

The Task for World Mission¹

Unreached Peoples

Geographical category → Ethnical Category

I. Definition of Peoples

1. People in Biblical Perspective

Two terms: λαός : people; ἔθνος: nations, peoples

Matt 28:19; Luke 24:47 πάντα τὰ ἔθνη all nations

Rev 5:9 “out of every tribe and tongue and people and nations” ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους

2. People defined ethnolinguistically

“A human population with a common language, a shared ethnicity, and significant patterns of social interaction” (Shreck and Barrett, *Clarifying the Task*, p.6)

3. People Group defined sociologically

“A significant large sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another” (Shreck and Barrett, *Clarifying the Task*, p.7)

“The collections of people that are organized by culturally defined rules and categories” (Spradley and McCurdy, *Anthropology: The Cultural Perspective*, 2nd ed., p.386)

4. People or People Groups?

1) Theological Consideration

“People” in Matt 28:19 and Luke 24:47

“All the world” (τὸν κόσμον ἅπαντα) and “all creation” (πάση τῇ κτίσει) in Mark 16:15

“The world” (τὸν κόσμον) in John 3:16

2) Strategic consideration

Paul’s emphasis on population centers

¹ This note is prepared by Jintae Kim, Alliance Theological Seminary on April 2, 2008, based partially upon his classnote taken from David Moore at the Seminary.

3) Communicational consideration

5. Strategic Significance in Sociological Group Identification

An individual belongs to many sociological groups simultaneously. Which group is the most strategic for the purpose of reaching that person for Christ?

II. Unreached People

1. Unreached defined (Unresolved ambiguity)

1) Near synonymous terms distinguished

“Unreached emphasizes the fact that these groups constitute a remaining task to be performed – of reaching out hidden emphasizes that the fact that these groups are generally overlooked by the major focus given to breakthroughs already made. Frontier emphasizes the fact that such groups cannot be reached without crossing a cultural barrier to reach them. Unpenetrated stresses the fact that no missiological breakthrough has taken place, so as to be able to continue on to reach people from within their own group.” (Ralph Winter, *Perspectives*)

2) “Percentage” Definition

“We consider a people ‘unreached’ when less than 20% of the members of the group are practicing Christians, that is, are active members of the Christian community.” (Edward R. Dayton & Samuel Wilson, eds., *Unreached Peoples*, 1982, p.414)

3) “Viable Christian Community” Definition

“A people group among whom there is no visible indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize their own people group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance.” (Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World*, 4th ed., p. 498)

4) “Exposure” Definition

“Johnstone argues that it would be more accurate to define reached/unreached as “... a measure of the exposure of a people group to the gospel, and not a measure of the response.” (p.498)

2. Christian Defined

1) “Professing” and “Crypto-Christian”

Professing Christians	Crypto-Christians
All who profess publicly to be Christians. They may be practicing or non-practicing Christians, committed or uncommitted.	Secret believers or non-professing Christians or those not baptized publicly, or clandestine or underground believers. (David Barrett, ed. <i>World Christians Encyclopedia</i> , p. 49)

2) “Adherents of Historic Christian Communication”

“By Christians, we mean adherents (church members, families and followers) of the historic Christian communions; Protestant, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and such independent groups as may claim the Bible as the basis of faith and Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.” (Dayton & Wilson, p. 414)

3) “Christians” by Personal or Church Affirmation

“...those who are claimed to be Christian, either by the individuals themselves in a government census, or by the churches to which they are affiliated...” (Johnstone, p. 26)

However, where possible, Johnstone does attempt to distinguish born-again believers or evangelicals. (p. 496)

II. The C&MA Definitions

Term	The C&MA Definition
People	Those persons with a common language, shared ethnicity, significant patterns of social interaction.
Sociological Group	Those persons with a shared group identity group association and interaction conscious of group membership, assigned roles and corresponding rewards, mobility in status.
Unreached People or Sociological Group	A people or group among whom there is no visible, indigenous community of believers in sufficient numbers and with sufficient resources to evangelize their own people group by planting reproducing and missionary churches without outside cross-cultural assistance.
Christian	A person who has experienced spiritual birth evidenced by profession and daily life.

III. Task Immensity (outdated)

1. Number of unreached people groups

Number	Source
16,750 People Groups	Ralph Winter, "The Task Remaining" in <i>Perspectives</i> , p. 324
11,500 Ethnolinguistic Peoples	Patrick Johnstone, "Unreached Peoples: Global Overview," a paper distributed at Lausanne II, July 1989
1,100 Undisciplined People	Johnstone
1,140 Unmissioned People	
650 Totally Unreached People	

2. C&MA responsibility

Unreached people groups within our reach: 133