

THY KINGDOM COME

A Church for Every People and the Gospel for Every Person by the year 2000

Preface

The Great Commission?

To complete the Great Commission is what we are all working for. But no one in AD 2000 is bold enough to say for sure just what is implied by *the completion of the Great Commission*.

Since the Great Commission is not an idea that is specific enough to make into a measurable goal the AD 2000 Movement has wisely chosen a purpose statement which is eminently measurable—*A Church for Every People and the Gospel for Every Person*. —as if you can get the Gospel to every person without planting a church movement which is meaningful to every person.

Let us not argue the wrong cause!

We are very excited about the Return of Christ, but we are not confusing His Return with our measurable goal.

“A Church of Every People – Plain Talk About a Difficult Task” Those few pages tell how meaningful a living, accountable fellowship *within every people* is and how delicate a divine-human achievement it is.

By saying that we mean that our goal has never been a sure thing, and we also understand that reaching this goal will naturally get less likely as time passes. After all, what *we* have in mind that *God* wants to accomplish by the year 2000 may be close or far from His actual purposes. Yet, what He may decide to do by that time—or at that time – will to some extent depend upon *what we and others do in his Name now and between now and the year 2000*. [Challenge: The difficulty we face is putting self-imposed, human time limits (the date of the goal) on what we all know to be God’s purpose—the preaching of the gospel within every people.]

Our plans cannot even begin to predict or control *revival fire*. It is not likely that the God who has often blessed this world with revival in the past will employ that kind of fire again? It has been said that in a true revival God can do in 20 minutes that might otherwise take 20 years. Are we praying for revival?

Chapter One: By the Year 2000?

Suppose we could come to the place where every “hearing” person has heard. At midnight on a certain night—we have finished the job! [If the “job” is to fill the earth with nothing more than a message with words.]

What CAN be done by the year 2000? What is it that we can all pray for?

Well, what did Jesus tell us to pray for? He said that we must pray “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Our concept of God’s desire to reach all peoples and persons must somehow be part of His desire for His Kingdom to come on earth. Other verses say that He looks toward the time when all the nations of the world will declare His glory.

God is primarily in the business of conquering Satan? [and being exalted]

The essence of the Return of Christ will inevitably be a moment when “measurable” evangelistic goals will be overwhelmed by a total newness of God’s own design?

With regard to His known will, we can and must go all out.

Can we be overly concerned about bookkeeping tallies in heaven and less concerned about declaring His glory on earth? Can souls get saved without His Name being glorified?

Satan *holds whole peoples in bondage*. We can’t wrestle a single soul out of his hand without challenging his authority in that particular people group.

In the Bible the concept of *darkness* is not merely the absence of light but the presence of a malignant, destroying Person. That is why the kingdoms of this world will not easily yield.

Every people—kingdom of darkness

The phrase *Every People* refers to these kingdoms of darkness.

What does a darkened kingdom look like? How can we tell when a kingdom has been brought under God’s sway? Isn’t this the definition of spiritual mapping?

Often the breakthrough comes through a miraculous healing or the unaccountable conversion of a key person, not through normal evangelism. Yes, normal evangelism only becomes possible after that breakthrough occurs.

[Why was the man blind? So that the Son of Man might be glorified. visible before audible]

...are there still kingdoms of this world where His Name is not glorified?

Chapter Two: A Church for Every People

The word “church” means much more than an empty building or even a small congregation, “a church movement.”

Dr. McGavran’s conviction was that *we cannot say that we have evangelized a person unless that person has been given a chance to unite with an indigenous movement within his or her own society*.

His concern for converts was that they ought to be encouraged to *reach* their own people rather than *separate* from them.

“(One) . . . principle is to encourage converts to remain thoroughly one with their own people in most matters.”

“(A closely related) principle is to try to get group decisions for Christ.”

What is the upshot?

“Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.”

Paul, referring to Aquila and Priscilla, spoke of “the church that is in their house” (Rom. 16:5, 1Cor. 16:10,) a situation (unnoticeable to many American readers) where family ties and church worship went together, where church authority and family authority were often indistinguishable, where church discipline and family respect were often indistinguishable, where church discipline and family respect were one and the same thing, where “honor thy father and thy mother” were not different from spiritual accountability in the church.

Beware of the Americans!

In America – especially in urban America – churches have become more and more collections of unrelated individuals huddling together – individuals who for the most part have already been loosened up from their natural families with the church becoming a kind of substitute family. Thus, although the churches of urban America to some significant extent perform the functions of a family, they often do so in the absence of – or possibly even at the expense of – the natural families.

If we seriously seek “A Church for Every People” we must recover third Biblical harmony between natural families and “church” families.

(The mission theologian, Howard Snyder, in his new book *Earthcurrents*, says, “In the United States, the most dramatic change has been the drop in households headed by a married couple – from about one half to one tenth in just 40 years,” p. 34.)

Missiologically defined peoples?

Those of us who often count ethnolinguistic groups usually take very seriously the tangible differences in dialect or vocabulary of different groups but may not often take seriously the many different kinds of intangible “prejudice barriers” that define additional subgroups.

Chapter Three: The Gospel for Every Person?

If it is imperative for there to be an indigenous church movement within every *people* in order for every *person* to have a reasonable opportunity to know Christ, then it comes with equal force that if every person in a group cannot join an existing people movement, it is apparently true that that group consists of more than one group needing the incarnation of an indigenous church movement.

Groups within groups?

Only when a people movement gets going will it define the practical boundaries and allow us to be sure how many groups there actually are. It means that we can only count groups accurately *after* the Gospel has come, not *before*. We don't want to count more groups than really *can* be reached with a single people movement; yet we don't want to ignore silent, alienated minorities . . . a group with mission significance is “the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church-planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.” Is the only reason to define a group so that we can reach the individual or is there another reason?]

These words were framed by a large and representative group of mission experts at a Lausanne-sponsored meeting in March of 1982. Neither before nor after has there ever been a similar meeting to define such concepts and terms, although people are free to ignore or oppose this definition. [Find information on this meeting.]

Defining groups by ministry tools.

Christian workers may be confused partly because they naturally tend to define the world's population in terms of the groups which are reasonable targets for the particular tools of evangelism *in which they specialize*.

missionary radio

Jesus film

printed page

ear-gate

Barriers of prejudice!

Tragically, near-neighbors often hate and fear each other.

Measure or verify?

But how measurable is the presence of this “essential people movement to Christ?” We “verify” the presence or absence of a condition.

What makes it easier to verify the existence of an unreached people is the fact that we are looking for the groups with the least opportunity, the least access. It is certainly easy to identify those groups *where there is not doubt* one way or the other.

- 1) unreached
- 2) doubtful
- 3) reached

What is being done, not so much for *what is not being done*. Few of these sources render information on peoples with whom they do not yet work.

Do we have enough to work with?

We need not suppose that everything depends on us, but we must understand that God is asking everything of us. That, in turn, is the same as saying that He wants to touch our tongues with a live coal from the altar.

Appendix

A Church in Every People: Plain Talk about a Difficult Task

Donald A. McGavaran

The goal of Christian mission should be to preach the Gospel and, by God's grace, to plant in every unchurched segment of mankind – what shall we say – “a church” or “a cluster of growing churches”? By the phrase “segment of mankind” I mean an urbanization, development, caste, tribe, valley, plain, or minority population. The goal is not one small sealed-off conglomerate congregation in every people. Rather, the long-range goal (to be held constantly in view in the years or decades when it is not yet achieved) should be a cluster of growing congregations in every segment.

The One-by-One Method

It is usually easy to start one single congregation in a new unchurched people group.

One single congregation arising in the way just described is almost always a conglomerate church – made up of members of several different segments of society. Some old, some young, orphans, rescued persons, helpers and ardent seekers. It is a conglomerate church. It is sealed off from all the people groups of that region. No segment of the population says, “That group of worshipers is us.”

Each convert, as he becomes a Christian, is seen by kin as one who leaves “us” and joins “them.” He leaves “our gods” to worship “their gods.” A church which results from this process looks to the peoples of the region like an assemblage of traitors. It is made up of individuals who, one by one, have come out of several different societies, casts or tribes.

... conglomerate congregations, made up of converts won in this fashion, grow very slowly.

The People Movement Approach

Here and there clusters of growing churches arise by the people-movement method. In order to use it effectively, missionaries should operate on seven principles.

First, they should be clear about the goal. That must be a cluster of growing, indigenous congregations every member of which remains in close contact with his kindred.

The second principle is that the national leader, or the missionary and his helpers, should concentrate on one people.

If you have three missionaries, don't have one evangelizing this group, another that, and a third 200 miles away evangelizing still another. The social dynamics of those sections of society will work solidly against the eruption of any great growing people movement to Christ.

The third principle is to encourage converts to remain thoroughly one with their own people in most matters.

The fourth principle is to try to get group decisions for Christ.

The fifth principle is this: Aim for scores of groups of people to become Christians in an even flowing stream across the years. This principle requires that, from the very beginning, the missionary keeps on reaching out to new groups.

We must trust the Holy Spirit, and believe that God has called those people out of darkness into His wonderful light. We must continue to make sure that a constant stream of new converts comes into the ever-growing cluster of congregations.

Now the sixth point is this: The converts, five or five thousands, out to say or at least feel:

We Christians are advance guard of our people, of our segment of society. We are showing our relatives and neighbors a better way of life.

The last principle I stress is this: Constantly emphasize brotherhood.

As we continue to stress brotherhood, let us be sure that the most effective way to achieve brotherhood is to lead ever increasing numbers of men and women from every ethnos, every tribe, every segment of society into an obedient relationship to Christ.

Conclusion

The great advances of the Church on new ground out of non-Christian religions have always come by people movements, never one-by-one.