

## THE LIFE OF DONALD MCGAVRAN: BUILDING A FACULTY

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— Editor’s Note: Gary L. McIntosh has spent over a decade researching and writing a complete biography on the life and ministry of Donald A. McGavran. We are pleased to present here the seventh of several excerpts from the biography.

### **Abstract**

Following the founding of the Fuller School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth in 1965, Donald McGavran began to enlarge the faculty. To the initial members—McGavran and Alan Tippett—he added Ralph Winter, J. Edwin Orr, Charles Kraft, C. Peter Wagner, and Arthur Glasser. This excerpt tells the story of these hires and the early development of the Church Growth curriculum.

### **BUILDING A FACULTY**

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Donald’s publications provided a major source of advertising for the new school, one that penetrated into numerous church families. For example, in 1967, he was published in the *Lutheran Standard*, *HIS Magazine* (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship), *World Vision Magazine*, *Conservative Baptist Impact*, and *World Encounter* (Lutheran Church in America). Some of his articles, such as “A Bigger Bang for Your Buck or How to Get More for Your

Missionary Dollar,”<sup>1</sup> spoke to specific local church interest. Other writings, such as “How to Evaluate Missions,”<sup>2</sup> communicated key aspects of church growth theory.

One of his most popular articles was written on leadership. Donald had developed a perspective on leadership that became extremely well known among those who studied church growth theory. He first published his ideas in an article that was published twice in 1967 as “Churches Need Five Kinds of Leaders.”<sup>3</sup> He felt, in fact, that effective church growth required the development of at least five types of leaders. First, a church needs class one leaders, unpaid laymen who face inwardly, providing nurture for the saints already in the church. Second, a church needs class two leaders, unpaid lay persons facing outward in evangelistic ministry to those outside of Christ and a local church. Third, a church needs a class three leader, the paid pastor of a small church. Such pastors must be able to identify with the people in the community, speak their language, practice their customs, and teach the Word of God in a manner that brings the people into spiritual maturity. Fourth, larger churches need a class four leader, a highly trained paid pastor. These pastors most often serve congregations in urban centers and have top-flight training and vision for church growth. Last, churches need class five leaders who work among and across numerous churches. Some class five leaders serve denominations, associations, or independent churches in many locations. This article became a staple of his lectures, one he shared at various conferences as “Five Kinds of Leaders.”

Along with his writing, Donald was consistently organizing seminars for missionaries on furlough, pastors of local churches, and missions committees. These were meant to educate those who attended but often served to introduce SWM-ICG to furloughed missionaries. Board members of mission agencies would often send a missionary to attend the school, or a missionary would attend on his or her furlough. Registration fees meant a seminar paid for itself, and those offered introduced church growth perspectives and terminology to numerous people. The seminars were usually team exercises, with both Donald and Alan Tippett speaking, along with guest speakers and other SWM faculty members as they came on board. Camp retreat centers, such as those in Glorieta, New Mexico; Montreat, North Carolina; and Mt. Hermon near San Francisco hosted seminars. Other seminars were held on college campuses, such as Biola College in La Mirada, California;

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<sup>1</sup> Donald A. McGavran, “A Bigger Bang for Your Buck or How to Get More for Your Missionary Dollar,” *World Vision Magazine*, December 1967, 16–17.

<sup>2</sup> Donald McGavran, “How to Evaluate Missions,” *His Magazine* 27, no. 5 (February 1967): 22–27.

<sup>3</sup> Donald A. McGavran, “Churches Need Five Kinds of Leaders,” *World Encounter* 4, no. 3 (February 1967): 17–19. This article was reprinted as “The Leadership Gap” in the *Lutheran Standard* 7, no. 4 (February 21, 1967): 8–9.

Nyack College in Nyack, New York; Simpson College, at the time in San Francisco, California; Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky; and Cascade College in Portland, Oregon. A sampling of the many church bodies represented in the 1960s at these seminars includes the Conservative Baptist, Southern Baptists, Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Disciples of Christ, Pentecostals, Nazarenes, the Primitive Methodists, United Methodists, Free Methodists, Lutherans, Mennonites, Episcopalians, United Brethren, Brethren in Christ, and many more.

Along with promoting the school, teaching, and writing—and perhaps most importantly—Donald worked on building the faculty. Ralph Winter (1924–2009), a Presbyterian whose field experience was with the Mam Indians of Guatemala, became the third full-time faculty member added to the School of World Missions. Winter had met McGavran in Guatemala during the early 1960s. In his typical fashion, Donald suggested that Winter spend time studying church growth at the new School of World Missions and also serve as a guest faculty member for the 1966–67 school year. Donald felt that Winter would be a good fit for the school, and after numerous conversations throughout that year, he agreed to join the faculty full time as associate professor of missionary techniques and methods, beginning with the 1967–68 school year.<sup>4</sup> Tippet was delighted with the addition of Winter to the team, feeling that he added at least three significant aspects to the new school: “(1) the introduction of the concept of Theological Education by Extension (TEE), (2) better sociological values in our graphing (e.g. semi-logarithmic graphs), and (3) a new approach to the history of Christian expansion.”<sup>5</sup> Later, Tippet recalled that

McGavran, Winter and myself all had one thing in common: we were all ready to experiment, to try new things, and (if you like) to try outrageous things, we thought that with God nothing was impossible, and each one of us got awfully impatient with beaucratic humbug. That does mean we always agreed. Sometimes we annoyed each other, and we wondered where the other one was heading; but in the final analysis what God achieved through our combination at the SWM was remarkable.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to the critics of mission during the 1960s—those who were saying missionaries ought to go home because the day of missions was dead—McGavran, Tippet, and Winter (eventually the rest of the SWM faculty as well) stood by the Great Commission. To them, no one had ever rescinded the Great Commission, and they did not intend to redefine the

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<sup>4</sup> Visiting faculty in the 1967–68 school year included J. F. Shepherd who was Executive Secretary for Columbia of the Latin America Mission, as well as J. Edwin Orr, noted authority on revivals and awakenings.

<sup>5</sup> Alan R. Tippet, *No Continuing City* (Charles Kraft personal collection, 1985), 320.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

concept of mission. Winter felt the SWM-ICG faculty must focus on its own growth and suggested that they meet together taking turns presenting a paper as a way to sound out new theories and concepts. The idea of writing a critical paper for exposure to each other took root and became a regular practice for several years. Later, they allowed doctoral students to present papers as well. These presentations served to create an integration of thinking, which helped shape Donald's *magnum opus*, *Understanding Church Growth*. Even though this was his idea, Winter, oddly enough, never presented a written paper to the group. More of a blackboard man, he preferred presenting his ideas out of his head to the group, although the ideas later found their way into various publications. Of these meetings, Tippet recalled, "If our doctoral candidates thought we were tough on them, we were not nearly as tough as we were on ourselves. If we were carving out a new discipline we had no intention of being sloppy about it."<sup>7</sup>

The issue was not his theology, rather the fact that his research and publications on revivals were not considered "sufficiently academic" by the committee.<sup>8</sup> Charles and Margaret (Meg) Kraft, both linguists with missionary experience in Nigeria, joined the SWM-ICG faculty during the summer of 1969. Chuck, as he was commonly called, became the second professor in anthropology, with African studies as his specialty. Chuck took over teaching the basic anthropology course, using Tippet's outline for the first year while developing his own.<sup>9</sup>

The resident theologians continued to doubt the theological scholarship of the faculty in the SWM-ICG. They also were displeased that the missiological curriculum included anthropology. Most of the theologians had earned a degree in Europe and had published solid theological works. They expected the SWM faculty to meet them on their theological turf and were unwilling to engage at the point of the SWM professors' scholarly competence. In truth, just a few of the theologians were outwardly critical and most were open, but the atmosphere was often less than collegial.

The SWM-ICG faculty recognized they had to prove themselves to the entire Fuller faculty, and they took pains to ground all presentations in the Bible before moving into the praxis of principles and methods. As missionary theologians, the SWM-ICG faculty focused on applied theology rather than pure academic theology. For example, Donald's background and training were primarily in education, but he had memorized larger portions of the Bible in both English and Hindi. His long years of meditation on the implication of Scripture passages for mission work meant that his theology

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<sup>7</sup> Tippet, *No Continuing City*, 338.

<sup>8</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *SWM/SIS at FORTY: A Participant/Observer's View of Our History* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005), 72.

<sup>9</sup> Charles H. Kraft interview, August 4, 2009. See also Kraft, *SWM/SIS at FORTY*.

was in his heart, more than it was on paper. While he was not a systematic theologian, to say that he had no theology was and continues to be short sighted. Tippet had a stronger theological education, and Donald relied on him to provide a theological defense for the burgeoning Church Growth Movement. Winter proved a strong theological defender of church growth thought, but Kraft, too, endured criticism for his theological views. True, they all understood that, compared to the academic theologians at Fuller, their writings on theology were much simpler. Some of the theologians were extremely negative toward Donald, and they turned down a couple of his candidates for professorships, greatly annoying him. The Old Testament professors were willing to meet the SWM-ICG faculty as equals, but the remainder of the professors projected a feeling that the SWM-ICG professors were neither theologians nor scholars.

Donald knew that the endeavor needed a church growth theologian and worked to bring a qualified person onto the faculty as quickly as possible. The basic church growth theology that Donald had developed needed someone to take it through the whole Bible. Tippet felt that “we had to work on the origins of the People of God in the Old Testament, the missionary idea of their responsibility to the nations (in Isaiah, for example), and in the vision of the Lord himself. We had to see the mission of God on the canvas of time, rather than confine it to the New Testament Church and the writings of Paul.”<sup>10</sup>

One person McGavran wanted as a faculty member was George W. Peters, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. Peters later wrote two influential books on mission theology: *A Biblical Theology of Missions* and *A Theology of Church Growth*. However, in 1966, Peters was invited to interview for a position at SWM-ICG. The process went well, and the Fuller faculty unanimously endorsed his becoming a professor there. Within a week, he received an invitation, along with information on the salary and terms of service. However, he turned down the invitation for three reasons. First, during his interview with the faculty, Fuller faculty members got into a heated debate about inerrancy, which set him on edge. Second, Donald was never precise about what he wanted Peters to teach. Three times Donald changed Peters’ assignment from teaching theology of missions to comparative religions to history of missions. Third, Peters was not in full agreement with the philosophy of church growth as advocated at SWM-ICG. Peters had a long acquaintance with the basic framework of church growth theory, since he had studied with Pickett at Hartford between 1945 and 1947. While Peters was sympathetic and had many commonalities with the SWM approach to church growth, he was not fully in agreement. It was for these three reasons that he turned down the opportunity to come to SWM in 1966.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Tippet, *No Continuing City*, 327.

<sup>11</sup> George W. Peters to Arthur Glasser, November 6, 1979.

During the fall of 1967, Donald was hospitalized with a twisted bowel, which doctors incorrectly diagnosed and treated. He was so sick that the faculty and staff feared they were going to lose him. This event showcased the vulnerability of the new school. When Donald became ill, Winter was out of town, Kraft was unable to teach Donald's courses, and no one could reach Orr. Therefore, it fell to Tippett to keep the ship afloat, which he did at great effort and with the support of Edna his wife. Tippett realized that the SWM-ICG professors had taken on more than they could handle, even with the occasional support of visiting lecturers. To continue the SWM-ICG without Dr. Mac, as Tippett called Donald, would be difficult, especially since his lecture notes were not available in printed form. Until this time, Donald had relied on the *Bridges of God, How Churches Grow*, and some of Pickett's writings as textbooks. Thus, while visiting Dr. Mac in the hospital, Tippett strongly encouraged him to forgo a planned trip to India that summer and instead put his courses into book form, which he did. The book was published in 1970 as *Understanding Church Growth*.

*Understanding Church Growth* was a highly significant book that was destined to stand the test of time. It immediately attained wide attention in numerous denominations, but especially in those that were conservative theologically. It established church growth as an orderly, systematic science. The book answered the question, How is carrying out the will of God to be measured? It was broken into five major sections: theological considerations, growth barriers, growth principles, understanding social structure, and establishing bold goals. The book is classic McGavran, presenting his more thorough and systematic presentation of church growth theory.

Another point of vulnerability was the leadership of the school. At that time, if Donald had passed away, or if he simply had to retire, the role of dean would have fallen to Tippett, a function he definitely did not desire. Thus, Donald and Tippett agreed that the school must find a man to work full time in church growth theology and prepare to take over the deanship. They felt that the right person must be a mission theologian, someone who knew the missionary world, a North American, and one with good standing with the Evangelical Foreign Mission Society (E.F.M.S.) and the International Foreign Mission Association (I.F.M.A.). The two of them concurred that the future of mission rested not with the mainline churches but with the evangelical wing of the church. Hence, having good credentials among North American evangelical mission societies was a big issue for the new dean.

The search for a professor of church growth theology and future dean eventually found its way to Arthur Glasser (1914–2009). A former missionary in China (1946–1951), Glasser was home director of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship for fourteen years (1955–1969; OMF, originally the China Inland Mission). In addition, he had served as a chaplain in the US Navy (1942–1945), studied Black theology, earned a master's degree in theology, knew the biblical languages, and had written several excellent articles

on theology of mission. He had a civil engineering degree from Cornell University (1936), a diploma in general Bible from Moody Bible Institute (1939), and a BD from Faith Theological Seminary (1942). While he had not attained a PhD (he had a DD), he was well known and respected by both the mainline churches and the evangelical churches Donald desired to win over to the church growth side.

Donald was delighted with the way that the school was developing and with the faculty that included Tippet, Winter, and Kraft. Writing to C. Peter Wagner, he commented that “it is a remarkably strong and many sided faculty. Its impact in the world of mission will be notable. And needed, too. This is precisely the time for great things in the missionary world.”<sup>12</sup> Along with the core faculty, the school extensively used visiting lecturers, along with an assistant. One assistant, Roy Shearer, helped keep students on track with their theses. Edwin Orr taught a class on revivals, which was included deliberately to emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in church growth as a balance to the social science courses.

The task of being the founding dean of the School of World Mission was demanding. Donald mentioned the heavy load in a letter to his pastor in November 1969:

When we moved here in September 1965—at the age of 68—it was to take up the largest responsibilities of our lives and enter on a man killing job. I am not only dean of the School of Missions and Institute of Church Growth, with fifty career missionaries in attendance from many boards, I not only teach a regular load, supervise many researches, and administer the faculty and the School, but am also fuelling a quiet revolution in missions.<sup>13</sup>

He had always radiated energy younger than his real age, but this letter reveals the toll the work was taking on Donald’s life.

The 1968–1970 edition of the SWM-ICG catalog reveals that the school had grown significantly in just three years. The curriculum consisted of thirty-five possible courses, distributed among eight major branches of learning. The branches were Theory and Theology of Missions; Apologetics of the Christian Mission—non-Christian religions; Mission Across Cultures—anthropology, sociology, world revolution, secularism, urbanization; Techniques, Organization, and Methods in Mission; History of Missions and Church Expansion; Church Growth; The World Church—Ecumenics; and Biblical Studies and Theology.<sup>14</sup> Core classes included principles and procedures in church growth, anthropology and mission, animism and church growth, history of mission, case study in church growth, and research

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<sup>12</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner 1970.

<sup>13</sup> Donald McGavran to Dr. Conner, November 9, 1969.

<sup>14</sup> Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth 1968–1970 catalog, international overseas edition, 6.

seminars. The 1968–69 school year found forty-two students, enrolled from twenty-five countries, representing twenty-seven denominations.

The SWM-ICG next added C. Peter Wagner (b. 1930) to the growing faculty. As a missionary in Bolivia for sixteen years in the mid-1950s, Wagner had received a copy of McGavran's *Bridges of God*, and he read it one afternoon while resting in a hammock. His first impression was not favorable, and he placed the book on a shelf, commenting, "This is cockroach food."<sup>15</sup> Thus, he was surprised to discover in 1965 that the founding dean of Fuller's SWM-ICG was none other than its author. His curiosity piqued, Wagner decided to return to Fuller on his next furlough to study for an MA with McGavran and determine what was happening at his alma mater. It took some convincing, but gradually Wagner found himself in wholehearted agreement with the new thinking about church growth and produced a thesis on church growth in Bolivia, which William Carey Library later published.

Donald was impressed with Wagner's leadership, enthusiasm, and teaching ability, and in early 1968, he offered him a teaching position in the School of World Mission. While Wagner was completing his stay in the United States, working on his MA, Donald wrote him a letter offering a three-year teaching fellowship. The fellowship would have required Wagner to teach up to four hours in the School of World Mission, assist the other professors in the grading of papers, lead research seminars, and write book reviews for the *Church Growth Bulletin*. The most important requirement would have been the obtaining of a PhD during the three years of the fellowship. Wagner declined the offer, stating that he felt morally obligated to return to the work in Bolivia.<sup>16</sup> Wagner was the assistant director of the Andes Evangelical Mission and believed the mission was in too crucial of a time for him to leave.

Donald understood Wagner's decision but continued to pursue him for a future position. Five months later, he wrote Wagner, inviting him to serve as the visiting lecturer in the spring of 1970:

What would you think of giving us a couple of two-hour courses—one for the career missionaries in the M.A. program entitled Church Growth Lesson from Latin American Missions; and one for candidates and B.D. men, entitled Why Mission To The Latin American Masses? Of the two, the first is by far the more important. In it you would pack the principles of action, administration, policy, budget distribution, missionary training, theological training of national ministers and laymen, which as a matter of fact have issued in the growth of Christ's Church and, conversely, those principles which have prevented the growth of the Churches.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Wagner to Gary L. McIntosh, n.d.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Wagner to Donald A. McGavran, March 5, 1968.

<sup>17</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, August 19, 1968.

Wagner accepted the invitation after some negotiating with his Andes Mission and started planning to be in Pasadena from January to March 1970. He suggested that the title for his lectures be “Frontiers in Field Missionary Strategy for the 70s” and titled individual lectures as follows;

- The Need for a Strategy for Missions
- The Great Commission as God’s Will for the Church
- How to Diagnose the Health of a Mission
- Modern Methods of Evangelism
- Ministerial Training in Growing Churches
- Missionary Go Home?
- Those Outside the Camp
- Theology and Missions
- How About Social Service?
- Why Some Churches Are Growing and Others Not (case histories)
- Missionary Structures and Their Value
- Integration and Segregation—The Danger of Cultural Overhang.<sup>18</sup>

The topics fit what Donald desired for the lectures and eventually formed the foundation for *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* published in 1978.

Donald continued his heavy load of speaking, traveling, and writing throughout 1968. He participated as a keynote speaker in the European Consultation of Mission Studies held at the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, England, from April 16–19. The consultation focused on Presence and Proclamation and the Meaning and Place of Mission. During July and August 1968, he lectured and researched the growth of the church in Japan. His analysis was published in an article for *Japan Harvest* titled appropriately, “Church Growth in Japan.”<sup>19</sup> In the article, he set forth the church growth situation in Japan as he saw it and offered nine observations or suggestions on what churches needed to do to grow more vigorously. From October 16 to December 19, he traveled with Conservative Baptist missionary Vergil G. Gerber (1916–2009) to Taiwan, Manila, India, and Bangladesh, ending up at Colombia Bible College in South Carolina.

Correspondence continued to flow from Donald, highlighting his continued creativity for the SWM-ICG. He wrote theologian Carl F. H. Henry on January 6, 1969, to inquire about his participation in a lecture series for the doctor of missiology students. He sent a copy of the letter to Glasser for comment. In reply, Glasser revealed his commitment to the purposes of SWM-ICG, writing, “We are committed to the growth of the Church. We want our studies and productivity to further this central task. We dare not allow ourselves the least indulgence that would divert us in the

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<sup>18</sup> Peter Wagner to Donald McGavran, December 4, 1968.

<sup>19</sup> Donald McGavran, “Church Growth in Japan,” *Japan Harvest*, Winter 1968–69, 15–22.

slightest degree from the emphasis that has brought the SEM-ICG into being.”<sup>20</sup>

Letters also flew back and forth between McGavran and Wagner for the next few years. Details were firmed up for Wagner’s lectures in 1970, and Wagner sought advice from Donald on the process of getting his MA thesis, “A Preliminary Study of the Origin and Growth of the Protestant Church in Bolivia,” published. At first, Zondervan showed interest but eventually turned down the manuscript. Because Eerdmans was publishing a series of church growth studies, Wagner sent it there for consideration. However, Eerdmans was already typesetting two books, and three others, including Wagner’s, were waiting for action.

Donald wrote, “These scientific, factual studies of the growth of the Church are not a very good bet financially, for any publishing firm. Eerdmans is likely to lose money publishing them.”<sup>21</sup> Donald suggested that the Andes Evangelical Mission consider pre-purchasing one thousand copies of Wagner’s future book as a means of encouraging Eerdmans to move quickly on it. Writing back, Wagner noted that his mission was not financially able to purchase that many copies. In the end, William Carey Library published his book on Bolivia. In a final line, Wagner mentioned, “Rumors about Art Glasser going to SWM are circulating internationally and let me offer my word of congratulations to you if they are true.”<sup>22</sup>

Actually, conversations with Glasser were still occurring. On March 14, 1969, Donald clarified the circumstances in a letter to Wagner:

In regard to Arthur Glasser, the situation is this. We have invited him to come to Fuller for a year of missionary studies. He has asked and received permission from his board to do a year of study. It is my hope that this year of study will lead to better things. I would love to have him on the faculty here, and that he is considering coming here means that he, too, is exploring a faculty position here with interest. No commitments have been made.

I am writing this in the hope that you know him well enough so you could drop him a line, telling him you have heard rumors that he is coming here, and would like to encourage him in doing so.

Your word from the field, like that—particularly if it heartily commended SWM, as I know yours would—would help him to make up his mind in the right direction.<sup>23</sup>

Wagner did write to Glasser in March 1969, encouraging him to study at SWM-ICG. Glasser participated with McGavran in three church growth seminars held in Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey during the sum-

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<sup>20</sup> Arthur Glasser to Donald McGavran, January 1969.

<sup>21</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, February 27, 1969.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Wagner to Donald McGavran, March 7, 1969.

<sup>23</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, March 14, 1969.

mer of 1969. After returning to Pasadena, Donald wrote to Wagner, “Arthur Glasser’s contributions in the last three church growth seminars have been tremendous. I have been in prayer that he will accept a call to SWM-ICG as one of the faculty. We could get no one more able and no one who knows more about the present missionary enterprise.”<sup>24</sup>

Glasser must have found the seminars equally invigorating, as the school announced the appointment of Arthur F. Glasser as associate dean and associate professor of missions on May 1, 1970. President Hubbard delighted that “the addition of Arthur Glasser to our faculty brings us a missionary scholar and spokesman of uncommon ability and proven dedication. He and the other full-time teaching staff in the School of World Mission will continue to blaze fresh trails of missionary research and education.”<sup>25</sup> Glasser joined the faculty in September of 1970.

McGavran cared for his students, fellow professors, and their families. After Wagner arrived and had started teaching in January 1970, McGavran wrote a letter of gratitude to Doris Wagner:

Just a line to tell you how pleased we are to have Pete here. His students stop to tell me of what a grand teacher he is and how much they are getting out of the courses. One of them said to me, “It was worth coming to Fuller just to be in Professor Wagner’s class for the month of January.”

We especially appreciate Pete’s being here during the time of your operation and your letting him come. And have been so distressed to hear of the complications you have had after the operation. I hope that by the time this reaches you, you are well out of the woods and indeed on the go again and we are looking forward to your being here in about three weeks.<sup>26</sup>

During February 1970, McGavran spoke at the annual conference for Evangelical Literature Overseas on the topic of “Church Growth and Literature.” The lecture was turned into an article by the same title.<sup>27</sup>

In 1969, Eerdmans released the Church Growth Research in Latin America (GRILA) study conducted by William R. Read, Victor M. Monterroso, and Harmon A. Johnson as *Latin American Church Growth*. The most extensive, detailed (421 pages) study of Latin American church growth to that time, it presented an evangelical but broadminded analysis of the Protestant churches in seventeen countries.

Most readers appreciated the book, although James Geoff, a Presbyterian working in Mexico, wrote what Donald considered an “extremely hos-

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<sup>24</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, September 18, 1969.

<sup>25</sup> David Hubbard, *Missionary News Service*, 1970, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Donald McGavran to Doris Wagner, January 30, 1970.

<sup>27</sup> Donald McGavran, “Church Growth and Literature,” *Lit-Tec*, Spring-Summer 1970, 10–13.

tile and slashing review.”<sup>28</sup> Geoff disagreed with the evangelical theology and attacked the statistical errors in the book. As Donald saw it, Geoff was instigating a “first class brawl” in a critical review of *Latin American Church Growth*. Although McGavran granted that the book contained some statistical errors, he felt Geoff’s outrage was overdone. First issues of nearly every book often contain such errors, and the second edition generally incorporates corrections. In Donald’s mind, some errors were to be expected, since the research covered more than three hundred missions and denominations, spread over all of Latin America, each with its own way of reporting statistics.

The truth was the mistakes were inconsequential. The overall trends and patterns of church growth in Latin America were clear, and correcting the minor faults in the book would not change them. “Dr. Geoff is not interested in correct figures,” wrote McGavran. “He is interested in discrediting Evangelical Missions.” He concluded, “What is at stake here is not opinion about a book. What is at stake here is Evangelical convictions about the Gospel, salvation, the Church, the evangelization of the world, conversion, social justice, the revolution, and the like. Geoff’s clever attempt to discredit the Cause by exposing alleged errors must be beaten back.”

Geoff’s criticisms reflected the distortion of the Christian mission found in the World Council of Churches, and the old debater in Donald wanted to “hammer them.”<sup>29</sup> Peter Wagner agreed with Donald and suggested they tackle Geoff on “(1) His radical theological stance, (2) His indifference to personal salvation, (3) The fact that the errors he uncovers are of little consequence and (4) If I’m not mistaken we can find that he has made some errors mathematically. . . . The byword—Scoff Geoff.”<sup>30</sup> Geoff’s review caused a major stir in Mexico, and a debate ensued on March 11, 1970, among Manuel Gaxiola, Roger Greenway, and Geoff, with John Huegel moderating. Following the debate, Greenway surmised, “Geoff wanted to limit the discussion to the ‘errors,’ but as Manuel and I saw it, these were just a pretext for attacking the whole ideology of Church Growth. The discussion which ensued confirmed our suspicions.”<sup>31</sup> A personal friend of James Geoff, Ralph Winter, agreed that Geoff was wrong:

I am certainly not ready to part ways with Jim as a personal friend, but his so-called review of the LACG certainly seems to exceed all bounds of courtesy and respect. . . . Those who know Jim very well are accustomed to his unruffled megalomania. Anyone who is as bright as he is deserves forgiveness in this fascinating fault. . . . Ecclesiastica statistics for Latin America are a wilder-

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<sup>28</sup> Donald McGavran to Harold Lindsell, February 6, 1970.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Wagner to Donald McGavran, February 7, 1970.

<sup>31</sup> Roger Greenway to Donald McGavran, March 12, 1970.

ness of “soft data” which any engineer should know must not be mathematically processed over seriously. Jim’s discovery of dozens (out of thousands) of numbers that do not jive precisely with other data in the book is very helpful to us in view of the second edition. But even to imply—much less insist—that such a relatively small amount of discrepancy “invalidates” the book is truly fantastic.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, the professors at SWM-ICG were going to defend the study, and two formal responses to Geoff’s criticisms were written, one each by McGavran and George W. Peters, a professor of missions at Dallas Theological Seminary. The entire controversy illustrated how the SWM-ICG pulled together to propagate and defend church growth theory.<sup>33</sup>

Donald and Wagner continued discussing his joining the faculty of the School of World Mission. A letter to Peter and Doris Wagner provides insights into Wagner’s appointment:

I was very pleased to get your note of March 18<sup>th</sup> which said, “Since the commitment is just about assured, you may want to consider keeping me ‘in’ by having copies of SWM minutes sent to me.”

I do, indeed, want to keep you “in” and you will receive the minutes regularly from now on. . . . From my point of view, and the timetable I have in mind for faculty movements, September 1972 would be a suitable time for you to join this faculty.<sup>34</sup>

Before Wagner could make a firm commitment, he needed to talk with the director of the Andes Evangelical Mission about fulfilling his responsibilities and obligations. Donald held a mutual concern that Wagner’s transition would bring no harm to the Andes mission. Donald addressed this concern to Joseph McCullough, general director of the Andes Mission:

We have given Pete a very cordial invitation to join the faculty at the School of World Mission and he is giving it serious consideration. At the same time, both he and we are agreed that his work with the Andes Evangelical Mission as Associate director is of the highest importance and must not be jeopardized. Since an immediate move is not contemplated either by him or by us, I am simply leaving this in the Lord’s hands, trusting that a way will be found of mutual profit to both the Andes Evangelical Mission and the School of World Mission.<sup>35</sup>

A letter received by Donald from Wagner just two days after his wiring to General Director McCullough gave indication that a forthcoming merger

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<sup>32</sup> Ralph Winter to Donald McGavran, March 14, 1970.

<sup>33</sup> In July 1970, James Geoff also criticized Peter Wagner’s *Latin American Theology: Radical or Evangelical?* published by Wm. B. Eerdmans.

<sup>34</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter and Doris Wagner, March 26, 1970.

<sup>35</sup> Donald McGavran to Joseph McCullough, April 6, 1970.

between the Andes Mission and another mission might open the door for Wagner coming to Fuller earlier than originally expected.<sup>36</sup>

Executive Secretary Clyde W. Taylor, however, was not totally pleased that Wagner might be leaving Latin America. He expressed that:

God seems to have given Peter Wagner a gift that has made him a rather unique personage in the Latin American world. He not only has a tremendous curiosity which has compelled him to investigate every facet of the work in Latin America, but he also has a very agile mind and a tremendous capacity for work. The result is that he has developed into a mission leader in Latin America, for whom we have no substitute.<sup>37</sup>

However, Taylor accepted the fact that Wagner was convinced God wanted him to join the faculty in Pasadena. He only asked that Wagner be allowed to continue service to the church in Latin America by being involved in special events, by traveling to consultations, and by being available in an advisory role as frequently as reasonable.

A return letter was fired off immediately to Wagner, in which McGavran gave a dynamic overview of how he viewed the function of the School of World Mission:

The function of this graduate school of missions in relation to the whole missionary enterprise is becoming clearer to me. We not only train a few hundred career missionaries, but by: training them, and focusing their conviction and experience on actual communication of the Gospel, and developing a consistent and biblical theory of missions which holds the evangelization of the world steadily in view, and ever aims to be faithful to a discipling of the ethne, and writing about these matters, and publishing books and articles on dynamic mission, and speaking, and teaching, and backing some activities and not others.

We influence styles in missions, and help steer long range goals in biblical directions, and fight crucial battles, knowing which battles are crucial and which are not, seek God's forgiveness for our wrong decisions, vigorously combat error—particularly error which is to death, and vigorously love the brethren.

God deliver us from being a mere school of missions. God grant us the high privilege of being a school of missions which is—to some small extent at least—a lamp to guide the feet of missions and a forum in which its central questions can be discussed and resolved.

The men on the faculty should be those who shiver a bit at the thought of such a demanding task, and delight in having a share in

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<sup>36</sup> Peter Wagner to Donald McGavran, April 8, 1970.

<sup>37</sup> Clyde W. Taylor to Donald McGavran, September 10, 1970.

it, and fight to keep their thinking clear and clean and accurate and creative, and faithful enough to receive from their wonderful peers on a thousand fronts a respectful hearing—are you tuned in, my friend?<sup>38</sup>

While Donald continued to work towards Wagner coming to Fuller, Wagner also gave consideration to the pursuit of a PhD at the University of Nairobi or a ThD at Fuller, neither of which was to happen in the long term.

The April 1970 issue of the *Fuller Bulletin* included a short article by McGavran entitled, “The Sunrise of Missions.” In it, he responded briefly to another professor of missions who had written that missionaries should go home, since the era of world evangelization was drawing to a close. Donald’s optimism shines in the article: “Far from the mission era drawing to a close, it is just beginning,” he announced. “We stand in the sunrise of evangelization. The acceptance of the Lord Jesus we have seen nothing compared with that which we shall see.”<sup>39</sup> As though to demonstrate such optimism even more, at the School of World Mission faculty meeting held on May 8, 1970, it was announced that the doctor of missiology program had been accepted.

Donald’s view of social responsibility is highlighted in a letter to Wagner. He wrote, “Social responsibility for evangelicals must be interpreted within the evangelistic, church-multiplying orbit—not (as our liberal opponents insist) as a substitute for evangelistic activity.”<sup>40</sup> He believed that “we need a top flight thesis on the . . . social action-evangelism issue. Someone needs to lay it on the line that evangelicals are deeply interested in social action and justice and the new day—but resolutely refuse to substitute these for soul salvation, insisting rather that social justice and social action are much more powerful when they result from soul salvation.”<sup>41</sup>

The growing impact of the Church Growth School was reflected in an article in *Eternity* magazine in August 1970. Calling McGavran “Today’s Expert on Church Growth,” Dwight Baker wrote, “Whether speaking against the leaden traditionalism of past mission policies or the heavy pessimism of current theories of mission, his voice is a salutary corrective that needs to be heard—and heeded—today.”<sup>42</sup>

December 8 found McGavran leading a church growth seminar in Ventnor, New Jersey. Immediately upon his return to Pasadena, he entered the hospital for gall bladder surgery. The surgery took place on December 14, and it went well. McGavran was back in his office by December 22.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, April 8, 1970.

<sup>39</sup> Donald A. McGavran, “The Sunrise of Missions,” *Bulletin of Fuller Theological Seminary* XX, no. 2 (April 1970): 3.

<sup>40</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, June 17, 1970.

<sup>41</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, November 25, 1970.

<sup>42</sup> Dwight P. Baker, “Today’s Expert on Church Growth,” *Eternity*, August 1970, 45.

<sup>43</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, December 15, 1970.

Correspondence continued back and forth between McGavran and Wagner, with Wagner making plans to arrive in Pasadena on February 5, 1971, to begin teaching a course at Fuller from February 9 to March 5, 1971. A unanimous recommendation went to the Fuller Seminary administration that Wagner be invited to join the faculty full time in the summer of 1971. Recognizing Wagner's administrative abilities, Daniel Fuller asked him to take over as executive director of the Fuller Evangelistic Association, along with teaching responsibilities in fall 1971.

An article by McGavran appeared in *The Opinion*, a publication of the students of FTS, on February 16, 1971. The article, "How I Work," offered a brief overview of his perspectives and the way they influenced his practices:

I am a man under orders from the Head. It is, therefore, my constant effort to please Him. My system of priorities, allocation of time, and style of writing must pass an inspection not mine. How will I succeed in this effort is, of course, another matter, of which fortunately I am not judge.

In my system of priorities, people come first. Not people in general, but those to whom I am sent, for whom I can do something. I have little time for casual conversation; but hours for those who have a claim to my services. In my concept of stewardship, nothing can take the place of understanding individuals and doing something for them.

Duties come second. One receives a salary for a certain kind of work done. I get paid for teaching classes and deaning the School of Missions. Many other duties hover on the fringe, however—writing letters to nationals and missionaries carrying heavy responsibilities in many part of the world, speaking in churches on missions, attending and speaking at conferences, writing on missions for magazines, writing books calling attention to the extraordinary opportunities to disciple men and societies today. It is a constant battle to know how to divide my time between all these different duties—in such a way as will please God.

Keeping the body and mind in shape comes third. Pleasure (including eating) come well down the scale. A handful of raisins, a dozen crackers, and a flask of tea constitute my regular lunch—not because I hate tasty food, but simply because it takes so much more time to get. I eat heartily when I go to lunch or dinner as a social duty!!

This system gives me little time to do serious writing. People and tending the store (my first and second priorities) eat up the hours and days. So I use vacations to write. My best known book The Bridges of God was written in the depths of an Indian forest where I spent my four week vacation in 1953. I stalked, rifle in hand, between five and six in the morning, sat at my typewriter from six

to six, stalked again from six to seven, and wrote till nine. My last book Understanding Church Growth was written in the summer of 1968 when recuperating from an operation. Mrs. McGavran and I hid away in Dr. Schoonhoven's house and there I glued the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair for twelve hours a day. And walked two miles each evening to keep in shape.

The preparation for books, however, is done from day to day. Ideas come constantly and are written down. Books and magazines, which I devour as time permits, yield many ideas—some to quote with approval and some to slaughter. Ideas which come in the middle of the night are often duds, but I get up and write them down just the same. Some gleam.

I strive for clarity and truth in my writing. Obscurantist authors are my bete noir. I reject the assumption that the more difficult a sentence is to understand, the more profound is the writer. I, therefore, shun learned jargon and—as far as possible—technical and little used words.

I rewrite many times. My first draft is always revised ruthlessly. I like to use a professional editor for the final draft. When others are going to spend days reading—and thousands do—I owe it to them to iron out the wrinkles, remove the ambiguities, and make my position crystal clear. What I say must also be true—as true as it is possible to make it. Making it clear and true sometimes leads me into strife with rules of various sorts. My ancestors came from Ireland and I have scant regard for rules for rules sake. I do not hesitate to over-emphasize a point if the situation in 1971 requires it! If in 1981 the situation requires overstatement on the other side, I shall cheerfully comply.

This is the first time I have described my way of working. Or even meditated on it. Consequently the above must be taken as something stuck off in the heat of battle. I am sure it leaves much unsaid. Yet it intends to be true and I know it is clear—and with that I shall have to leave it. To put more time on it would probably not please the head.<sup>44</sup>

Critics of McGavran have commonly mentioned his polemical style of writing as a problem, but this short article shows McGavran's thinking as to why he often overstates his case.

Actually, McGavran had a spirit of graciousness toward his critics that was not always recognized. Church growth thought was not received well in Latin America and had been harshly criticized, beginning with Edward F. Murphy's (b. 1929) 1969 paper at the Latin America Congress on Evangelism in Bogota. Wagner's book on Latin American theology and the publica-

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<sup>44</sup> Donald McGavran, "How I Work," *The Opinion X*, no. 5 (February 16, 1971): 1–2.

tion of *Latin American Church Growth* in Spanish resulted in strong reaction to the church growth viewpoint by Rene Padilla, Samuel Escobar, Washington Padilla, and Pedro Arana. Wagner reported the anti-church growth feelings to Donald in June 1971, and in response, he suggests that the critics of church growth be dealt with kindly:

I suggest, therefore, that we bend over backward to be kindly and generous to those who are now reacting vigorously to “church growth thinking.” They will see the light—if God gives them to see the light; but it will take time. The truth will triumph. Let us give them that time and go on ploughing corn. Let us publish books which describe churches in honest, truthful detail. Let us analyze causes for growth and non-growth. Let us remember that the task is indeed great and complex and ours is only one part of the whole. Let us ask God to forgive our sins—and push resolutely forward as if we had not sinned. There is much ground to be gained and there are many adversaries to be overcome, and the day is far spent.<sup>45</sup>

The polemical tone of McGavran’s writing flowed from his commitment to the Great Commission, rather than from a dislike of his adversaries. He believed passionately in the cause of Christ.

Donald had been working for several months to get Peter Wagner on the faculty. After the faculty voted to invite Wagner, he wrote to Donald, accepting the formal invitation. “It was quite thrilling to see that the unanimous recommendation has gone to the seminary administration that I be invited to join the faculty in the summer of 1971,” Wagner replied.<sup>46</sup> Given the significant reputation Wagner had in Latin American Missions, as well as his published books and articles, the Faculty Senate of Fuller agreed to his incoming status as associate professor of Latin American affairs.<sup>47</sup>

The Wagner family arrived in Pasadena on August 6, 1971, and stayed with the McGavrans until they were able to move into their new house. Donald and Mary turned over the entire house, three bedrooms and a bathroom, to them, and everyone ate in two shifts. Peter and Doris Wagner later were shocked to learn that Donald and Mary had been sleeping on the floor to make room for the Wagner family.

A new era began in September 1971, when Arthur Glasser took over as dean of the SWM-ICG. An announcement was released in July that Donald would now be named dean emeritus and senior professor, with Arthur Glasser becoming dean and associate professor. In the June graduation ceremony, Donald was given a DLitt, only the fourth such degree awarded by the school. Also noteworthy at the spring graduation was the first doctor

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<sup>45</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, Ralph Winter, Arthur Glasser, and Vergil Gerber, July 9, 1971.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Wagner to Donald McGavran, January 26, 1971.

<sup>47</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter and Doris Wagner, March 15, 1971.

of missiology degree conferred upon an SWM-ICG student, Alan R. Gates of the Conservative Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. Five graduates received an MA in missiology and eight received the MA in missions.

In the fall, McGavran taught principles and procedures in church growth in conjunction with Roy E. Shearer, a teaching associate in mission and church growth. Because McGavran was in the Philippines and Singapore during November and December, Shearer covered the remainder of the class. The course began on September 28 and ended on December 6. The outline of the course was as follows:

Introductory Session

The Complex Faithfulness Which Is Church Growth

God's Will and Church Growth

Today's Task, Opportunity and Imperative in Missions

A Universal Fog

Facts Needed

Discovering Reasons for Church Growth

Sources to Search for Causes of Growth

Helps and Hindrances to Understanding

Revival and Church Growth.

The course required the reading of fourteen hundred pages in *Church Growth and the Word of God* (Tippett), *Wildfire: The Growth of the Church in Korea* (Shearer), *Church and Mission in Modern Africa* (Adrian Hastings), and *Latin American Church Growth* (Read, Monterrosos, and Johnson). It also required students to conduct research on their own fields of ministry.

Beginning with fifteen graduate students, over the years, the School of World Mission grew to become one of the most influential schools of missiology in the world. By fall 1971, the school had "a faculty of six, a student body of more than eighty missionaries and nationals, from forty-one separate countries."<sup>48</sup> Some 250 missionaries attended the school in its first seven years, with sixty-four receiving degrees. In his role as dean, McGavran's understanding of church growth continued to expand as he collaborated with colleagues like Alan Tippett, J. Edwin Orr, Charles H. Kraft, Ralph Winter, Peter Wagner, and Arthur Glasser. Along with these leaders, a significant vehicle for communicating church growth thought was the William Carey Library, a publishing house devoted to producing books about Great Commission missions.

McGavran made an extensive four-month trip to Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, West Java, India, Pakistan, Ethiopia, and England from November 1971 to March 1972, during his sabbatical leave from the School of World Mission. As usual, he conducted several church growth conferences and

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<sup>48</sup> Daniel Fuller, *Give the Winds a Mighty Voice: The Story of Charles E. Fuller* (Waco: Word Books, 1972), 233–234.

seminars, as well as helped to establish a new School of Church Growth at Union Biblical Seminary in Yeotmal, India. Over fifteen hundred pastors attended a total of fourteen seminars in twelve different countries. The trip cheered Donald as he saw the impact of church growth teaching around the world; he felt a fresh breeze of evangelism and mission blowing around the globe, with much of it instigated by SWM-ICG. He declared, “Today, church growth is a hot, current emphasis in the church, not only in the United States, but around the world.”<sup>49</sup>

Critics of church growth theory began to speak out intensely in 1972. Peter Wagner wrote to Donald about two disturbing events. The first involved articles against the church growth viewpoint written by Orlando Costas and Osvaldo Mottesi. Wagner wrote, “If these papers are typical of their position, Dean, there is no question that they are moving theologically with the Geneva line, and this can only cause a dilution of their evangelistic desire and involvement.” Wagner’s second concern reflected the decision of the Latin American Mission to move the department of Evangelism in Depth into the Latin American Seminary, rather than into the Department of Evangelism. Since Evangelism in Depth was to be under the direction of the seminary administration, Wagner suggested, “One does not need to have the gift of prophecy to see that this arrangement will soon neutralize the vision that Kenneth Strachan had when Evangelism in Depth was started back in 1960. This is most regrettable. The Lord will have to raise up something new and more vital in the days to come for Latin American, I am afraid.”<sup>50</sup>

On January 25, 1972, McGavran responded to Wagner’s two concerns in a letter that revealed his classical theological position:

I am grieved to hear that EID is going to be a department of the LAM Seminary switching to humanization as the one hope of the world.

However unless we seminary professors keep on believing that—

the soul is eternal, the body transient,

the soul can be eternally lost or saved,

salvation depends on belief in “JC according to the Scriptures,”

membership in His Body is the outcome of such belief

and the Bible is the infallible Word which judges men rather

than being judged by men,

unless, in short, a straightforward biblical position is maintained

(no symbolic meanings, no going behind the words to fanciful meanings) the pressures of the day will shove seminary after seminary over to the Uppsala position. SWM-ICG will be subject to the

same pressures.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Donald McGavran lecture at the Faculty and Staff Retreat, Northwest Christian College, Eugene, OR, September 2, 1972.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Wagner to Donald McGavran, January 18, 1972.

<sup>51</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, January 25, 1972.

While McGavran strongly felt that a Christian society was something everyone wanted, he continued to believe such was accomplishable only through the efforts of redeemed men and women. Peter Beyerhaus emphasized church growth's commitment to biblical authority in McGavran's introduction to an article in November 1972. He wrote, "Church Growth is not primarily a matter of statistics, methods, or church or mission policies; but rather of deep convictions. It becomes possible only when Christians who know Christ go out driven by belief in the unshakeable authority of the Bible."<sup>52</sup>

John K. Branner published an interview with McGavran in the spring issue of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* titled, "McGavran Speaks on Roland Allen." In the article, McGavran stated that he had never met Roland Allen and had begun reading him only after the publication of *Bridges of God*. While admitting that some of Allen's principles could be found in church growth thought, he noted the big difference that Allen had never understood the concept of people movements. Church growth thinking had not grown out of Allen's principles on the expansion of the church but from McGavran's studies with Pickett in the 1930s that culminated in the publication of *Church Growth and Group Conversion*.<sup>53</sup>

One of the challenges that Donald and the SWM-ICG undertook was to contend with the World Council of Churches (WCC) over the meaning of "mission." Early in 1968, as the WCC prepared to convene its fourth assembly in Uppsala, Sweden, its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism published a *Renewal in Mission*, a document describing the plan for missions and evangelism in the 1970s. Having read it thoroughly, the faculty of SWM-ICG "were alarmed to see that it contained no plans for evangelism and interpreted 'mission' solely as horizontal reconciliation of man with man."<sup>54</sup> The WCC document separated mission from the Great Commission, conversion evangelism, and church planting. To draw attention to this change in direction, Donald wrote, "Will Uppsala Betray the Two Billion?" in the May 1968 issue of *Church Growth Bulletin*.

The article created a storm, as the WCC leaders viewed it as an attack upon them personally. "Actually, it was a plea," Donald expressed, "for them to turn from excessive concern with humanization and to lay at least equal stress on proclaiming Christ as divine and only Savior and persuading men to become his disciples and responsible members of his church."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Peter Beyerhaus, "Shaken Foundations and Church Growth," *Church Growth Bulletin* 9, no. 2, (1972): 267.

<sup>53</sup> John K. Branner, "McGavran Speaks on Roland Allen," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1972): 165-174.

<sup>54</sup> Donald McGavran, "Yes, Uppsala Betrayed the Two Billion: Now What?" *Christianity Today*, June 23, 1972, 16.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Thanks to John Stott and others, the final document released following Uppsala was edited to include a few words about the Great Commission. Donald and the rest of the SWM-ICG faculty were not impressed, feeling that the WCC was just masking the magnitude of change in its theory and theology of missions. Uppsala, according to Donald, had hijacked the Great Commission by redefining the locus of mission from evangelism to advocacy of justice and assistance; it stressed horizontal reconciliation among humanity over vertical reconciliation between God and mankind. Uppsala had betrayed the two billion who had yet to believe in Jesus Christ and serve him in a church. No matter how much the leaders of the WCC thought Donald was attacking them personally, the reality is that his campaigning was not against them or the WCC, per se, but against what he and the other members of his faculty believed to be the wrong direction, a faulty missiology, and the bankrupt theology of the WCC.

The battle between these two entities continued throughout Donald's life. *Eye of the Storm: The Great Debate in Mission*, of which Donald served as editor, was released in February 1972. It presented in detail the differing ecumenical and evangelical points of view. An article appeared in *Asian Challenge* in July 1972 that was extremely critical of McGavran and the church growth viewpoint. "The Place of the Western Missionary in Asia" referred to McGavran's ideas as "very destructive" and "very dangerous." The author stressed misunderstandings of the church growth position by saying, "Glorifying God does not include starting churches and obtaining large numbers of nominal converts at the expense of all else." He stated, "If numbers are the only criterion of success, then it would seem that it pays to preach heresy!"<sup>56</sup> McGavran's approach to the article was "I counsel ignoring it. This sort of misjudging's of the c. g. position and of what I have been saying is commonplace. The truth will swamp it—given time."<sup>57</sup>

One of the key thoughts in Donald's mind as he developed the faculty of the SWM-ICG was to round out his program and widen his platform in order to more effectively respond to critics. The critics had always considered church growth thought to be unbiblical, with criticism coming heavily from the Reformed branches of the church, including a couple of the theologians at FTS. Tippett provided significant research on the biblical basis of church growth in the early years of the movement. After several years, he expressed his thinking in *Church Growth and the Word of God*, which was published in 1970. The book went through several printings, selling some fifteen thousand copies, which demonstrates it met a need. Eventually, it was translated into Mandarin, Korean, Japanese, Malayalam, Hindustani, Indonesian, and Spanish. In particular, the work caused critical evangelicals

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<sup>56</sup> Bernard T. Adeney, "The Place of the Western Missionary in Asia," *Asian Challenge*, July 1972, 50–51.

<sup>57</sup> Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, September 23, 1972.

to take a serious look at church growth thought. Glasser assumed the heavy theological lifting once he was established at the school, but Tippett and the entire faculty continued to address the theology of church growth in their lectures.

Donald and Mary McGavran celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary on August 29, and the SWM professors honored them with a card shower sent to their vacation address in Eugene, Oregon. Unknown to Donald and Mary, a Festschrift to honor Donald was in development during 1972, and negotiations for publication were ongoing between Ralph Winter, Harper & Row, and Wm. B. Eerdmans. By July, Eerdmans had agreed to publish it and have it ready for release in January 1973 at an SWM-ICG event commemorating Donald's seventy-fifth birthday. Tippett worked overtime throughout the fall to meet the December 30 editorial deadline. Edwin Orr completed the typesetting on his own machine in his home, a stage accomplished in such haste to meet the publisher's deadline that numerous typographical errors resulted. The project was extremely difficult to keep a secret since the entire manuscript was assembled in the office next door to Donald's.

Although the book was a tribute to his friend and colleague, Tippett had a hidden editorial agenda in designing the chapter outlines. A couple of rival theologians from other institutions had criticized Donald a good deal because of his supposedly one-track mind. Some were known to say, for instance, that Donald had only one string on his violin, and that was all he played. Tippett felt such criticism was no less than professional jealousy, so he decided to use the Festschrift to challenge it. Thus, the book covered a wide sweep of Christian mission, scattering twenty-five articles across five different fields of mission. Although each writer had freedom to develop his chapter, each chapter arises out of some dimension of mission already found in Donald's writings. By using this structure for the various chapters, Tippett felt he was saying to the reader, "Now, say that McGavran's writing is narrow if you dare!"<sup>58</sup> The 447-page Festschrift, *God, Man, and Church Growth*, included essays from twenty-six of McGavran's students and professional colleagues. Wagner volunteered to secure letters and telegrams from mission executives who might want to provide special recognition for McGavran on his birthday.

The big event scheduled for January 23, 1973, was a dinner commemorating Donald's birthday. Secret plans had been underway for more than a year to host the birthday party and present the Festschrift. Faculty members, SWM-ICG students, and former students from the early days in Eugene, Oregon, were invited to attend. International students were requested to wear national dress as appropriate. Persons too far away to attend were invited to send testimonials to be bound in a book of memories. The birthday party was billed as a promotional event, and McGavran was asked to

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<sup>58</sup> Tippett, *No Continuing City*, 441.

write a paper on “Five Expectations for Fuller’s School of Missions in the Years Ahead.” At the SWM celebration for Donald’s birthday, Wagner presented the book of letters, President Hubbard awarded the Festschrift, and Dean Glasser shared thoughts from the SWM faculty. Some 267 people attended the dinner celebration, and more than 300 friends and associates from around the world wrote letters of congratulations. Each person present received a copy of *God, Man, and Church Growth*. The 1972–73 SWM class announced the establishment of an annual Donald A. McGavran Award in Church Growth to the SWM graduate who made the most significant research in church growth overseas.<sup>59</sup> Even so, at seventy-five years old, Donald could not have imaged how his theories of evangelism were to spread across the world in the coming years.

### **About the Author**

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<sup>59</sup> Later this annual award was expanded to include the graduate who contributed significant research toward understanding church growth, whether it was overseas or domestic.