

Classical Pentecostal Mission Agencies and Frontier Mission Missiology

At the celebration of the centennial of Edinburgh 1910 we find that the composition and character of global Christianity changed greatly over the past 100 years. The Southern shift in the locus of the Christian faith is now a well documented phenomena and the subject of scholarly interest (Jenkins 2002:2-3)¹ The past century has also seen the rise of a new stream of Christianity represented in Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of the faith. These two phenomena are related since the shift of the center of gravity of the Christian faith to the south has been statistically a Pentecostal/Charismatic one (Anderson 2006:169-70).² The essays in this volume document another megashift that has happened in the past 100 years in the arena of missiology. Corwin observes that the shift was not so much a new vision as it was a new way to look at the old vision: “that for the first time in the modern period the [mission] task was now couched primarily in terms of *ethne* or peoples and religious blocks, rather than in geographic or geo-political terms” (Corwin 1996:20-21). Known as frontier mission missiology, the special plea of this stream of mission thinking is to take the gospel to people groups that lack Christians, churches, and church movements adequate to evangelize their people on their own.

My interest here is to explore the relationship between these two megashifts. One is a missiology that has generated an evangelistic focus on people groups that do not have existing church movements, while the other began as an evangelistic church movement that has generated a phenomenal amount of cross-cultural mission with great success in raising up younger churches all over the globe. On the face of things it would seem that these two shifts were made for each other, with the one calling for evangelistic activity where the Gospel has not been preached or believed, and the other born in the fires of revival with the compulsion of the Spirit to evangelize the world. However, as it played out in the last quarter of the 20th century, classical Pentecostal mission agencies in general did not bend their efforts or structure themselves to mobilize their vast resources for the challenges articulated by frontier mission missiology. What caused the mission arms that developed out of classical Pentecostal denominations to have a relatively slow response to the notion of unreached people groups? I endeavor to build an account to answer this question and then move to a discussion of ways that Pentecostals can draw from their own theological and historical roots to turn their massive numbers and spiritual vitality towards the remaining unreached peoples.

Classical Pentecostals and their Presence among Unreached Ethnolinguistic Groups

Trying to define Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity is notoriously difficult. Wonsuk Ma reminds us that these movements are not homogeneous and the terminology used to describe them is not standardized (Ma 2007:28). He offers a classification system with three major streams: Classical Pentecostals (roots in the Azusa revival in 1906, believe in a unique experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in other tongues); Charismatic (or Neo) Pentecostals (who may not subscribe to the doctrinal position of a separate baptism in the Holy Spirit, but are open to the

supernatural work of the Spirit); and Indigenous (or Neo-Charismatic) Pentecostals (highly diverse and often with doctrinal emphases orthodox Christians reject or are uncomfortable) (Ma 2007:28).³ Coming chronologically in the first wave of renewal at the turn of the last century classical Pentecostal denominational mission structures are older, more established, and have large networks of national churches outside their home borders.⁴ Thus it is possible to track their response to the rise of frontier mission missiology from the mid-1970s to the present.

In critically examining the interface between classical Pentecostal mission agencies and the challenge of frontier missions to plant the church among the unreached, some qualifications are necessary. First, to make the assertion that these agencies were slow to respond does not mean that there was no response. Pentecostals place great value on personal calling and the leading of the Spirit. There have always been people called and led to work among groups of people that have had little or no Christian presence. Second, the achievements of the classical Pentecostal denominational mission agencies have been stunning. As an example, the Christians associated with churches planted or associated with the mission arms of only six of these denominations number nearly 82 million.⁵ Third, although full documentation on this does not yet exist, we know that some of the cross-cultural workers generated from these newer church movements are ending up among the unreached. Finally, in the last decade there is evidence of increasing numbers of workers, structures, and initiatives within many of these agencies and their national churches that are devoted to aspects of frontier mission, often focusing on a particular religious block or the unreached in a geographic region.

It is in point of fact the phenomenal success of classical Pentecostal missions that brings into deeper contrast the realities of their massive growth in some places, and little fruit in others. This is matched by the fact of large numbers of personnel in highly successful places and a corresponding dearth of workers among places and peoples with arguably the least Christian witness. What is at issue here is not the sending of discrete individuals with a call to an unreached people group, but rather the agency level choices that did not utilize their structures and energies to encourage and facilitate new ministry thrusts from their cross-cultural workers and national churches to the ethnolinguistic groups with the least witness of the Gospel.⁶

A full documentation of my assertion of a slow response to the challenge of unreached people groups is beyond the scope of this paper. Additionally, there are inherent limitations in trying to gather data related to work that engages unreached groups. Classical Pentecostal missions keep statistics at the level of the nation-state and not by people group, thus it is impossible to know precisely how many actual members of their teams are working directly with such groups. The various missions define their regions in different ways as well, and the countries that make up regions change making it hard to compare data. The work done by majority world churches connected to classical Pentecostal movements is still in its early stages and has not been documented for the most part.

However, it is possible to delimit a geographical area that is unreached people group dense, and compare over time the number of personnel located in this area. Taking 1970 as a baseline, before the dissemination of frontier mission missiology post-Lausanne in 1974, we can then see how missionary placement changed or did not change over the decades up to the present. A significant increase in field staff would be a solid

indicator that something happened in response to the challenge of unreached peoples. Similarly if percentages stay relatively the same, and percentages in other areas where the church exists stay the same or grow, it is an indicator that response was limited. The number generated by this exercise is not the actual total of people working among the unreached (due to the fact that many workers are connected to the national church and its needs in these countries) but only the *potential maximum* number of workers.

The area that I have chosen for comparison among five classical Pentecostal agencies is the region that includes North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey and the Central Asia republics, and the South Asian countries including India and those surrounding it.⁷ For convenience I am using the Assemblies of God World Missions designation for this area, Eurasia. By Joshua Project database figures this area contains arguably the highest density of discrete unreached ethnolinguistic groups in the world.

	1970	1990	2000	2009
Assemblies of God World Missions				
Total Career Staff	889	1663	2401	2719
Total In Eurasia	78	86	261	308
Percent of Total Staff in Eurasia	8.8	5.2	10.9	14.6
International Pentecostal Holiness Church				
Total Career Staff				97
Total In Eurasia				7
Percent of Total Staff in Eurasia				7.2
Foursquare				
Total Career Staff	71	40	65	88
Total In Eurasia	1	2	4	8
Percent of Total Staff in Eurasia	1.4	5	6.1	9.09

Table 1 Percent of Workers In An Unreached People Group Dense Part of the World (Eurasia)

What this information shows is that even with the ability to enter the newly accessible countries of Central Asia after the 1989 dissolving of the Soviet Union, the relative percentage of these missions' total field staff in this area has not changed drastically. Two of the missions have statistical information on their websites measuring their personnel placement in terms well known measures relating to the unreached and least-reached. The Assemblies of God 2010 current facts and highlights sheet shows 34.2 percent of their staff working in places that are less than 2 percent Evangelical, which are the Joshua Project categories 1 and 2.⁸ The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada website says of their 254 workers that "Nineteen per cent...serve in Restricted Access nations or in places closed to the open preaching of the gospel. Another 18 per cent work in the 10/40 window."⁹ While these numbers are very commendable, the fact that 60 plus percent of their mission teams are working where the global church is largest and

growing fastest, indicates a less than aggressive response to the challenge of unreached ethnolinguistic groups.

MISSIOLOGICAL FACTORS SHAPING RESPONSE

I now want to examine some missiological factors that may have shaped the response of one classical Pentecostal mission agency towards peoples and places in the world with the least Christians. The context for my observations is my own agency, Assemblies of God World Missions, USA. While there are numerous external factors involved in missionary placement, my focus here will be explicitly on internal missiological issues.¹⁰ Although other organizations will have different issues, I believe that much of the discussion that follows will be relevant not only to classical Pentecostal agencies, but to any agency that finds the bulk of their teams working outside of unreached groups.

Conceptions of National Church and the Unintended Loss of the Pioneering Dimension

Founded in 1914, with one of its stated priority purposes being the evangelization of the world, the Assemblies of God noted in their 1915 General Council that missionaries were to evangelize using New Testament methods. At their 1921 Council in St. Louis they formally adopted the goal of establishing three-self “native churches” (McGee 1986:95-96), and delineated to the Foreign Missions Department the nature of the New Testament practices they were to follow in six key principles (McGee 1986:95).¹¹ The second stated, “The Pauline example will be followed so far as possible, by seeking out neglected regions where the gospel has not yet been preached, lest we build upon another’s foundation (Romans 15:20)” (1986:96).

It was not until the 1930s that indigenous self-governing church organizations at the nation-state level began to appear with El Salvador being one of the first (McGee 1986:148). Some twenty years later, veteran missionary Melvin Hodges who worked in Central America, was asked to put the practical steps of indigenous church development into book form. This short and clearly written book became a seminal piece in Assemblies of God missiology and as testimony to its enduring value; it is still in print nearly 60 years later and remains a popular missions text in the evangelical world.

The incredible power of the indigenous national church concept cannot be underestimated in the exponential growth of the Assemblies of God worldwide fellowship of churches. While recognizing its fruitfulness as a mission concept, I want to look at some of the unexpressed assumptions that grew out of the specific historical context of its development that may have impacted our response to unreached people groups. In current usage national church almost always is equated to mean the church movement within the boundaries of a nation-state. In rereading Hodges, I am not necessarily sure that such jump was in his mind as he wrote.

The book, following its title, is primarily about planting an indigenous three-self church or churches. Only six pages of the text are dedicated to the formation of a national church organization (1976:92-97). Indigeneity was much more the focus than development of a national organization. Although the unifying factor of the Spanish language among the various peoples in his experience in Central America meant that the fledgling national church would encompass the boundaries of the nation state, his words

leave open the possibility for other scenarios. He allows for the needs of geographical features, political boundaries, differences of language, and transportation facilities to be accommodated. “When distance, language or political barriers make it impractical to unite the churches into one district, it is advisable to divide the district into smaller units with a sectional conference or council in each area” (1976:94). Hodges used terms like conference, district and section, taken from AG organizational structure in the USA, to illustrate the form of organization he is suggesting (1976:93-94). Only later does he introduce the word “national church” (1976:95). My sense is that in Hodges’ mind the notion of national church and its structure along the lines of AG USA polity was quite clear to his audience thus he felt no need to define or defend it. But his own comments do not demand, and leave the door open for organizing around language or other factors that would separate groups, and not simply geography. Thus it appears that the notion of one national church along nation-state lines came to be assumed, and was not required by the missiological concept.

Another assumption entered the mix as a result of the rapid growth of these national church organizations. There was a natural movement from the idea of the missionary planting the first individual churches and facilitating the development of an indigenous national church movement to partnering with that movement (Hodges 1978:5) (Williams 1979). There is a logical shift in role from the pioneering work that established the church to working with the young organization to strengthen it and pursue its agendas. It is interesting to note that when Hodges did talk about the need for redistribution of missionaries because there were too many in one locale, it was not for the purposes of pioneer church planting among the unreached, but for the good of the indigenous church (1976:96).

The principle of partnership is also an extremely powerful concept because it forms the basis for an ongoing relationship to help emerging indigenous national church movements grow and prosper. Without such a notion, it is too easy to get something started and then back away, thus truncating the movement and not allowing it to truly become capable of evangelizing its own people without outside resources. For us in the Assemblies of God, the definition of national church, like Winter’s notion of Pauline missiological breakthrough, is a very robust concept (see Johnson 2009:113-14). What is problematic however is the unwarranted jump that makes partnership with the national church such a dominant theme that it suppresses the ability of the mission to act as an apostolic band to take the Gospel where it has not been preached. While that conclusion is never formally stated, in practice it partnership becomes a primary value that shapes placement and ministry trajectory. This is true not only on the side of the mission agency, but can come from national churches as well. Majority world church movements, jealous to husband resources for their needs, are capable of citing chapter and missiological verse back to missionaries when they propose working outside of their boundaries to reach out to an unreached people group.

When we stand back for a moment and look at these two concepts, linking the ideas of “indigenous national church” and “partnership” enabled a level of fruitfulness that could only have been dreamed for in the early years. However, surfacing some of the assumptions that are currently connected with each reveals ideas that hinder rather than facilitate a move towards unreached people groups. I see the shift in primary emphasis from proclamational pioneer church planting to partnership with existing church

movements as something that was never planned. It was a natural change of attention to what was happening as new movements blossomed. However, the unintended consequence of the partnership concept was the erosion of the pioneering dimension of Pentecostal mission that was so salient in their early days. My guess is that this development may have been aided by an assumption that the Pentecostal experience would always lend towards urgency in proclamation and thus it was not something that needed to be worried about. What the passage of time has now revealed is that it is quite possible to remain doctrinally and stylistically Pentecostal, yet lose one's evangelistic fervor.

At the same time, the gradual cementing of the meaning of "national church" along nation-state lines unwittingly marginalized unreached ethnolinguistic groups outside of the primary ethnicity of the existing national church. Missionaries find that national churches want them to work in their orbit and not with those who they may have a history of problems or animosity. Another problem set has to do with how the new converts in an unreached group will relate to the existing church. Do they start their own "national church"? Do they come under the existing one? Rather than legitimating and validating pioneer work among the unreached, the hardening of these concepts and their associated assumptions slowed the process down by raising concerns were not taken from our reading of Scripture, but rather grew from limitations in our use of these concepts.

The Impact of Missions Success on the Ability to Engage Least-Reached, Resistant, and Unresponsive Peoples

In hindsight, it appears that the incredible success of our mission endeavors actually caught us all by surprise. The doctrine of indigeneity valued and predicted strong, robust, Pentecostal, zealous, evangelistic, national church movements. But when it happened so suddenly, it was natural that some missiological points were neglected or lost in the scramble to stay at the front of the wave. The impact of mission success was a key factor in creating a particular ethos and self-understanding in mission; contributed to a lack of reflection on and missions praxis for the unreached, resistant, and unresponsive; and its suddenness hindered the development of missions policy for responding to it. All of these factors combined to work against a systemic response to the challenge of unreached peoples.

The self understanding and ethos of classical Pentecostal missions

The advent of frontier mission missiology in the mid-1970s came at a time when the national churches founded by classical Pentecostal agencies were beginning to explode exponentially (Hurst January 26, 2006). To put it simply, to be a Pentecostal missionary, meant that it works. The era of painstaking sowing, rejection, and persecution in many fields became memories as big crusades, big churches, big institutions, and big buildings sprung up all over the globe. New missionary candidates raised on stories of powerful Pentecostal mission success came to the agency interested in going to such places and reduplicating such methods. The opposite side of the coin is that this success ethos creates an environment where people working in circumstances with slower response feel a great deal of pressure to "produce" the results that are expected from Pentecostal mission. Both at the denominational level in the local churches and at the agency level successes were cheered and given high profile, and it was natural that

numerically unfruitful fields among the unreached world received correspondingly less attention. The overall effect of such a self-understanding is to constrain those who will respond to the challenges represented by the unreached.

Success and the dulling of context-sensitivity

Another impact of the success ethos is that the way Pentecostals "did church" became a part of their style, or mode of faith expression. Pentecostal/Charismatic worship forms jumped beyond the boundaries of their own churches and became the trademark of cutting edge churches in a globalized world.¹² The difficulty in terms of mission is the fact that while this style fits well in a globalized segment of the world, it does not touch the heart of millions of people in the unreached world who are either turned off, offended, or confused by globalized music, worship styles, and the equation of Christianity with western culture.¹³ This stylistic identity that starts at the grassroots level of the constituent churches of classical Pentecostal organizations combined with the success ethos at the agency level means that the cross-cultural workers sent out in the time frame examined here were not well prepared to deal with the context issues that they faced among unreached populations. Their ministry toolkits were limited to reproducing globalized style Pentecostal/Charismatic forms.

A lack of theological reflection on how to handle the resistant and unresponsive

One of the strengths of Pentecostal mission is the emphasis on the leading of the Spirit, and getting involved in what the Spirit is manifestly doing in the world. Wilson, in his biography of J. Philip Hogan, who served for 30 years as the executive director of the Assemblies of God missionary program, provides a number of illustrations from Hogan's thinking that show the sense of dependence on the guidance of the Spirit (1997). It is the Spirit who leads laborers to strategic harvest opportunities (1997:64, 136), and prepares peoples, communities, cities, and nations for sudden harvest (1997:67, 136). Being strategic in this sense is going where God is pouring out his Spirit (1997:72). Success in part flowed also from an intentional focus on where the Spirit was working.¹⁴

Again, it seems natural that in an era of explosive growth all over the globe, there was little time to think about the resistant, unresponsive, and those separated from the Gospel by barriers of language, religion, and social standing. The result was that there has not been serious Pentecostal missiological reflection on working among those who do not respond quickly. There is no theology of sowing and preparation and creating a value system that honors such work. The practical on-field result of this theological gap is that cross-cultural workers find it hard to persevere in the face of no results and gravitate towards work with existing churches that is more capable of quantification and amenable to being reported to constituents.

Lack of reflection on missiological principles for exit from fully indigenous national churches

If there is a lack of theological reflection on how to deal with the unresponsive, the other side of the coin is that we never developed a missiology of success that gave us an explicit exit strategy. By this I mean how we respond as a mission to the successful formation of strong indigenous national churches which is our stated goal. Indigenous national churches are inherently needy; it never feels as if there are enough workers. Without a theology of success we have no decision-making tools to help us decide what

needs to be done and how to respond to the demands of national churches long after they are fully indigenous or as they are in last stages of the transition time moving towards it. The result is that over time the New Testament dimension of crossing cultural boundaries to present that Gospel and the Pauline theme of going where the Gospel is not yet present becomes obscured.

Classical Pentecostals and Frontier Missions: Towards a Greater Engagement

If in the past classical Pentecostal agencies have been slow to respond to the challenges of the final unreached peoples, the good news is that the present is showing signs of significant shifts towards a greater engagement.¹⁵ These signs are hopeful that the future will see the turning of the energy of these movements towards the frontier task that remains. I now want to look at some missiological issues that may help facilitate a greater engagement with unreached ethnolinguistic groups by classical Pentecostals all over the world. Each of these points could be expanded upon; my purpose here is not to be exhaustive or comprehensive, but rather is to set forth a tentative outline of a potential agenda that both established and emerging missions can begin to discuss and seek to implement in their work.

I envision this as a reflective process, taking the powerful concepts that have already been developed and proven to bear fruit, and not discard them or move past them, but rather revisit them in light of the challenges of the unreached and bring to them fresh insights that will sharpen our focus and practice. I see the goal of this exercise as synthesizing a conception of mission that:

- Integrates the guidance of the Spirit, the power of the indigenous national church/partnership notions, and a lens to see “peoples” without the Gospel,
- that also legitimates the role of the apostolic band that goes where Christ is not known,
- and brings a unified identity to all cross-cultural workers and affirms the value of the multiplicity of gifts in the missionary team.

The series of reflections here provide an outline and some examples of the issues that are potential content for this process.

Reflecting on Pentecostal history: Restoring evangelistic zeal

The early Pentecostals saw the coming of the Spirit as a restoration of the church and harbinger of the return of the Lord. The mission impulse was grounded in a sense of urgency that Christ be proclaimed to reap a final harvest. In Assemblies of God history, they pledged themselves to the greatest evangelization the world had ever seen. Now, 100 years distant from the Azusa revival the Lord has not returned, the fires of evangelism have waned among the western based denominations, and the perception of missions on the part of many constituent churches is that missionaries train local people to do ministry. While doctrinally affirming that the coming of the Spirit is empowerment for mission, practically we have developed systems that concentrate on supportive activities among emerging churches. There needs to be an intentional linkage on the part of

denominational and missions leaders that the coming the Spirit is still a relationship that pushes people to go to those who have not heard the Gospel. The fact of the documented existence of unreached ethnolinguistic groups needs to be held up to our movements as a primary place of labor for Spirit empowered workers.

To argue that western originating cross-cultural workers are relegated to only a training role so that majority world people can finish the task is faulty at two points. First, it assumes that people who themselves are not burning with a zeal to proclaim the good news among the unreached are able to communicate that burden to others. Second, it introduces a limitation that is not warranted by Scripture, restricting the apostolic task to others while ignoring it ourselves, to our spiritual peril. The reality is that the best way to revive evangelistic zeal among the western churches is to trumpet the need of all the tribes and tongues to hear the Gospel. For every worker envisioned by the Spirit who moves out of their own cultural setting there will be dozens that take up the task among their own.

Reflecting on key missions concepts: Revisiting the indigenous national church and partnership

The problems with some of the unwritten assumptions connected to the concepts of the indigenous national church and partnership I discussed above invite revisiting these notions in order to clarify and strengthen them. Expanding the concepts to make room to enable mission structures to relate to an existing national church while at the same time pioneering in another people group is a first step. This means loosening the connection between national church and the nation-state and opening the doors to creatively structuring varying forms of relationship between church movements with two or more distinct ethnic groups within the boundaries of a single nation-state. Similarly, the notion of partnership needs to be updated so that it allows for an incoming mission team to have the blessing and freedom to work apostolically in planting the church among an unreached group. The bottom line is that we cannot allow the concepts of national church and partnership to harden in such a fashion that they prohibit or inhibit the ability of the mission team to work outside the boundaries of the existing national church and its people group among an unreached group.

Reflecting on the work of the Spirit

For Pentecostals, the role of the Spirit in calling the workers is central to placement. However, research shows that there are a number of elements that coalesce in the calling to mission.¹⁶ Information via a variety of sources such as missionary narratives, missions conventions, missionary experience, and counsel play an important role in this. This means that it is an act of missionary statesmanship to make the needs of the unreached world known. Constituent churches of the home base as well as missionary candidates coming to the agency need to know that there is a world that has not yet heard, understood, or responded to the Gospel.

If a candidate comes to a mission organization evincing a call to missions but has never heard of the unreached world, it is incumbent upon the mission leadership to make those facts known and ask that such a candidate spend time in prayer over this information asking God for guidance. I am not suggesting in any way that we squelch the work of the Spirit, nor is this an exercise in suppressing individual guidance in favor of

corporate guidance. My point is very simple and is grounded in a big assumption: that it is impossible for the Spirit not to be calling workers to the unreached, given what we know from Scripture about God's concern for all the peoples. The databases of the world's unreached peoples are public documents.¹⁷ At the very least prayer for these groups needs to be engaged at the highest levels of our mission leadership, in our local churches, in our mission teams, and among the emerging national churches we relate to. To pray seriously about such groups will be to place ourselves in the line of fire to hear the voice of the Spirit who calls workers into the harvest fields.

Reflecting on our current placement: The need for spiritual genetic modification

If we generate prayer for new workers to the least reached, what do we do with the 60-70 percent working among the existing church? Some have mistakenly taken the call to the unreached as also being a call to redeploy existing cross-cultural workers to work among them, and as an implicit negative judgment upon those working with the church. This is not the case. It was a great misfortune that Ralph Winter's views on this were underplayed and ignored as people group thinking gained more prominence in mission circles (Winter 1991). He consistently maintained that to take language and culture competent workers out of their setting and put them into new learning curves among the unreached is not a policy of wisdom. There is much strategic work that can be done for the frontiers of mission from their current place of service.

I like to compare the awakening of having a "lens" to see "peoples" as a spiritual genetic modification. This DNA level change in the worker produces changes at the level of why they do things, reorients the ultimate goals of their work, and may even change their whole focus. If our mission staff living among the existing church movements in the majority world began to turn the energies of those churches towards prayer for the unreached, and to help develop mission sending structures and train workers to go to the unreached, what would the impact be? To infect all of the ministerial training apparatuses among these churches with the biblical theology of mission and a burden for the unreached would be an incredibly strategic work. In my own corner of the world as I have had opportunities to train Asian leaders, I have discovered that our majority world churches often do not share our missiology. In addition to this, their views of mission are shaped by the experience of receiving the Gospel in a flow of transmission from the West. Too often mission is defined by their perceptions of what Western cross-cultural workers have done and are doing. When they have never seen anyone go to the unreached, they do not see it as part of the mission agenda. If our existing mission staff can get the vision for the unreached, they can become key players in passing that burden on to the church movements to which they relate.

Reflecting on the biblical text: A theology of the hard work

The Spirit's work in bringing response to the message and guiding the worker, combined with the ethos of Pentecostal mission success has created a blank spot for what to do with the places that are *not* currently receptive/responsive. In addition to this, the Western passion for tangibility and quantification has shaped a view of mission that makes results the primary evaluative tool for determining success. This results in avoiding work that does not produce immediate and measurable results; thus many important activities that are preparatory to harvest are neglected. This value system is

often transmitted from the West into the newer emerging missions, making the criterion of successful mission numerical results alone and discouraging any activity that does not meet that standard. All of this highlights the need for what I call a theology of the hard work. Such a theology is grounded in reflection on the biblical text that will strengthen workers for the foundational tasks of clearing the fields, preparing the ground, and planting the seed needed for harvest.

In John 4:35-38 as Jesus is talking to his disciples about the present harvest, he makes the statement that others have done the hard work (vs. 38), and they are now reaping the fruits of those labors. When I went back and worked through commentaries on this passage, I discovered that scholars are not really sure of the antecedents that Jesus is using here. Who are the “others”?, what harvest Jesus is talking about?, where did he send them to reap?, who are the reapers drawing their wages?, and so on. What is quite clear however, is that Jesus is acknowledging here the well known agricultural fact that in order to get a harvest you must do hard preparatory work first. It encouraged me greatly that Jesus recognizes and honors the hard work. He notes that both the sower and the reaper rejoice together (vs. 36).

A theology of the hard work is founded on Jesus’ acknowledgement of the role of hard work in preparing for a harvest. He lets his disciples know that they are standing on the shoulders of others; that those who have gone before have done the really difficult labor and now they will reap. Today, in the excitement of the worldwide expansion of the church there is a diminished tolerance for the often backbreaking labor of preparation for a harvest. I look forward to seeing classical Pentecostal missions new and old fill out their theologies of victory and success with perspectives on hard work in preparation for harvest that includes the role of suffering, and living among the nations to declare the glory of God. This kind of theological reflection will provide future workers among the hardest places to serve joyfully for God’s glory even when they are not seeing tangible results yet.

Reflecting on the future: Mobilizing classical Pentecostal movements to go the unreached

I have saved what is the most important issue and what I consider to be the most exciting possibility for this final point. One thing that makes the Pentecostal/Charismatic stream of faith so dynamic is the continual, unplanned, often unexpected wind of the Spirit that blows and raises up new vision and visits and transforms bodies of believers and their communities. As classical Pentecostals we need to believe God for a mighty visitation that will bring the vision and spiritual power to turn the movements that are associated with us all over the world towards the unreached ethnolinguistic groups

Imagine what could happen if tens of millions of believers suddenly could “see” peoples and begin to order their lives, churches, and movements around making Christ known among such neglected groups. Beyond the obvious benefits of large numbers of people being aware and praying for the unreached, there are two particular ways where a mobilization of classical Pentecostals would have a huge impact for frontier mission. The first is the vast pool of workers that could be released into unreached harvest fields. Majority world missions among classical Pentecostal movements are taking off, and it needs to be steered in the direction of places that do not have existing church movements. It would be a great tragedy for the majority world churches to develop cross-cultural

sending structures only to have people sent to work with the existing church somewhere else. It is entirely understandable how emerging majority world missions structures want to emulate the work of the missionaries who were sent to them. This highlights the critical need for missions education and information so that these younger agencies can be aware of the needs of the unreached. It is ironic that many younger missions structures have come into existence with a vision to send people not to cross cultural boundaries, but geographic ones, often in pursuit of reaching the diasporas of their own people, while neglecting cross-cultural opportunities right within the borders of their own nation state to work among an unreached people.

The second impact of an awakening to see unreached peoples has to do with the informal ministry of millions of lay people in classical Pentecostal movements around the world that literally rub elbows with unreached peoples every day. If we could bring training down to our local churches and pastors to enable them to bear witness to the Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists that live around them, these believers would have access to the lives of millions of people that are much more culturally near to them than any expatriate worker.

Conclusion

In 1910, no one could have predicted the megashifts brought to the mission world by the concepts of frontier missions and the vitality and success of Pentecostal churches. Although organizations and missions growing out of classical Pentecostal roots have been slow to respond to the challenges of the unreached world in the past, there are reasons to be very hopeful about the coming together of these streams. The first signs of hope are the explicit structures that are emerging within classical Pentecostal missions in the west that focus on the unreached, and the mobilization for mission happening in the younger churches. The second is that the reasons for slow response are amenable to being addressed, and there is every reason to believe that revisiting key concepts and Pentecostal experiences can lead to a massive turning of the weight and spiritual energy of these movements towards the needs of the unreached.

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¹ Anderson, (2006:169), citing Barrett and Johnson's statistics (2004), shows 62 percent of global Christians residing outside of the west.

² Anderson points out that the growth edge of Christianity is in its Pentecostal and Charismatic forms. He notes a "tremendous diversity" in the Pentecostal/Charismatic stream which includes classical Pentecostal denominations and missions and a wide variety of independent Pentecostal-like groups and groups influenced by the Charismatic movement and Charismatics inside mainline denominations (2006:169-70). Synan, citing Barrett and Johnson (1982), says that at 1980 the number of non-white Christians surpassed the number of white Christians for the first time in history and Pentecostals became the largest Protestant family in the world (1992:5)

³ There are other ways to categorize Pentecostals/Charismatics as well. Barrett and Johnson use the terminology of first wave-Pentecostal renewal (the oldest part of the renewal claiming the name, history, experiences and theology of Pentecostalism); second wave-Charismatic renewal (members of nonpentecostal mainline churches who experience Pentecostal phenomena), and third wave-new Charismatic renewal (Spirit-led independents rejecting White Pentecostal/Charismatic denominationalism) (2001:284-85). Miller and Yamamori see five different organizational types of Pentecostalism with four different major orientations that cut across the organizational forms (2007:25-31).

⁴ I asked Todd Johnson to provide me with a list of the major North American classical Pentecostal denominations (not including oneness Pentecostals). His list included the following groups that I was able to find websites for and also that had missions agencies listed in the MARC Handbook: Apostolic Faith Mission, Assemblies of God, Church of God of Prophecy, Church of God (Cleveland), Elim Assemblies Fellowship, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, International Pentecostal Holiness Church, and Pentecostal Church of God (Joplin). For a listing of the missions agencies that are part of the Pentecostal European Mission see www.fcgoe.at/pem/About-PEM_42.html.

⁵ The information here is taken from the denominational websites or from articles in Wikipedia that reference denominational documents and refers to their worldwide constituents/adherents. Assemblies of God 2009 estimated constituents, 63,089,711; Church of God of Prophecy, one million; Church of God (Cleveland), six million; International Foursquare, eight million; International Pentecostal Holiness Church 2000, 3,410,890 including members and affiliates; Pentecostal Church of God (Joplin), 500,000.

⁶ For instance, up until recently, in my own organization, there have been various emphases at the macro-level that have come into existence since frontier mission missiology hit the scene in the mid-1970s. All except one have focused on something other than unreached ethnolinguistic groups or religious blocks. The most prominent was the Decade of Harvest during the 1990s. Examples of others include numerous auxiliaries and international ministries that have been founded, various humanitarian structures, construction oriented groups, prayer focuses, and city-wide crusade focuses. Given the prominence of frontier mission missiology through conduits such as the U.S. Center for World Mission, various journals, and the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement it is somewhat surprising that some kind of intentional focus on the unreached did not similarly appear during a time when all of these other things were happening.

⁷ Grant McClung, the missiological adviser for the World Missions Commission of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, was very kind to help out in sending my requests for information on missionary placement in this specific part of the world to a number of classical Pentecostal missions organizations. In total between Grant and myself the following were contacted: Church of God World Missions (Cleveland), Assemblies of God World Missions (USA), International Pentecostal Holiness Church, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, FIDA, Church of God of Prophecy, International Foursquare, Open Bible.

⁸ See www.joshuaproject.net/definitions.php for how they define the categories of unreached/least-reached and formative or nominal church. Both are less than 2 percent Evangelical, the difference being the latter has more than 5 percent of some form of Christian faith present.

⁹ See www.paoc.org/missions/default.aspx. Since restricted access nations are also in the 10/40 window it is hard to know if the figures should be taken cumulatively so that 37 percent are in areas where unreached people groups are present, or if it would be something closer to the 19 percent total.

¹⁰ I have dealt elsewhere with problems that missions of all backgrounds had with some aspects of frontier mission missiology (Johnson 2001). These difficulties, whether with actual concepts or the

misappropriation of concepts, certainly had an impact at the agency level in the Assemblies of God in determining macro-level response. However, my interests here are to look specifically at how missiology within a specific agency may have constrained a more significant response to unreached people groups.

¹¹ A major influence that led to adopting the notion of three-self church came from the publication of three articles by Alice Luce where she laid out the biblical arguments for planting “apostolic churches” that support, govern, and propagate themselves (Luce 1921a, 1921b, 1921c). In the first article she credits Roland Allen’s 1912 book on the missionary methods of Paul (1962) for having opened her eyes to the “diametrical distinction between our methods of working and those of the New Testament” (1921a:6).

¹² See Miller and Yamamori on the role of worship and prayer in the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches they studied (2007:129-59).

¹³ Walls points out that historically, Christian missions did much better at gaining adherents from the primal religions rather than the major religious traditions (Walls 1996:68-69). Kraft argues that one reason Pentecostal/Charismatics have grown so well with noncontextualized approaches is that their emphasis on healing and deliverance touches a felt need and that “the cultural relevance of such a focus would seem to outweigh in people’s minds the irrelevance of much of the rest of what goes on in these churches” (Kraft 2005:75). The issue here is that it would appear that there are millions of people in the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist worlds for whom a noncontextualized approach, even with power, impedes a response to the message of Christ.

¹⁴ This is a very sound mission strategy. Note that McGavran argued that the New Testament church went where people responded, and that the Church won the winnable (McGavran 1987:37). He also noted that sudden ripenings for harvest are common (McGavran 1987:247), but in contrast to the Pentecostal ethos of following the leading of the Spirit, receptivity and response is discerned through sociological methods and observation (McGavran 1987:183, 245-65). Because of robustness of the notion of indigenous church, it is critical to commit personnel and resources to places where harvest is being reaped until such point that a national church movement can truly move forward on their own. One of Hogan’s well known saying that reflected this strategy was, “Find the soft spot, and pour on the resources.” (Klaus and Petersen 2006:146).

¹⁵ In the process of gathering the data for this material many of those who responded added comments about what their organizations are currently doing. There is an obvious increased focus on the needs of the final unreached peoples that includes structures designed to focus on particular religious block, training centers devoted to helping people working in unreached people dense religious blocks, regional and world level strategic meetings, participation in global networks, training initiatives to bring vision and mobilize Christians inside of Pentecostal national churches to reach out to unreached groups geographically near and far to them, and encouragement of national churches to form their own mission sending structures with a focus on the least-reached world. My expectation is that within the next decade the numbers of global cross-cultural servants that are sent by classical Pentecostal missions agencies from all over the world will increase dramatically.

¹⁶ See Delonn Rance’s research on the work of the Spirit in El Salvadoran missionaries, particularly his summary on the missionary call (2004:252-54).

¹⁷ For instance, information about unreached ethnolinguistic groups can be found at the Joshua Project database www.joshuaproject.net, in *Operation World* (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001), in various publications documenting unreached people groups by country or religious block, and through searching for prayer profiles on the worldwide web.