

RALPH WINTER

& THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MISSIOLOGY

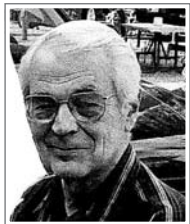
WILBERT R. SHENK

PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MISSIOLOGY

Ralph Winter undertook many strategic initiatives during his eventful life. One of these was the founding of the American Society of Missiology. By the 1960s, mission studies in North America were in transition. Mainline Protestant missions were declining as was mission studies in their seminaries. Evangelicals had depended on Bible institutes and colleges to train most of their missionaries in non-accredited programs. Indeed, the term “missiology” was largely unknown in North America.

Winter joined the Fuller School of World Mission in 1966, a year after its founding. Fuller Seminary President David Allan Hubbard was concerned that the SWM be recognized academically; but missiology lacked academic credibility. In a conversation Hubbard told Winter that for missiology to gain academic respect, missiologists needed a professional society that sponsored regular meetings, published a scholarly journal, and promoted publication of monographs in the field of mission studies.

In 1970 Ralph Winter and Gerald Anderson, who had recently returned from ten years of missionary service, began discussing the urgent need to organize a missiological society. *Practical Anthropology*, the primary missiological journal for many missionaries and professors for nearly two decades, was about to cease publication. The Association of Professors of Mission never functioned as a full-fledged professional society and was uncertain about its future. At the same time new missions were being established and the number of North American missionaries was growing. The time seemed



Wilbert Shenk is the current president of the American Society of Missiology.



ripe for strengthening missionary training and mission studies.

After consulting various colleagues, in June 1972 Winter and Anderson convened a meeting attended by 45 persons to test a proposal for a new professional society. Its membership would include professors of mission studies and cognate disciplines, mission executives and missionaries. It would be ecclesiastically comprehensive—mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics and Independent/Evangelical Protestants. The new organization would meet the requirements of a professional scholarly society. The founding meeting of the American Society of Missiology was held June 1973. Gerald Anderson was elected president and Ralph Winter was secretary-treasurer. Winter negotiated with the publishers of *Practical Anthropology* to take over their mailing list and incorporate into the new journal the main purposes of *PA*. *Missiology: An International Review* began publication in 1973. Winter negotiated ASM membership in the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion.

Dr. Winter faithfully attended each annual ASM meeting. He frequently raised probing questions and offered suggestions. We salute him as a founding father of the American Society of Missiology. 🌐