

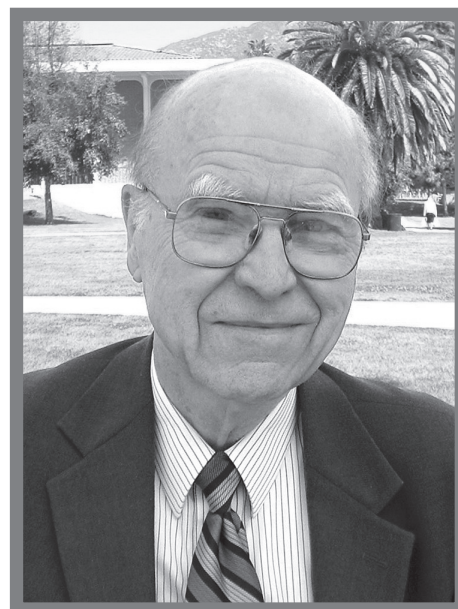
## A Tribute to Dr. Ralph D. Winter, 1924-2009

David J. Hesselgrave

There are but few encounters with Dr. Ralph Winter that yield no surprises. After returning from the mission field in 1966 he was appointed Professor of Historical Development of the Christian Movement at Fuller Theological Seminary. I first met him soon afterwards when visiting Fuller as a guest of Dr. Donald McGavran. Hearing that Dr. Winter's introductory course in

a very short life! From Winter's perspective, the greatness of the Christian mission is a mirror reflection of the grandeur of the Christian faith because both emanate from, and eventuate in, the glory of the Triune God.

In the second place, on the bases of both experience and education, Ralph Winter was well equipped to make good on his promise of relevancy. He served in the United States Navy for al-



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but very often almost single-handedly**—Ralph Winter was responsible for founding some of the most important missionary undertakings of the twentieth century.

world mission was exceptionally well received by students, I asked him about his approach. He replied in the following vein:

Well, you know, seminary students tend to think that an introductory course in Christian mission will be a pushover. So I begin by assigning enough really solid reading to make their heads spin. Then I proceed by demonstrating the relevance of what they have read. That usually does the trick. Once the course gains their respect there's no problem.

This answer was a bit surprising, but it shouldn't have been. In the first place, Ralph Winter took the world mission of the church with the utmost seriousness. If ever there was a time when he considered Christian mission to be simple and undemanding, the idea must have had

most two years in 1945-46. He had an undergraduate degree in civil engineering, graduate degrees in theology and TESL and a doctorate in linguistics, anthropology and mathematical statistics. In fact, during one eleven-year period he matriculated at seven different institutions of higher learning! As a missionary to Guatemala serving under the Foreign Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church (1956-66) he served as Rural Development Specialist concentrating on the Mam tribal group.

But all of that proved to be only the beginning. Looking back now, it is evident that Dr. Winter's career subsequent to those early days at Fuller was spent tackling one challenging task after another—usually with a significant degree of success. His resume is so encompassing that it reads like a listing of the cu-

mulative accomplishments of an entire missionary organization. In company with others—but very often almost single-handedly—Ralph Winter was responsible for founding some of the most important missionary undertakings of the twentieth century: the U. S. Center for World Mission, the Institute of Christian Studies, the William Carey Library, the Association of Church Mission Committees, the American Society of Missiology, Perspectives on the World Christian Movement; Frontier Missions Fellowship, and the International Society for Frontier Missiology as well as a number of lesser known missionary enterprises. His name is inevitably associated with the "unbelievable years" of church growth following the mid-point of the twentieth century and with innovative ideas and enterprises

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such as Theological Education by Extension; E1, E2 and E3 evangelism; Hidden People groups; the Caleb Project, sodalities and modalities, programmed learning; and, most recently, Kingdom mission/missiology.

Ralph Winter will be forever remembered for a paper and lecture delivered at Lausanne in 1974 that has been termed a “bombshell” by one missiologist and “infamous” by another. In a speech reminiscent of Donald McGavran’s paper “What of the Two Billion [unreached people]” delivered at Uppsala in 1967 and in the midst of a prevailing push for social action, Winter gave an impassioned speech urging evangelicals to remember unreached people groups of the world with their combined population of as many as 2.7 billion souls.

In a modest effort to discover how his colleagues assessed these various contributions, I requested representative missiologists around the country to submit their answer to the question “Of Dr. Winter’s many contributions to missions, which one do you consider to be the most important?” Answers reveal something of the breadth and depth of Winter’s impact on both missions thinking and engagement.

#### **Robertson McQuilkin, Columbia International University:**

Since his Fuller days more than a half century ago, I’ve always said, “Ralph Winter has more creative ideas than most of us have in a life-time.” Then I added, “Of course, 19 of them are wacko. But the 20<sup>th</sup> is usually a world-shaping breakthrough.” Of the many “breakthrough” ideas of this most influential of missiologists in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century I would vote for his speech at Lausanne to the World Congress of 1974 as being at the top. As always, couched in Winter’s unique terminology, the concept of ‘Hidden Peoples’ changed the whole face of evangelical missions to a focus on the unengaged—those people groups still out of the reach of current evangelistic witness. Though replaced, no doubt, by other concerns in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that focus still guides the mission emphasis of many. Thus, Ralph’s influence lingers on.

#### **Norman E. Allison, Toccoa Falls College:**

I believe Dr. Winter’s most important contribution to the world mission of the church was his paper delivered at The International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland in July, 1974. The paper titled, “The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism” brought into focus for the first time the concept of “unreached people groups.” Using Acts 1:8 as a model, Dr. Winter spoke of Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth as categories for classification. His understanding of these progressively more distant locations and their relation to those in the world needing to hear the Good News were systematically categorized into the following groups: E-1, those of the same culture; E-2, those of a similar culture; and E-3, those of a very different culture. Dr. Winter went on to emphasize the many ethnic and culturally different groups in the world for whom E-2 and E-3 evangelism is necessary because there is no one within their culture able to carry out E-1 evangelism. These became known as “unreached people groups,” and this understanding has profoundly affected the evangelical Christian world since that time. Along with many others, much of my own teaching in the School of World Missions as well as the direction of the School was impacted by Dr. Winter’s understanding of unreached peoples, their cultural differences, and the unique methodological requirements for each to “hear” the Gospel.

#### **Stan Guthrie, Christianity Today editor-at-large:**

Ralph Winter is a towering figure in world missions. Among his many contributions to the movement and to the church worldwide is his insight that focusing on people groups will help us complete the Great Commission. We must reach the thousands of ethnolinguistic people groups little touched by the gospel, and this means crossing not just geographic boundaries but cultural ones as well. This emphasis has given a boost to the frontier missions movement, to Bible translation, to missionary recruiting, and to so many aspects of missions. We now



see the “nations” mentioned in Matthew 28 in a strikingly different way. Thank you, Dr. Winter.

**Steve Hawthorne, WayMakers:**

Some of the most important contributions made by Ralph Winter were extensions of McGavran’s ideas. Perhaps the most significant was how Winter developed McGavran’s ideas about peoples and movements. McGavran had claimed that a thorough examination of the growth of churches in history would show that Christward movements have flourished best within culturally and socially defined ethnicities. Winter heartily agreed that the gospel moves best along ‘the bridges of God’ of culture and ethnic affinity. But what Winter did with this concept was to run the reasoning in the opposite direction by urging his students to consider ethnic settings in which there was not yet any kind of church movement. In these settings, the gospel moved with such difficulty that it was likely to never gain any appreciable momentum without some kind of breakthrough. Winter presented the idea, supported with historical precedent, that the kind of evangelism required in such settings constituted a different and more difficult kind of evangelism. By calling attention to the peoples not yet affected by existing church movements, the task of world evangelization came to be defined in terms of bringing about new church movements with potential to evangelize the entire people. Since the task was defined in terms of the outcome (flourishing church movements bringing transformation in their society) instead of in terms of missionary activity (such as preaching or teaching), it was possible to speak of working together to complete a global task in a simple and powerful way.

**A. Scott Moreau, Wheaton College:**

I can think of no greater contribution to missions made by Ralph Winter than focusing energy on people group thinking. While he did not originate the idea, he gave it traction and energized it among missionaries, mission agencies and churches around the world. While people group thinking is not without controversy, there can be little doubt

that it is at the core of current evangelical missions focus on reaching our world and drives more decisions of deployment than any other focusing idea today.”

**Christopher R. Little, Columbia International University:**

If a person generates a thousand ideas during his lifetime and only a handful of them turn out to be great, especially in relation to the Great Commission, then that life is a life well lived. This is indeed the case with our esteemed brother and colleague, Dr. Ralph D. Winter. Although heirs of Dr. Winter may rightly argue over which of his contributions to Christian missions surpasses all others, I would submit that none has been greater than his insight regarding unreached or hidden peoples. It was at the International Conference on World Evangelization in Lausanne (1974) where Dr. Winter in his paper, ‘The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism,’ first confronted the evangelical missions community with the troubling truth that large segments of the world population had not been reached and would not be reached without intentional, cross-cultural witness. Later, in his article, ‘The Task Remaining’ (cf. *Perspectives of the World Christian Movement*, 1981), he noted that only 13% of the Protestant missionary force was serving among people groups with no visible church capable of evangelizing their communities. More recently, that figure has been adjusted, surprisingly, to only 10% (cf. *Perspectives of the World Christian Movement*, (2009). At a time when evangelical missions is drifting away from world evangelization toward world reparation, one can only pray that this call to proclaim the gospel among the unevangelized will take on renewed attention and activity today.

**Michael Pocock, Dallas Theological Seminary:**

Ralph Winter’s greatest contribution to missions and missiology has been his emphasis on “closure,” the completion of the Great Commission through the identification and engagement of the unreached peoples of the world. He not only re-directed the focus of mission agencies, he advocated or constructed vehicles to spread

this emphasis. The *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, both text and course, have been used by over one hundred thousand students. The U.S. Center for World Mission, Mission Frontiers, Adopt-A-People, ACMC—all were used to focus attention on the goal. As a result of Winter’s emphasis, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist peoples have been engaged at a level never before seen in history. We may indeed see all the world’s people evangelized in our life-time, the goal yearned for by the Student Volunteer Movement, and re-embodied in the AD 2000 Movement. If we do, Ralph Winter will be remembered as God’s servant leader who focused, fueled and fired the followers who realized that dream.

**Greg H. Parsons, U. S. Center for World Mission:**

When I think about Ralph Winter, and the one thing he did that had the most impact from my perspective, I am tempted to write about several things. First, his involvement on the ground floor of Theological Education by Extension. Through that, later “distance” programs have been birthed. Or, second, his presentation at Lausanne 1974 which became a rallying cry and an awareness builder which legitimized mobilization for the people groups that don’t have a church within their culture. Or, third, his writing on sodalities/modalities which helped missions to think more deeply about mission and church structures. But I’d like to focus on something that has become clearer since Dr. Winter died on May 20, 2009. The word *impact* comes to mind. Many people have written and reflected on the way Winter impacted their lives, and it is becoming clear that while reading something he wrote, while hearing him speak, or while staring at a ‘pie chart’ with circles representing the Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist, the uniting factor is this: they changed. Their lives were redirected. For a good friend of mine, it meant China for 20-plus years. For countless others (especially many with a science or engineering background), hearing Winter meant that someone could be really smart and still be involved in missions. And yet, Dr. Winter expressed complex ideas in a simple strategy: figure out what is left to be done; then mobilize believers to do it.





**Robert J. Priest, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School:**

The contribution of Dr. Ralph Winter to the field of missiology which I have personally found most helpful was his analysis of modalities and socialities as needed and complementary structures for the carrying out of world mission.

**Enoch Wan, Western Seminar:**

Of Ralph Winter's many contributions to Christian missions/missiology, one that has impressed me most is the founding of institutions such as the U.S. Center of World Mission, William Carey Library and William Carey International University. These are all located in Pasadena with significant contributions to Kingdom ministries.

**Jonathan J. Bonk, Overseas Ministries Study Center.**

One of Ralph Winter's major contributions has been to encourage us to emerge from the cocoon of Latin Christendom within which evangelical notions of orthodoxy have been long confined. Through both his own highly provocative writing, and his editorial gate-keeping, he has opened our eyes to indisputable evidence of God's salvific grace outside and beyond inherited Christendom theologies and ecclesiologies. He has reminded us that this Procrustean system of thought was forged in significant part as an imperial response to political and military insecurities of the day. In both what he has written himself and in what he has fostered others to write about so 'called 'insider' movements, he has reminded us that salvation is not about Christianity but about Christ; that it is not orthodoxy but orthopraxy that ultimately distinguishes sheep from goats on judgment day. This potentially is as revolutionary for Christian missions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as was the Protestant Reformation in 16<sup>th</sup> century Christian thought and practice.

**Darrell Whiteman, The Mission Society (Norcross, GA):**

It is difficult to cite Ralph Winter's most significant contribution to the world of mission because he made so many. However, I have chosen to focus on the one with which I have been

most engaged for the past 25 years. This is Ralph's contribution to the formation of the American Society of Missiology (ASM) and the journal *Missiology* which I edited from 1989 to 2002. Winter recognized that, if the field of missiology was going to develop as an accredited academic discipline, there needed to be an academic society that published a scholarly journal. His tireless effort to help create the ASM and launch the journal *Missiology* is certainly near the top of his contributions. He served as Secretary-Treasurer of ASM from 1972-1976 and as President in 1977-78. Today the discipline of missiology is firmly established and post-graduate degrees in missiology are offered in many seminaries and universities. We therefore pay tribute to that visionary, Ralph

to be found on a great variety of ideas, institutions, movements and individuals, some of which may not be thought of as part of mainstream evangelicalism. Nevertheless, as far as the small sampling above may be representative, it seems evident that Winter's most far-reaching and lasting contribution may well prove to be similar to that of A. T. Pierson at the close of the nineteenth century: namely, a vision and strategy for fulfilling the Great Commission task of world evangelization. Similar, yes, but with a profound difference: Ralph Winter's strategy extends beyond evangelizing persons living in "coastland" areas and "interior mainland" areas, to his "Third Era" strategy of evangelizing unreached "people groups" wherever they are to be found. As some re-

## Without question scholars and practitioners alike will give careful consideration to Ralph D. Winter's numerous contributions for many years to come.

Winter, who paved the way for this field to emerge as one of his many contributions to the world of mission.

**Summary**

It is to be expected that the foregoing responses reflect the interests and priorities of the respondents as well as the variegation and importance of Dr. Winter's accomplishments. But in concluding this tribute, I would like to focus on two contributions, one that is mentioned most frequently in the responses above and one that is not mentioned at all.

The responses have been arranged in a way that highlights the contributions most frequently mentioned. Readers will notice that over half of those queried agree that Dr. Winter's insights relating to understanding, identifying and evangelizing unreached people groups constitute his greatest contribution to missions/missiology. This fact should not be allowed to detract from contributions noted by other respondents. Not at all. Rather, it is those other contributions that remind us of the fact that Ralph Winter's abiding imprint is

respondents have indicated, it was precisely this insight and vision that makes world evangelization doable and makes closure possible.

But I would also point to something that, to some of us at least, will prove to be quite surprising at this point. Namely, that though there are one or two allusions to it, Dr. Winter's most recent and well-publicized "Kingdom Mission" proposal did not receive a single explicit mention as being among his most important contributions! A word of explanation is in order here.

In October of 2006 and along with almost 30 specialists in various sciences as well as theology and missions, I was invited by Dr. Winter and his associates to Techny, Illinois, for the express purpose of giving consideration to his "radically new interpretation of the Lord's Prayer and the Great Commission." The consultation was held under the auspices of the Roberta Winter Institute which was founded for "the purpose of awakening the Evangelical movement to a *crucially deeper understanding of God's will in this world*" (emphasis mine). For the better part of two days participants first lis-





tened to an introductory presentation by Dr. Winter; then examined distributed materials including his essay “Planetary Events and the Mission of the Church;” and, finally, engaged in a protracted discussion designed to bring strengths and weaknesses of his new Kingdom proposal to light.

My own appraisal of Winter’s “Kingdom Mission” is available elsewhere and need not be reviewed here. But after a careful study of it; and after an exchange of some fifty letters and notes with Dr. Winter over many months; and in spite of serious misgivings, I have no hesitation in saying that, judged only on the basis of internal consistency and comprehensiveness, Winter’s new proposal was one of the most remarkable statements of mission strategy that I have come across in nearly sixty years of involvement in Christian missions. In essence, it changes the focus of Christian mission in this new era of globalization from just—or even primarily—the proclamation of the gospel to the verification of the gospel. Exactly when I do not know, but my friend Ralph ultimately came to believe that, as he expressed it, “words without deeds are meaningless.” Accordingly, he challenged Christians to participate in the “mission of Jesus” and glorify God by effecting good and combating evil in great and grand ways in order to clarify the kingdom and make the gospel meaningful and believable.

Dr. Winter was steadfast in holding to his “new view” to the very end, although he did accede to his critics in at least one significant respect. Though earlier on he thought of engagement in this kind of “Kingdom Mission” as constituting an entirely new “Fourth Era” of modern missions, he later relented and withdrew that part of his proposal. This change is of the essence because it has the effect of extending Winter’s “Third Era” vision and strategy of world evangelization into the future. I sincerely believe that it is to Dr. Winter’s everlasting credit that he invited me and various other colleagues to dialogue with him on such important matters.

I must conclude, but no tribute to Ralph Winter would be complete without recognition of those who aided him so ably and patiently in his life-

Continued on page 8

# Worldview & Worldview Transformation: A Personal Reflection

John D. Wilson<sup>1</sup>

**T**he issue of “worldview transformation” should be one which we wrestle with as people committed to transformational discipleship in church planting.

What is a “worldview”? In *Transforming Worldviews*, Paul Hiebert defines worldview as “the foundational cognitive, affective, and evaluative assumptions and frameworks a group of people makes about the nature of reality which they use to order their lives” (page 25). It is important to note that these “assumptions and frameworks” are often held unconsciously—they are “unseen structures underlying the entire explicit culture”; “their deep, unconscious infrastructure” (page 32).<sup>2</sup>

Even if our definitions are inadequate and our understanding limited, the basic concept of “worldview” as a subconscious framework or grid of understanding has value for us in seeking to understand and communicate with people in other cultures.

Probably we should also ask ourselves: Do we understand our own worldview and is it necessary to do so in order to understand other cultures?

However, there is a further question for us to consider which has significance for evangelism and discipleship: Can there be such an experience as “worldview transformation”?

What follows is an attempt to address these issues from personal experience rather than from theory, and to show that there is an interplay between cultural self-awareness (not just as an individual, but corporately), and the understanding of the worldviews of other groups of people.

## Cultural Self-Awareness

Like most people, I did not know anything about a worldview, any more than I knew I had a Scottish accent, or that the language I spoke had a grammar and syntax.

I only discovered that I had a Scottish accent when I began to interact

with people from England, Germany and France. And I only began to discover—truly discover—that there were such things as grammar and syntax when I began to interact with other languages, namely, Latin and French.

I did not perceive—consciously perceive, that is—that there was such a thing as a culture specific way of understanding, interpreting and living in my world until I began to interact with Americans, Canadians and Australians in a neutral context, in Papua, Indonesia. More significantly, this awareness was brought fully to the surface of my consciousness in interaction with the indigenous people of Papua, particularly the Yali people.

It was my cross-cultural experience which drove me to seek ways of better understanding who the Yali were and who they saw themselves to be; to understand what they believed and why. I concluded early on that just as I examined their language using linguistic models, so I could examine their culture using other models.<sup>3</sup>

## The Process of Discovery of Yali Culture

I discovered, for example, some fascinating things about Yali grammar—13 classes of verb, including two irregular verbs; but the Yali did not know that. I had employed analytical skills and an understanding of grammar upon their language. I concluded that the same was true for their culture. There was also a grammar for the way they believed and how they ordered their world.

For example, incest was taboo—but while I essentially had one category they had five; which every adult could enumerate and explain. Their five were necessary because of their kinship system which is different from mine! I didn’t even know that different people could have different kinship systems. But the entire Yali community was conceived as consisting of two exogamous moieties—two distinct halves, whose





members were required to marry into the other half. The basis for this belief was embedded in a number of primal origin myths; but where these myths came from is a total mystery.

My awareness of a “cultural worldview” (for want of a better term) was further heightened after my re-entry to the West and my immigration to Canada. As a westerner, born, bred and educated, I suddenly found I was no longer “at home” in my own culture. For one thing, I had changed; I had been *transformed* by indwelling and even imbibing something of the “worldview” of the Yali people. However, on the other hand, I began to realize that (even in the 20 years I had been overseas) western culture had changed. With the help of another missionary pilgrim, Lesslie Newbigin, I began to look at my western culture and western worldview in a new way.<sup>4</sup>

### Indwelling the Culture

People who engage deeply in another culture *experience* something for which models and words—regardless of how inadequate and imprecise they might be—also prove useful.<sup>5</sup> However, worldview is not simply a construct which we use, nor is it a clearly defined entity which we can simply analyze systematically with our cognitive, intellectual powers. As Hiebert seeks to bring out in his book, there are cognitive, affective (emotional), and evaluative (ethical or moral) dimensions to worldview. An understanding of a cultural worldview needs, therefore, to be informed by experience as well as by critical, analytical thinking.

A “worldview” is something every one of us has *experienced*...with heart, soul, mind and body! Our experience of worldview is not merely cognitive! In fact, for the most part it is tacit—implicit, unspoken, but known unconsciously. For me, living among the Yali, this experience involved the whole gamut of categories: cognitive, affective, relational, narrative, evaluative and physical.

In the process I experienced dissonance at every level for a long time. Eventually, I became more comfortable, and I think that that came about by deep immersion in or “indwelling” the language and culture.<sup>6</sup> Theologian Trevor Hart expressed this idea well:

“The missionary *must seek to become a surrogate member of the community, participating in its life over a period of time, assimilating its patterns of thought and behaviour* so that in due course she will be able to interpret the gospel for the community both conceptually, and by suggesting appropriate rituals and patterns of behaviour as a response to and embodiment of it.” Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking*, IVP, 1995:186. (My emphasis)

Eventually, I learned to speak the Yali language unconsciously (no longer thinking consciously about grammar and syntax). Similarly, I learned to live—to participate—in the culture, no longer continuously conscious about it. Of course, there remained times when I was aware of my foreignness; but there were other times when I unconsciously thought and behaved like a Yali. Sometimes I even felt accepted and treated as a Yali.

I have grieved with them; suffered with them (in earthquake and famine). I have argued with them; and I have been swept away by their profound rationality (expressed in different ways than I am used to). I was moved from silently mocking their fear of spirits, to a new respect for the spiritual dimension. I was becoming less of an individualist and more of a communitarian. My default mode as an analytical “realist,” striving for rational reductions of every issue, was modified as I became holistic and integrative. I became content to wrestle with paradox and ambiguity—ever open to unexpected vistas of understanding. In other words, my inherent values were challenged, developed, and in some cases changed.

My encounter with the Yali changed the way I read the Bible. Thanks to them, I realized that my view of salvation had been individualistic; and that my view of the church had failed to comprehend the huge dynamic of its corporate nature. As I came to understand the function of genre in the Yali oral “texts” I began to pay more attention to genre and the literary interpretation of scripture. Above all, I learned the power of narrative.

### Changed Perspectives

My “worldview” was changed; and so, therefore, was I.

One of the profoundest ways I was changed was in the realization that my

personal identity did not consist in my distinct individuality, unique and separate from others; but rather in my relationship with others. Western culture had taught me to think that “person” and “individual” were virtually synonymous. My encounter with the Yali taught me to realize that my personhood is enriched in its relationships, and in community. Moreover, I slowly realized that that is the biblical ideal.<sup>7</sup> I thank the Yali for showing me that!

Having examined my own cultural worldview<sup>8</sup> and also having experienced a personal worldview transformation through immersion in their culture, I was therefore better able to contextualize the gospel for the Yali. On the other hand, this experience has caused within me a kind of restlessness in relation to the traditional, western expressions of Christian faith.

In certain ways I have become an outsider to my own culture, and looking in, I wonder why people believe these things and do what they do, and I have asked myself, “Where do their ideas come from?” Something drives these beliefs; something drives their behaviour, and I want to know what it is. In other words, through deep engagement with another worldview, I have been forced to reflect on my own.

I have come to believe that all the facets of a worldview are tied intricately together in some cohesive—even while often disparate—amalgam of conventions, traditions, rituals, philosophy, narratives, social structures, beliefs, values and ethics. Whatever this amalgam is, I have found the model of “worldview” to be helpful.

The insider (the indigenous member of any society) holds these ideas and practices together unconsciously—blissfully unaware of incongruities and inconsistencies. The outsider can use his or her experience and the model of “worldview” to examine the worldview assumptions, beliefs and values. But they sometimes seem like quicksilver—slipping through the fingers, just when you think you have grasped them.

The outsider does perceive something; she does see how one thing relates to other parts of the culture. Bit by bit, just as the linguist—using linguistic models and experience—analyzes a language and simultaneously synthesizes it





and learns to speak it, so can the mis-  
 siologist or anthropologist. She can ex-  
 amine a culture's system of beliefs and  
 values—through the model of world-  
 view—both to understand it, and to be  
 able to indwell it.

### **Towards a Transformed Worldview**

I claimed that my worldview was  
 transformed. However, it is important  
 to say that the transformation was nei-  
 ther instantaneous nor radical. It was a  
 process of subtle change; but it was not  
 a process of substitution or exchange  
 of one thing for another. Instead it was  
 characterized by challenges to long-held  
 assumptions, a broadening of under-  
 standing and a re-integration of beliefs  
 and values.<sup>9</sup>

I did not cease to be Scottish, or  
 gradually become Papuan. Rather I ex-  
 perience an expanding of my under-  
 standing of the possibilities of human  
 behaviour. I experienced an addition  
 of new concepts, new values, new sen-  
 ses and new skills to my existing collec-  
 tion. For example, from my education  
 with its Scottish Enlightenment values,  
 I have learned to be analytical and sys-  
 tematic. I also appreciate the values of  
 individual initiative, having goals and  
 making plans and developing a process  
 to achieve them. However, from my life  
 among the Yali I have added other val-  
 ues. I appreciate the nature and place  
 of community; I have learned to listen  
 for many sides to a story. I have realized  
 the importance of building consensus;  
 I am now more able to live with mys-  
 tery and paradox. I have learned that  
 there can be a holistic, that is, integrat-  
 ed way of looking at things; and much  
 more besides.

The worldview mainstream already  
 flowing through my life cannot be  
 stopped or diverted. I was born a Scot,  
 raised in a reformed Protestant, upper  
 middle class home, educated in a pri-  
 vate school within an educational tra-  
 dition flowing out of the Scottish Ref-  
 ormation and the Scottish Enlighten-  
 ment; and I was spiritually nurtured  
 within the Evangelical movement. My  
 grandparents and my parents were mis-  
 sionaries in Africa, so I inherited a kind  
 of (postcolonial) global awareness  
 through them and also in my encoun-  
 ters with missionaries from Africa, Asia

and Latin America.

Mingling with this mainstream are  
 the value-laden waters of other streams  
 of thought and culture which I have  
 gained throughout my life. These fresh  
 currents flow not only through cross-  
 cultural experience; but also through  
 reading, the arts and other media, and  
 also—let us not forget—the shifting of  
 my own culture, from modern to post-  
 modern. Most of all, my worldview  
 transformation has been brought about  
 in a “trilogue” between my own main-  
 stream of worldview, other worldviews  
 (in particular Papuan) and Scripture.

This three-way conversation is not al-  
 ways conscious; not always intention-  
 ally cognitive, although it can be. Much  
 of our learning is tacit and subliminal.  
 Values are caught not taught: picked up  
 casually in daily human interaction—  
 acquired through observation, listen-  
 ing, and imitation; learned through  
 popular songs, contemporary mov-  
 ies and other media; imbibed through  
 the experience of politics and religion.  
 The emotional, sensory and affective  
 aspects of culture are experienced and  
 imparted to us through non-cognitive  
 means: signs, symbols and rituals (such  
 as baptism, Christmas festivities, sport-  
 ing events, graduation and so on.) They  
 give us hope and joy; provide feelings  
 of stability and security; and endow us  
 with our sense of personal and corpo-  
 rate identity.

Perhaps when Christian people think  
 of worldview transformation, they think  
 of conversion to Christianity, and in a  
 sense that is true, provided we think  
 about a deep process such as I have de-  
 scribed, rather than only a conversion  
 event. In effect, it is an ongoing process  
 of critical contextualization as we—al-  
 ways in community with others—en-  
 gage the Scripture in dialogue with the  
 deeply held (often hidden) beliefs, as-  
 sumptions and values of our own main-  
 stream worldview.

Some people believe that worldview  
 transformation comes through learn-  
 ing a “Biblical worldview”—through  
 something explicitly taught.<sup>10</sup> Howev-  
 er, it comes through the totality of our  
 experience with others in the commu-  
 nity of faith. It comes in all the diverse  
 facets of human experience: our work  
 together; our relationships; our recre-  
 ation; our family life; our enjoyment of

music and the arts; and our reading and  
 study. It occurs as we read and re-read  
 Scripture together; in our discussions at  
 a meal table and over coffee; at times of  
 adversity when our faith (such as it is  
 at the moment) is challenged; through  
 the experiences of our worship together;  
 in corporate life and ministry together;  
 and when our lives are mutually exam-  
 ined in light of the gospel.

In short, a transformed worldview  
 is not sparked solely by a conversion  
 event, or knowledge taught and learned  
 in a discipleship class. Rather, it is fos-  
 tered within the totality of life lived in  
 community with other Christians when  
 we are committed to reading Scrip-  
 ture together again and again; when we  
 open our hearts and minds to fresh un-  
 derstandings and are willing to examine  
 both our personal and our corporate  
 (cultural or ecclesiastic) status quo.

In one sense, it is part of the pro-  
 cess of critical contextualization; how-  
 ever, it is also an aspect of sanctifica-  
 tion, and in that case, the Holy Spirit is  
 necessarily involved, as he leads us in  
 what the apostle Paul calls the renew-  
 ing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2)—  
 not just of our intellect, but our “heart-  
 soul-mind-strength.” It is the renewal  
 of our entire human nature as we pres-  
 ent our bodies as a living sacrifice to Je-  
 sus as Lord. It is what he calls elsewhere  
 no longer living as the heathen do with  
 their futile thinking; but rather “learn-  
 ing Christ”—which must mean much  
 more than a cognitive knowledge of the  
 gospel (Ephesians 4:17-20).

#### **Endnotes**

1. John Wilson is a missionary with World  
 Team. He lived with his wife and family for 20  
 years among the Yali people, helping estab-  
 lish the church, train leaders and translate the  
 Scriptures into the Yali language.

2. See Paul G Hiebert, *Transforming  
 Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding  
 of How People Change*, Baker Academic, 2008.

3. I had had no previous missiologistical, an-  
 thropological or linguistic training. My field  
 experience generated the desire for under-  
 standing, and I subsequently pursued research  
 and training in these areas. I found the writ-  
 ings of Paul Hiebert particularly useful in un-  
 derstanding anthropological and missiologi-  
 cal issues.

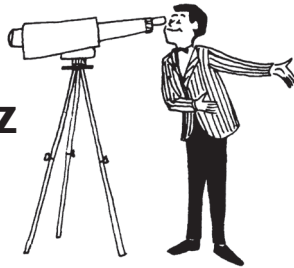
4. See the writings of Newbigin, such as *The  
 Open Secret; Foolishness to the Greeks; and Prop-  
 er Confidence*.

**Continued on page 8**





## As seen through the LENZ



Ralph Winter has, throughout his missionary and ministry career made a significant impact on our thinking in missions. With that in mind, I thought it fitting to have this issue of the *Occasional Bulletin* dedicated to his memory and lifetime of service. No one better qualified to lead in this memorial is Ralph's good friend, Dr. David Hesselgrave. I asked Dave to compile a number of vignettes from those who knew Ralph and were impacted by his thinking, and to print these thoughts as the feature of this issue. A lot more undoubtedly could be said, but we had to limit the responses. I believe this issue of *OB* will be a memorial keeper in our brief history of publications, as you read the compilation of comments that outstanding missiologists have contributed in honor of Dr. Winter. Thanks, Brother Dave, for your great work in making this issue memorable.

In a previous issue of *OB* (Vol. 21 No. 3), John Wilson reviews Paul Hiebert's book *Transforming Worldviews*. John has written a brief autobiography of the way this concept has affected his own life and ministry. His honesty in lifestyle changes will be very helpful in classroom analyses of cultural adjustment in overseas ministry.

—Bob Lenz, editor

### Worldview & Worldview Transformation, continued from page 7

5. See, for example, Paul Hiebert's *Transforming Worldviews*, chapters 2—4, and N. T. Wright in *The New Testament and the People of God*, pages 122-127.

6. I borrow the idea of "indwelling" from the late Scottish theologian Thomas F. Torrance, who probably drew the idea from the writings of the philosopher Michael Polanyi.

7. I have written about this elsewhere. See "Inside Out and Outside In: The Radically New Society Described in Ephesians 2" in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, July 2005.

8. Note, however, that my cross-cultural experience, including my later immigration to Canada, continued to force me to re-examine my worldview. It is an ongoing process.

9. On processes of worldview transformation, see Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, especially pages 319-324. He outlines three distinct aspects of a process of "ongoing deep discipling": (i) Help people consciously to examine their worldview assumptions and values in light of the Scriptures; (ii) Engage/encounter another worldview with critical reflection; invite members of that culture to critique what they see in you; (iii) Create what he calls "living rituals" which attend to the affective dimension.

10. Here I part company with Hiebert. By his own definition there cannot be a biblical worldview, for he describes worldview as something held by a group of people. At best there could only be "biblical worldviews"—each based on the readings and interpretations of Scripture by different groups of people. ■

### A Tribute to Dr. Ralph Winter, continued from page 5

long missionary task, especially his helpmates Roberta and Barbara. Those two noble women of the faith did more than can be told to enable his many accomplishments. They richly deserve the gratitude of us all.

As for my colleague Ralph himself, I want to acknowledge here that God has graciously privileged me to know, think and work with several truly great Christian leaders of my day. Ralph D. Winter was one of them. The writings and doings of this man of God constitute a rich treasure trove which women and men of missions will explore for years to come. Or, to change the metaphor, the contributions highlighted here—as well as a number which have not been mentioned—will provide all-important grist for most, if not all, missiological mills of the future. Without question, scholars and practitioners alike will give careful consideration to Ralph D. Winter's numerous contributions for many years to come. They will constitute an abiding legacy. Without question, scholars and practitioners alike will give praise to God and voice to his thinking both in halls of learning and on fields of labor for the foreseeable future. That will constitute a continuing tribute. ■



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