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THE SCHOOL OF WORLD MISSION: A NEW SCHOOL FOR A NEW MOVEMENT

BY J. DUDLEY WOODBERRY, PH.D.

In 1946, a full year before the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary, Charles E. Fuller published a booklet titled *Announcing Fuller College of Missions and Evangelism*, and a dean and faculty were chosen. It was only after Harold J. Ockenga persuaded him to first found a full theological seminary that included instruction in missions and evangelism that a distinct school of world mission was postponed until 1965.

The 1960s were a time of crisis in mission. With the end of colonialism and the transfer of sovereignty to "new" nations, many called for a moratorium on Western missions. There was a decline in Western mainline missions as existing institutions were turned over to national churches. Although there was a new evangelical thrust, it was based on the classical missions paradigm of mission stations and institutions. China was closed to foreign missionaries. The world was dominated by the Cold War, and attention was drawn home by the civil rights movement and disillusionment with the Vietnam War.

In this context Donald A. McGavran was chosen in 1965 as the founding dean of the new school, a person whose perspective was that "we stand in the sunrise of missions." Since the early 1930s he had studied why some churches grew and others did not. He published some of his findings in 1955 in *The*



International students (1957) debate where missions would be most strategic.

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DONALD A. MC GAVRAN: BEGINNING AGAIN AT 67

BY C. PETER WAGNER, PH.D.

When twenty-first century historians compile lists of twentieth-century missiologists, Donald A. McGavran's name will certainly appear on the shortest of the lists. Some have already begun calling him the premier missiologist of our generation.

Missions was part of the spiritual DNA of Donald McGavran. His father and his grand-

father had both served as career missionaries to India. Donald and his wife, Mary, followed in their footsteps in 1923 after Donald graduated from Yale University. They served in India under the Disciples of Christ for over 30 years.

A turning point in his life came when McGavran

associated with Methodist Bishop J. Waskom Pickett and began to analyze why it was that in some parts of India, huge populations were turning to Christ—but in his own mission, after investing enormous quantities of time and money, converts were barely trickling in. He compiled his findings in *The Bridges of God*, published in 1955. That book became the Magna Carta of the subsequent church growth movement.

McGavran left India and spent several years researching church growth around the world, writing articles and books, speaking to mission leaders, and establishing a training institute in Oregon. By then his name had become a household word in the mission community around the world. In 1965

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Bridges of God. But it was with the founding of the School of World Mission that his ideas began to impact mission policy and practice worldwide. Here his ideas were deepened and supplemented by the insights of the behavioral sciences through Alan R. Tippett (1965)

and Charles H. Kraft (1969), the lessons of mission history and revivals through Ralph D. Winter (1967) and J. Edwin Orr (1967), and guidance on the biblical theology of mission through Arthur F. Glasser (1970).

School of World Mission faculty were deeply involved in the founding of the American Society of Missiology in 1972 and the journal *Missiology* (adopting a Roman Catholic term for the interdisciplinary field of study), and a Doctor of Missiology program was developed. These influenced the growth of similar institutions in North America and around the world.

With the freedom of movement that a separate school provided, the School

of World Mission faculty and students (considered “co-researchers”) found themselves able to develop many of the emphases that have since guided mission theory and practice—for example: the focus on people groups with common affinities rather than on individuals alone and how to be used by God to facilitate people movements; how to contextualize the gospel in other cultures so that its impact has a dynamic equivalency in that culture, while still being faithful to the original message; how to minister in power without introducing Christian magic; and how to utilize the lessons of cross-cultural mission in the postmodern, post-Christian West. The challenge today is to meet the crises in missions in the 1990s as the founders of the School of World Mission met the crises of the 1960s.



J. Dudley Woodberry in the '50s as a student



Arthur Glasser, 1958 World Mission Lecturer: “Mission Unaccomplished”

DONALD A. MC GAVRAN: BEGINNING AGAIN AT 67

—from front page

President David Hubbard of Fuller Theological Seminary asked McGavran to become the founding dean of the School of World Mission. Dean McGavran was 67 years old, and launching out into the most productive season of his career. He turned his office over to Arthur Glasser in 1971, but continued to teach actively until he was 83. He never did retire to his farm in Oregon as he had planned. He could be found in his seminary office every day researching, writing, talking to students and mission leaders, traveling and speaking until his death in 1990.

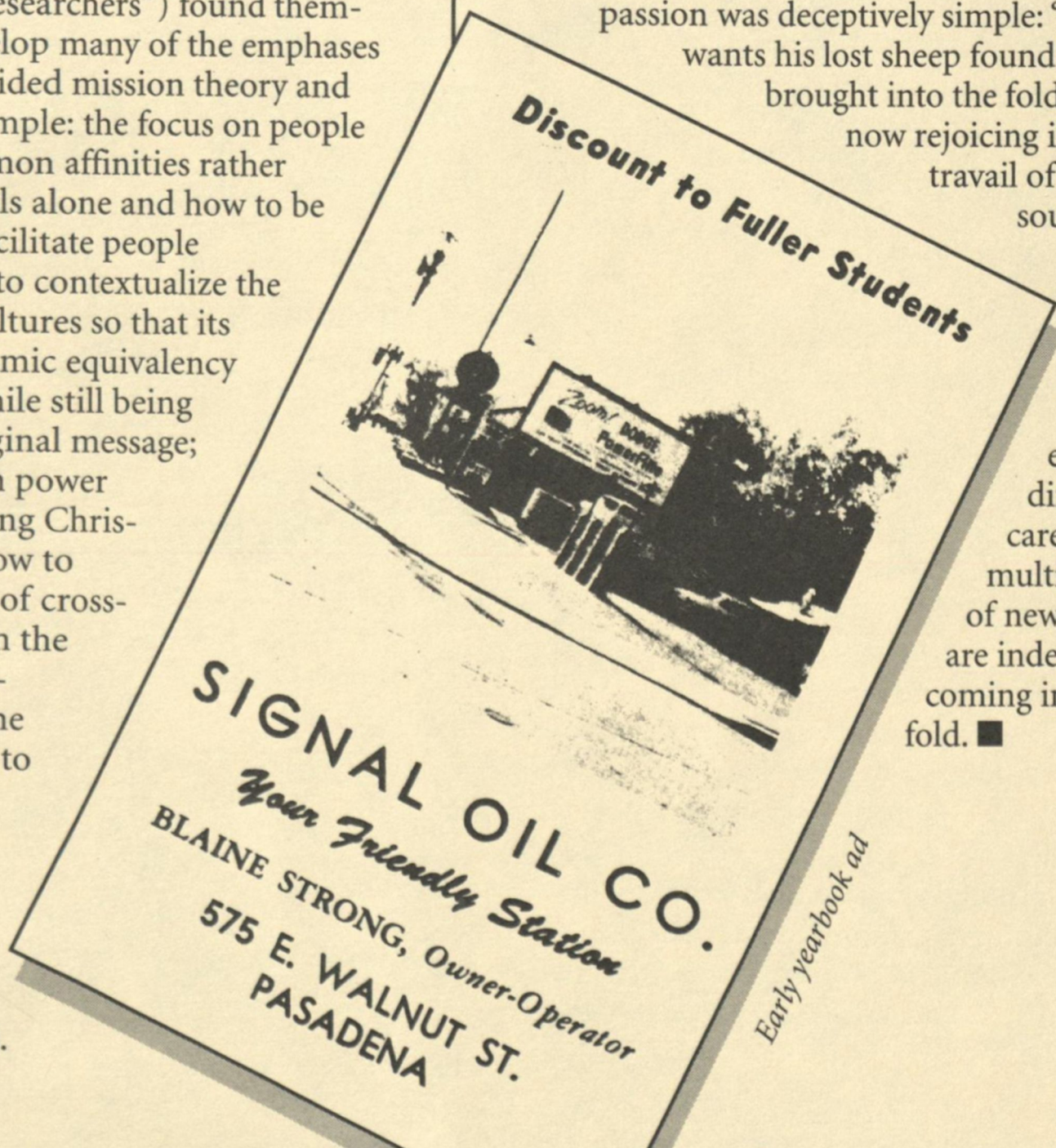
Donald McGavran’s legacy to the Kingdom of God was the church growth movement, which has been a dynamic force in stimulating productive evangelism around the world. His textbook *Understanding Church Growth* is an acknowledged classic in missiological literature. His disciples circulate freely in the highest circles of mission leadership. Few individuals in any field have had the influence among their colleagues as McGavran has had in the field of missiology. His driving passion was deceptively simple: “God

wants his lost sheep found and brought into the fold.” He is now rejoicing in the travail of his soul,

because as a result of his extraordinary career, multitudes of new sheep are indeed coming into the fold. ■



C. Peter Wagner in the '50s as a second-year student!



Early yearbook ad

GEORGE ELDON LADD: AN APPRECIATION

By RALPH P. MARTIN

At a time when the seminary community is in a reflective mood, it is good to recall those faculty members who were Fuller's pioneers. An honored name in that group is George Eldon Ladd.

Coming to the seminary in 1950 when Fuller was still in the shake-down mode, Ladd remained a formative influence as professor of New Testament until his retirement and death in 1982. It can be fairly claimed that Ladd's presence and

reputation did much to shape biblical teaching on-campus and to enhance Fuller's growing reputation as a center of scholarly endeavor. His several publications and lectures off-campus gave Fuller both visibility

and renown in the wider field, and secured for the fledgling institution a place in the sun. Ladd's name became linked with Fuller in a way that ensured that the School of Theology became internationally known as a good place to study, especially biblical theology and the exegetical disciplines.

These achievements are worth recalling, given that the early history of Fuller was marked not only by a struggle for survival (as men and women were encouraged to enroll in increasing numbers) but also by a bid to gain recognition as an academic center with respectable credentials. Ladd's name became associated with traits that inspired confidence among evangelicals; and at the same time he became respected among the more serious-minded observers as one who could hold his own in the scholarly and professional guild. That unique blend of theological conservatism and intellectual integrity, I would maintain, gives George Ladd his unrivaled place in the seminary's annals. And, interestingly, these two qualities are exactly those praised by Gerald Bray in his recent volume *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (InterVarsity Press, 1996).

George Ladd initially spoke to an audience eager to listen. His own dissatisfaction with a dispensationalist approach to prophecy and the future led him to address

his major theme, the Kingdom of God. His early book *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (1952) was to presage his best-known study *Jesus and the Kingdom* (1964), and to pave the way for his magisterial overview of New Testament theology (1974), written to support what he regarded as the ruling motif of biblical theology, namely, salvation history. His popular commentary *Revelation* (1972) secured a niche at a time when the reading Christian public was anxious to have a sane, sober, and yet heart-warming treatment of eschatology.

It is in that connection that I first made Ladd's acquaintance, first through his writings, then as I met him at Tyndale House, Cambridge, and later on my first visit to

Fuller in 1965. I found him an impressive figure; though to be honest, he did not easily open up and was not effusively friendly. It took time for a relationship to develop, and at first I was hesitant. In fact, I have a distinct



George Eldon Ladd in action

memory of sitting in a church row in Sierra Madre and putting to him a direct question: Did he think we could be colleagues? This was at a time when I was considering the faculty invitation to come to Pasadena.

When we did arrive in 1969, any fears and hesitations I may have had were dissolved, and we grew to respect and value each other's person and contribution. At times there was some distance between us, mainly (I think) because he was not sure about some views I entertained regarding biblical authorship and redaction criticism. For my part, I was unpersuaded when he expounded his over-systematized biblical theology. Yet we agreed to differ, and on reflection I did learn much from him and came to esteem him as a valued colleague and confrere.

Moreover, his nature (I think) mellowed over the years. At times he could be gruff and angular, with a matching stentorian voice, a bit harsh in dealing with students and a touch unpredictable in personal relationships. The cause celebre of a notorious book review that was wholly negative on his *Jesus and the Kingdom* book left him soured and deflated, a mood from which he never recovered. Nor was he helped by telling the story of this review times without number and to all who would listen. I would encourage him to forget



it and press on. As F. F. Bruce told me of his remark to Ladd, “George, *what* did you expect?” in view of who the reviewer was. (In fact he was a fellow-student with me at Manchester years before, which didn’t please Ladd when I told him!)

Here we are in touch with the human side of our learned friend. For all his expertise in biblical study and impressive exterior of strength like a Prussian military officer with an occasional brusque manner, Ladd was vulnerable and insecure. Seeking a place in the scholars’ inner circle, which he surely deserved and merited, he never felt quite at home there. And any shaft of criticism came home to him as a personal assault and insult, and put him into a depressed state. Or, perhaps, the diagnosis of his moodiness is simpler, as my wife who knew his wife, Winnie, well once took him aside and gently chided him, “George,” she said, “don’t take yourself so seriously.”

George Ladd’s virtues and accomplishments, of course, outweigh any perceived faults. Marianne Meye Thompson, in her excellent presentation at a Jubilee Celebration seminar, lifted up his place in the seminary’s early, formative days and called attention to his influence which, truth to tell, was to decline for reasons she rightly gave. I would add one more. Ladd stood for the integrity and utility of biblical theology, seen as a synthetic approach to the New

Testament. Alas, the biblical theology movement was already on the way to the exit, when Ladd taught and wrote his *Theology*, and it has never made a comeback. And salvation history as a hermeneutical method is in eclipse.

Yet Ladd’s other contributions do remain. He lived, taught, and wrote at a time when Fuller was emerging into prominence and acceptance. What it is today, as far as biblical scholarship is concerned, is due thanks largely to his example and influence. We salute his memory: and as I said at a dinner in 1978, honoring him with a Festschrift volume, we certainly shall not see his like again. ■



Pioneering beach evangelism

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1947-1997
FULLER