

1-1-2005

## “God’s Unswerving Purpose”: Session One Manhattan Christian College, October 1981

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### Recommended Citation

McGavran, D. (2005). “God’s Unswerving Purpose”: Session One Manhattan Christian College, October 1981. *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth*, 16(1), 61-75. Retrieved from <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/jascg/vol16/iss1/5>

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**"God's Unswerving Purpose": Session One  
Manhattan Christian College, October 1981**

**Donald McGavran**

*In 1981, Donald McGavran presented a series of lectures at Manhattan Christian college. Over the next few journals, we will publish this series in a continuing effort to honor McGavran and his legacy of Church Growth Missiology. —Editor*

This article has been transcribed from the taped lectures.

*INTRODUCTION*

HOST: This is a class period and we will conduct this class as normal as we can. I am going to read a scripture and then Dr. Charles Cook will lead us into prayer, after which I will introduce our speaker and then the class will begin. It is not often that we begin our service with a benediction, that is when we think only a benediction is to end things. But I want to read a benediction, a blessing of God, to begin things:

"Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel, and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings, by the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and know him. To the only wise God be glory forever and ever, through Jesus Christ, Amen."

Let us stand.

AUDIENCE MEMBER PRAYING: Our Father in heaven, you have called us to tasks greater than we can achieve. So we see ourselves as participants with you in this great mission. You have called us to this moment - to have our minds enlightened, to have our understanding increased, our commitment doubled—so that we might be participants in your mission in the

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world. We thank you for bringing to us these persons, whose lives have been so committed, helping the church fulfill its mission. We thank you, that by example, as well as by teaching, they have influenced so many in so many places, to the end that there is a turning to Christ, a turning, perhaps, unlike any other time since. We thank you for making that possible. Today, keep us from being students who only learn, to remember, that we are students who learn to apply. Enable us Lord to hear and to believe. And believing to give ourselves in service to you. Perhaps, among us there are many today, Lord, who are seeking and searching for a way - a way for their lives to have meaning and fulfillment. And even as we have prayed, we now come eager, desiring that you will show us that way, in which we can also be 'amen.' Help us in the decision we will make, because of what we are able to understand of the one who guides us, in Jesus name, Amen.

HOST: Some of our late students arriving [referring to students entering room]. Nothing would be more pleasurable to me, than to spend this time fulfilling this honorable task of introducing our speaker. I will do so only because of the intriguing nature of the exciting accomplishments of this person, and the importance of his presence with us today. So please excuse me if I am somewhat lengthy in this introduction.

A powerful potential movement began just prior to World War II, but because of the global conflicts it sputtered and came to a halt. But God, in his time, had prepared a man to bridge the gap—to crystallize latent forces into a mighty army, which has led the greatest advance of the kingdom of God, this side of the first two centuries, A.D.

Our speaker is the founder of what is known as the 'Church Growth Movement.' He is its first major and most voluminous author and writer. After thirty years in India, as educator, director, and missionary, he returned to the United States in 1954 to study and teach the missionary movement in order to better determine what methods were actually effective in planting churches all over the world.

The first presentation of his views in literary form was the *Bridges of God*, published in 1955. And since then, a vast array of articles and books have followed, the classic of which is, *Understanding Church Growth*.

To accomplish his concern, he founded the 'Institute for Church Growth' in 1960 on the campus of our sister organization, Northwest Christian College. He founded the Institute of Church Growth and its subsequent expansion required a move to Pasadena, California. And it was renamed the 'School of

World Missions and the Institute for Church Growth.'

Our speaker has led in the overturn of traditional ways of church growth and missions all over the world. He has stirred the liberal and evangelical expressions of Christianity to rethink their philosophies and activities. He has lit a light and kindled a heat that burnt off the fog that surrounded the church as she wandered to and fro in uncertainty and in ineffectiveness in her task. He has been the catalyst, which solidified and firmed up those elements in the minds of churchmen and missiologists, which are imperative for the church to fulfill her covenant and her magnificent mandate. He is a biblical missiologist. He is a professor of the science of the theology and a theology of missions. He is a gospel missionary. He is a writer of a library size collection of church growth principles. He is a servant of the living God.

Last year, in Geneva Switzerland, my wife and I, and Mr. and Mrs. James Smith of the Christian Missionary Fellowship, stood behind the pulpit in the chapel of the World Council of Churches headquarters, and together we lifted up our voices in unison, and chanted the theme of the World Consultation on Frontier Mission, which had convened the week before in Edinburgh, Scotland. The theme was 'A Church for Every People by the Year 2000.' This school has taken up the challenge to participate in that holy adventure. Choosing to recruit, and train, and send out at least two-hundred units by the year 2000 to the un-reached people of the world.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 'Amen!'

HOST: This theme of this emphasis week is 'A Church for Every People: Where do I Fit In?' No man this side of heaven's gate is more equipped to lead us toward this unprecedented goal in this grand enterprise than our speaker.

Faculty and students, ladies and gentlemen, I present to you, Donald A. McGavran.

*Applause.*

MESSAGE

McGavran: Christian friends, its good to be back in a Christian college. As Dr. Barret just said, the Church Growth movement found its major expression at Northwestern Christian College. And I am pleased that Christian church, churches of Christ, had a share in the launching this movement, that has, under God, and by the help of many people and many lands, become a major force in the expansion of Christianity.

And I am pleased to be here at Manhattan Christian College—from N.C.C. to M.C.C. I don't know if you're going up the

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alphabet or down the alphabet, but its good to be here. I feel at home.

And I am going to speak to you this morning on "The Unswerving Purpose of God." The 'Unswerving Purpose of God for the Salvation of Man.' As we consider the crucial task in Kansas, in California, and around the world, today, we must at the very outset, remember the unswerving purpose of God for the salvation of man. Evangelism and mission, and church growth begin in God's unswerving purpose. So before and few moments, I come to today's challenge and opportunities, we must go back to God's revelation in Jesus Christ, and align ourselves with him. Before our Lord was conceived, the angel told his earthly father, 'Call his name Jesus. For he will save his people from their sins.' He lived for just one purpose: to seek the lost, and to restore them to their Father's house. He died on the cross and rose again, that *panta ta ethne*, you, that all the tribes, families, and kindred, and classes of men, might be disciplined and transformed into good men and women, able to create good societies. From the foundation of the world, God's intent was to open up a way of salvation for all populations: urban and rural, whereby they might be reconciled to God. Thus freed from the power of sin and death, they would become parts of the reconciling body of Christ, the Church—that great transformer of men and nations. This purpose of our Lord, shared by his sons, is the driving force behind Christian mission, church growth, and world evangelization.

Now as we gather in Manhattan Christian College, it is particularly fitting that we should hear, again, the words the Lord spoke, both before, and after his resurrection, which expressed his desire that men and women believe on him and be saved. Thus we shall ground in his eternal purpose, our commitment to a mighty multiplication of his churches throughout the world. And God grant that there be a cluster of growing churches in every people across the earth by the year 2000.

Numerous passages of scripture voice this consuming passion of Christ, for the propagation of the saving Gospel of God. I am going to turn to six of them—all six—and others beside, combine to make the New Testament church vividly conscious that its primary task was to spread the good news and multiply Christians and churches everywhere. All these versions must have been bright in Paul's mind, as he swept around the Mediterranean, planting scores of churches. All these versions pressed upon the early church *and* press upon our churches today: to keep focused on the salvation of all classes and conditions of men. Salvation transforms believers and begins when people

consciously place their faith on Jesus Christ, confessing him before, and become his followers.

The saved constitute the church. 'I will build my church,' said the Lord Jesus, 'and the gates of hell will not prevail against her.' As men believe, they were invariably baptized, added to the church, and continued in the fellowship of the church and the propagation of the gospel.

The first passage to which I shall call attention is recorded in John 17. In that amazing, high-priestly prayer, spoken at the last supper in Jerusalem, he said, "As thou has sent thee into the world, I have sent them in the world.' And the 'them' there includes us, gathered in this room here today. The purpose of the sending is clear. Five times in the high-priestly prayer, versus 8, 20, 21, 23, and 25, our Lord tells us that the basic purpose of his appointing, and teaching, and sending his disciples is, 'that the world might believe that thou hast sent me.' When the world learns that God has sent his Son, and believes on his Son, the world will be saved. Telling men that is still the basic purpose for Christ sending out his servants today—from this college and every college, from the churches here represented and from all churches.

Take a second vivid expression of the passion of our Lord for the salvation of many. We read in Acts 1:8 about his final, earthly appearance, when the disciples came together in Jerusalem. He said, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, and all Judea, and Samaria, and away to the ends of the earth.' This directive was very contrary to what they were expecting. They were expecting him to establish the kingdom of Israel, and to chase the Romans into the sea. Instead he told them to go out and evangelize the world.

'You will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem,' let us call this witness to nominal Christians in our 'Jerusalem's,' our churches. Let us call this evangelism '0.' It really is not evangelism at all—its perfecting existing Christians. But let's call it evangelism '0.' And 'in Judea,' let us call this witness to people of our own sort, our own language, who are not believers, not even nominal Christians. Let's call this evangelism '1.' And 'in Samaria,' let us call this evangelism to nearby people, who live across a linguistic and cultural barrier from us, evangelism '2.' And 'away to the ends of the earth,' let us call this a witness to those who live a great cultural, or linguistic, or geographic distance from us, evangelism '3.'

The world picture to which I am calling your attention in this first session includes all four kind of evangelism: 'evangel-

ism 0,' 'evangelism 1,' 'evangelism 2,' 'evangelism 3' and is what's necessary if we are going to win this world for Christ, if we are going to place a church in every people by the year 2000.

Third, before these words of our Lord were actually written down in the gospels as we now have them, we have a most important passage direct from the hand of the apostle Paul himself. I am referring, of course, to Galatians 1:16, where Paul says this, 'God, who set me apart from birth, and called me through his grace, chose to reveal his Son to me and through me.' Now listen carefully. Why did God choose to reveal his Son to him and through him? 'In order that I might proclaim him among the people of earth, the non-Jewish peoples of earth, the Gentiles.' That's why God chose Paul. That was part of God's unswerving purpose: to save all men through faith in Jesus Christ. The date of that revelation to Paul, to which he refers again and again, was about AD 32 or 33, some where around in there. It probably reflects the testimony, which young Saul of Tarsus, a fanatical Jew, during the years immediately following Pentecost, during the first huge expansion of Christianity, and the mighty multiplication of churches throughout Jerusalem, and Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, was repeatedly hearing from Jewish Christians as Paul spoke to them he insisted that the Lord Jesus commanded the gospel to be proclaimed to all tribes, tribes and tongues, to everyone. And that Christians were to witness to the ends of the earth. As Saul persecuted the Christians, he must have asked angrily, again and again, 'why do you keep going out all over this country and telling these innocent people about your wretched Jesus?' The humble Christians would apply, 'Because the risen Jesus told us to tell everybody.' 'Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and away to the ends of the earth' are his exact words. He told us to. That's why we do it.

The Galilean, peasant Christians probably didn't understand the whole import of the large command, to disciple, *panta ta ethne*, all the peoples of the earth. But Saul, the educated and traveled man did. His first reaction was to hate the command. But after the risen Lord had met him on the Damascus road, Saul knew that God was calling him to be the special messenger to the peoples of earth. Saul of Tarsus would never, never, never, have accepted this utterly repugnant assignment, which ran counter to so much of what was written in the law and the prophets, and the Psalms. Except that it was the clear command of the Lord Jesus, both before and after his death and resurrection. Attested to what hundreds of Christians, entirely independent of each other, kept on telling him. What the Lord Jesus told him on the Damascus road simply confirmed what the

Christians everywhere had been telling him for several years. And so finally he yielded—made the hundred and eighty-degree turn, and became the missionary to the Gentile world.

Fourth ... the fourth passage. The best recognized form of our Lord's command to disciple the people's of the world is Matthew 28:19, and 20. I have placed it fourth to indicate that it is merely one of many versions in which the scriptures teach us clearly that bringing men and women to intentional, costly discipleship to Jesus Christ and membership in his body, the Church, is a chief and irreplaceable duty and privilege of all Christians. The fourth passage reads: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." What overwhelming authority. All authority over people. All authority over things. All authority over the laws of nature. All authority on earth and all authority in heaven. Now what's the Lord going to say after that impressive beginning? He might have said, 'therefore love one another.' But he didn't. He might have said, 'therefore study the Bible.' But he didn't. He might have said, 'therefore, be good Christians.' But he didn't. What he did say was, 'Therefore, go and disciple all the peoples of earth. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you.'

You see the unswerving purpose of God flying like a banner over the church, constantly leads her on to disciple every piece of the vast human mosaic - the three billion who have yet to believe, the tremendous multitudes around existing churches here in Kansas, in California, and out a ways to the ends of the earth, must be evangelized, must be disciplined.

Turn next to the fifth version, found in Romans 16:25, and 26, that has already been read once, but I am going to read it again: "To him that has the power to make your standing sure according to the gospel I brought you, and the proclamation of Jesus, according to the revelation of that divine secret, hidden for long ages but now disclosed, and through prophetic scriptures, by eternal God's command, made known to all nations, to bring them to faith and obedience, to God be the glory."

From this magnificent ascription of praise to God, if we take the foundational thought, that runs through out—very clearly once you see it—you'll recognize that here we have the Great Commission according to Paul. Listen to what he says. He says the gospel, hidden for long ages, but now, by the expressed command of eternal God, made known to all nations, to bring them to faith and obedience. The Gospel, my friends, was not revealed just to win Donald McGavran to Christian faith, or to win all of you to Christian faith. Thank God we have come under the Gos-



der the Gospel power. But that's a very, very small part. The Gospel was revealed in order that the unswerving purpose of God for the salvation of men might be carried out. That's what this says, and it fits in so beautifully with these other passages of scripture that I have been reading to you.

Now we come to the sixth version of Christ's command, to disciple the peoples of planet earth. In the revelation of John, chapter 7, verse 7, 9, 10, and 13, read as follows: "After this, I looked and saw vast thrones, which no man could count, from every nation, of all tribes, and all peoples, and all languages, standing in front of the throne and before the lamb. They were robed in white and had palms in their hands, and they shouted together, 'Victory to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!' Then one of the elders turned to me and said, 'These men, robed in white, who are they? I answered my Lord, 'You know, not I.' Then he said to me, 'These are the men who have passed through the Great Ordeal, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

The grand goal, my friends—the grand goal, to which world evangelization and Christian mission progresses, is that real Christians—those that have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white—from every ethnic unit, every language, every people, every town, every countryside, in every nation on earth, shall stand before the throne and the Lamb and shout, 'Victory, Victory to our God, who sits on the throne and to the lamb!' Till that happens, Christian mission goes on. Till that happens, world evangelization is at its beginning.

Now these six versions that I have given to you are not chance utterances. They didn't just happen to be there. Or happen to be found by me as I was preparing this address. It was God's eternal purpose that all men might have the opportunity to believe and be saved. It was part of the revelation of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, which exerted and was intended to exert, great pressure on the New Testament churches.

How did the New Testament churches respond? Well? Well, men and women respond according to the context, and how context looks to them. That is exactly how the first century Christians responded to this command of the Lord. It would be stupid for us to say that when our Lord said so clearly, 'preach the gospel to the ends of the earth,' he obviously meant Brazil and Greenland, and Zambia, and Timbuktu. Therefore, the early church should have sent missionaries to all those lands. Since they did not, they probably did not know of God's unswerving purpose, to make salvation available to the whole world. It would be stupid of us to say that. Zambia and Timbuktu were

not what 'the ends of the earth' meant to those early disciples, to the Galilean, peasant, followers of our Lord, who had never been outside Palestine. To them, the 'ends of the earth' were Dan in the North, and Beerishaba in the South—that was where their world began and ended. Bound as they were by their intense Jewishness, they cared little about other people. They knew little about the rest of the globe. To the first Christians, the Great Commission meant discipling Judea, and Benjamin, and Levi—all the Jews then living in Jerusalem, and Judea, and Galilee, and disciple them they did! No doubt they had heard of Jews in far countries. But the big task was the Jews right around them. On them they concentrated and them they won.

Then God's purpose, pressing heavily on him, Philip, remembering what the risen Lord had said—'Samaria'—Philip went to Samaria. Now Samaria, while near geographically, was at a great distance, socially. Philip would have never gone to the Samaritans, except for his Lord's expressed command. There the crowds listened, eagerly to what he said. The Lord blessed his minister, multitudes of Samaritans believed on the Lord Jesus, and there was great joy in their land. At once, the Jerusalem church sent Peter and John, who prayed for the converts, immersed all who believed, and added them to the Lord and to the church.

Many Christians in Jerusalem must have had serious questions about those half-breed Jews with whom they had no dealings, and making them, you know, fellow Christians, who would sit down at the communion table and eat with us. Ezra-Nehemiah had straightly charged the Jews not to intermarry with the Gentiles, not to fellowship with the Samaritans, and to put away women who were not Jews. God-fearing Jews would inevitably have serious questions as to whether Samaritans could become Christians—could be saved or not.

Notwithstanding these questions, the apostles and evangelists became keenly conscious of Christ's command to preach the gospel in Samaria, and to disciple the families and tribes of men out to the edges of the earth, who obediently immersed the Samaritans and taught them all things. God honored their obedience and granted his Holy Spirit abundantly to these new Christians with a slightly different culture and slightly different language.

In similar fashion, period by period, the churches obedience to the unswerving purpose of God for the salvation of mankind has varied according to the context. If I had time, I would trace all the intermediate periods, and would show you, in them, leaders of the church understood God's passion for men's re-

demption, and responded according to their contexts.

How does today's context influence us Christians what to do in October 1981, and in the coming nineteen years before we'll be in October 2000? That is the question we must ask. What is our context? We are command to *panta ta ethne*. Well, what does *panta ta ethne* mean to us, in modern America in 1981.

I call your attention to five great meanings of the contemporary context. First, a domestic meaning. Enormous numbers of our kinds of people live all around us with claimed, but very ineffective commitment to Jesus Christ. They speak our language. They live in houses like ours. Their children and ours go to the same school. We shop at the same supermarkets, and eat the same kind of food. They are our kind of folk. Yet they have little consciousness of daily life lived in obedience to a master. They consider themselves Christians, but do not really know what being 'in Christ' means. So they grow more and more alienated, and more and more secular. They watch the family breaking up, and the sex life of millions gravitating toward the animal, and rush out to buy pornographic books. They bring magazines full of liquor advertisements into their homes. And accustom their children to the thought that, 'today everyone in America drinks.' They hold and pass on racist convictions. They seldom, if ever, have family prayers. They have time for everything else but not for family prayers. On Sunday, they immerse themselves in the paper, and watching football games. The Bible in the house accumulates dust. In all this, they have little consciousness of betraying Christ, or disobeying their shepherd. But the fact of the matter is they are living without a shepherd, and without a Savior.

Europeans always have in mind when they speak and write about 'post-Christian Europe' less than 10%, probably less than 5% of all Swedes and Englishman attend church regularly. The Church of Rome, calls great sections of the industrial heartland of France, 'missions territory.' Because there practically no one attends mass, even once a year. In Latin America, the forty-nine million who speak Indian languages, are overwhelmingly 'Christo-pagans.' And among the Spanish and Portuguese speakers, at least a hundred and fifty million are hard-core, secular materialists. They never read the Bible, and have no intention of obeying Christ in daily life and worship.

Let me now attempt to quantify the situation in the United States. Frankly, I shall be presenting you with an educated guess. But please do not respond by quickly thinking up a better guess of your own. Instead, see that something of this magnitude does in fact exist. Focus on the enormous number of lost people. Of

the two hundred and twenty million now living in the United States, about a hundred and seventy million are our kind of people. Of the hundred and seventy million, let us vary generously, let us assume that seventy million have a current, obedience relationship to Jesus Christ. They are the backbone of all churches. They intend to be Christians, to walk in the way, and rear their children as believers. They get to the church. They read their Bible at least occasionally. They regularly confess their sins, and ask God to forgive them. They continually make new starts in the power of the Holy Spirit. There are seventy million Christians—very generous estimate—of that sort. If this estimate is at all correct, that would lead a hundred million of our kind of people, living all around us, nominal Christians but actually without Christ. They are the most winnable people in the world. They consider themselves in some way Christian. Nothing keeps them from practicing their faith and loving their Lord, except sin and selfishness. They suffer no persecution when they become real Christians. Multitudes of new churches can be started among them. Day before yesterday I was in Greenborough, Indiana, just south of Indianapolis, and saw a church of six hundred people that had been started three years ago, and grown just like that—to six hundred—multitudes of churches can be started among them. Multitudes of them can unite with existing churches. Let us call all that effort, to win our own kind of people, who are already marginal or nominal Christian, 'evangelism 0.' Tremendous increase of 'evangelism 0' is demanded. This is the first meaning of the contemporary context.

The second great meaning of today's context is that very large numbers of our kinds of people who do not belong to any church, and who do not consider themselves Christians, live all around us. They are fellow Democrats or Republicans, or members of the faculty. They live on our street. They meet us on the golf course, and in the university club. And at the lumber mill. They write the books we read. And own stock in the same companies we do. Often they are very nice people. But would not be offended if we called them pagans born of pagans. They have openly given up Christianity as untenable by modern man. They avidly believe that there must be life in the millions of planets out there—life created of course, not by God, but by just the right mix of methane gas and other elements, conveniently swirling around at just the correct temperature. They are hard-core secularists and humanists. And there are millions of them. Others who claim no relationship to Christ are hedonists in mad pursuit of pleasure. They have an invincible belief that if they try hard enough and get enough education and solve enough prob-

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lems and spend enough money at it, everyone can have a good time, and living can really be quite a lot of fun. In North America, these unbelieving pagans—our own kind of people, numbered probably twenty or thirty million—they are not highly winnable. Many are distinctly resistant. These are, however, to be converted. Our Lord sends us out to these people, to tell them of the Savior.

No thought has been more damaging to the conversion of these multitudes than the commonly believed error that America is rather really well churchd. We have enough churches. Our principal task ought to be cooperating with each other, and acting more like Christians. Do not let us look for the unsaved. There may be some of those around, and particularly overseas, but not in the United States. To think in those erroneous terms is tragic.

In February 1975, I spent several days with the Southern Baptists in seven, northern central states: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Missouri, and I think Iowa. About twenty years ago, based on careful surveys, the Southern Baptists concluded that in the heartland of northern America, there were millions of unsaved and uncharged people. The Southern Baptists began serious church planting evangelism. What I am talking about today. In 1957, they had seven hundred churches in that territory—only seven hundred churches! They now have three thousand. Then they had a hundred and twenty-thousand members of their churches. Now they have six-hundred thousand members of their churches. And they plan to have eight-hundred thousand in the next few years. They established a hundred churches in Illinois in two years, 1976 and 1977. The Southern Baptists are finding that their estimates of twenty-five years ago are correct. Multitudes of the unsaved are found everywhere. And I'm sure that with this audience they do not need to emphasize this fact. Incalculable needs and opportunities are all around us.

The third main meaning of today's context, arises from the thirty-million Americans who are neither our kind of people, nor practicing Christians. Ethnic minorities of all kinds are found in the United States: Koreans, Arabs, Lebanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Porto Ricans, Greeks, Argentineans, Mexicans, Japanese, Asian Indians, Africans, and on and on. And these, my friends, must be won. As I flew in here yesterday, I passed through the St. Louis airport, and an employee of the airport was shouting direction to another employee, he was speaking entirely in Spanish. In St. Louis, these minorities, my friends, live all around us. I wish I could spend an hour talking to you on that point. But I

must go on to the fourth aspect of the contemporary context. It bursts on our site like the Rocky Mountains, as like one enters Denver from the east.

Living in this world just across the oceans from us are at least three billion non-Christians: Hindus, Buddhists, Marxists, Muslims, Animists—most of these have never heard the name of Jesus, all of them have yet to believe on him. All of these myriads, who used to live far away, now suddenly live very close to us. 'Overseas' is not overseas anymore. 'Far away' is really close at hand. Timbuktu has become a suburb of Manhattan. And Manhattan has become a suburb of Timbuktu.

In any event, in the fall of 1980, I rode for hundreds of miles by car and train, through typical districts of that vast country. I saw tremendous numbers of villages, and towns, and millions of people. In most of the district, at least nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand were non-Christians and knew nothing of our Lord Jesus Christ. In all human probability, they will never sit down to the communion table, to partake of the bread and the wine. The same thing could be said in Indonesia, Algeria, Thailand, Persia, Iran, Turkey, Cambodia and on and on.

To evangelize these huge populations, all churches in all countries will have to engage in 'evangelism 3.' And I hope that many of you will dedicate your lives to 'evangelism 3': That is, send missionaries that learn other languages, becoming thoroughly part of those lands and those cultures, and patiently commend Christ by word and deed across linguist and cultural barriers.

The fifth aspect of the context, which has very great meaning for us in Manhattan Christian College today, is the enormous wealth of the American church. No church in any period of history has had greater per capita wealth: financial, intellectual, and spiritual. No nation on earth has ever had more health, more food, more warmth, more luxurious transportation, more learning, more leisure, and more money. In none has the average citizen read more books. In none has a greater percent of the population been as biblically-literate. In none, has as large of a minority, had a warm, personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Add to this, the fact that we look out on other peoples—Asia, Africa, and Latin America - we see at least two thousand million who are living on a mere pittance. They feel themselves fortunate if they have three pounds of rice, or wheat, a day for their entire family. Our Lord said, clearly, 'Everyone to whom much is given, of him much will be required.' The incredible wealth of our churches and our members increases significantly our responsibility for all four types of evangelism, and perhaps espe-

cially, for 'evangelism 3' to those three billion that have yet to believe.

We can measure the evangelistic thrust of our churches in a rather simple way. How many members does it take to send out a full-time evangelistic worker or a missionary? In some American denominations it takes five thousand members to send out one evangelistic worker. In other denominations it takes a thousand. In a few dedicated denominations, each hundred Christians send out one full-time missionary. If the millions of active Christians represented in our constituencies, in our Christian churches, and our churches of Christ, and the other churches whose representatives are here with us this morning, were to send out evangelistic workers and missionaries at this last rate (a hundred to one), which is quite possible for all Americans, the three billion who have yet to believe, would believe in this generation. This stupendous spiritual, intellectual, and material wealth of our churches is the fifth significant part of the context in which we carry out the Great Commission.

God has called us Americans, American Christians, American churches into existence for just such a time as this. He has richly endowed us, and placed before us the most winnable world at home and abroad, ever to be seen. And has commanded us to thrust in the sickle and bring the sheaves into the Master's barn. Christian mission and church growth is not an optional activity. Some people go in for Christian mission, some people go in for golf. O no!—it is mandatory. In the last twenty years of the twentieth century, the unswerving purpose of our Lord to save men, voiced so frequently in the New Testament, and seen in the light of the contemporary context, means the growth and multiplication of churches must be our goal. The establishment of a congregation of the redeemed, a Christian church, a growing Christian church, in every thousands of the sons of man, in every community, in every neighborhood, in every land, in every continent, is what we are sent to do, my friends. It is God's will, and the sooner we realize this, and commit ourselves to it, the more pleased God will be, and the better his unswerving purpose be carried out.

*Applause*

HOST: I'm sure that everyone has received a good bite into the biblical feast that were going to be receiving these next few sessions. Dr. McGavran spoke to me briefly just before this class period, saying that he would like to meet with every one of you who, has on your heart, the burden to be a missionary. He would like to meet with all of you at some time during his stay here [that includes your students Andy]. I would very much like

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to have all the students who are interested in the mission field to meet with Dr. McGavran. The time we will set at a later session, because we have not coordinated all of our efforts yet. Class is dismissed.

Writer

McGavran, Donald A. Dr. Donald A. McGavran is widely noted as the founder of the modern Church Growth movement. After a distinguished career as a field missionary in India (1923-1954), he served as a traveling researcher and visiting professor of Church Growth missiology. In 1961 he founded the Institute for Church Growth in Eugene, Oregon and eventually became founding dean of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA.