of our heavenly Father. It is not merely a case of overcoming evil with good, as when we run up against “flesh and blood.” We must also deliberately seek out and destroy evil *in order to defend and confirm the character of our Father in Heaven.*

I just read that annually over 200,000 hours of work are lost in the USA to dental disease among seniors. By contrast, in Africa, 45 million work years are annually lost to malaria. That’s 2 million times as many man-hours! Is that why Africa’s people

are malnourished and poor? You bet. Should we fight malaria as Christians? Yes. Are we doing so? NO. (Bill Gates is). We have no theology to fight disease. We think *caring for the sick* is all we need to do. Yes, we must reach every Unreached People. But we must also faithfully reveal the Father, or we won’t win very many.

Are we finishing the task? (Part 2)

Yes, in a way. If we confine our attention to the remaining Unreached Peoples and not for the moment concern ourselves with all the Lord’s

Prayer means, we can deal with some very concrete figures.

An Unreached People has been technically defined as lacking an indigenous community of believers. A department of the USCWM (www.JoshuaProject.net) uses a more researchable definition of less than 2% believers and 5% adherents. Their total of 6,637 such groups I have divided into three categories. Some of the first category may actually be “Reached” as defined technically.

Probably the most surprising number in the chart is the small total population for the 3,473 groups in the third category – 6.7 million. That is less than one-tenth of one percent of the global population (about one-thousandth).

Note well that there are now thousands of churches worldwide which could become part of the harvest force for each of these “least-reached” groups. And mission outreach is now exploding in Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, Brazil, etc. Not bad! 🌐

Student Profile # 238

NAME: Long Fai
 AGE: 21
 YEAR: College Senior
 FAVORITE NBA PLAYER: Yao Ming
 BEST FRIEND: Mark Smith,
 North American
 English Teacher

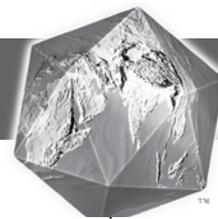
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Surrey	Jan. 29	Liane Jagger	604-596-5366

ONTARIO

Niagara	Jan. 8	Marty Frisk	905-646-0228
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SASKATCHEWAN

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Lubbock - PM	Jan. 15	Justin Pruitt	806-789-0478
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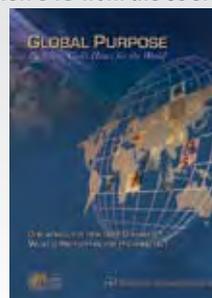
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Attracts 350 in Austin

Editor's note: among the spring 2006 *Perspectives* classes in North America was a remarkable group of 350 in Austin, Texas. Here are a few excerpts from a report by Bill Wimberley, co-coordinator in Austin. What lessons might apply to *Perspectives* in other cities, including your own?

Bill Wimberley

As God brought together task force members in spring 2005, including three co-coordinators, it quickly became apparent that we represented many different churches and denominations and many different walks of life, but we had one thing in common – we had all been forever changed by our own *Perspectives* “encounter.” As we met and prayed and discussed the possibilities, God seemed to impress on our hearts the number “350.” We began to ask Him for this number of students, and more, who would be forever changed as we had been.

Following the conclusion of that first *Perspectives* task force meeting, we began to fan out across the city and meet with pastors, mission leaders, student ministry leaders, business leaders and other “influencers” in our city. We were very encouraged as we received pledge after pledge of support, assistance and endorsement from almost everyone we talked to. It seemed as though God was “paving the way” for what He was about to do.

With Austin being the high-tech center that it is, we decided in late summer 2005 that we needed to use all the tools at our disposal to get the word out about *Perspectives*. Fortunately for us, our task force included a graphic artist and a website developer. With these skills we quickly built a website and produced various forms of promotional materials. We continued to meet, pray and talk to people about *Perspectives* throughout the fall of 2005.

We decided early on, in keeping with our desire for unity across the city, to declare a single, city-wide *Perspectives* “class” even though we had two different locations (north and south) miles apart and three different class times. Despite the fact that the classes were at different times and different locations, they shared many functions, including promotion, grading, weekly communication, classroom resources, and guest instructors. This “single class” structure turned out to be one of our best decisions.

We also decided early on that we would “begin with the end in mind”, and this “end” meant more than just imparting information and motivating students. We agreed that the true measure of success of *Perspectives* in Austin would be people becoming invested in God’s plan for the nations, not merely attending another class. As such, we invited strategic mission and ministry



“partners” (many of the same ones we had contacted earlier) to speak for 5-10 minutes at each of the 15 weeks on how their organizations could provide mission opportunities for our students. We also allowed them to set-up a table or booth and talk with students before and after each class and during the breaks.

Despite all of our promotional efforts, student registrations (primarily online through our website) came slowly at first. We had taken a “gamble” by virtually requiring online registration and payment, and things did not initially go smoothly. We had also “gambled” by purchasing a huge shipment of *Readers* and *Study Guides* ... enough for 300+ students. Finally, we had “gambled” on bringing a lot of our guest instructors from out-of-town and had therefore incurred significant travel and living expenses. Would these “gambles” pay off?

On our two opening days 375+ students from 51 different churches and 10 evangelical denominations came together for the start of a 15-week adventure with God. After 15 weeks together, 350 students remained. Many students responded to the opportunities presented by our ministry partners each week, and *Perspectives* in Austin built informal partnerships we believe will bear much fruit in the days ahead. On the last night of the course – the Grand Finale commissioning event – well over 300 people came together at one location from across all the class times and locations to celebrate the completion of a life-changing season with God – and to pray for the nations and our part in reaching them. 🌐



What Does It Mean to Effectively 'Engage' A People?



Jeff Liverman

By God's grace tremendous strides have been taken in recent years to make the gospel understandable within people groups who, until only recently, had yet to hear the Good News at all. However, among huge swaths of humanity there are no followers of Christ. Despite our best efforts, many have yet to hear the Good News presented to them in meaningful ways even once!

So which groups are still beyond the reach of an effective gospel witness? Surely there must be some way to codify who these peoples are *and* accurately assess if messengers are positioned to present the gospel in the most fruitful way.

Recently, for example, more than 20 African, Latin, Asian and Western mission agencies have chosen to partner in an effort to "see all Muslim peoples engaged by 2025." A fundamental task of this partnership is to clarify which peoples are still without an effective gospel witness, or, to put it another way, which unreached peoples are still not "engaged." But what does this mean? How do we know when engagement has happened? Which people groups are or aren't engaged?

In 1985 Edward Dayton published an article in the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* titled "Reaching Unreached Peoples: Guidelines and Definitions for Those Concerned with World Evangelization." Dayton reported on six stages of identification and evangelization that had been noted at a significant conference in 1982. [Editor's note: see commentary on page 4.] Stages 1-5 deal primarily with the task of seeing the task before us and mobilizing workers to begin working in these newly-identified fields. Stage 6 reads: "Engaged: Initial field work has begun with the intent of planting an evangelizing, culturally indigenous church." Bravo! This early definition helped us envision the initial baby steps necessary to achieve the goal of world evangelization.

Jeff Liverman has lived and worked among Muslims for more than 20 years. He is currently the Director of Strategy Coordination at the International Office of Frontiers.

Today we have very helpful lists measuring a variety of mission activities (including church planting). Nonetheless, such activity, if it is to be fruitful, must be based on a fundamentally sound initial step of engagement. Thus I suggest the need to update and expand what it means to "engage" an unreached people group.

As we look at engagement, we need to address the *quality* of mission activity among a people. Therefore, we aren't looking simply for any effort that contains "evangelistic activity," but for strategic activity which will most likely produce "fruit that remains." So perhaps the term should be "*effective* engagement", or at least it should be understood that this is what we are pursuing.

Thus, in the codification process we are concerned primarily about two things: 1) distinguishing which groups have or haven't heard from the preacher (per Romans 10), and 2) casting that distinction in such a way as to increase the likelihood of the recipient society hearing and receiving the gospel as indeed Good News for them. It should be noted that the question of effective engagement doesn't encompass the full cycle of how church planting (for example) is accomplished, but it does seek to establish a minimum benchmark which will help set the stage whereby church planting (and, ultimately, church planting movements) can thrive.

I suggest that four essential elements constitute effective engagement:

1. apostolic effort in residence;
2. commitment to work in the local language and culture;
3. commitment to long-term ministry;
4. sowing in a manner consistent with the goal of seeing a church-planting movement (CPM) emerge.

To amplify:

1. Apostolic effort in residence

Taking the gospel from where it is to where it isn't is the essence of the apostolic task. This may be

accomplished through any number of means: by teams or individuals; by westerners or by missionaries from the Two-Thirds world; and/or by catalyzing people groups which live in proximity to the unengaged group. The main thing in this criterion is that apostles are in residence among those to whom their efforts are focused. Thus the short-term (or what Ralph Winter calls “amateur” or “drive-by”) workers who blitz in – and within a few months are out again – do not sufficiently meet this criterion.

Exciting new strategies to bring the Good News to the unreached are being developed every day. The efficacy of these new strategies must be analyzed at the point where impartation of the Gospel takes place, not merely on our activity prior to that point. Not until the last step is accomplished (that is, the

arrival on the field of those who will minister among a given people) should we consider this criterion to have been met.

2. Commitment to work in the local language and culture

Essential to the task of sharing the gospel is the question of effective communication. Central to this decisive factor is the conviction that the gospel *must* be translated into the recipient culture. Lamin Sanneh notes, “Translatability is the source of the success of Christianity across cultures” (*Translating the Message*). This requires the significant commitment and work necessary to acculturate oneself and one’s message to whatever degree possible (without falling into syncretism) in order to

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All Four Items Necessary in Every Engagement?

Jim Haney

In our help manual, distributed to all IMB field personnel, we include the following statement:

Engagement is about church-planting. Specifically, engagement is about implementing church-planting strategy among each unique global entity. ... An entity is engaged when the implementation of church-planting strategy is underway. ... Finally, engagement is not adoption, provision of materials or media, focusing on a people through a prayer emphasis or the implementation of an advocacy strategy, although these are critical to church-planting.

Although we affirm many of the components of the working definition that Jeff indicates for Frontiers, we do not see these four items as necessary in every engagement. Let me take them in turn:

1. apostolic effort in residence

Those who bring the witness must not stop short of church-planting, but do they have to be resident within the people group they are engaging? Would this not rule out the non-residential missionary approach to engagement? It may well be possible and desirable that trainers are not resident within a people group but will train trainers from outside, especially if those sent are from the same affinity bloc or people cluster as the people group engaged.

2. commitment to work in the local language and culture

Again, Jeff’s assumption appears to be that the actual engagement will be done by those from outside the

culture and language area. However, cannot engagement sometimes result if someone becomes a believer outside of his language and culture but then returns to engage his own people?

3. commitment to long-term ministry

Our research shows that long-term ministry is necessary if one expects to significantly impact a people group with the gospel. Short-term workers need to plug in to the ongoing ministry of a long-term network of field workers. With the emphasis these days on virtual churches, strategy-coordinator churches, or engaging churches (such as those involved in initiatives like Finishing the Task, PEACE Plan, etc.) and in light of a long history of adopting people groups, it is surprising how even the best plans never actually get to “engagement.” Frontiers is committed to engagement, and the only reason to get engaged is because marriage is imminent. Frontiers missionaries – and others I commend – are in it for the long haul.

4. sowing in a manner consistent with the goal of seeing a church-planting movement (CPM) emerge

Yes, and there are many pitfalls to sowing that are not consistent with this goal. CPMs have their own metrics, and it is a different world than church growth. Missionaries consider “optimal” time for church-planting – how long does it take to plant reproducible churches without encountering many of the pitfalls that one finds where attaching for too long creates dependency? To get to a CPM, you have to do CPM things. Having accessed 13 CPMs, our department has learned a lot, and foremost among them is Jeff’s point – you increase your chances of getting to a CPM by holding missionaries accountable for those things that get to a CPM. 🌐

Jim Haney is director of the Global Research Department of the International Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention.

make the gospel understandable and attractive in the recipient culture. Thus, as early as possible, concrete steps must be taken to deeply absorb and work in the local language and culture.

3. Commitment to long-term ministry

The apostolic effort must persevere for as long as it takes in order to see the Gospel understood by at least a remnant in the recipient society. All too often our desire for quick results causes us to neglect the deep and demanding long-term relationships necessary to build the kind of trust essential to effective ministry. Too many have drawn the target around what they have been able to achieve in a few years before moving on. Instead we should determine to minister in ways which follow “most fruitful practices,” especially perseverance over the long haul.

4. Sowing in a manner consistent with the goal of seeing a church-planting movement (CPM) emerge

Clearly this criterion suggests that an evaluation of means must occur. Here we’re looking for the employment of methodology which takes into consideration cultural sensitivities, linguistic peculiarities and political realities. Furthermore, as Dr. David Garrison has noted, “wide sowing” must occur if we

are going to see CPMs emerge. There is no single tried-and-true method which meets this criterion, but we should take note of methods which have borne fruit and others which have led to minimal or disastrous results.

So where do we go from here?

The future of effective mission must involve the implementation of innovative strategies such as the strategic use of the Internet and other technologies, the mobilizing of itinerant evangelists, and the utilization of “commuters.” But, with each successive wave of creativity and innovation, the fundamentals of effective mission should not be lost in the excitement and ambiguity of the “next best thing.”

In order to effectively catalyze new sending movements and guide the next generation to bring the Gospel to the remaining unreached peoples of the world, we must clearly and cogently measure our activity as we move toward “finishing the task.” My hope is that mission agencies, churches, teams and individuals will focus resources on peoples identified as still lacking even the most basic and fundamental elements of mission attention.

May God grant us the wisdom and compassion to more fully understand what remains of the task before us and what steps must be taken to see the Great Commission accomplished in our generation. 🌐



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A P N I E T

A 21ST - CENTURY APPROACH TO APOSTOLIC MINISTRY¹

Dan Sinclair and Dick Scoggins

We're all so very familiar with the traditional mission agency (TMA) structure that we may unconsciously think it's the only approach to obeying Jesus' Great Commission. TMAs more or less grew up in 19th-century Europe as various "missionary societies", and have since proliferated especially in 20th-century North America and Europe with both denominational and non-denominational forms. In fact, God's apostolic emissaries have been taking the gospel to unreached peoples throughout the centuries, well before the TMA structure came along. For over 200 years the TMA approach has served God's people well (especially from the West), as it has fit comfortably with the world as it was. Hundreds of people working together in a collective sodality have afforded tremendous advantages:

1. Easy recruitment and deployment
2. Solid link between those on the field and those in support ministries back in the "home office"
3. "Name recognition" and the trust that automatically bestows ("Oh, you're going out with OM? That's great. Here's some support...")
4. Synergy between various departments (e.g., oversight and member care, finance and church relations)
5. The kind of built-in accountability that comes from a hierarchical structure

But the world has changed. Some of the old advantages are now disadvantages. ("Oh, you're with OM? You have 48 hours to leave the country.")

Working solely within one organization can be confining, limiting gifted ministers to impact only within their organization. Large organizations cannot adapt quickly to rapidly changing circumstances. And they are not equally good at everything they do, so a member of a given organization must be content with its particular strengths and weaknesses.

Does It All Have To Be Vertical?

Consider the primary functions that an agency typically provides:

1. Definition of vision and ethos
2. Recruiting
3. Team formation / personnel deployment
4. Financial administration
5. Oversight and coaching
6. Training and leadership development
7. Infrastructure (including hosting conferences for ongoing connectivity)
8. Member care

There are other important ministries within agencies, but these are perhaps the most common.

Ask yourself: Do all these functions always have to be "vertical", under one organizational roof? For the last 200 years that's the way it's been.

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

What if we positioned these sorts of ministries into separate, networked, but autonomous entities?

*Dan Sinclair is author of the new book **A Vision of the Possible: Pioneer Church Planting in Teams** (Authentic Media 2006). Sinclair served as field director of a large mission agency for 11 years, after serving in the Middle East for over a decade. Dick Scoggins has been a church planter in North America and England for 20+ years and has served within a large mission organization training church planters. In addition he has been involved with starting two small mission organizations. He has written several books on church planting. His web site is www.dickscoggins.com.*

Instead of being vertically piled up in each agency, they would be laid out horizontally as separate ministries, all committed to serving those apostolic workers on the field. These operations would be, in business jargon, “loosely coupled, highly aligned”. Imagine a world with hundreds, of autonomous, specialized but interlinked entities, working together to serve those on the frontlines to fulfill the Great Commission. Imagine an explosion of apostolic ministry among unreached peoples, more adaptable to varying contexts, made possible by whole new approaches in mobilization and support. The closest analogy is perhaps the Internet.

Each node or “Apostolic Service Provider” (ASP) would focus on one or a few vital ministries, such as:

- recruiting, pre-field evaluations
- team formation / personnel deployment
- pre-field training
- financial administration
- oversight and coaching
- training and leadership development
- infrastructure
 - member care
 - fund-raising and development
 - financial receiving and administration (especially with a secular, non-profit profile)
 - mobilization of proximate Christian background believers into neighboring unreached peoples
 - email and other IT services
 - conferences between related ministries
 - relationship brokering, specialized networking
- church relations
- children’s education services
- language and culture learning assistance
- internships
- crisis assistance
- commercial tentmaking facilitation
- business set-ups
- NGO facilitation
- specialized printing and publishing

Plus dozens of other vital services we can’t think of now, but which will surely arise in years to come.

ASPs could be easy to start-up, and soon there would be hundreds linked together for the spread of the gospel among all people groups, forming a global apostolic network, or “ApNet”. And within the ApNet could be a variety of sub-affiliations or movements (e.g., church-planting among Muslim UPGs).

This flattening of the apostolic enterprise reflects what is happening elsewhere in human enterprise. In *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*, Thomas Friedman has written,

The world has been flattened by the convergence of ten major political events, innovations, and companies. None of us has rested since, or maybe ever will again.²

The net result of this convergence was the creation of a global, Web-enabled playing field that allows for multiple forms of collaboration—the sharing of knowledge and work—in real time, without regard to geography, distance, or, in the near future, even language. No, not everyone has access yet to this platform, this playing field, but it is open today to more people in more places on more days in more ways than anything like it ever before in the history of the world. This is what I mean when I say the world has been flattened. It is the complementary convergence of the ten flatteners, creating this new global playing field for multiple forms of collaboration.³

Peter Goldmark (former president of the Rockefeller Foundation) has commented on how the number of non-governmental organizations in the world has exploded in the past 25 years:

You have restless people seeking to deal with problems that were not being successfully coped with by existing institutions. They escaped the old formats and were driven to invent new forms of organizations. They found more freedom, more effectiveness and more productive engagement.⁴

Thousands of NGOs operating more narrowly have found that they can be more effective than operating in just a few large organizations. In the same way, we anticipate a rapid multiplication of ASPs, creating a huge boost to apostolic work around the globe, Lord willing.

All of the ASPs and the ApNet as a whole would exist to serve and facilitate those on the frontlines working with unreached people groups. Seeing over 100 ASPs emerge by the end of 2011 is possible in the Lord!

21st-Century Advantages

The advantages of TMAs could be retained, while avoiding the growing disadvantages, and becoming a more nimble structure for the world in which we now live. We would envision ASPs as being able to serve TMAs as well as independent apostolic teams on the field (e.g. church-based teams), delivering the best services available in a flat world.

Some new realities in today’s environment:

1. Larger sending churches are increasingly favoring church-based teams, and the ApNet environment is ideally suited to serve these teams which are sent out directly from the local church.



2. Advanced communications (such as secure email, Skype, and secure websites) and cheaper, easier travel now make diverse and global collaboration possible.
3. There are new high levels of trust and common vision between related agencies.

And there are other ways in which the ApNet is better suited to the 21st century:

1. Quality ministries are no longer limited to the confines of one agency. This takes the level of cooperation on and off the field to a new level. Synergy is increased. Global collaboration occurs in particular areas, not limited by the walls of one agency. Services and help are available from a wider range and not just one's agency.
2. Rapid expansion of mobilization and support services.
3. Apostolic teams, if they so choose, would not belong to a known, identifiable "mission" organization.⁵ This legitimate deniability may improve one's viability and identity on the field.
4. Instead of a mission organization doing a so-so job in a given area or department (e.g. training), specialized ministries can become expert, and people can focus in the area of their passions.
5. Downsides of present agencies are reduced or eliminated, such as heavy dues, policies (or tax status) that may not fit a particular situation, etc. Field workers can pick and choose what services they want and from whom.
6. Ministries can change or retool very quickly to meet changing circumstances, not being bound by decades of organizational inertia or ill-fitting policies.
7. ASPs will succeed or fail according to the marketplace. In other words, they will be driven to meet real needs or go out of existence.
8. The ApNet will grow relationally and organically, which fits better in this postmodern world.
9. ASPs are service providers in the true sense, and are not command-and-control structures.

Frequently Asked Questions

1) *What makes a ministry or an organization an ASP?*
 Many specialized ministries already exist, but are not yet ASPs as such. A set of ASP protocols will be crafted to help these ministries decide whether or not to adapt to and join the ApNet and to guide new ASPs into existence. These will probably include such terms as:

- a. The ASP exists to provide vital service(s) to front-line apostolic ministries.

- b. It must be "anti-silo", without an exclusive clientele (e.g. a single TMA).
- c. It is committed to linkage and communication, speed and networking.
- d. The aim of a given ASP is not to become big and famous itself, but to aid effectiveness, growth and reproduction on the field, and possibly the birth of other ASPs.

2) *What would the infrastructure look like?*

As in the Internet, in the ApNet each node must be somehow inter-connectable to other ASPs and ministries on the field. In this way for example, a team of Nigerian church-planters that needs help with well-digging management might draw from an ASP based in Arizona that has the expertise. A recruiting and mobilization ASP in Mexico can help an under-manned team in Aceh grow to proper strength.

The necessary tactics and means have yet to be worked out. Nonetheless we are convinced they are doable; in most areas the technology and tools already exist in the business world. We will need the power of Google-like search tools and MySpace-like communications environments to facilitate the ApNet. The Lord will provide.

3) *Is the ApNet just a way for gospel workers in sensitive environments to somehow be secretive in their work?*

Certainly not. What is primarily driving this new concept is the desire to see an explosion of new apostolic efforts on the field and new effective ministries to support them. Having said that, the ApNet may offer more integrity for those who wish to avoid trouble with governments who may be antagonistic to workers seeking to convey the Good News.

4) *What about security?*

The information about ministries in hostile environments will continue to be very sensitive. As described above, the ApNet requires significant interconnectivity and communications, and the means to handle sensitive information will need to be developed. For example, we are interacting with one ministry with a high security sensitivity. They have shown interest in becoming an ASP and have already devised security protocols to enable this. Likewise there are existing tools for security which the financial industry has developed in order to operate in a flat world. We have a lot to learn, but we won't be needing to re-invent the security wheel.



5) *How is trust to be developed between the various parties (i.e. pre-field candidates, on-field teams, ASPs, sending churches, etc.)?*

As mentioned, TMAs enjoy a built-in level of trust and brand-name recognition. If a team is forming and going out without benefit of a TMA, but with the assistance of a handful of ASPs, how can the various parties know each other and form trust-bonds? How can support be raised without the automatic recognition of an “OM”, “YWAM” or “Pioneers”? This is the subject of another paper, but good ideas are already coming together to meet this challenge. Once again, it is important to realize that flat business with extensive supply chains have already proven that this can be done.

6) *What is the future of TMAs?*

The flattening in the business world has not meant an end to large corporations. Rather, the way they do business now is to focus more on what they uniquely do best and outsource much of what others can do better. This has led to the restructuring of big business, not its demise. We think that in similar ways ASPs will not eliminate TMAs but rather serve and augment them. Many early ASPs will likely focus on connecting resources to needs across agency lines, as is already beginning to happen in the area of training. At this point in time, it is crucial for mission agencies and those working on the ApNet to work together well (and probably with some overlap) for the sake of the gospel. Lord willing, synergy will grow.

7) *What's next?*

Many are discussing this very question. This is exciting stuff but surely needs more prayer, brainstorming and work. There are many issues to work out such as ApNet architecture, interconnectivity structures, solutions in communications and security, ways for ASPs and TMAs to work together, how ASPs market

their services, finance, how to help some ministries become ASPs and how to help new ASPs come into existence, and how to streamline the ASPs' overhead. Watch this space!

We'd love to hear your thoughts. Please email us at dick@dickscoggins.com 

Endnotes

- 1 The New Testament apostles—both the Twelve and non-Twelve apostles, along with their fellow-workers—took the gospel to people groups that did not yet have the church established in their midst, seeking to establish new communities of faith in Jesus. Today this is often termed pioneer church-planting among unreached people groups.
- 2 Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 48.
- 3 Friedman, 176-177.
- 4 David Bornstein, *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.
- 5 “Missions” and “missionary” are good words, properly understood. However, because these words are so misunderstood and distorted in parts of the world, gospel workers are increasingly avoiding them.

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Unveiling

Presenting Jesus to Muslims Through a Confessional Recitation

Martin Parsons

*Editor's note: this article is excerpted from **Unveiling God: Contextualizing Christology for Islamic Culture** (William Carey Library, 2005). To obtain a copy of this book and to learn the framework behind the confessional recitation reproduced here, go to www.missionbooks.org.*

A christology must have a concrete form if it is to become meaningful communication. There are many forms through which christology might be expressed. These include creeds, hymnody, theological curricula, church sermon series, chronological Bible storytelling, drama and poetry. Discussion of the merits of particular forms is beyond the scope of this study.

However, it is important to note that the contextualised christology must be expressed in a form which is both accessible to, and transmittable by, a wide spectrum of people within the community, not simply those who have either studied theology or are significantly more educated than the majority. In a culture where communication is primarily oral, the christology must be expressed in a form that is capable of oral transmission if it is to become part of the church's expression of its faith.

Although limitations of space prevent us illustrating the shape this christology might take in a diversity of forms, we will here give one concrete example of how this christology might be expressed. This first is in the form of a confessional recitation.

Example: A Confessional Recitation

In order to facilitate oral learning and transmission, the confessional recitation is divided into a number of cantos and has a largely narrative and versified structure. This study can only point towards the ultimate form that this structure and versification might take in any given culture.

Martin Parsons, Ph.D., is a British academic. He has spent a number of years in two Islamic countries, where he was involved in assisting the local church.

However, it is important that a form of versification be adopted which is accessible to the widest spectrum of the population, rather than necessarily following the style and conventions of classical poetry. The discourse structures that typically characterise oral literature will require this confessional recitation to use a far greater degree of repetition than the written texts that predominate in the West. Indeed, a large body of scholarship suggests that repetition is the key feature of oral literature.

This use of narrative and repetition will inevitably make this expression of christology significantly longer than the more systematic expressions of theology appropriate to other contexts. However, these features of oral discourse will facilitate a greater comprehensibility of theology in many non-western contexts. Indeed, it is precisely the concise expressions of systematic theology that non-western theologians have criticised as being too abstract to be easily comprehensible in the non-western world.

First Canto

There is but one God
Whom alone we worship
The Creator (*al-Khaliq*) of all things
The Lord of all things (*Rabb kull shay*)
The Master of the Day of Judgement (*Malik Yaum al-din*)
And the only Saviour.
Heaven, even the highest heaven cannot contain Him,

الرَّحْمَنُ

Yet He manifested His presence on the throne of heaven, when He unveiled visions of Himself to the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, who saw Him surrounded by His angels high above all else.

He walked in the garden with Adam and Eve, before He banished mankind from His presence on account of their sin.

But He veiled His glory and appeared on earth to Abraham, announcing his covenant and the gift of a son.

And He appeared on earth to Moses at the burning bush and on the Mount, when He revealed that He was the Saviour who would rescue His people from Egypt, and revealed the name YHWH expressing this revelation of His identity as the Saviour.

الْحَكِيمُ

He veiled Himself in the cloud and went before His people to rescue them from Egypt. Not an angel, nor an

ambassador, but He Himself became their Saviour.

The prophets foretold that He would come to earth again, as Saviour and Judge. They told of the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the dumb speaking and lame walking, when God Himself came to earth.

Isaiah spoke of a child to be born,
Who would be called 'Mighty God'.

Malachi foretold how God would send His messenger to prepare the way, before He Himself would come to earth.

Yahya ibn Zakariya was that messenger who prepared the way for God's own coming, calling all to

repent, for the kingdom of God was at hand.

For all the law and the prophets were only until Yahya.

For all the law and the prophets spoke of the coming of al-Masih, Who came to earth to rescue men and women from obedience to Satan and restore them to the rule of God their King.

And when He came to earth, by His own authority He healed the blind and lepers, brought the dead to life; the dumb spoke, the deaf heard and demons left the afflicted.

He also gave this authority to His disciples, in His name to heal the sick and over all the powers of darkness.

And yet when He the Creator (*al-Khaliq*) God came to earth, men and women –

His own creatures refused to receive Him hospitably, and brought shame, guilt and dishonour on the family of man by working with Satan to crucify Him.

But by His death on the cross, He defeated Satan and demons, He dealt with our sin that had separated us from God. He alone could forgive us our sins, for it was Him we had sinned against.

He fulfilled all that the prophets had spoken, as they prophesied the sufferings of al-Masih and the glories to follow.

Therefore He was raised back to life, for death could not hold Him, and He was exalted back to the very throne of God in heaven.

From there He poured out the very Spirit of God on those who submitted to his kingly rule in their lives.

'A Most Valuable Contribution'

Muslim responses to Christianity down the ages have been shaped by diverse factors. One of the primary stumbling blocks has been Muslim misperceptions of Christian core beliefs about the person of Jesus and the nature of God.

In this study, Martin Parsons seeks to present Jesus to Muslims in a way which is harmonised with Muslim cultural realities. He argues that previous attempts by Christian scholars to do so have been typically based on a misreading by the Christians concerned of what would be understandable to a Muslim audience. Parsons proposes instead an approach which draws heavily on that used by early Christian writers in presenting Jesus to Jewish

audiences. This study includes a practical example of contextualisation which should provide great insights to Christians who are trying to explain their faith to Muslims in diverse contexts.

The study thus makes a most valuable contribution to the task of seeking greater understanding between Christians and Muslims. In a context of increased tension between the West and Islam in the early 21st century, such a skilful and insightful study should be warmly welcomed by Christians and Muslims alike.

Peter G. Riddell

*Professor of Islamics and Director,
Centre for Muslim-Christian Relations,
London School of Theology*

There the angels and all the host of heaven worship Him, declaring that He is worthy to receive honour and glory and praise, for with His blood He re-deemed men from every tribe and language, people and nation to worship God.

From there 'Isa will come again in glory on the Last Day (*Yaum al-akhir*), accompanied by His angels to take those in His kingdom to the place prepared for them in heaven.

On that day He alone will sit as Judge, the Master of the Day of Judgement (*Malik Yaum al-din*). He will burn in the lake of fire those who rejected His kingship, along with Satan and his demons.

But those in His kingdom will see His face, they will serve day and night before His throne. Never again will they hunger, never again will they thirst, the sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Behold, He is coming soon!

This is our God, the only true God.

We worship Him alone.

Second Canto

He alone is the one Creator (*al-Khaliq*) of all things, The Father who dwells in unapproachable light is the source of creation from whom all things came.

From all eternity 'Isa, the visible form of the invisible God, was with God, and was God. All things were created through Him, without Him nothing was made that has been made.

He is the Creator (*al-Khaliq*), the Maker (*al-Bari*), the Fashioner (*al-Musawwir*) and the Beginner (*al-Mubdi*) of all things. We are His creatures.

He is the one Creator God, the Self-subsisting One (*al-Qayum*) who alone has life in Himself, and has imparted life to His creation through His Spirit, who alone is the Quickener (*al-Muhyi*), the giver of life.

This is our God, the only true God.

We worship Him alone.

Third Canto

He alone is Ruler of all things (*Rabb kull shay*), the Lord of the worlds (*Rabb al-alam*), the King of kings (*Malik al-mulk*) and Lord of lords, who created all things and rules all things.

When Satan and his demons rebelled against God, they were thrown out of heaven down to earth, where they seek to deceive the children of men, bringing rebellion, death and destruction with them.

Therefore the Father, Who dwells in unapproachable light, put all things under 'Isa, the visible form of the invisible God, in order that He may reign as Lord over all creation until He has put all the powers of darkness beneath His feet. He is the Lord

of all things (*Rabb kull shay*), to whom all creatures must submit.

He defeated the proud rebellion of Satan, by laying aside His heavenly glory, clothing Himself, the visible form of the invisible God, with humble human nature, becoming a man as we are. And being found in appearance as a man,

He defeated Satan's proud rebellion by humbling Himself to the point of death on the cross, where He disarmed Satan and all the powers of darkness, triumphing over them, redeeming men and women from their bondage to Satan's kingdom.

Therefore, He was raised from the dead, and not only raised, but also exalted back to the highest place in heaven, that every knee in heaven and earth should bow before Him, and confess that He is Lord of lords and King of kings (*Malik al-mulk*).

From heaven He has sent the Spirit of God to His church, that through His church, His kingdom might spread throughout the earth, among every tribe, language, people and nation that His death redeemed for God.

He will then come once more to earth as Judge. He will finally destroy all the powers of darkness that have rebelled against God.

When He has finally destroyed all rebellion against God, 'Isa, the visible form of the invisible God, will hand the kingdom back to the Father Who dwells in unapproachable light, and sit with Him on His throne, the one Lord of the one throne (*Rabb al-'arsh*).

There will be no more suffering, no more sickness, no more sin.

For God's rule will reign unchallenged in all things from the one throne in heaven of the one God,

This is our God, the only true God,

We worship Him alone.

Fourth Canto

He alone is the Saviour,

He alone can forgive us our sins, for it is He that we have sinned against.

No-one else could save us from our sin.

He is the Ruler and King of all things. All creatures, whether angels or men, owe Him perfect, absolute and undivided obedience.

No mere man could redeem the life of another, or give to God a ransom for him.

Even the most perfect of His creatures could have no surplus merit to pay the debt of another.

Only God Himself could pay the debt we owe, only He could save us.

He, *al-Azim* became the momentous (*azim*) sacrifice

الْعَدْلُ

promised to Abraham, the only sacrifice that could ransom us.

He the Compassionate (*al-Rahim*) and the Merciful (*al-Rahman*) became our Saviour.

The Father who dwells in unapproachable light, *al-Batin*, whom no-one has seen or can see, sent 'Isa, the visible form of the invisible God, to save us from our sins and reconcile us to Himself.

He added human nature to Himself; the immortal visible form of God clothed Himself with mortal flesh like ours, and became a man. Man could not be united with God, only God could unite Himself with man.

As a nightingale suffers thorns and bloodshed to reach the rose it loves, so God our Saviour laid aside His heavenly glory and humbled Himself, suffered thorns and bloodshed to save us. Out of His great love, He endured the cross for us to free us from the powers of evil, sin and death and reconcile us to Himself.

By His death and resurrection He paid the penalty for our sin, only He could do it.

He freed us from the power of sin and death, delivered us from the kingdom of Satan, and transferred us to His own glorious kingdom.

This was solely an act of His grace. We did not earn it, we could not earn it.

Therefore He was exalted back to the highest place in heaven. Now all the host of heaven worship Him because He is the Lamb who was slain to purchase men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Because 'Isa did this the Father saves all who repent of their sins and believe in Him, making them alive with new spiritual birth.

And 'Isa, the Lord of the water of life (*ab-i-bayat*), has poured out the Spirit of God, the Giver of life (*al-Muhyi*) on those who repent, making them alive with new spiritual birth and renewing them.

We who were formerly spiritually dead in our sins, He has made alive, and by His Spirit united us (*wasl*) to Him.

When He Himself acted to save us from our sin, He revealed that He, Father, Messiah and Holy Spirit, was the Saviour of all men. And so He has revealed to us His great name (*Ism al-azim*), 'the name of the Father, the Messiah and the Holy Spirit'.

This is our God, the only true God, the only Saviour. We worship Him alone.

Fifth Canto

He alone is the final Judge. Every creature in heaven and on earth must appear before Him.

The Father who dwells in unapproachable light has

given all judgement to 'Isa, the visible form of God, Who became man.

He is the Master of the Day of Judgement (*Malik Yaum al-din*), the Judge of judges (*al-Hakim al-hakimin*), all things will be judged by Him.

He is the Just One (*al-'Adl*) who will judge with perfect righteousness and justice.

He has sent the Spirit of God, *al-Wakil*, into the world to convict men and women of sin, righteousness and judgement.

Those who refuse to follow Him, who refuse to repent and accept His sacrifice for their sin, He will throw into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

But those who repent of their sins and follow Him, He will welcome into the very presence of God in heaven. His perfect sacrifice has cleansed them from their sin.

They shall dwell with God.

They will be His people,

And God will wipe every tear from their eye, there will be no more death, or mourning, or crying or pain.

For God will make everything new.

Sixth Canto

There is but One God,

Who alone we worship.

We know Him as Father, *al-Batin*, who dwells in unapproachable light,

Yet tenderly cares for us, planned our creation and salvation.

We know Him as 'Isa, the visible form of the invisible God,

Who created, rules and will judge all things, and became our Saviour.

And we know Him as the Holy Spirit,

Who breathed life into creation,

is the all-seeing presence of God throughout creation,

Who inspired the prophets,

convicts the world of sin,

and whose presence unites us with God,

sanctifying our sinful hearts and empowering us to serve Him.

This is the one God we worship.

He alone is the Creator (*al-Khaliq*) of all things,

Lord of all things (*Rabb kull shay*),

Master of the Day of Judgement (*Malik Yaum al-din*),

And the only Saviour.



A Necessary But Not Sufficient Condition

Greg H. Parsons



Sometimes people become angry with us at the USCWM. Perhaps *angry* is too strong; at the very least, they disagree with us vigorously. Usually disagreement is fine, but occasionally I find these people are attributing to us positions that I don't agree with either! This means they either (1) don't understand what we are saying or (2) are creating a "straw man" to argue their point. (Of course, if they don't understand, it could be our fault for not communicating clearly.)

One argument relates to seeing churches (or, alternatively, "movements to Christ") established among every people. Some critics think this focus is dated; they're looking to the "next thing" in missions. Sometimes this stance stems from an American desire to come up with a new program to push in a church. But to others, it doesn't seem enough to focus on the establishment of fellowships among the unreached

because it doesn't seem to get to the core of the deep issues that we see in our world: AIDS, street kids, poverty, lack of clean water, and much more.

But ask yourself: which comes first – full-orbed ministries to address the needs of all kinds of individuals, or the presence of the church in each people? It's possible, for example, for ministry to the disabled to lead to fellowships or cell groups, but usually wider transformation doesn't begin until the emergence of viable fellowships of people seeking to be like Jesus within and beyond their respective cultures.

Seeing these movements to Christ (or, as Donald McGavran called them, "Christward Movements") among every people is a *necessary* but not *sufficient* condition toward the fulfillment of God's purposes. It is *necessary* in our strategic thinking because those movements become platforms for subsequent ministries. But it is also *necessary* because it points to the main thing Jesus said He would do *through* us. In Matthew 16:18 He said, "...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

That priority clearly imbeds the idea of the church on the move, advancing.

Yet this condition is not *sufficient* because we will never know all God wants to do until He declares it sufficient. We do know that He wants to build these "Jesus gatherings." We know that the Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed to all the nations, but I'm not sure we fully understand all that means. Because we see in the Scriptures the breadth of God's focus – from Genesis to Revelation – on the clans and *ethne* of the earth – we believe He is committed to all people groups or cultures.

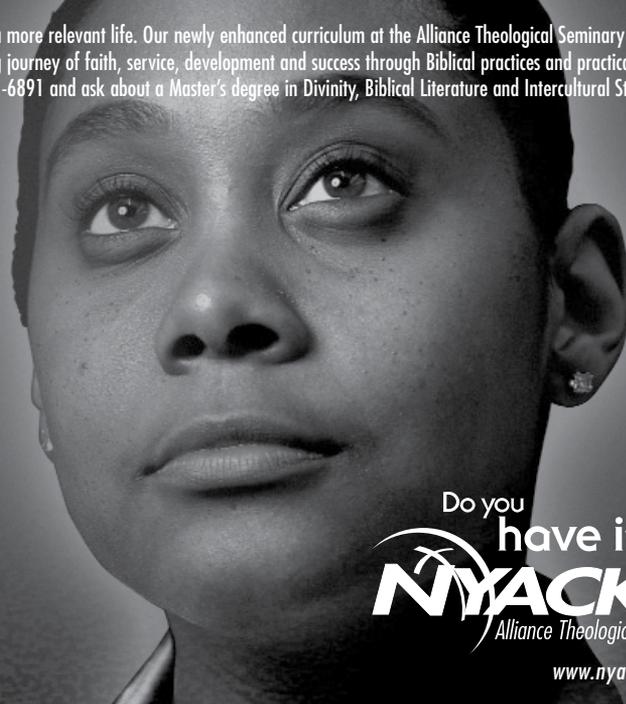
So we can affirm all those called to work in a variety of ways among any culture. But others shouldn't get upset if some of us choose to focus, by God's power, to see fellowships start among peoples where there are none. Once they do start, many other ministries will flow until the End. 🌐

Rev. Greg Parsons is General Director of the U.S. Center for World Mission. He's been on staff at the USCWM for 22 years.



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