

## A NEW AGE IN MISSIONS BEGINS

by Donald McGavran

At the International Congress on World Evangelization Dr. Winter proved beyond any reasonable doubt that in the world today 2,700,000,000 men and women cannot hear the Gospel by 'near-neighbor evangelism'. They can hear it only by E-2 and E-3 evangelists who cross cultural, linguistic and geographical barriers, patiently learn that other culture and language, across the decades preach the Gospel by word and deed, and multiply reproductive and responsible Christian churches. This means enormous numbers of 'sent' preachers (Romans 10:14, 15). It means missionaries by the hundred thousand. It means that all Churches (denominations) become sending Churches, sending out E-2 and E-3 evangelists (missionaries) till the 2,700,000,000 have sprinkled through them at least, 2,700,000 congregations. At that point, the Lord may well judge that all men have really heard the Gospel and return.

Winter's address marked the end of an age in missions. For the last thirty years the urgent necessity has been for Eurican missions to turn authority over to Latfricasian denominations. During this period it has been both fashionable and right for national leaders to emphasize in dozens of ways that they had come of age and no longer needed missionary guidance or control. It was right for missionaries to withdraw and for missionary societies to plan their program so as to lessen the number of missionaries who exercised directional responsibilities over Christian denominations, hospitals, schools, and other institutions. It was right for the goal of both missions and Churches to be the ultimate abolishing of missionary posts designed to serve existing Churches.

It was right for these things to happen in connection with all well established denominations (Churches). But since the missionary movement (which involves Christians in all six continents) is continually planting new clusters of congregations in which missionaries have to be the planters and nurturers for some years, tension between national leaders (who think that the time has come to turn over, who resent fatherly guidance from the missionaries) not only exists but will continue. This tension must not be wiped out by the simplistic expedient of ceasing to plant new clusters of congregations, and closing one's eyes to the 2.7 billion!

During the era just past, the stock in trade of certain leaders, both Eurican and Latfricasian, was to proclaim boldly that nationals were quite able to run their own show and that missionaries should bow to their wishes. Alas, this became "the chief Gospel" preached by many eminent leaders. This is what they were noted for. This was what they always said. Let us assume that in the years now ended their message was right.

But it is no longer right. That period in the expansion of Christianity is over. A new era has begun. There is no longer any danger that missionaries from Japan, Korea, Norway, England, the United States, the Philippines, Zaire, Chile, Mexico or other lands will lord it over the denominations in the lands to which the Holy Spirit sends them. To continue harping on that old message is wrong in this new era when suddenly we are conscious of the two point seven billion who are living and dying without Christ and who cannot be reached by near neighbor evangelism. Through his cool and irenic presentation of the great new fact which confronts international Christianity, Dr. Winter was calling on the four thousand leaders from 150 countries gathered at Lausanne to recognize that we have emerged from the old era and have entered a new era. What is necessary and should be fashionable today and tomorrow is not that old message. The battle to recognize Latfricasian Churches (denominations) as equal has been won. There is no need to continue fighting it. That wheat has been threshed. Let us not continue threshing the old straw.

Today's challenge is to devise new slogans, new priorities, and new principles which excite the Church of Jesus Christ to surge forward on ten thousand fronts sending apostles, sending preachers, sending missionaries across cultural linguistic and economic barriers to evangelize any segments of society which the existing Churches in any land are not reaching and cannot reach. Today mature Churches in every country will courageously face up to the many segments of the population which they are not evangelizing, in which they are not establishing outposts of heaven, in which few ever become baptized believers. Mature Churches will then do two things:

First, they will recruit as many of their own sons and daughters as they can - and send them to such segments as E-2 and E-3 missionaries, but not to reproduce their own kind of embodied Christianity, their own cultural image, and their own social status. On the contrary, their missionaries will do what all good missionaries do - deculturize themselves and enculture themselves in the segment of population concerned, learn the language thoroughly, and then father new congregations which are soundly Christian, filled with the Holy Spirit, obedient to the Bible and loyal to the good in their own culture.

Second, seeing the tremendous size of the task, mature Churches will actively recruit missionaries from other Churches in their own country and in other countries. They will send messengers to other countries, pleading with them to "Come over to Macedonia and help us. We have selected for you a segment of population - a county, a ward of our great city, a tribe, a caste, an income bracket, the intelligentsia, the illiterate, the community whose men drive taxis in our metropolis, the land owners, landless laborers -

and will assist you in every way in evangelizing that segment. We will pray God's blessing on you, thank Him for your presence, counsel you as to methods, but not impose our will on you. We will hope that you will employ some of our sons and daughters as your assistants. We are confident that the clusters of churches which you establish will be soundly Christian. And that as those churches mature you will encourage them to associate themselves with us, while you go on to other yet untouched and unreached segments of our vast population."

The creative nature of Dr. Winter's address will only be recognized as we try to develop some such vision of the future, some concrete plans to engage all the churches of all the continents in a determined, intelligent evangelization of the 2,700,000,000 (who in less than 20 years will be 4,000,000,000) who are not now being reached by existing denominations.

The shadow of the era just past is, to be sure, still visible, but it will diminish in length. It takes no great feat of imagination to hear some indignant leader protest that many missionaries even today are exerting undue influence on the existing churches. Such protests are sometimes well founded. Some missionaries, like some ministers, are dominant personalities and occasionally excite resentment in those dominated. Some few missionary societies may yet be living in the pre-1945 era. But they are rare; sending out only a few missionaries, planting a few churches. Where such conditions exist, pressures should certainly be brought to rectify them.

Such protests are sometimes ill-founded. In any extension of the Christian Faith on new ground, infant congregations are brought into being. They would never be born without a father, whom God uses to create new churchlets. These need fatherly "care and feeding". They need Christian nurture. They need help. Someone must be in travail for them till Christ be born in them. Of course, fatherly care continued too long becomes paternalism, but this error in judgment is not likely to be made often. The real danger is all the other way - namely, that in fear of being paternalistic, the missionary hesitates to be fatherly. As a result either no churches are born or those which are born sicken and die. Existing denominations and congregations need no longer be jealous that their prerogatives may be usurped by foreign missionaries. Existing denominations and congregations should actively invite in bands of comrades from outside their culture area who will accept the responsibility for evangelizing suitable segments of the unevangelized.

What do we mean by suitable segments? In the past two hundred years, it was commonplace for one mission to claim sole responsibility and authority for ten million people. This ten million was a Baptist area and that an Anglican. The mission then occupied the area with a force of twenty missionary families - which gave each a parish of 500,000 souls. Today any such assignment of territory is totally unacceptable. One missionary family is ordinarily able to evangelize effectively a community of perhaps five thousand. It is easily seen that the two point seven billion divide into 540,000 fields of that size. These would be fields, according to Dr. Winter's thinking, in which at present practically no one can be reached by E-1, that is, by near-neighbor evangelism.

When in 1965 I was inaugurated as the founding dean of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary and called for 100,000 missionaries, I considerably underestimated the need. Since the total number of the unreached, for the next thirty years at any rate, will increase toward four billion, the number of reasonably sized fields to be occupied by missionaries will increase year by year. After thirty years - or perhaps fifty years - if the Lord tarry - the number will decrease. I have dealt with this in the May 1974 issue of the Church Growth Bulletin under the title "The Tide Turns". But until it turns, the number of utterly unreached mission fields will increase. Christians must not delude themselves with the comfortable assumption that existing churches using near-neighbor evangelism will complete the task. They will not. They cannot. This is the hard, unshakeable core of what Dr. Winter told Lausanne.

The Church Growth Bulletin calls on readers to obtain from Church Growth Book Club the pamphlet entitled "The New Macedonia: The Revolutionary New Era in Mission Begins". It is a reprint of this essay plus Winter's epochal address. Let them distribute 'Macedonia' widely to denominational leaders, mission board executives, missionaries and ministers. The price will be 75¢ per copy, or \$1.00 per copy postpaid, or 10 copies for \$5.00 postpaid, or 1 copy free with a purchase of \$5.00 or more.

Nothing said at Lausanne had more meaning for the Expansion of Christianity in the thirty years ahead. As its implications are discovered - I have mentioned only a few - and new forms of mission are invented by LatfricAsian and Eurican denominations to carry out effective mission in this new age, the possibility of obeying the Great Commission adequately will loom larger and larger. God grant His rich blessings on all such courageous and faithful forward moves to obey God and meet the deepest and most desperate human needs.