

The Consummation: The Crucial Ministries Involved

Reaching the peoples of the 10/40 Window has been greatly advanced by a variety of support and media ministries. Immense efforts are being poured into these ministries, all of which have the potential of completely covering the world's population and peoples. In this article the author briefly describes the impact of the major mega-ministries working to help reach the unreached peoples of the world.

by Patrick Johnstone

Can we really see church planting initiatives launched for all peoples within our present generation? Some might question that. In answer I report on what transpired in GCOWE-97 in South Korea.

Luis Bush, the Director of the AD2000 Mvt., made a great effort during GCOWE-97 to encourage mission agencies represented and the various national delegations to commit themselves to reaching each of the remaining 500 peoples. By the end of GCOWE only 172 were left without any commitment from those present.

It must be added that we know of many smaller peoples (possibly around 1,000) with populations less than 10,000 who are just as worthy of attention, and part of Jesus' discipling command which are not included in these totals.

However, the implications of this are immense and exciting. It means that we are running out of peoples where there is no pioneer work already in progress or is being planned. To have reached this point is a very special moment in the history of missions! It also underlines the need for wise networking and partnering with others to ensure that the most effective way to achieve this is pursued.

Planting one congregation of

believers in a small tribe of 1,000 can be significant, but one church among the 6 million Tibetans or a few churches among the 200 million Bengalis is less than a drop in the bucket. Our aim should be at minimum a church for every people, but this is only a beginning. This is where the Discipline a Whole Nation vision of Jim Montgomery is so valid. We need to ensure that there is a vital, worshiping group of believers within easy reach of every man, woman and child in the world. I reckon that there are now about 3,000,000 congregations of all kinds in the world today. Montgomery has written a challenging book *7,000,000 Churches to Go!* to highlight the task ahead of us.¹ The DAWN Movement founded by Montgomery has made a significant impact in many countries around the world in setting country-wide, multi-denominational goals for church planting to achieve that vision.

Church planting has been greatly ensued by many support and media ministries which are people and language-sensitive. Immense efforts are being poured into these ministries, all of which have the potential of almost completely covering the world's population and peoples. Here I briefly describe the possibilities and impact of the major mega-ministries.

Translating the Scriptures

It is almost impossible to conceive of a strong church within a people that has no word of the Bible translated into their own language. The lack of the Scriptures for the Berber languages of North Africa was a significant factor in the surprising disappearance of the once-large North African Church between the coming of Islam in 698 and the twelfth century. The same was true for the Nubian peoples of the Upper Nile, who eventually succumbed to Islam after being Christian for 1,500 years. Why did they succumb? The Bible was never translated into their languages.

William Carey saw Bible translation as so important that it became the main thrust of his mission work. He wanted to lay the foundations for strong Indian churches through the labors of his missionary successors. The impact of the translation of the Bible is shown by the pioneer work of the London Missionary Society in Madagascar. The LMS made it a high priority to translate the New Testament into Malagasy. Soon after terrible persecution broke out under Queen Ranavalona. The missionaries were expelled, but in spite of this the church survived and even multiplied.²

We can only praise God for the

remarkable ministry of the Bible Societies around the world who have multiplied over and over the number of languages that now have Scriptures. More recently God raised up the Wycliffe Bible Translators with the specific vision to provide a New Testament for every language without the Scriptures. WET is now one of the largest cross-cultural mission agencies in the world. Their workers had, by 1997, translated the Scriptures into 420 languages, and have teams working in a further 965. The rate of increase of Bible translations into new languages is shown in this dramatic diagram.

A Forum of Bible Agencies was formed in 1992 linking together the efforts of 17 Bible translation and distribution agencies. The aims are courageous and need to be covered in prayer. In 1993 these were:

1. The whole Bible translated into all languages spoken by five million or more by the end of 1999. There were 33 languages in this category that needed to be translated.

2. The New Testament translated into all languages spoken by over 500,000 people by the end of 1998. This meant a commitment to 77 languages that needed to be translated.

3. Some Scriptures in audio or written form for all languages spoken by more than 250,000 by the end of 1997.

4. Translation begun in all languages spoken by over 100,000 people by the end of 1997.

Of the world's 6,703 languages, at least 925 and possibly over 2,000 languages still have a need for New Testament translation work. The majority of these languages are in the African Sahel and Horn of Africa, the Iranic peoples, Central Asia, the Caucasus, China and India. We should be urgently recruiting many more dedicated and talented missionary Bible translators in order to see this task

achieved. There is much work to keep an army of translators busy for another generation or more.

The Power of Literature

The power of non-Christian literature in corrupting millions is well known, for one only has to think of the pernicious evil that came through Hitler's racist *Mein Kampf* or Marx's warped theories in *Das Kapital*, and Mao Tse Tung's poisonous diatribes in *The Little Red Book*.

The power of Christian literature should not be underestimated. Some

One cannot but be impressed with the breadth of this vision and the above results...

We have to admit that even in such a large and complex country as India, with the largest concentration of unevangelized individuals in the world, it is likely that nearly all the homes have been visited twice!

reckon that over half of evangelical Christians attribute their conversion, at least in part, to Christian literature.

Today there is a prodigious volume of Christian literature produced

and distributed quite apart from, and complementary to, the work of the Bible Societies—such as The Bible League, Scripture Gift Mission, the Gideon, Pocket Testament League and many others. Here I will only describe what I regard as the most globe-covering literature vision the world has ever seen—that of Every Home for Christ. The vision is very simple, but its out workings have had extraordinary coverage and impact.

That vision is to prayerfully distribute a simple, relevant gospel presentation to every home and institution in each country of the world. Every Home for Christ has systematically distributed almost two billion multi-page gospel messages globally, each with a decision card, in languages spoken by 95% of the world's population. Illiterate people are reached with audio messages and the blind are provided messages prepared in Braille. Over 19 million of these decision cards have been returned to 80 global offices where each is followed up with a four-part Bible Correspondence Course. The aim is that every contact be introduced to a worshiping group of believers.

Other statistics are equally impressive. In 1997 almost 2,000 full-time nationals were employed in 80 countries, who coordinated as many as 10,000 volunteer distributors in the field during any given week. On average, these workers physically take the Gospel to 350,000 new families every seven days, or approximately 50,000 families a day. Based on a global average of 5.2 persons per household, this means that as many as 250,000 persons are provided reasonable access to the message of salvation through EHC activity every day.

In areas of EHC activity where there are no Bible-believing churches of any kind, converts are encouraged to come together for fellowship, Bible study and worship in small groups

called "Christ Groups." These sometimes develop into well established congregations. To date, some 15,000 Christ Groups have been established world-wide with the majority being in such regions as India, Indonesia, Nepal, Africa, the South Pacific, and the former Soviet Union. According to a report received recently from Africa, just one Christ Group near Kinshasa, Congo Republic, has grown to become a well-established church with more than 2,000 members in less than two years. In a city in the Ukraine another Christ Group grew to more than 3,000 in only 18 months.

Since the first EHC was launched in Japan in 1953, systematic every-home distribution has been carried out in more than 166 countries. Seventy-five have had at least one complete nation-wide coverage. Others, like Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan have had multiple coverages. Some countries, like India and the Philippines, have had two coverages and are being covered for the third time. The EHC ministry is currently active in 80 countries including many new works in the former Soviet Union, French Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. By 1997 EHC activity world-wide had been responsible for distributing over 1.78 billion pieces of gospel literature in hundreds of languages.

One cannot but be impressed with the breadth of this vision and the above results—even if the magnitude of such figures obscures the disappointments and failures. Yet by this means we have to admit that even in such a large and complex country as India, with the largest concentration of unevangelized individuals in the world, it is likely that nearly all the homes have been visited twice!

Faith Comes by Hearing the Word

The story of Joy Ridderhof and

Gospel Recordings, the mission she founded, is one of the great missionary sagas of this century.³ It was a brilliant innovation to devise the means for painstakingly recording simple gospel messages on to records, and later, tapes and CDs even in languages where there were yet no believers or missionaries. The medium also lends itself to being able to fairly quickly produce gospel messages for a multitude of languages and dialects. This linked with simple play-back devices such as the Card-talk for records or manually operated play-back machines for cassettes enabled

I simply want to show the power of audio materials in contributing to the evangelization of the least reached peoples on earth... This further enhances our potential to reach every tribe, people and tongue within our lifetime.

missionaries to leave an audio message that could be played over and over again. Illiteracy, lack of resident believers or lack of missionaries speaking their languages did not prevent the truth being given to unevangelized peoples. This tool has often been the first means by which totally unevangelized peoples first hear the gospel.

Gospel Recordings has grown into an international network of missions

organizations under the title Global Recordings Network with bases in 30 countries. They produce and distribute audio evangelism materials in many of the tongues spoken in every country on earth. In 1997 GRN succeeded in preparing a gospel message in their 5,000th language.⁴

One of the advantages of this medium is that the resources and time needed are small enough to enable recordings to be made for the smaller peoples that could not otherwise be served with radio broadcasts or Bible translation for many years to come. A Bible translator would need to think carefully before committing all the effort and the 10-15 years to translating the New Testament into a language spoken by 300 people, but there is far less hesitation for preparing a recording, or series of recordings for a people of 50 speakers;

GRN have a program called *Tail-enders*—those who are the last to get served, if they ever do get served. Gospel Recordings/Global Recordings Network is committed to finding and providing for the evangelization of *Tail-enders*, who are being ignored and neglected. The ultimate aim is to have a recording for every living language and dialect on earth; possibly a total of around 16,000.⁵

There is not the space to tell of many other worthy agencies that specialize in producing audio materials for evangelism and discipleship—Scriptures on tape, teaching, and so on. Here I simply want to show the power of this medium in contributing to the evangelization of the least reached peoples on earth, especially those bypassed by other ministries because of smallness of size or isolation. This further enhances our potential to reach every tribe, people and tongue within our lifetime.

The Jesus Film

The Jesus Film Project has

already been mentioned on p 154. This literal portrayal of the life of Jesus according to the Gospel of Luke has become one of the most powerful evangelistic tools of recent times and the most-watched film in history.⁶

The year 2000 vision is that at least all of the world's 300 languages spoken by more than one million people and at most all languages spoken by more than 75,000 people, and many of the smaller ones, will have a version of the film available and in use by then. The intermediate goal was 271 translations ready by the end of 1993. By August 1997 this total had reached 417 translated and a further 226 in production.

The effort, planning and resources needed to produce this film in so many languages is staggering. Many thousands of Christian workers in many agencies are working hard in preparing new language versions or extensively showing this film. It has become a significant contributor to world evangelization.

Contribution of Radio

Christian Radio has had an extraordinary history with some thrilling results in gradually breaking down long-held prejudice against the gospel. It has also made a pivotal contribution to providing teaching to Christians and their leaders especially where no other teaching resources were accessible.

The most dramatic evangelistic results have been where regular culturally-relevant broadcasts have been beamed into areas closed for most overt mission outreach. Justin Long of the Global Evangelization Movement and working on the *World Christian Encyclopedia* reckons that there are probably around 3 million people who have come to faith in Christ as a result of radio and television broadcasting, of which possibly 400,000 of these are isolated, often secret believ-

ers in areas where no church exists. Such figures are almost impossible to verify, but amazing stories have emerged from Russia, China, India and many parts of the Middle East of large numbers of churches being planted and numbered almost entirely by Christian radio. The ministries of HCJB in Ecuador, Trans World Radio, Far East Broadcasting Company & Association, Radio 'BRA, and many others have borne fruit beyond all that earlier detractors would have expected.

In recent years many of these large global ministries have come together to form the *World by 2000 International Network*. The aim was the Gospel by Radio to all Peoples. To be more specific, the aim was to provide the gospel by means of radio to every mega-language (this is a language spoken by more than 1,000,000 people) with a daily half-hour broadcast. This means that over 99.5% of the world's population would have the potential to hear the gospel in a language they could understand. The logic behind this is that nearly all of the people who speak a language of less than 1,000,000 would be at least partially bilingual and know sufficient of a more widely spoken language to understand the message. Of course in many areas radio listeners would be few, but in others many. For instance it was reckoned a few years ago that 15% of the population of the southern part of Muslim Yemen listened to the Christian FEBA station on Seychelles in the Indian Ocean.

At the time the World by 2000 Network made the commitment (mentioned in more detail on p.152) to broadcast daily for at least 30 minutes to every language of over one million speakers, it was estimated that about 140 of the world's mega-languages had Christian broadcasts. This meant that a further 160 language services needed to be developed. With further

research a number of additional mega-languages were identified.

Since its inception World by 2000 broadcasters have added 75 new languages, and the initiative continues to provide impetus as the year 2000 approaches. There are now approximately 90 remaining languages which are scheduled for development.⁷

It is astonishing to see the progress towards this goal. However with many of the remaining unreached peoples, the difficulties look almost insurmountable, and will need a large investment of expertise and funds, development of scarce or non-existent follow-up ministries, and a sufficient pool of native-speaker Christians with the maturity in the Lord to make the programs. Just a few examples of the challenge:

* The 3,000,000 Luri people in Iran are one of the least reached peoples in the world. There are no known Christians in Iran directly involved in reaching them, and there are few Luri communities in other countries where they are more accessible. How, then, can broadcasts be made when no Christians are available to speak into a radio microphone?

* The 4,000,000 Kanuri of Niger, Nigeria and Chad have been evangelized by SUM, SIM and other missions for decades, but after all this effort, the Christians among this Muslim people can be counted on fingers and toes. There are no viable churches and few Christian leaders to recruit for radio ministry, and even if there were, those vital workers would probably have to leave another key ministry to do this. To prepare a daily 30 minute broadcast with the content and necessary appeal is a challenge that needs a team of dedicated workers for broadcasts and the essential follow-up ministries to be maintained.

* The 1,500,000 Kham Tibetan people of China have no broadcasts in

their language, and the Christians among them are few. Most of these are also in the far west of China straddling the borders of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Much of the Tibetan area is in turmoil because of Chinese attempts to quell separatist unrest. Were any Kham Christians able to help with preparing broadcasts, where could they do this, and would they bring trouble to themselves and their relatives were their voices recognized by the authorities?

Satellite Communications

The rapid development of satellite TV broadcasting and the widespread distribution of ever-smaller receiving dishes has radically affected our world. Sadly, often for the worse with ubiquitous programming that panders to the basest instincts of man. Yet even this medium is proving a remarkable means for proclaiming the gospel in lands hitherto almost inaccessible for the gospel.

For some nations, the advent of satellite technology is a boon for avoiding the need for provision of expensive cables for both national telephone systems and also a network of ground-based television transmitters. This means that even the less-developed countries could leap-frog into twenty-first century technology. Poverty is no longer necessarily a major factor in accessing high-technology communications. We can therefore expect that prayerfully launched and wisely managed Christian TV broadcasting could have and is having a significant impact on large numbers of peoples that are otherwise very little exposed to the gospel.

There are a number of Muslim countries that have been very aware of the subversive and corrupting effects to existing morals and religious beliefs by widely accessible programming over which they have no control.

Some countries have tried to ban satellite receiver dishes, but to no avail - the dishes get smaller by the year and more easily concealed. It is reckoned that by 1997 about 80% of all homes in Saudi Arabia had satellite dishes, and in Tehran, Iran over 100,000 dishes were being set up every month.

*Every people on earth
must be reached with
the gospel and discipled
for the
kingdom, using the
variety of tools and
possibilities
the Lord has given.*

The desire for such is accentuated by the boredom induced by unimaginative Islamic programming. When a Muslim scholar sits in front of a camera and chants the Qu'ran, it is a strong encouragement to channel surf!

There has been a rapid rise in Christian investment in this medium. In 1997 the Christian broadcasting organizations, SAT-7(Cyprus), The Bible Channel (UK) and the Miracle Network(Norway) were all started using the AMOS satellite with a footprint covering the whole Middle East. The response to Arabic broadcasting by the end of 1997 was far beyond the expectations of the producers. By September 1997, 25 million people a week were hearing about the Gospel in India by satellite TV, but this will increase to more than 50 million in 11 languages by January 1998. There are big plans for such satellite networks for Latin America and East Asia.

The rapid expansion of "bandwidth" available is enabling more

broadcasting with the possibility of interactive discipling programs, whether by email, sound or TV with computers and satellites. This opens up the way for individual discipling in any language over satellite links. All closed borders become increasingly irrelevant and less of a barrier for any ministry. It is hard for us to imagine in 10 years time what might become reality—a missionary based in Germany discipling Mantsi believers in northern Siberia; a Korean intensive TEE course run for Mauritians in Arabic based in Seoul; or a group of refugee Hmong in French Guiana having fellowship with their fellow Hmong believers in Laos! This all opens up the potential for significant mission work to the ends of the earth to be run from a local congregation's own facilities.

This also opens up the possibility of continuity of ministry even if continuity of residence is denied the missionaries of the future. Are we ready to fully exploit these amazing technologies?

In Conclusion

We must not be dazzled by the wonders of technology and think that the need for mighty intercessory prayer is obviated, the need for the cross and suffering nullified, or the value of real life acculturation and incarnation of expatriate missionaries within the culture lessened. Technology lessens our sole dependence on physical nearness and direct personal contacts, but does not lessen its value. Every people on earth must be reached with the gospel and discipled for the kingdom, but the flexibility and variety of tools and possibilities have multiplied. Let us use them where appropriate.

Each medium provides another layer of global coverage. Not every layer will affect every person equally, but the cumulative multiplicity of

The Consummation...

media layers does give us grounds to give greater expectation that the task can be finished if we mobilize the resources of the Church.

Endnotes

1. Montgomery 1975, 1989, 1997. Montgomery's challenge as to the need for church multiplication applies both to areas not yet evangelized and to areas that have been evangelized, but where accessibility to churches is inadequate.
2. Nell 1904:269-70.
3. Barlow 1952, Thompson 1978.
4. Gospel Recording Network have an email address at <GloReNet@aol.com> and a web site at <<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/GloReNet>>
3. The latest WBT Ethnologue total for known languages of the world is 6,700. However the Ethnologue also lists known dialects of these languages. This adds almost 10,000 dialects to the language list. The difference between language and dialect is hard to determine, but decided not only on linguistic, but also historical, cultural and social factors. If one group of people dislikes their same-language neighbors, a few words that differ, or shades of pronunciation are all that are needed to make a dialect into another language and another New Testament preferred!
6. Eshloman 1995. This book tells something of the history, struggles, triumphs and fruit of this extraordinary gospel tool.
7. The World By 2000 Network has a web site where more details may be found of languages broadcast, and languages or which broadcast are needed: <<http://www.wb2000.org/>>.

*[Editor's note: This article is a reprint from a chapter in Patrick Johnstone's excellent new book *The Church is Bigger Than You Think*. Permission granted. To order Johnstone's book call the William Carey Library at 1-800-MISSION or contact the IJFM editor.]*

Photo
here
of
Patrick
Johnstone

*Patrick Johnstone, served for 16 years as a missionary in Africa. He is the author of *Operation World* and is now serving with WEC*

International. He also is Chairman of the Unreached Peoples Network of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement.

Ad here
by
Columbia Biblical Seminar
and Graduate School of Missions
(Repeat ad, same as in last issue.)

Ad by
InterServe
(Repeat ad,
same as in last
issue.)

Ad by
AmeriTribes
(Repeat ad,
same as in last
issue.)