

The Changings of the Guards:
Missiological Legacies of Donald A. McGavran,
John R. W. Stott, Carl F. H. Henry and Ralph D. Winter.
by
David J. Hesselgrave

I bear good news and bad news. The good news is that modern science has finally caught up with Scripture. It has shown that, as one advances in age, that part of the brain often associated with wisdom—dealing with conflict and ambiguity, setting priorities and making choices—excels. Younger brains excel when it comes to creativity and inventiveness, the accumulation of knowledge, and the execution of plans. [Healy 2007, 66]. Also good news is the fact that I am dealing with four aging and brilliant brains in this monograph. But there is bad news as well. The bad news has to do with the fact that possessors of the four aging brains considered here changed their minds as they grew older. So they are not now in agreement with what they believed at an earlier stage in their development. More importantly they are not always in agreement with each other. So all who are younger and those of us who are older but less astute still have some hard choices to make!

Now when it comes to missiology, this state of affairs leaves us with confusion as to all-important issues bearing upon the very nature of Christian mission as well as the future of our evangelical missions. Let me explain.

As the 20th century drew to a close, Samuel Escobar indicated that three streams of missiology were to be found in evangelical bodies such as the Lausanne Committee and the World Evangelical Fellowship: first, *post-imperial* missiology of Britain and Europe; second, *managerial* missiology of the United States and some places in Latin America; and, third, *critical missiology from the periphery* (i.e., Latin America, Asia and Africa) [Escobar 1991, 315-29]. Escobar pointed to John Stott's "holism" as one example of post-imperial missiology; to Donald McGavran's Church Growth movement as being representative of managerial missiology; and to Rene Padilla's missiological Christology as an instance of "critical missiology from the periphery."

I would suggest that, when examined closely, much of the critical missiology from Asia and Africa, yes, but especially Latin America (including Padilla's "missiological Christology") has been intended to make American evangelical missions become more socio-politically concerned and involved. I would further suggest that that is exactly what has happened to a significant degree. Why? For many reasons, among them (1) a lowered view of the authority of Scripture; (2) a *laissez faire* approach to the interpretation of Scripture; (3) a lessened interest in orthodox doctrine, and (4) the prodding of certain Christian leaders from the majority world, especially Latin America. As a result it seems to me that North American evangelical missiology can now be divided into basically two—not three, or four or five but primarily two—main streams or groups. One group thinks of Christian mission as being a broad enterprise encompassing all those good things that the Church and its missions are doing, or should be doing, in the world. The other group still holds to the more narrow and traditional view that the Christian mission basically has to do with world evangelization—with proclaiming the gospel and planting New Testament churches. Other ministries may indeed be both Christian and important but they are "secondary" or "supporting" and not the heart of Christian mission.

This brings us to a very sticky wicket if not an impasse. Four of the most brilliant evangelical leaders of the past half century changed their mind as to the right answer to this issue at just the time of life when their judgment should have been at once most informed and most incisive. Furthermore, evangelicals have now arrived at precisely that hour in missions

history when choices such as this one may well set the pattern for this 21st century. Please note, then, that the subject of this essay is not “The Changing of the Guard,” though that would be a most relevant topic. It is, rather, “The Changings of the Guards.” My aims are, first, to highlight the general missiological direction taken by these four evangelical scholars in their later years and then, second, to make an abbreviated evaluation designed to clarify important issues and encourage the “guards” and “guides” of tomorrow to make wise choices when contemplating future mission.

Before we launch into that discussion please note the limitations of this essay. First, that which follows is in part based on personal interaction with these four colleagues. It is also based on an examination of but a very limited number of their writings deemed to be most germane to future mission and missiology. Second, the changed thinking of these scholars as I understand their thinking is presented in the first part of this essay; my personal reflections are offered after that. I proceed in this fashion to enable auditors/readers to come to their own conclusions relatively unencumbered by this author’s opinion. Then, if they so desire, they can proceed to the second part of this essay and compare their conclusions with mine. Third, this essay represents a work in process. This author is open to corrections and suggestions for improvement from any and all sources.

Part I: Changings in the Missiological Thinking of Four Evangelical Scholars

Changes in the Missiology of Donald Anderson McGavran

As a mission strategist, Donald McGavran was certainly one of the premier missiologists of the 20th century. Originally he went to India with the Disciples of Christ as an educational missionary. He once remarked to me that he had been in India for years before he realized that Indians could become Christians by entering through any door other than the door of education. But in India he came into contact with the Methodist Bishop Waskom Pickett and his studies of what was then termed “mass movements” to Christ in that land. Subsequently Dr. McGavran himself became first a student of, and then one of the world’s leading authorities on, the growth of the church around the world. In 1955 he published a small but ground-breaking book, *The Bridges of God*, in which he dealt with People Movements in the New Testament and in Christian history [McGavran 1955]. Then, in 1957, he moved his Institute of Church Growth to Fuller Theological Seminary where it became the School of World Mission of which he was dean. A vigorous exponent of classical mission with its emphasis on evangelism and church development, he soon became mentor to a whole generation of evangelical missionaries.

Dr. McGavran was no stranger to criticism. Latin evangelicals such as Dr. Escobar who categorized his missiology as being “managerial,” were not alone in their criticism. His Church Growth school of thought was often criticized as being based more on the social sciences than on Sacred Scripture. And when he and his associate, Dr. Alan Tippett, attempted to base church growth principles more solidly on Scripture, their attempts were sometimes looked upon with a measure of suspicion. But Dr. McGavran was absolutely convinced that God wanted the world’s peoples to be discipled and gathered into growing churches. He could abide criticism. What bothered him much, much more was the kind of missiology that occupied itself with every sort of noble enterprise other than “finding lost sheep, and folding and feeding them” so they could become devoted members of the church and productive members of society.

Perhaps one of the most devastating and mind-changing episodes of Dr. McGavran’s long career was the treatment accorded him and his concern for the unevangelized at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Uppsala in 1968. Long before that time the theme chosen for the Assembly was, “Behold I Make All Things New”—a theme designed to highlight what God is doing in the world and to call upon the church to join him in the doing of it. Over long months Dr. McGavran prodded Assembly organizers and leaders to give

consideration to the question, “What of the Two Billion?”—a reference to over two billion people of the world who, it was reckoned, had not heard the gospel of Christ. Largely ignoring Dr. McGavran and his question, organizers augmented the Assembly theme with the slogan “Let the World Set the Agenda” and invited the pop singer, Pete Seeger, to sing the popular song, “Pie in the Sky When You Die.” Dr. McGavran was not the only one who was deeply disturbed and decried this mockery of the Christian gospel, but he was one of them [See Petersen and Petersen 2000, 110].

Long before Uppsala while still in India, Donald McGavran had changed his mind as to the nature of mission and the way in which the peoples of the world experience what he termed “redemption and lift.” Now about half a century later in the 1970’s and 80’s, his experience at Uppsala and a variety of personal experiences and associations conspired to occasion another significant change in his thinking. That later change took a variety of forms made apparent in another little book *The Clash Between Christianity and Culture* [McGavran 1974], a late-appearing monograph entitled “Missions Face a Lion” [McGavran, 1988b], and several personal letters addressed to this author. [especially McGavran 1988a] Several features of this later “change of mind” are especially important here.

A renewed commitment to a “high view of Scripture.” Dr. McGavran held that the entire Bible—“the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament”—is the inspired and infallible Word of God. Apart from the Bible it is impossible to know about the “. . . purposes of God, the hope of immortality, or the victory of good over evil.” The Bible is not culture-bound: its words are the words of men but also the words of God and its understandings are not limited by the understandings of the ancient times in which they were written. Based on that understanding, Dr. McGavran wrote

Intelligent discussion of cultures and Christianity must be accompanied by a clear statement of whether or not the speakers believe in the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. *But more must be said than this. Most Christians claim to believe in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, but they believe it in different ways. Consequently, their clear statement must also describe the way in which they believe in the Bible. Their doctrines of revelation and inspiration must be stated before their pronouncements can be evaluated* [McGavran, 1974, 52; emphasis mine].

A renewed commitment to the indispensable linkage between sound theology and authentic mission. Dr. McGavran became convinced that the only theology that will sustain Great Commission mission is a theology that takes seriously biblical teachings having to do with the lostness of mankind, the uniqueness of Christ, the necessity of conversion, the “perfecting” of the saints, and the establishment of churches that are truly Christian. In fact, in order to enable evangelical missiologists to discuss Christian mission without being obliged to digress into subjects necessitated by lack of agreement on cardinal Christian doctrines, he urged the formation of a “society of *Christian* missiology.” In that regard, he came to believe that both the older Association of Evangelical Professors of Missions and the newer American Society of Missiology were ill-conceived. In one of his letters he wrote as follows:

I want to lay before you, David, a very important item. The evangelical professors of missions have an organization which is not really called missiology. I think that that is a grave mistake. I think that the evangelical professors of missions need to establish a nationwide organization called openly and courageously “The American Society of Christian Missiology.”

You see what has happened is that, when the present American Society of Missiology was formed, it took in—against my advice—both Roman Catholic missiologists and conciliar missiologists. Thus, The American Society of Missiology seems to say that missiology is everything done outside the four walls of the church. The net result is that the heart of all missiology, which is the discipling of segment after segment of the world's population, has been gravely neglected by the present American Society of Missiology. Indeed, they would probably denounce any idea that the heart of missiology is preaching the gospel with the intent to win people away from the worship of stones, idols, ideas, power, sex, money and success to the worship of the true and living God as portrayed in the Bible [McGavran 1988a].

A decision to identify with—and lend full support to—evangelical efforts that share the above convictions and are devoted to classical mission with its emphasis on evangelism and church growth. Dr. McGavran called this kind of mission “Great Commission mission.” Sub-orthodox theology is its enemy but not its only enemy. A view of mission that is too broad is also its enemy. If the former is characterized as “a low view of Scripture and a high view of culture” in *The Clash Between Christianity and Culture*, it is the latter that is depicted in his monograph “Missions Face a Lion.” [McGavran 1988b]. In that monograph McGavran reconstructs the history of missions in the modern era (especially that of the 20th century) as developing in two very different streams or groups of missionaries with two very different understandings of Christian mission. He writes,

The first group of missionaries held that mission is discipling men and women and segment of society after segment of society, people after people, caste after caste. The second group of Christians held that mission is helping men and women of all religions and all segments of society to live better lives. Mission is famine relief, mission is development of communities, mission is doing good works by medicine, education, agriculture, and the like. . . .

The difference between these two understandings of the missionary task was clear. The first held that justice and racial equality are excellent goals, desired by God, and that the best way to get them is to lead large numbers of people in every nation to become practicing Christians filled with the Holy Spirit and directed by the Bible. The second held that mission is helping man and women of every religion, particularly Christians, to act more justly in their daily lives and to be more brotherly to the Africans, Asians, Europeans, and Americans in the midst of them.

In short, is mission primarily evangelism, or is it primarily all efforts to improve human existence? [McGavran 1988b, 5].

Changes in the Missiology of John R. W. Stott

Perhaps because of his association with Intervarsity and the Urbana conventions but for other reasons as well, John Stott has generally been considered to be pretty much in step with American evangelical missions thinking even though Dr. Escobar identifies his “holistic missiology” as being “post-imperial.” But Dr. Escobar is probably correct at this point. Two aspects of Dr. Stott's missiological thinking would seem to be germane here. First, in the middle 1970s Dr. Stott announced a change of mind vis-à-vis his understanding of the Great Commission that was out of step with much of American evangelical thinking at that time. He openly announced that change in his 1975 book *Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should be Doing Now* and confirmed it in a similar, but much later, publication. [see Stott 1975 and 1992]. Second, in 1988 Dr. Stott engaged a leading Liberal, David L Edwards, in a dialogue in which he disclosed his views of hell and judgment, eschatology and the Kingdom,

and the fate of the unevangelized [Edwards and Stott 1988]. To these matters we now turn, considering first issues having to do with Scripture and eschatology and, after that, the nature of Christian mission.

An inerrantist understanding of the inspiration of Scripture. A notable feature of Dr. Stott's approach to *all* matters having to do with church and mission is his clear stand on the inerrancy of Scripture. In his forthrightness at this point, later made clear in his dialogue with Dr. Edwards, he actually presaged Dr. McGavran's call for clarity as to the *kind* of authority missiologists ascribe to the Bible. [See Edwards and Stott 1988, 102-105] Then, still later in his career he writes,

The Bible does not just *contain* the gospel; it *is* the gospel. Through the Bible God is himself actually evangelizing, that is, communicating the good news to the world. You will recall Paul's statement about Gen. 12:3 that "the scripture . . . preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham" (Gal. 3:8; RSV). All Scripture preaches the gospel; God evangelizes through it [Stott 1992b].

The importance of Dr. Stott's inerrantism and his high view of Scripture becomes evident when, whether we agree with his interpretation of the biblical text or not, we nevertheless observe the seriousness and scrupulousness with which he treats biblical texts having to do with the mission of the church.

Hell and annihilation ("conditional immortality"). When and how Dr. Stott came to believe as he does about certain end time events relating to Christian mission is not clear. What is clear is that, for his own reasons, he did not make his view on hell and annihilation public until very late in his career. In any event, in his dialogue with Dr. Edwards he states his belief that New Testament passages concerning hell are not to be understood literally but rather as banishment from the presence of God that will be "real, terrible and eternal." Dr. Edwards is not satisfied with that answer so Dr. Stott replies,

You press me . . . to go beyond this. You rightly say that I have never declared publicly whether I think hell, in addition to being real, terrible and eternal, will involve the experience of everlasting suffering. . . . Will the final destiny of the impenitent be eternal conscious torment, 'forever and ever,' or will it be a total annihilation of their being? [Edwards and Stott 1988, 314].

Stott answers that question in a way that is not characteristic of evangelicalism in general. He says that the traditional position is "eternal conscious punishment" but that "tradition must yield to the supreme authority of Scripture." He then proceeds to make a biblical case for "conditional immortality" according to which eternal life is given to penitential believers only and that only believers are immortal. He makes extended arguments for this position from language, imagery, justice and universalism. (Edwards and Stott 1988, 315ff) For example, he notes that the "vocabulary of destruction" (Gr. *apoleia*) is quite generally used in the New Testament to refer to the final state of perdition and that the word very often implies termination.

The fate of the unevangelized. If doctrines having to do with hell and judgment are so unsavory as to make Dr. Stott understandably reluctant to address them—and they are—the matter of God's final disposition of those who have never had a meaningful hearing of the gospel is equally or more so. To explain his thinking concerning those who have never heard of Christ

and therefore never had opportunity to respond to him, Dr. Stott resorts to four considerations [See Edwards and Stott 1988, 20-29].

1. Apart from the intervention of God, *all human beings* are perishing (Gr. *appollumenoi*). This is their present, not their future state. They may yet hear and believe.
2. *Human beings* cannot save themselves. Christians cannot. Non-Christians cannot. Self-salvation is out. Even Cornelius—described as righteous, generous, pious, and respectable—had to be saved (Acts 10).
3. Jesus Christ is the only Saviour. “He has no peers, no rivals, no successors.”
4. Given the above three statements, Dr. Stott’s fourth point consists mainly of questions and negations. He cannot agree, for example, with the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* of John Paul II (1979) to the effect that every man is redeemed by Christ irrespective of whether he knows it or not. He cannot agree with those who interpret the sheep and goats passage in Matthew chapter 25 as teaching that, in the end, those who treat others well will be saved. Neither can he agree with those who say that God knows who would be saved if they were to hear the gospel, and saves on that basis; nor with those who speculate that everyone will have opportunity to believe at the moment of dying or after death; nor with Sir Norman Anderson and others who say that those who cry out for mercy from a God whom they dimly perceive will be saved. Having said all of this, Dr. Stott describes his own position as agnostic but hopeful in view of Abraham’s question, “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25) and John’s vision of the redeemed being “a great multitude that no-one could count” (Rev. 7:9).

Eschatology and the Kingdom. With respect to eschatological questions in general and those having to do with the Kingdom in particular, Dr. Stott accepts the criticism that evangelicals often tend to be both too interested in eschatological passages of Scripture and too literalistic in their interpretations rather than viewing these passages as prods to holiness, service, witness and hope. Interpretations of prophetic passages having to do with the last days should not be made tests of orthodoxy. Nevertheless, not all evangelicals who understand prophecies of the end times as indicative or what is actually going to happen are “nincompoops.”

With that as a starting-point, Dr. Stott proceeds quite meticulously to elaborate the differences between preterist, futurist and historicist (and recent “successivo-parallelist”) interpretations of the Book of Revelation; between premillennial, amillennial and postmillennial views of the Kingdom; and between still other interpretive differences with regard to the Kingdom of God. [Edwards and Stott 1988, 306-12]. Unfortunately, he does not speak concerning his own position with the precision and clarity with which he explains various eschatologies though he does give indication of being amillennialist. His treatment of such questions would seem to be intended to answer the accusations of liberals on the one hand, and establish common ground between evangelicals on the other.

1. As for the Book of Revelation, its message is concerned with the age-long conflict between the lamb and the dragon, the Church and the world, Jerusalem and Babylon. That conflict has had many manifestations and will have more. The assurance is that Christ will be victorious. Christ is both reigning now and coming soon.
2. As for the millennium question, amillennialists interpret the “thousand years” in Revelation 20 as symbolic of a long but unspecified time during which Christ reigns (though not “on earth”); certain “witnesses” reign with him; and Satan is bound. Both postmillennialists and amillennialists interpret the binding of Satan (Rev. 20) in terms of the post-resurrection missionary advance of the church in which people of all nations are being delivered from deceptions and gathered into Christ’s church (Matt. 28:18-20). Dr. Stott believes this “reconstruction” to be reasonable [Edwards and Stott, 1988, 309].

3. As for the Olivet Discourse, it is by no means certain that Jesus (or Paul) held to the mistaken notion that the end had to come very soon. On the contrary, as inerrantists affirm, Jesus confessed that he himself did not know “that day or hour” (Mark 13:32). However, Jesus did contrast “all of these things” which would happen in his generation with “that day and hour” which only the Father knew (Mark 13:30-32). Jesus’ emphasis was two-fold. First, his coming would be a “global, divine and cataclysmic climax to history.” Second, in spite of “heralding signs” such as the evangelization of the world, his emphasis was that believers should be watchful and ready for his coming.

Holistic mission—a revised understanding of the Great Commission. If Dr. Stott’s views concerning future judgment and certain related matters have been relatively unknown and therefore not much of a factor in the thinking of American evangelicals, his holism is a very different matter. The socio-political concern of Latin Evangelicals (“critical missiology from the periphery”!) at the World Congress on Evangelism in Lausanne in 1974 undoubtedly played a role in his changed position on the Great Commission as well as in the inclusion of a statement on social responsibility in the Lausanne Covenant. For his part, very soon after Lausanne, Dr. Stott made it very clear that he had changed his mind in his book *The Christian Mission in the Modern World* referred to above. [Stott 1975] John Stott had adopted a holistic understanding of Christian mission.

“Holism” in missiology has a variety of meanings. In this context I use the term to refer to the idea that Christian mission necessarily entails (or the gospel somehow includes, or the Great Commission somehow requires) the elimination or alleviation of suffering, poverty, oppression and injustice. Dr. Stott himself does not really define the term in the book referenced here, but a summary of his new view as expressed in *Christian Mission in the Modern World* reveals it to be basically holistic, though not as radically so as that of many other holists [See Hesselgrave 2005, 117ff]. His holism is more restrained (evangelism is given a “certain priority” in his new view of Christian mission) and the change of mind involved in its adoption can be encapsulated in four basic statements [See especially Stott 1975, 23-35].

1. Dr. Stott defines “biblical mission” in the following terms:

“Mission” describes rather everything that the church is sent into the world to do. “Mission” embraces the church’s double vocation of service to “the salt of the earth” and the “light of the world.” For Christ *sends* his people into the earth to be its salt, and *sends* his people into the world to be its light (Matt. 5:13-16) [Stott 1975, 30-31].

Dr. Stott considers this “salt of the earth” duty so intrinsic to mission that, if the community goes bad, the blame should be laid not on the community but at the door of the church!

2. Previously Dr. Stott, like most traditional evangelicals, believed Matthew 28:16-20 to be the most crucial statement of the Great Commission. Now he had come to believe John 20:21 (“As the father hath sent me so send I you”) to be most crucial because in using the words “as” and “so” Christ deliberately made his mission the *model* for ours.

3. We cannot “copy” Christ in providing salvation. “We are not saviors.” So we must begin with something more general such as the fact that Christ came to serve in deed as well as in word. This means that social (or socio-political) service is a more or less co-equal *partner* of evangelism in biblical mission. I say “more or less” because Stott agrees with the Lausanne Covenant when it says (rather ambiguously) that “. . . in the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary” [Stott 1975, 35].

4. The nature of Jesus' mission as indicated in Luke 4:18-19 and the Great Commandment to love our neighbor requires that we be concerned for our neighbor's total welfare. This adds a political dimension to our social concern, i.e., ". . . the quest for better social structures in which peace, dignity, freedom and justice are secured for all men" [Stott 1975, 30].

The Changed Missiology of Carl F. H. Henry

Like Dr. Stott and unlike Drs. McGavran and Winter, Dr. Henry was principally a Bible scholar/theologian, not a missiologist as such. But also like Dr. Stott, Dr. Henry had a deep and abiding concern for Christian missions and world evangelization. Undoubtedly that concern stemmed from primarily from his commitment to Christ and from his understanding of Scripture. But after reading Helga Henry's carefully written biography of her father and pioneer missionary to Gabon, Carl Bender, (for which I was privileged to contribute the Foreword) I became aware of the impact of her missionary background on Carl Henry as well as on Helga Henry herself. Along with many other influences, it found expression in Dr. Henry's frequent references to the mission of the church; his participation in mission conferences; his involvement with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Foundation; and in Billy Graham's choice of him to head up the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin in 1966 (precursor of Lausanne I and the Lausanne Movement).

Whether one would want to say that Dr. Henry changed his mind over the years is perhaps debatable. Certainly he always carried with him a significant concern for human need and social change as demonstrated in the part he played in the ministries of World Vision and Charles Colson's Prison Fellowship. However, at the very least, it does seem clear that there was a change of emphasis in his thinking with the passing years. And it seems that, as the evangelical movement evolved, Dr. Henry became increasingly convinced that evangelical leaders, churches, missions and schools are gradually relinquishing some cardinal truths of Divine revelation and that, as a result, their impact upon Western society is lessening and their commitment to world evangelization is diminishing. There are a number of quite clear indicators of this change in his thinking if, indeed, we are warranted to speak of it in those terms.

An early emphasis on social responsibility. It is intriguing that one of Dr. Henry's earliest writings—and one that, along with Dr. McGavran's *Bridges of God*, is considered to be one of the 100 most influential Christian books published in America in the 20th century—was his *The Uneasy Conscience of Fundamentalism* [Henry 1947; see also Petersen and Petersen, 2000]. Considering the fact that most of Dr. Henry's vast corpus—including his *magnum opus* six-volume set—has to do with divine revelation, why is it that this early book on social responsibility is the one that seems to be most generally known and cited? Could it be that the answer to that question lies more in the bent of American culture and churches than in the mind of Dr. Henry himself? Perhaps so.

However that may be, *The Uneasy Conscience of Fundamentalism* was, in effect, an indictment of fundamentalism on the one hand and a warning and exhortation directed toward fellow members of the newly formed National Association of Evangelicals on the other. Fundamentalists had become so preoccupied with their opposition to liberalism and the Social Gospel that they had rendered themselves incapable of addressing the social needs of American society. As intimated above, Dr. Henry urged evangelicals to fulfill their divinely appointed social responsibilities and to do so even if it became necessary to join with non-Christians in the effort.

The church as the locus of the Kingdom of God. Just a year before he chaired the Berlin Congress, Dr. Henry published *The God Who Shows Himself*—a very different sort of book [Henry 1965]. In that book he picks up on some mission themes that had been very much a part of the agenda of fundamentalism—the mission of Jesus, the relation between Kingdom and church, and the nature of Christian mission, for example. Concerning the relationship between Kingdom mission and the mission of the Church, he concludes that, at his first coming, Jesus revealed the Kingdom in his person, preached it in his gospel, presented it to his people, and taught his disciples to pray for its arrival. At his second coming, Christ will answer the prayer for the Kingdom, bring the Kingdom, and establish his rule on earth. In fact, Dr. Henry takes considerable pain to contrast his view of the Kingdom with that of the “old liberal theology” according to which “The Kingdom is . . . defined as a life of humanitarian idealism;” and in which “Gone is the supernatural Jesus, the supernatural atonement, and supernatural regeneration.” Dr. Henry affirms his belief that “The closest approximation of the Kingdom of God today is the church, the body of regenerate believers that owns the crucified and risen Redeemer as its Head.” [Henry 1965, 88]

According to Dr. Henry, the church’s *mission* is to evangelize the world by preaching the gospel, converting men and women to Christ, instructing them in the faith, and forming them into responsible churches. The church’s *problem* is that many of its own members are unregenerate and remain outside the Kingdom, and most others are not taking the Great Commission seriously enough to evangelize the earth! [Henry 1965, 102]

Paganism in western culture and churches. It may be more than coincidental that Dr. Henry’s *Twilight of a Great Civilization* was published in 1988, the very year that Dr. McGavran urged the formation of a “Society of *Christian* Missiology.” [Henry 1988] In this book Dr. Henry uses the kind of terminology and writing style in speaking of the church and its mission that is calculated to impact ordinary church people. He speaks of the arrival of “new barbarians” who equate success with material goods, sex and status rather than with the values of the Sermon on the Mount. He even speaks of these new barbarians as being present, not only in American society, but in the church itself. He speaks concerning the relapse of the church into a kind of “paganism” where the truth of God, the authority of Scripture and the power of redemption have been lost. *And he accuses the church of being preoccupied with the changing of social structures when it ought to be burdened for the evangelization of the world!*

A plea to recover Christian belief. Most revealing of the mind and heart of Dr. Henry during his declining years was one of my last meetings with him. As I recall, only a few Trinity colleagues were present. Dr. Henry requested that one of us retrieve a box of books from his car. That book proved to be *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief: The Rutherford Lectures*. [Henry 1990] Dr. Henry explained its importance in a few words; said that he had multiple copies; and offered us as many copies as we could put to good use. I took only four copies but have often wished that I had taken many more because that little book unveils the still lucid thinking of one of the ageing but truly great evangelical minds of the 20th century.

Originally given in 1989 in Rutherford House—a research and publishing center in Edinburgh, Scotland—*Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief* contains much the same message as *The Twilight of Civilization* now delivered in terms and enhanced by conceptual history such as should commend it to the very best scholarship whether secular or religious. It may be that a one- or two-sentence summary of the main theses of this important book will encourage a reading of it even though such an approach cannot begin to do justice to its contents. The four theses are:

1. Influenced by speculative theories, Christian scholars have retained Christian principles only piecemeal and in so doing have sacrificed basic Christian doctrines to the point

where neo-paganism routinely leaves its mark on Western learning. Recovery of a comprehensive Christian world- and life-view is absolutely essential.

2. Empiricism and existentialism having deeply penetrated evangelicalism during the past century, deductive theology must now take precedence over inductive theology. Recognizing that God's Spirit uses truth as a means of persuasion and confers personal assurance as a gift, the roles of presuppositional theology, rational consistency and the Biblical canon are nevertheless essential if we are to avoid fideism and mere theological probability.

3. The Protestant Reformers are to be applauded for their understanding of the existence of God, of the world and of other selves as being pre-philosophical. Building on this understanding, Dr. Henry elaborates certain axioms that underlie the core beliefs of Christianity and also the role of logical consistency as a negative test of truth.

4. A resurgence of evangelical interest in systematic theology and a growing awareness of the importance of more theological depth are to be commended and encouraged. "Without clear and credible doctrinal directives, Christian experience fades in conviction, even as doctrinal assent devoid of personal appropriation spells spiritual impoverishment." [Henry 1990, xi]

Dr Henry sees little hope for a society that attempts to build civilization on godless foundations; or for a church that attempts to fulfill its mission on any basis other than the Word of God. He concludes the book by writing, "Echoing from Creation to Calvary to Consumation, God's eternal Word invites a parched humanity to the Well that never runs dry, to the Water of Life that alone truly and fully quenches the thirst of stricken pilgrims" [Henry 1990, 114].

Changes in the Missiology of Ralph D. Winter

Few missiologists are gifted with the creativity and versatility of mind possessed by Ralph D. Winter. Of the numerous innovative and helpful ideas and enterprises for which he will be remembered, none could be expected to exceed those connected with his contributions to world evangelization and the growth of the church worldwide. Following his service on the mission field he became associated with Dr. McGavran and his School of Mission and Church Growth at Fuller. From there he went on to establish the U. S. Center for World Mission along with some of its most prominent ministries including William Carey Library, William Carey International University, the Insight course of study, the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement program and much more. His name is inseparably linked with the book, *The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years 1945-1969* [Winter 1975]; his plea to reach unreached peoples delivered at Lausanne I, and his leadership role along with Dr. Thomas Wang in the World Evangelization by A.D. 2000 and Beyond movement. The contributions of Ralph Winter to world evangelization and the growth of the Church worldwide has been nothing short of phenomenal. All of us are in his debt, and I more than most.

Most of my readers will be at least somewhat familiar with another part of the Ralph Winter story. While still in her prime Dr. Winter's first wife Roberta—like his second wife Barabara, a most gifted and committed helpmate—contracted, and eventually succumbed to, Multiple Myeloma. Subsequently, the dedicated chairman of the board of William Carey University, Dr. Kenneth Mulholland, died of the same disease. Ultimately Dr. Winter himself contracted both Multiple Myeloma and Lymes Disease. By that time and in the providence of God, however, medical science had yielded a new and as yet experimental treatment that has arrested the Multiple Myeloma and made continuing ministry possible.

In late August 2006 almost thirty individuals including U. S. Center staff personnel but also specialists in missiology, education and the sciences received an invitation from Dr. Winter to attend a consultation to be held in Techny, Illinois. The larger concern had to do with the future of the recently established Roberta Winter Institute. But the specific purpose was to engage a discussion and evaluation of Winter's ". . . radically different interpretation of the Lord's Prayer and the Great Commission" [Winter 2006]. That purpose proved to be extremely

important for three reasons that have subsequently become apparent. First, Dr. Winter's missionary strategy is rapidly and decisively taking an entirely new direction. Second, the scientific, historical and philosophical components of this new direction are crucial and must be considered. Third, it is now clear, however, that final determination of the validity or invalidity of this new direction must be determined on theological grounds—on whether or not this "radically different interpretation of the Lord's Prayer and the Great Commission" can be sustained hermeneutically and exegetically.

Succinctly stated, my understanding of Dr. Winter's new view of the Christian mission is that it requires us to do more than preach what he chooses to refer to as the ". . . simple gospel of saving souls and planting churches." He suggests that the "Gospel" in the New Testament usually refers to the Gospel of the Kingdom. A "Kingdom Gospel" requires us to meet basic human needs for education, food, water and medicine. Nor does it stop there. It also requires us to undertake the kind of organized research and organized undertakings that combat evil in all its forms--violence, injustice, poverty, environmental exploitation, drug-trafficking and disease (especially those aimed at the eradication of disease-bearing microbes but even the restoration of vicious animals to their original non-carnivorous state)—thereby transforming society and the present world. In Dr. Winter's present thinking, all of these undertakings are included when Christian mission is (rightly) understood as "Kingdom Mission" or, more precisely, "Kingdom of God Mission" or "Fourth Era Kingdom Mission" (see below) [Winter 2008].

What follows is my attempt to overview the creative and expansive thinking that has led Dr. Winter to this understanding. My thoughts are based on primary sources only—on personal correspondence with Dr. Winter; handouts provided to invitees at the consultation sponsored by the Roberta Winter Institute and held in Techny, Illinois on October 23-24, 2006 [See Winter 2005; Dr. Winter's published article on "The Future of Mission" and a follow-up chapter on that subject scheduled for publication in a forthcoming book, *God's Initiative in Mission* of which I am co-editor with Dr. Ed Stetzer [Winter 2007]; and a lecture "Seven Men, Four Eras" delivered at the U.S. Center, March 11, 2008 [Winter 2008]. I am both humbled and sincerely grateful to Dr. Winter for his willingness to include me in the select company of respondents and recipients of these materials.

The overview of Fourth Era Kingdom Mission that follows has been reviewed by Dr. Winter who has affirmed its soundness but has kindly suggested several changes that have been incorporated into the text.

Some Important Components.

1. Cosmological components. As Dr. Winter sees it, microbiologically-induced disease is an insidious expression of cosmological warfare between two Kingdoms--the Kingdoms of Light and Darkness, Good and Evil, God and Satan. This warfare does not lend itself to the kind of dualistic ambiguity found in Zoroastrianism, however, because when Satan appears on the scene he appears as a being created by God albeit created with the extraordinary capacity to initiate sin and suffering in all their multifarious forms.

2. Paleontological components. Building on Merrill Unger who was a Department Chairman at Dallas Theological Seminary and on the basis of "contemporary scientific consensus," Dr. Winter understands the world as we know it to have evolved over perhaps 500 million years that were characterized by great violence, massive eruptions and a series of cataclysmic "extinction events" triggered by collisions of asteroids with our earth--all of this preceding Genesis 1:1 and resulting in the destruction of most life and the generally chaotic condition of the whole world including that part of the world dealt with in the Genesis account.

3. Historical components. Winter's new understanding rests primarily on his interpretation of some basic periods and primary aspects of human history—biblical and modern. Genesis 1 is the story of a new beginning in which the dust settles, light returns, and non-

carnivorous animal life and non-violent human life are created. However, humans are seduced by Satan, violence returns, and the relatively short history of the Bible ensues. Critical to the history of the Bible, especially from a missionary perspective, are such things as the global extent of evil, the call of Abraham, and God's promise to bless the world through Abraham and his offspring. From beginning to end the Old Testament period was characterized by Divine redemption and human advance, but through the kind of violence, pestilence and suffering (both animal and human) occasioned by the attacks of Satan. Crucial to the New Testament period are the coming of Christ, the accomplishment of his redemptive and Kingdom mission on earth, and the commissioning of his followers to fulfill his Kingdom mission.

This biblical history is so vital that we must return to it below. First, however, we will fast-forward to Dr. Winter's account of the roles played by post-Reformation First and Second Inheritance Evangelicals in the on-going "Kingdom war" between God and Satan.

According to Dr. Winter, First Inheritance Evangelicalism was represented by the likes of John and Charles Wesley, William Wilberforce and others related to the 18th century Evangelical Awakening in England and the simultaneous Great Awakening and Second Awakening in America. It was characterized by a dual emphasis on the earthly and heavenly, the social and the personal. In the United States, however, it branched into two "reductionisms" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One reductionism among upper class influential people emphasized the importance of social concern—God's will *on earth*—and was "less likely to call itself Evangelical." The other reductionism emphasized the necessity of personal salvation coupled with an other-worldly focus *on heaven*. D. L. Moody and Billy Sunday were representative of this mainly non-college movement.

It was this second reductionism that became mainstream Evangelicalism in America. In many cases it embraced the "naïve dispensationalism" of the Englishman, J. N. Darby, and the American scholar, C. I. Scofield. It tended to label those who exercised social concern as *liberals*; it looked upon the word "Kingdom" with a good deal of suspicion; and it evolved a theology of "this world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through." It was elaborated into a great Bible school movement, and its Bible schools educated most of the evangelical missionaries of the early part of the 20th century. Only recently has it attained social influence through the conversion of Bible institutes into colleges and universities.

4. Elenctic/apologetic/polemic components. Dr. Winter has nothing to say about elenctics as such but one of his primary concerns is that Christianity be a "digestible" and believable option for educated people in our globalized world. It is to that end, for example, that he takes a page from Merrill Unger and develops his evolutionary cosmology. It is to that end that he hypothesizes that Satan, not in any sense God himself, who was the originator of evil and therefore suffering. It is to that end that he is sympathetic with the position of Gregory Boyd on the question of why bad things happen to good people. And it is to that end he insists that, just so long as the gospel is merely "information" and "words" it will be insufficient and unconvincing, Words without works/deeds have no meaning. However, when accompanied by deeds and works *of the right kind* the proclaimers of the gospel gain credibility and the gospel itself becomes meaningful and persuasive.

The Biblical Foundations.

1. The Promise to Abraham. The familiar promise that the world would be blessed through the offspring of Abraham as recorded in Genesis 12 is extremely significant in Dr. Winter's thinking. Many Second Inheritance Evangelicals have adopted the erroneous notion that Israel's mission was "centripetal" not "centrifugal" and that the nations were blessed by taking the initiative and "coming to" Israel. Dr. Winter insists that Israel's role in the sharing of the promised blessing was divinely intended to be an active, not a passive, role.

2. The Lord's Prayer. Dr. Winter proposes a "radically different interpretation of the Lord's Prayer and the Great Commission." With respect to the Lord's Prayer he repeatedly emphasizes that in the petition "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10) it is *life on earth* that is in view, not *life in heaven*. In this respect he seems to reflect a view similar to that of George Eldon Ladd's idea that the mission of the Church is not just to pray for the coming of the Kingdom or to witness to it but to ". . . display the life of the eschatological kingdom in the present evil age" [Ladd 1974, 337].

3. The Great Commission. Unlike John Stott, Ralph Winter does not depart from the usual reliance on Matthew 28:16-20 as being the most complete and definitive statement of the Great Commission. Instead he seizes upon the phrase, "teaching them to *obey all that I have commanded*" and, in effect, says that "obedience" in this case ultimately requires that both missionaries and their converts undertake the kind the kind of evangelism empowered and made intelligible by the kind of good deeds he now invokes in his own "Kingdom of God Mission."

4. Christ's "Kingdom Mission." Dr. Winter seems to elect Jesus' mission rather than Paul's mission as the primary model for Christian mission in the 21st century even though he claims that this is not at all his thought. In any case, he characterizes Jesus' mission in the familiar terms of Luke 4:18-19 understood as including physical and social terms. He gives special consideration to three additional passages. One of them speaks of Jesus' answer in response to the question of John the Baptist "Go and tell John *what you hear and see . . .*" (Matt. 11:4-5). Then, with reference to the missionary ministry of the Apostle Paul, Dr. Winter quotes Paul's testimony before King Agrippa to the effect that he was sent to Jews and Gentiles "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God . . . (Acts 26:18). Finally, he puts great emphasis on the apostle John's statement that Jesus came to "destroy the works of the devil" (I John. 3:8). In effect he enlarges and extends Christian mission so as to make it inclusive of all kinds of worthy development, ameliorative and restorative efforts.

The Present Hope, Future Prediction and Ultimate Objective.

1. Overcoming "Second Inheritance reductionism." Dr. Winter's hope is that "Second Inheritance reductionism" will be overcome and evangelicals will demonstrate a concern for social transformation and fighting non-human forms of evil such as disease germs. Thinking in terms of the history of modern missions, he advocates a "Fourth Era" which will go beyond efforts to reach the coastlands (the "First Era," initiated by William Carey), inland areas (the "Second Era," inaugurated by Hudson Taylor), and unreached peoples everywhere (the "Third Era," started by Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran). Missionaries of his proposed "Fourth Era" will take up the challenge of reaching great city populations and the great numbers of people who have moved from their homelands to new areas. And they will do so by adopting a theology that no longer separates evangelism and social action but sees both as parts of a single Gospel of the Kingdom that seeks to extend God's will throughout societies rather than on "merely concentrating on getting people saved from their sins."

2. A hopeful prognosis. In Dr. Winter's view, the future of evangelical mission largely depends on the adoption of this strategy. His prognosis is that the chance of this happening and of the inauguration of a "Kingdom Era" (the "Fourth Era") of evangelical missions is good for two reasons. First, the evangelical missionary movement has now become a college/university movement with all the new potential that implies. Second, this "Kingdom Mission" will be undertaken by evangelicals who are *committed to world missions* and they constitute the most promising segment of contemporary evangelicalism.

3. *The missionary objective.* Reflecting the theology/missiology of Dr. John Piper at this point, Dr. Winter's view is that, when all is said *and done* (!) God will be glorified. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your

Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). Dr. Winter adds a certain caveat at this point, however. Our war against evil *clarifies* God's glory, but it does not *complete* it. He does not assume that human effort will abolish evil, just that "the gates of Hell will not prevail against it." Completion of the Kingdom awaits the return of Christ. It is he who will "wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The "Changings of the Guards"—Helpful or Hurtful?

Having come this far in an attempt to explicate critical changes in the missiological thinking of four of my most illustrious contemporaries, I anticipate that some who have been sufficiently patient to travel this far in my explorations will inquire, first, as to my own thinking about these various "changings of the mind" of these mentors of a previous generation of missionaries and missiologists, and, second, why I believe all of this to be of the utmost importance. It is not at all easy to accommodate these aims in a few words, but I feel somewhat comfortable in making the attempt because I have already undertaken a more or less thorough evaluation of relevant topics having to do with Kingdom and Church, holism and prioritism, incarnationalism and representationalism, restrictivism and inclusivism, power encounter and truth encounter, and more in my recent book, *Paradigms in Conflict* (rated No. 1 by Dr. Winter when it was published in 2005), so the details can be examined there and elsewhere [Hesselgrave 2005, 125-35] Furthermore, certain commonalities between the four principals make it possible for me to dwell on differences. For example, all four are committed to the Deity, Saviorhood and Lordship of Christ even though the outworkings of that commitment may be different in each case. All take a high view of Scripture though the degree to which their treatment of Scripture actually reflects a high view differs. All believe that the Christian mission entails evangelism and church development though their changed views either reinforce or diminish the importance of that kind of mission. And so I proceed with some reflections on their changed views and their significance.

Donald A. McGavran's "Great Commission Mission" missiology.

Growing out of long involvement in a mainline denomination and its missionary agency and with the larger ecumenical movement, and later on with some fellow missiologists of a quite different mindset in his academic associations, Dr. McGavran's thinking underwent profound changes toward the end of his long and illustrious career.

With reference to the nature and object of mission, he changed his perspective when serving in India and never wavered. He had taken the narrow view with which his Church Growth school is associated and he never wavered from it. If anything he became more convinced that it was right. In the end he says "quite frankly" that ". . . the purpose of missiology is to carry out the Great Commission," and added that ". . . anything other than that may be a good thing to do, but it is not missiology."

With reference to the authority of Scripture and the importance of the cardinal doctrines of the church, the neglect of both as often alleged earlier on was replaced in his late years by a confessedly "high view of Scripture" and doctrinal commitments that were so strong as to cause him to urge the formation of a truly *Christian* missiological society! The Evangelical Missiological Society, undergirded by a clear statement of Christian faith, is at least an indirect result of McGavran's commitment to the authority and teachings of canonical Scripture as well as "Great Commission Mission." [See the Appendix for a copy of the 1988 letter from Dr. McGavran that was most instrumental in the founding of the E.M.S.]

John R. W. Stott's "Holistic Mission."

Two aspects of biblical revelation are of paramount significance in Dr. Stott's changed missiology. One has to do with the authority of Scripture as the Word of God. The other has to

do with ways in which it is reflected in the change process. The change processes of both Dr. McGavran and Dr. Stott reflect a high view of Scripture, but, but Dr. Stott's takes it upon himself to both defend inerrancy and demonstrate its importance by the meticulous way in which he exegetes the text itself. He models the kind of concern and commitment vis-à-vis biblical authority and interpretation that, if Dr. Henry is correct, must increasingly characterize evangelicals in the future.

At this point, however, I add a caveat. I believe that this kind of commitment and concern is better modeled best in Dr. Stott's pre-Lausanne I missiology with its more traditional understanding of Matthew 28:16-20 than is the case in holistic missiology. I am at a loss to explain why he changed his mind not only so as to make the terse Johannine statement of the Great Commission to be more important than the more complete Matthean statement. I am equally at a loss to explain the exegesis that allows him to interpret that statement in such a way as to make Jesus' mission a model for our own [See Hesselgrave 1990]. Furthermore, though in my estimation Dr. Stott makes a somewhat better case for his "conditional immortality" and his agnosticism as to the destiny of the unevangelized, it has seemed to me that his exegesis is flawed in these cases as well. As to the former, the usual Evangelicals case against annihilation applies. As to the latter, I think that Dr. Kenneth Kantzer was much closer to Scripture when he concluded that the most that can be said on the basis of New Testament teaching is that a person may be immortal until that person has turned her or his back on the light that God has already given.

That having been said, I will not hazard a guess as to why Dr. Stott's changed his interpretation of the Great Commission at Lausanne I in 1974, nor why he did not make his conditional immortality view public until 1988. Though I applaud him for holding to a restrained holism that assigns a "certain priority" to evangelism in Christian mission, I believe that his holism coupled with the emphasis accorded to social action in the Lausanne Covenant has contributed to current confusion as to the nature of the Christian mission by opening the missiological door to an increased emphasis on social transformation and a broadened interpretation of the Great Commission. Dr. Stott changed his mind and, for good or ill, many evangelicals subsequently changed their mind with him.

Carl F. H. Henry's Call to a Recovery of Christian Belief.

At almost every major point, Dr. Henry's theology and missiology is at issue with both the relaxed view of Scripture authority and the expanded understanding of Christian mission that seem to characterize many evangelicals today. As I understand him, it was the diminishment if not abandonment of Scripture authority and Christian beliefs that preceded and precipitated a diminished commitment to the witness of the church, the proclamation of the gospel and the evangelization of the world. It seems to me that that he was correct in taking issue with old liberal denials of the supernatural nature of Jesus, the atonement and regeneration; and also with old Liberal humanitarian and social ideas of the Kingdom. He was also correct in his agreement with the traditional Evangelical view that Jesus' mission as King was to present the Kingdom to Israel, and then to give his life as an atoning sacrifice for sin; that at his second coming he will establish his Kingdom on earth and reign as King. In the interim it is in the responsibility of the church to demonstrate the rulership of Christ in all of its affairs. And it is the church's mission to evangelize the world, convert men and women to Christ and form them into churches. The *main* problem is not that the church is not sufficiently involved in the physical and social needs of mankind. The *main* problem is that the church has too many unregenerate members; has disregarded or discarded too many Christian beliefs; and has not taken the Great Commission with sufficient seriousness and urgency.

Some evangelicals will take issue with Henry's inerrantist position on Holy Scripture, preferring to settle for infallibility. Some who agree with his inerrantism will disagree with his

presuppositionalism, opting rather for evidentialism. Some who will not take issue on either of these counts may nevertheless object to his assessment of the present state of the church, particularly in the U.S. where evangelical church attendance and involvement is relatively high. Nevertheless, I for one would concur with the Warden of Rutherford House, Nigel M. de S. Cameron, when he writes,

From his [Henry's] position at the center of the evangelical world for more than half a century, he is more able than anyone to call us *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, and to do so with passion and intellect alike undiminished by the passage of years—and in a constantly changing world, in which the recovery rather than the mere defense of the faith is now the issue [Henry 1990, vii; emphasis mine].

The “Fourth Era Kingdom Mission” of Ralph D. Winter.

I have great admiration for my friend and colleague, Dr. Ralph Winter, but I have significant concerns with respect to his “Fourth Era Kingdom Mission.” His proposal certainly merits an immediate and much wider evangelical examination than was the case at Techny (October, 2006) for several reasons. First, as one of the premier mission scholars and strategists of the 20th century, Dr. Winter is not only very much alive but vigorously promoting his new Kingdom of God Mission. Secondly, he has a loyal and devoted staff at the U. S. Center, most of whom now support his new strategy as wholeheartedly and enthusiastically as they previously supported his unreached people strategy of a few years ago. Thirdly, as Dr. Winter has said, his newest proposal represents a “radically different interpretation” of some of the most fundamental ideas in the theology and theory of the Christian mission. Almost by definition, “radically different interpretations” require careful evaluation, especially when proposed by someone of Dr. Winter’s stature.

Still speaking very generally, it seems to me that Dr. Winter does not really take into account the reality that some knowledgeable Evangelicals are committed to a young earth and 24-hour day understanding of creation, for example, and simply will not accept his old earth theistic evolutionary theory. Others are convinced that God’s promise to Abraham entails a future earthly kingdom for the nation of Israel and simply will not accept his replacement theology. Again, though many will agree with his apparent amillennial eschatology, many others are decidedly premillennial (of whom some are dispensational) and will not accept it. Again, though it is true that numerous evangelicals will agree with his emphases on Christ’s Kingdom Mission and with his missiological incarnationalism, many others are committed to representationalism and the more traditional understanding of the apostle Paul’s message and ministry as being the biblical model for Christian missions today. And, yet again, when reading Dr. Winter’s affirmations of the contributions of Donald McGavran, Carl F. H. Henry and, yes, John Stott as well, some knowledgeable readers will know that these men would not be in agreement with important aspects of Dr. Winter’s Fourth Era approach and would take exception to his silence with respect to those exceptions. If I am correct in these surmises, it is only a matter of time until those who disagree with his new proposal will have a hearing. At that point, Fourth Era Kingdom Mission may occasion something more than disagreement; it may also occasion division.

That having been said, I will proceed to make brief mention of some specific areas of concern with respect to Fourth Era Kingdom Mission. Readers should know that I am in continued dialogue with Dr. Winter; that he is still in process of refining his proposal; and that it is for that reason that I use the word “concern.”

Some Theological Concerns

Of various theological concerns I will mention only two here. One has to do with Scripture authority; the other with the nature of God.

1. The authority of the Bible. Dr. Winter's reliance on, and usage of, the Bible in formulating his Kingdom Mission are certainly indicative of his high view of Scripture. Nevertheless, when comparing his treatment of the biblical text and his attention to biblical doctrines with that of Dr. McGavran and, especially, Drs. Stott and Henry the difference is immediately apparent. There is little here that is reminiscent of Drs. McGavran's and Henry's clarion call for clarity as to one's commitment to Scripture and scriptural doctrine, and hardly anything that is reminiscent of Dr. Stott's meticulous attention to biblical exegesis.

2. The nature of God and Jesus. As for the Person and purposes of God, it concerns me that Dr. Winter's proposal is greatly indebted to certain aspects of Dr. Gregory Boyd's open theism. For example, Dr. Boyd says that "God looks like Jesus" and then proceeds to describe Jesus and his ministry in terms of "freeing people from evil and misery" and warring against forces that oppress people and resist the good purposes of God" [Boyd 2008]. This understanding of God and Jesus is clearly mirrored in Fourth Era Kingdom Mission, but by no means is it a full portrait of either the Jehovah of the Old Testament or the Jesus of the New. In fact it is so one-dimensional that it comes perilously close to being a caricature.

Some Exegetical Concerns

Dr. Winter's reinterpretations of the Lord's Prayer and the Great Commission are indeed different. The question is, are they valid? [see Winter 2007, 15.]

1. The Lord's Prayer. Dr. Winter's reinterpretation of the Lord's focuses on but one aspect of it—the petition "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and especially the phrase, "*on earth*." His emphasis is not so much that God reigns in *heaven* as that he reigns on *earth*; not so much that *God bring* the Kingdom as that *we extend* the Kingdom; not so much that the Kingdom is *future* as that it be *present*; and not even so much that we *pray* the Lord's Prayer as that we *do* Kingdom work. In his view, it is active involvement in extending the Kingdom in our world that *empowers* the gospel. It seems to me, however, that the gospel itself has power (Rom. 1:16). Also that the text is very clear and straightforward (Matt. 6:9-10). The Lord's *Prayer* is a model *prayer*, not a model *prescription*. And this particular petition is that *God* do something that only *God* can do!

2. The Great Commission. Quite apart from grammatical analysis, Dr. Winter's reinterpretation of the Great Commission places undue emphasis on the phrase "obey all that I have commanded you." His emphasis is not so much on what *missionaries* are to do (except by implication) as on what their *converts* are to do; not so much on *teaching* as on *obeying*, not so much on what is to be *understood* as what is to be *done*. Coupled with the "on earth" focus of the Lord's Prayer, Dr. Winter says that the Great Commission "... implies the conquest of evil." He believes that it is the *obeying* of Christ's commands that the gospel is given meaning. Otherwise the gospel is simply words. [Winter 2007, 15] But to sustain this reinterpretation he will have to prove the grammarians wrong when they say that the sole missionary imperative in this text is "*disciple* the nations" and that this is to be accomplished by *baptizing* and *teaching*. [See, for example, Culver 1984, 148-52) Asserted implications of the phrase "*obey all that I have commanded*." (as well as of the phrase "*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*") such as those of Dr. Winter must be sustained on grounds other than the Great Commission itself.

Some Missiological Concerns.

1. A greatly expanded understanding of the Christian mission. In emphasizing social transformation, holistic ministry, incarnationalism and Jesus' mission (John 4) as a model for our own, it can at least be said that Dr. Winter is certainly in step with much of contemporary

evangelical missiology. However, he goes a step further when he builds Christian mission on the apostle John's words in I John 3:8b: "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." (ESV). This expands mission in such a way as to make it inclusive of almost any activity designed to destroy Satan's nefarious doings in the world. For example, it allows Dr. Winter to make the eradication of disease-bearing microbes the centerpiece of his Fourth Era Kingdom Mission proposal. But it also allows Pastor Rick Warren to make his mission out to be the elimination of poverty in Uganda. Indeed, in the end, it logically allows any committed mission-minded Christian to decide what his or her mission will be!

Let us be clear here. We are indeed engaged in a great struggle between good and evil, between God and Satan. To combat evil and do good to all men is in accord with Scripture and are good things for the *church of Christ* to do to the degree that its resources allow. That is not in dispute. But I believe that Dr. McGavran was right when he said that these endeavors are not, and should not be, the special responsibility of Christian missions and missionaries, nor is the study of them the special province of missiology and missiologists.

2. The eclipse of the eternal in contemporary missiology. It also seems to me that Dr. Winter's reinterpretations tend to turn a biblical value system on its head. They embellish the earthly at the expense of the heavenly, the temporal at the expense of the eternal; the physical at the expense of the spiritual.

Let us be clear here as well. Unlike much of Eastern religion, biblical Christianity affirms both the reality of the material world and the importance of humankind's temporal existence. But, at the same time, Bible writers everywhere insist that the spirit is more important than the body; that the Bread and Water of Life are more important than daily bread and water; and that the world to come is more important than this passing world. As a matter of fact, even if they did not insist upon this, pure logic would do so. Of course, I am not saying that Dr. Winter would deny this. Only that his approach tends to exacerbate a problem that already plagues a great deal of contemporary missiology [See Hesselgrave 2008b]. And it does so in the name of Christian mission. What, then, is the nature and meaning of the Christian mission at its core? At its core it has to do with the relationship between God and his creatures, with their everlasting salvation and his eternal glory. Concerning this, readers do well to consult Dr. Christopher Little's incisive article entitled "What Makes Mission Christian?" [Little 2008].

Some Doxological Concerns

Finally, what about the anticipated outcomes of Dr. Winter's Kingdom Mission proposal with respect to immediate and ultimate goals?

1. The ultimate goal of Christian mission. I believe that all evangelicals will agree with Dr. Winter when he says that the ultimate goal of Christian mission is doxological—to bring glory to God. Most may even be in agreement with the idea that *his kind* of mission as well as mission as more traditionally conceived would bring glory to God. If so, Dr. Winter is certainly to be commended in that regard. But more must be said.

2. The immediate goal of Christian mission. According to Dr. Winter, by speaking about creation in categories provided by a consensus of the scientific community on the one hand, and by accomplishing precedent-setting breakthroughs in medicine, technology, astronomy and other sciences on the other, evangelical missionaries gain credibility and the gospel becomes more believable. It seems to me that his contention is worthy of serious consideration and is at least partly correct [See Hesselgrave 2007]. But only *partly* so because the apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that the "Word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing" and that God uses the foolish, the weak, the low and despised, and even non-entities to bring glory to himself and his Son! (I Cor. 1:18ff). Scripture teaches that both salvation *and* service are divinely orchestrated in ways to bring glory to God alone, both now and forever.

Conclusion

The 200-year era of modern missions has come to a close and we have entered a post-modern era of globalized Christianity. This new era may well witness the long-awaited *parousia* of our victorious Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Until that time advances in Christian mission will not longer be determined or directed from the churches and missions of the West, but rather from the churches and missions of the South and East. If in this time of transition, leaders of evangelical churches, schools, and mission agencies and movements in America desire to make an optimum contribution to future mission they must listen to voices from the past, to “*criticisms from the periphery*” as Samuel Escobar terms them, to each other, and to the voices of Scripture. As for the aging voices of the leaders considered in this essay, it is obvious that they do not speak univocally. But in one way or another, whether positively or negatively, their changed thinking seems to reinforce certain ageless commitments that will be of supreme importance to evangelical missions and missiology in the future.

1. Christian belief is absolutely essential to Christian mission. However inclusive certain conversations and dialogues might become, it will be imperative that evangelicals regularly meet together in venues where a commitment to the Christian faith is not simply assumed but openly avowed, and where orthodox doctrines are not taken for granted but intentionally considered.

2. The nature and meaning of Christian mission will require ongoing study and discussion among evangelicals. Since, as we have seen, the nature of mission is a sensitive matter and the subject of continued controversy, there is a strong inclination to avoid its consideration for the sake of unity. But to do so would be to court disaster. Respectful and courteous discussion among evangelicals who differ is not a recipe for failure but for success.

3. A commitment to the absolute authority of Holy Scripture must be the basis for any and all evangelical missionary undertakings. In the future, Christian mission will be carried out in a world of unrelenting change and increasing complexity. Luther thought of the world as a “pond” and the gospel as a pebble. This generation thinks of globalization as involving a “sea-change”; of the gospel as a “change agent”; and of the Bible as an “anchor.” Perhaps a change of metaphor is now in order. The changing world of tomorrow will be more like a mighty, rushing and raging river with a current forceful enough to drag our biblical anchor, capsize our gospel boat, and drown our missionary crew. We must now not only *drop an anchor* we must *drive a stake* ever deeper into Christian belief and the Eternal Word.

A familiar voice “from the periphery”—that of Ajith Fernando—speaks simply and eloquently to what I have in mind in his recent article “Getting Back on Course” [Fernando 2007]. He notes the trend away from prioritizing evangelism in contemporary missions and missiology. He says that there was a time not too long ago when he thought that this “priority idea” was Western and emanated from a “Western desire to have things nicely lined up in a logical progression.” The tendency among some evangelicals to downplay verbal proclamation and persuading people to receive Christ’s salvation has been a factor in his changed thinking, however. He acknowledges that “Those wanting to follow Christ in seeking and saving the lost will always be despised for their supposed arrogance.” But, taking another look at Scripture, he himself now calls for the kind of priority evidenced in Christ’s words, “For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?” (Matt. 16:26).

In the final analysis, the voices of the Prophets, the Apostles, and Christ himself—not other voices of East or West, North or South, past or present—must be followed in charting the course of Christian mission in the future.

References

- Boyd, Gregory. 2008. "Is God to Blame?" *Missions Frontiers*, 30:2 (March-April): 19-21.
- Culver, Robert D. 1984. *A Greater Commission: A Theology for World Missions*. Chicago: Moody.
- Edwards, David L. and Stott, John. 1988. *Evangelical Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.
- Escobar, Samuel. 1991. "Evangelical Theology in Latin America: The Development of a Missiological Christology." *Missiology: An International Review*, XIX:3 (July) 315-29.
- Fernando, Ajith. 2007. "Getting Back on Course," *Christianity Today* (November): 41-47.
- Healy, Bernadine. 2007. "The Power of the Aging Mind," *U. S. News & World Report*, November 12: 66.
- Henry, Carl F. H. 1947. *The Uneasy Conscience of Fundamentalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- _____. 1965. *The God Who Shows Himself*. Waco, TX: Word.
- _____. 1988. *Twilight of a Great Generation*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.
- _____. 1990. *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief: The Rutherford Lectures* Wheaton, IL. Crossway,
- Hesselgrave, David J. 1990. "Holes in 'Holistic Mission.'" *Trinity World Forum* 15:3 (Spring): 2-5.
- _____. 2005. *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Missions Today*. Grand Rapids: Kregel.
- _____. 2007. "Reasoning Faith and Global Missions: On Reaching Hindus and Hindu-Like Peoples" in Geisler, Norman L. and Meister, Chad V. eds. *Reasons for Faith: Making a Case for the Christian Faith*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway: 381-400.
- _____. 2008a. "Will We Correct the Edinburgh Error?" *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, forthcoming.
- _____. 2008b "The Eclipse of the Eternal in Contemporary Missiology" in *Journal of Evangelical Missiology*, forthcoming.
- Ladd, George Eldon. 1974. *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Little, Christopher A. 2008, "What Makes Mission Christian?" *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*. forthcoming.
- McGavran, Donald A. 1955. *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions*. New York: Friendship.
- _____. 1974. *The Clash Between Christianity and Culture*. Washington D. C.: Canon .
- _____. 1988a. Personal letter to David J. Hesselgrave, (7 April).
- _____. 1988b. "Missions Face a Lion." Manuscript in the possession of David J. Hesselgrave. A version of this manuscript was published as "Missions Face a Lion" in *Missiology: An International Review* 17:3 (1 July 1989), 335-56.
- Petersen, William J. and Petersen, Randy. 2000. *100 Christian Books That Changed the Century* Baker Books (Fleming Revell).
- Pocock, Michael, et al. 2005. *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Scherer, James A. 1993 "Church, Kingdom and *Missio Dei*." In *The Good News of the Kingdom: Mission Theology for the Third Millennium*, ed. by Charles Van Engen, et al., Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis; 83). 1993:83
- John R. W. Stott, 1975. *Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should be Doing Now*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity.
- _____. 1992a. *The Contemporary Christian: Applying God's Word to Today's World*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992)

- _____ 1992b. "The Bible in World Evangelization" in *Perspectives in the World Christian Movement*, rev. ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, gen eds, Pasadena: William Carey. (A3-A9)
- Winter, Ralph D. 1975. *The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years 1945-1969*. Pasadena: William Carey.
- _____ 2005. "Planetary Events and the Mission of the Church." (Donald McClure Lectureship, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 3-4 October).
- _____ 2006. Personal letter of invitation from Ralph D. Winter to David J. Hesselgrave, 26 August.
- _____ 2007. "The Future of Evangelicals in Mission" *Mission Frontiers* 29:5 (Sept.- Oct.): 6- 15; see also Stetzer, Ed and Hesselgrave, David, co-eds. *God's Initiative in Mission*. Nashville: Broadmans, forthcoming.
- _____ 2008. "Seven Men, Four Eras." Lecture delivered at the U.S. Center for World Mission, 11 March.