



## Does any other organization in the entire world have the same function as the GNMS? Clearly not.

Ralph D. Winter



### Dear Reader,

Some things are sleepers.

When years ago a tiny baby was born on the small island of Corsica west of Italy, the world did not take notice. But that baby, named Napoleon, became one of the most prominent people in European history.

The same could be said of that little baby born in the tiny town of Paulerspury in the north of England. No one could have imagined what William Carey would become.

(I won't add about a baby born in Bethlehem because that would be too large an exaggeration.)

I will go on to say that in Amsterdam on April 20 a new baby organization was born. What it will become is by no means certain. What it is intended to do is extremely crucial.

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Something of the kind existed earlier (see page 11). But for over 30 years no global-level entity has represented specifically the crucial sphere of the mission agency.

In recent history the spectacular Berlin 1966 World Congress on Evangelism was sponsored by *Christianity Today* and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Since then, many marvelous "Lausanne" meetings have been held to discuss what local churches and even denominations can do in service for Christ.

But global linking of the leaders of mission agencies? Some smaller

meetings of specifically mission leaders have been convened by invitation.

What has not existed in recent times are either meetings or organizations on the global level as described on page 11. Yet that sort of thing does successfully happen within *countries* like India, USA, Nigeria, just not on the *global* level.

However, the need for global-level planning, coordination and strategy is much, much more relevant today than it has even been in human history. Only in the "last few minutes" of the human story have human communities been so massively on the move all over the planet.

Chinese restaurants have been widespread for a long time. Filipino workers are all over the world. Same with Korean and Japanese businessmen. But the quiet, relentless migration of families and whole peoples has recently been going on at a faster pace than ever.

So? It is quite possible that fairly soon the large majority of all of the least-reached peoples will be found in pockets here and there in the Western world.

Wow, the amazing thing is that migrating people are often the most open to new ideas! The significance of this for missions is vital. For example, Rifi Berbers from North Africa, by the tens of thousands, are now to be found in Spain and the Netherlands.

### Missions is Complex

I have received several letters from mission agency leaders asking for permission to reprint my editorial from our May-June issue. In that editorial I spoke of the need for professional wisdom in missions. I mentioned the

limitations of three popular trends:

1. Just "sending money" (to hire "native missionaries"),
2. Congregations sending and trying to supervise their own missionaries, and
3. Sending out two-week short-term people.

None of these is all bad. Yet, all of these would seem very seriously to underestimate the complexity of the missionary task.

One example of that complexity which is rarely mentioned has to do with the dispersion of disease.

I think of the Spanish Catholic missions in the vast area of what used to be called "Florida" (taking in most of southeast USA). A book by a Florida university professor tells of the many native peoples who over a lengthy period were served by a network of 150

mission settlements, in which agricultural, industrial and educational activities were promoted along with the Christian religion.

But this huge accomplishment was erased completely, along with the people. Not a single piece of wood remains from all those settlements. Not a single soul appears to

have survived the onslaught of European diseases.

Think of the ocean of good will, the sacrificial labors, the patience and suffering that went into that huge undertaking!

### What About Glorifying God?

Those missionaries did many things right. They did not effectively cope with one single factor. Does getting people into heaven adequately glorify God? Or, is the destructive plundering of His creation a problem with which we can be involved that will also glorify His Name?

Millions of Christian believers are dying in Africa due to the unchecked ravages of AIDS and other diseases. The Millennium Development Goals (pages 14-16) include dealing with disease. But I am afraid that the makers of that list of goals are unable to

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*Ralph D. Winter is the Editor of Mission Frontiers and the General Director of the Frontier Mission Fellowship.*

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count on any concerted, distinctively Christian efforts at defeating those diseases at their root.

Of course, our Evangelical missions reach out to the sick. Our hospitals and clinics display genuine and helpful concern for those who have already been overtaken by disease pathogens. But we are relatively unacquainted with the task of dealing with the origins of disease. And most of the problems the Millennium Development Goals mention are seriously complicated by the factor of rampant disease.

In the case of leprosy, years ago missionary initiatives led the way to virtually eliminating it wherever found.

### Defensive and Offensive Efforts

One reason, except for leprosy, missionary medicine has not made much of a dent in the eradication of the diseases themselves is simply because the load of healing the sick is such a burden there is no time or energy left over to delve into the eradication of causal pathogens.

Furthermore, we often don't know how we could do it, or training in curative medicine is not of much help.

Even "preventive medicine," good as it is, is not what I am talking about. Preventing an enemy from attacking is not the same as defeating the enemy.

Thus, there are three kinds of essential effort in a real war:

**Defensive:**

1. Treat the wounded (Curative)
2. Avoid bullets, bombs (Preventive)

**Offensive:**

3. Defeat the enemy (Eradication)

All of these are important, but the third is the most urgent and crucial. You can fumble the ball in treating the wounded and dodging bullets, but you can't win the war without the offensive.

For example, many people talk as if we can win the war against disease by better and better methods of treating the sick, and they feel we must pour more money into the medical/phar-

maceutical industry. (High prices for drugs may mainly fund huge television advertising).

Tragically, the vast majority of the many good things that the medical/pharmaceutical industry does has very little to do with eradicating disease – any more than does the work of a skilled heart surgeon who all day cuts people's hearts out to replace them with donor hearts or artificial hearts. What that dedicated surgeon does has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the causes of arterial shut-down.

Dear reader, do you think I am off on a tangent? I am aware that only in recent history have humans recognized that most sickness is due to ingenious, invisible, deadly forms of intelligent life. I realize that our major theologians – our Calvins and Luthers, Augustines and Aquinas – had no opportunity to decide

whether germs brought over a great shadow on the glory of God, or, thus, whether fighting those destructive entities would be a significant means of glorifying God.

But, if an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, a tenth of an ounce of eradication is even more crucial.

Furthermore, human beings, now in Singapore, Tokyo, Shanghai, Uppsala, Atlanta, Bangalore, Berlin, even Moscow have stumbled their way into phenomenally greater knowledge of microbiology. Today opportunities exist for systematic and serious eradication that have never existed before. Using this knowledge, our own government has investigated military applications. Why not go the other way? Why not, in the name of Christ, for the glory of God, seek to destroy those obviously deadly germs? Does the church have to be three centuries behind the world? 🌐

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