

RESPONSE TO DR. RALPH D. WINTER'S PAPER

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When I received the request to respond as a Christian anthropologist to Dr. Ralph Winter's paper, "The Highest Priority — Cross-cultural Evangelism," I looked at the title and cabled: "Yes, I'll be delighted," I responded so enthusiastically because I also strongly believe that one of the greatest habitual problems of evangelization and church growth on a worldwide scale is that the church, once established, is again and again tempted to stabilize within a specific homogeneous group, be that a tribe, a culture, a social group or social class in larger stratified societies, and in the process it loses its zeal to witness across cultural boundaries.

When I tried to enter into the reasoning of Dr. Winter's paper, however, ever-increasing inner struggles took hold of me. It grew so acute that I finally telephoned long-distance from Africa to California to discuss my concerns with Dr. Winter. For this reason I could base my reaction not only on the paper itself, which you presumably have all read, but also on the telephone dialogue. Since you did not all share in this dialogue, however, and have had only the original paper, I feel that I must limit myself largely to it. Nevertheless, where it is especially pertinent I will make reference to the telephone dialogue.

Before I begin my response proper, however, it seems wise for me to try to summarize briefly the theses of Dr. Winter's paper, because some of you have read it some time ago and its contents may be somewhat hazy in your own minds. Furthermore, I want you to be aware of what I personally extracted from the paper, because you may not have understood it precisely that way.

As the title correctly indicates, the central thrust of Dr. Winter's paper is the high priority need for the Gospel to be carried across cultural boundaries. In developing this theme he stresses the following points:

a. The task of world evangelism is the timeless biblical mandate of the church, and as such must be a central concern of this Congress — a Congress on World Evangelization (pp. 1-2, 7, 10).

b. That certain Christian groups and churches have erroneously been lulled to believe that the Gospel has now reached the "uttermost parts of the earth" and so it is up to the local Christians to finish the task by local evangelism (p. 1).

c. That the task of evangelism, on the basis of the differing cultural distances to be bridged between the myriad of tribes and peoples in the world, can be classified into three categories:

E-1: evangelism within homogeneous groups.

E-2: evangelism of geographically close and culturally or linguistically related groups.

E-3: evangelism of culturally distant groups in which the evangelist is separated from the people to be evangelized by monumental (Winter's own term) cultural distances (pp. 4-5ff).

d. That for the Gospel to reach all societies or all segments of socially complex societies, it will be necessary for E-2 or E-3 to cross the cultural gap and to spark the development of the church in each culturally definable social group, which, once reached, can then complete the task of evangelism by powerful and effective E-1 (p. 6).

e. That in the unfinished task of reaching the still-unreached, E-3 evangelism stands out "head and shoulders" above all other forms of evangelism because:

(i) At least four out of five people in the largely unevangelized blocks of humanity do not have any near Christian neighbors (pp. 2, 14).

(ii) Where there are Christian neighbors, local prejudice frequently makes E-2 all but impossible. An E-3 outsider, not sharing in the E-2 prejudice system, can often do much more effective evangelism (pp. 8-9, 20).

f. That every evangelist must be deeply aware of what kind of cultural gap there is to be bridged, and that the foreigner of E-3 distance should never attempt to do what a national of E-1 or E-2 distance can do (pp. 11-12).

Now to the response proper.

As a Christian anthropologist I can wholeheartedly endorse Dr. Winter's thrust that our evangelism must not be short-circuited by cultural distance, but I do have a number of concerns about the emphases his paper places on E-3 evangelism. (Here it needs to be pointed out that during the telephone conversation Dr. Winter already stated that he saw E-2 and E-3 as a single continuum, and that if they are to be separated, they are to be preferred in that order. E-3 should be employed only when E-2 is impossible.)

Secondly, I cannot share his view that 87 per cent of all non-Christians have no near neighbors.

Before I state my concerns, I feel that I should also remind the delegates that:

1. I am deeply aware that I am stressing my personal point of view over against Dr. Winter's point of view in some aspects, and that the Congress participants will have to help both of us to sort out which of these emphases, if either, contains the greatest degree of relevant truth for their particular situation.

2. I myself treasure among my most sacred memories as a missionary a whole series of E-3 experiences that God saw fit to bless with church growth. I cannot detail them individually here so I merely refer to some of them by name: the Choco church in Panama, the Waunana in Colombia, and the group conversion of the Chulupi in the village of Sandhorst in the Paraguayan Chaco.

3. The Bible provides us with several most wonderful examples of E-3 evangelism, like Jonah going to Nineveh. In fact, the incarnation, when God in the form of his Son emptied himself of his divine prerogatives (Phil. 2:6-7) and became a human being (John 1:1), is to me the supreme example of E-3 and the very foundation of all subsequent evangelism.

4. As God has used E-3 in the past, I am convinced that he will also use it in the future. However, as Dr. Winter says, it is extraordinary evangelism (pp. 2, 6, 10), and therefore it also carries with it some extraordinary requirements and limitations. These are:

a. That the would-be evangelist must follow Christ's example and knowingly empty himself of his own culture and be identified with the people in the culture to be evangelized — few of us E-3 missionaries have achieved this.

b. Because of this weakness on our part, God usually uses the E-3 evangelist only as a catalyst, and not as a long-time leader. In fact, when Jonah proclaimed the judgment of God on Nineveh, it was the king who took the initiative and called his people to repentance, leaving the frustrated E-3 missionary to mope under a juniper bush. Sometimes the contact will be only an "accidental" encounter in passing, like Philip and the eunuch who met briefly on the deserted Gaza road under the Holy Spirit's guidance. Then before the eunuch could become attached to his spiritual father, the same Spirit of God snatched him away.

c. For E-3 evangelism to be effective, the recipient culture must be able to separate the true message content from the cultural wrapper in which it comes and then be aware of congenial models for the new life in Christ that will permit healthy spiritual development. Otherwise it may fall back on syncretistic models of its own old life, or more likely it will try to pattern itself according to the cultural models of the E-3 evangelist's culture.

I want to divide the statement of my concerns about E-3 into three categories which I will, for the sake of easy reference, label biblical, anthropological, and practical, respectively.

1. *Biblical concerns*

a. To my understanding, Acts 1:8 obviously stresses E-1 evangelism for Jerusalem and Judea, and E-2 for Samaria, but not necessarily E-3 for the rest of the world. I say this because I feel that the world, as the early Christians saw it, was the then-known Greco-Roman world of which Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria were integral parts. Hence we are dealing with E-2 distances throughout rather than with E-3 distances.

b. I find the prejudice reason for using E-3 over against E-2 very questionable, because Christ, Paul plainly tells us, has torn down the walls of separation (Eph. 2:13-16), and in Christ there is no distinction between Jews or Gentiles, slave or free man, etc. (Col. 3:10-11). Thus when a person of E-3 distance must evangelize in a situation where prejudice keeps the church of E-2 distance from doing the job, I fear that the converts are really being taught to accept an inferior kind of Christianity — a Christianity that is not strong enough to break down the walls of prejudice. I have serious question whether this kind of Christianity is worth "selling."

c. The biblical model which I personally see throughout the book of Acts involves only an alternation of E-1 and E-2. After the Holy Spirit came and the disciples lost their fear and began to witness boldly, earth-shaking demonstrations of God's power in the lives of men rocked the very foundations of the Jewish society in Jerusalem, and soon not only Jerusalem, but also all of Judea was blanketed with the good news: "The

Messiah has come! He is Jesus who was crucified, but whom God raised from the dead, to be the Savior and healer of all men." When a group has such a powerful E-1 experience, E-2 is the inevitable, direct result. In fact, E-2, as the book of Acts shows, can take on a variety of forms.

(i) People whose lives have been transformed by the power of God cannot help but share this wonderful experience with others. Thus Philip (with the help of a little bit of persecution in Jerusalem) goes to Samaria where Jesus had already sown the good seed and sparks a wonderful conversion movement. But at the height of this movement, before Philip himself can become a "permanent fixture" there, the Spirit of God sends him away to a second form of E-2 evangelism.

(ii) When people from neighboring groups hear that a good thing has happened to people they are acquainted with, they often come from a considerable distance to get more information or to see firsthand this good thing God is doing. Thus we can report the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch to whom Philip ministered on the Gaza road.

(iii) A third form of E-2 evangelism is seen in Acts 10 in the account of Cornelius, the Roman officer, who sent messengers to Peter asking him to bring him and his family the good news of Jesus Christ. Here is an alien resident in a foreign land. He sees what God does for the Jews and he as a Gentile wants to experience the same for himself and his family, so he calls the Christians for help.

(iv) And finally, in Acts 13 and 23 we see a fourth form of E-2. Here the Spirit of God asks the churches to send several bi-cultural men from their midst to do E-2 evangelism in the length and breadth of the Roman Empire, and thus the church at Antioch sends Paul and Barnabas to do the job for which God had prepared them and to which he had called them.

2. *Anthropological concerns*

From the anthropological perspective, I think Dr. Winter is correct when he states that great cultural distance spells even greater communication problems. The reason is that effective cross-cultural communication can happen only when the new recipient can separate the message content from its cultural form; or we could say, when the meaning of a message is separated from its cultural wrapper. In the E-1 situation both the message and the wrapper are understood and are meaningful to both the evangelist and the convert. At the E-2 level the two different peoples in contact usually have an awareness of the cultural differences that separate them, and so the alien wrapper of the message is easily distinguished from its true content. For example, I once asked a South American Indian, who was seeing immersion baptism for the first time, "What in the world are those people doing?"

"They're head-pouring," he answered casually.

"Head-pouring!" I said. "Why, they're putting the people under water all the way. There's no pouring going on there."

"I know," he responded, "but it means the same thing as when the priest pours water on the baby's head."

Frequently at the E-3 level the wrapper, no matter how incongruous, has been accepted as part of the message. Often this wrapper has

effectively choked the real life out of the message.

Again, when we look at effective movements of cultural change that have blanketed many tribes and cultures, we find that like church growth in Acts, they are spread by an alternation of E-1 and E-2. Effective E-1 in a given society leads to E-2 (in some or all of its forms). Once having taken root in a new setting, the change grows until the resulting excitement again bursts its cultural seams and goes E-2. This can be seen in the spread of peyote as a religious experience in North America. Peyote, the cactus drug, was first used as a substitute for white man's Holy Spirit by the Indians in Northern Mexico; but then it rapidly spread northward through many tribes of the United States into Canada, often reaching into tribes who had formerly been bitterest enemies.

The same can be said about Muchape, the anti-witch medicine of East-Central Africa. It had its origin somewhere in Central Mozambique and moved north as far as Tanzania and Kenya, east to Angola and Zaire, and south into South Africa — all in the course of one generation. The pattern of its spread was effective E-1 which became E-2, which again became E-1, which having changed the new society again, goes E-2 to reach its neighbors.

3. *Practical considerations* At the practical level there again are several points to underscore.

a. James Scherer in his book, *Missionary Go Home*, has already pointed out very effectively that for all their self-sacrifice and dedication, E-3 missionaries almost universally have not been able to pass on their zeal for evangelism to their converts. At least one reason seems to be that too much of the foreign wrapper was imported and this prevented healthy, meaningful E-1 evangelism from developing in the local situation.

b. When the E-3 foreign missionary's own cultural models for conversion, church, and Christian living become the one and only model God requires, the evangelized people are pushed to become imitation Europeans rather than spiritually reborn nationals. At a recent conference at which I spoke about indigenous and foreign conversion models, one of the leading nationals got up and said, "Sir, what you have said about conversion deeply moves me, because, I must confess, I have not been converted that way. My deeper African values have not been changed. I have merely become an imitation European on the outside. I have not learned to listen to the Holy Spirit, but I have been trained to listen very carefully to what the missionary wants." Furthermore, the denominational nature of most mission work, or even the distance between supposedly non-denominational faith missions, has often helped to create support for local prejudice systems rather than helping to eliminate them. In fact, very frequently Christianity has helped to provide the new sanctified rationale for the continuing prejudice, as Dr. Winter's paper already points out.

c. Because missionaries often developed the feeling that their work was somehow lacking in depth, they opted to stay longer and to try harder to get better results. But the result they really achieved, as Claude Stipe has already pointed out, is that they tended to usurp the place of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers. I cannot think of a more painful ex-

perience than when I myself had to confess to the young Choco church in Panama that I had kept one of their men from doing what the Spirit of God had told him to do because of my public pronouncements.

d. When the Asia Conference of Churches some time ago, and the All Africa Council of Churches recently, called for a moratorium on the missionary personnel and foreign funds, there were, of course, some anti-Western sentiments coloring the proposal, but as I listened to the Lusaka discussions I became convinced that African leaders were really saying: "We need that moratorium so that we can let what is 'rice Christian' in our midst die. We need time to peel off the foreign wrapper and to find what the real message of God for us is. Then we need to translate this message into life and action so that we can do effective E-1 evangelism in our midst. Once we have achieved this, then we will again be ready to join hands with the rest of the churches in the world to complete the task of world evangelism."

Now a few remarks in the second area of concern: I am afraid that I have to confess that I do not share Dr. Winter's view that the so-called non-Christian world has no near neighbors. In fact, I feel that we as evangelists often fail to see and to utilize the cultural links of near-neighbor relationships which God in his providence forges. Look at China for example: right now in Tanzania and Zambia there are some 30-40,000 working together with Africans to build a new railroad. Could it not be that God has called African believers to share the Good News with these Chinese workers? Then could not these transformed by the power of God become God's tools to spark a Good-News revolution in China?

Before I conclude, I want to sound a personal testimony with which I hope you can identify. Dr. Graham underscored the fact that as the Scriptures lost their authority in the lives of believers and in the work of the church in the West, evangelistic fervor declined accordingly. I want to testify that we are on the verge of a possible reversal of this trend as the result of two new developments in Bible translation.

a. The Bible societies have accepted the principle that all new translation shall be done by mother-tongue speakers of these languages. This makes nationals responsible for the quality of the translation.

b. The second is a growing awareness that most languages have obligatory grammatical or semantic categories for which there is no help in the Greek or Hebrew text. In order for these translations to be equally authentic, it is essential that the Spirit of God who spoke in the original, speak today to clarify God's intent.

The result is that in an ever-increasing number of languages, mother-tongue speakers as translators are appealing to the entire community to pray: God if you had said this only in our language, how would you have said it? The startling result of the answer to these prayers is that in these African contexts the Bible no longer is a message of the white-man's God, to white people, said to be valid also for Africans, but it is the authoritative message of God to the specific group since he has now spoken to them specifically in the clarification of the demands of their language. The resulting authority of the Bible is reminiscent of the power of the Word in the early chapters of Acts.

In conclusion I want to say that it is my genuine desire that this conference and my small part in it can help set our own hearts on fire so that each one of us returning home may bring that "spark" from God which will start an evangelistic fire in our home community to give our people a deep experience of the power and Spirit of God in such a dynamic way that movements like the one described in Acts will begin in many places in the world, and that the fire of E-1 becoming E-2 evangelism will sweep the world like the great grass fires that race across the vast, African grasslands in the dry season.

RESPONSE TO RALPH D. WINTER AND DR. JACOB LOEWEN

David J. Cho

1. Generally, I agree with Dr. Winter's position. As to Dr. Loewen's, while I admit that there are a number of good points, I cannot agree with his negative judgment upon the necessity or effectiveness of cross-cultural evangelism.
2. An honest criticism on the failures of Western missions is praiseworthy. Yet, it should aim at correcting the past mistakes for constructing a right mission strategy for today. It should not aim merely to deny the effectiveness of cross-cultural evangelism.
3. The claim that the days of world mission are gone is mistaken. Without a burning zeal for mission to the enormous, unreached area, the concern for the E-1 evangelism would itself die.
4. Dr. Winter places the highest priority on E-3 while placing E-3 at the third place in order after E-1 and E-2. The order should be reversed. The evangelism of the highest priority, i.e., E-3 should be placed at the first, even in order. Dr. Winter's E-3 should be E-1 and his E-1 should be E-3.
5. Geographical ordering from the nearest area to the farthest is the measurement of a human-centered perspective. With mission and evangelism seen and understood in terms of divine mandate, there is no difference between "home" and "abroad." There simply is "a world." All of the E-1, E-2, E-3 should be equally and simultaneously stressed. When one of the three is neglected, the evangelical enterprises in other areas are bound to fail.
6. As a response to the negative position toward the cross-cultural evangelism, I present my views as the following: The failure of the Euro-American missions was not as much due to the problem of communication gap as to the problem of life-style and posture of missionaries. The failures were rather due to the lack of right motivation and dedication. Here is an example of the case. In Korea there are two opposite kinds of missionaries.
 1. Mr. A is a second-generation missionary. He is not yet able to preach in Korean. He still has difficulties with Korean foods. He cannot read Korean newspapers or magazines. Even though he works hard, he is not willing to break through the cultural gap.
 2. Mr. B has been a missionary in Korea only about five years. He is, however, fluent in the Korean language. He contributes quite a number of articles to magazines and newspapers. He spends much time in the bookstores on the street and tries to read as many newly published books as possible. He is well accustomed to the