



Does it not make sense for agencies from different parts of our planet to compare notes about the majority of people groups which are today to be found in more than one part of the planet?

Ralph D. Winter



Dear friend,

If I had the chance to “replay” on a TV screen just two minutes of some single distant past event, I know I would be cross-eyed with indecision.

But, one of the leading candidates for those two minutes would certainly be a snippet from the “Northfield Conference” of 1885 when the burly, fidgety D.L. Moody jumped to his feet, cut off the famous speaker (A.T. Pierson) in mid sentence and waved to the rapt audience, “Do you believe it can be done by 1900?”

The huge crowd roared approval. Moody did not stop there. He was a practical man. He appointed an illustrious committee which in three days hammered out in just 1,038 words an eloquent, impassioned “Appeal to Disciples Everywhere” (see p. 11). Buried in that brief document are these key words based on Pierson’s calculations:

If but ten millions, out of four hundred millions of nominal Christians, would undertake such systematic labor as that each one of that number should, in the course of the next fifteen years, reach one hundred other souls with the Gospel message, the whole present population of the globe would have heard the good tidings by the year 1900!

This document, the committee’s “Appeal,” echoing consciously Jonathan Edwards’ 1747 “trumpet-peal calling upon disciples everywhere,”



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could easily have been expected to become the most significant breakthrough in mission history, tied as it was to a specific “closure” date of 1900.

But it wasn’t.

The appeal was addressed by church leaders to a church audience, not by mission leaders to a mission leaders audience.

What was wrong with that?

Was not Moody even at that date the most prominent and influential evangelist/revivalist of American history? And what more auspicious springboard could there have been than the famous Northfield Conference?

Yes, but. It was just a little like proposing to an Oscar awards ceremony that we fight a war in Iraq. This fabulously visionary document was addressed to “disciples everywhere” and sought a large emotional gathering of “disciples” to consider evangelizing the planet. Such gatherings were held: 1888 in Liverpool, England; 1900, in Carnegie Hall in New York City (President McKinley giving the opening address).

But this profound Northfield appeal to get out and do the job was soon forgotten.

Meanwhile, a year later, in 1886, at Mt. Hermon (a Moody-founded school a few miles down the Connecticut River from Northfield), 100 students stood forward, again inspired by A.T. Pierson, to form

the Student Volunteer Movement. These students soon infiltrated the existing boards of missions and twenty-four years later convened the less-public “Edinburgh 1910” conference made up exclusively of delegates of mission agencies, where, an incredible younger mobilizer, John R. Mott, now replaced A.T. Pierson who was close to death.

This 1910 conference, after the hiatus of the 1st World War, generated a concrete basis for global level coordination of mission strategies, namely the International Missionary Council, which worked effectively for forty years but eventually transitioned into a council of overseas church councils, with little mission vision.

However, once again at Edinburgh in 1980 another global meeting was held, intentionally similar to the 1910 meeting. More agencies were represented and fully one-third now came from the non-Western lands. It attempted to re-establish a global network of mission structures but just barely failed.

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Many other global meetings, the 1966 Berlin conference sponsored by Billy Graham, the 1974 Lausanne, Switzerland

International Congress on World Evangelization, the Lausanne meetings in Thailand in 1980 and the Philippines in 1989, and the various, marvelous global AD2000 meetings have valiantly promoted concern for the whole planet to a very wide range of Christian leaders.

These wonderful meetings were all similar to the one shouting its approval to Moody’s plea at Northfield in 1885. But they are, at best, meetings of the global church’s “state governors” not “private enterprise CEOs.”

And today there is not even a modest global office functioning as a vital network of mission agencies from all the world.

Thus, other than Edinburgh 1910 and Edinburgh 1980, there have been no global level conferences open simply to delegates from mission structures from both North and South.

And today there is not even a modest global office functioning as a vital network of mission agencies from all the world. The need for such an office may not be "all-important" and yet may still be of highest priority. It does not legislate against any other kind of meeting. But such relationships are already very helpful on the national level—both India and Nigeria have substantial national level offices linking dozens and dozens of mission agencies.

But, today more than ever people from India, for example, can be reached in the Silicon Valley not just in India. Overseas Indians are

one fifth of one percent of India's population but these 20 million people earn as much as the entire Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of India.

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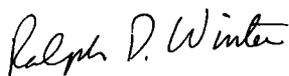
Closely related to the concept of a global mission network is Robert Blincoe's article on page 15. He pointedly stresses that vast democratic bodies of Christians in the form of denominations rarely take the risks of starting brand new work. Minority initiatives are the backbone of the history of missions. Yet, all over the world from Nigeria to Korea local mega-churches are confidently sending out missionaries on the assump-

tion that the role of veteran mission agencies are not necessary. One more reason for a global network of mission agencies.

The current, Vol 20:2, issue of the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (www.ijfm.org) has far greater detail to offer on the present move toward a global network of mission agencies. To subscribe, send \$15 per year to Rory Clark, *IJFM* Managing Editor, 1539 E. Howard Street, Pasadena, CA 91104. Look at the sample issues below. Why not begin with volume 18 (half of what you see below) and get 18, 19, and 20 (which is for 2003). In that way you can follow many fascinating new frontiers in missions. Or, phone 626-296-7501 with your credit card handy and we will take your order over the phone. Do it. You will not regret it!

Ralph D. Winter 🌐

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Ralph D. Winter

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