

Tribute to Dr Ralph Winter



Alex and Faith Smith

Missiologist, historian, thinker, visionary, stimulator, and creative writer are some to the qualities that comes to mind when I think of Dr. Winter.

As a native Australian, I am glad to add this tribute to one of the giants of our generation in analyzing and evaluating Mission. I first met him in the summer of 1969 during a week of exposure to the Church Growth approaches at Winona Lake, Michigan. Dr. Ralph Winter along with Dr. Donald McGavran, Dr. Alan Tippett and Dr. Arthur Glasser, the "big geniuses" in the School of World Mission, kept me enthralled with the exciting conceptualization and historical relevance of effective theory and practice in Mission. Later in the 1970s, I sat under their teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary. Dr. Winter's insights and reflections sparked much interest, rumination and sometime controversy, but always with the serious ultimate extension of God's Kingdom in mind. I was there at the beginnings of the struggle to get the property for establishing the US Center of World Mission in Pasadena.

During my long service in Thailand I had occasional personal interaction with Dr. Winter. His warm welcome and excitement at every new concept for mission catalyzed many conversations with him during lectures, furlough visits, and conferences, often catapulting one into new dimensions of vision and commitment to Mission. With his encouragement, I became a frequent lecturer in the Perspectives Courses on World Mission. That series of weekly exposures contained the stimulus and vision of Dr. Winter, which exposed many key church leaders, general laypersons and field missionaries to the broad vista of Mission in today's world.

Dr. Winter's vision for the Islamic world was matched for his concern to see all peoples, nations tongues and tribes reached with Christ's Gospel.

Dr. Winter certainly made a mark on the generations of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which will likely continue into the future. He was one stimulating person whom it was difficult not to respond to, whether one agreed with him or not.

Yes Dr. Ralph Winter was a Missiologist, Historian, Visionary, Stimulator, and creative Writer who made you sit up and listen. He will be missed but his insights are likely to influence the future for some time to come - until God's Kingdom on earth is established.

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June 5, 2009.

Published in the July 2009 issue of the multi-lingual online journal
www.GlobalMissiology.org