

From the Editor's Desk

As the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* nears its two-decade mark, a bit of a crisis has loomed and IJFM now has a default editor. (How deeply we are indebted for all the years Hans Weerstra has served us.) Depending on how we react, things can go down or up, but they are not likely to stay the same.

In the first place, there is nothing out-of-date about frontiers in mission. Nor is it a case of old-age senility. Our nearly two decades of history certainly has less to do with the number of those years than with two facts:

First, we have just crossed an enormously prominent historical date, the boundary of the third millennium, and thus the steam is now gone for work toward that date. Indeed, in the founding purpose of the associated *International Society for Frontier Missiology*, the initial purpose included, quite understandably, the question "What can we do by the end of the year 2000?" But that kind of steam is now gone.

Second, not only are those frontier goals (hastily assembled in order to take advantage of the prominence of the goal date) now no longer borne aloft by the aspirations of reaching them by that very special date—an almost unrepeatable date—also, the idea of gaining a "missiologal breakthrough" into every "unimax people" by the year 2000 can now be seen as never more than an intermediate goal for most of us. But it was a strikingly concrete goal. However, now the relevance of an intermediate goal that might be reachable by a terrifically prominent date has lost a lot of meaning, and must now finally be recognized as intermediate.

OK, so we quit?

Or, do we now find ourselves forced into a highly productive review of mission frontiers in general? And, now that we are released from an artificial goal date, can we now more soberly and realistically widen our vision to take a great deal more into account?

There certainly would be no good reason to continue with either the *International Society for Frontier Missiology*, or the *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, if there were no more frontiers. Startlingly, now that we are released from a possibly reductionist pragmatism (which was intermixed in some people's thinking about "reaching peoples"), a whole host of both related and unrelated but genuine, crucial frontiers now cry out for our attention. This is not the place to list some of those (however, see the tentative description on page 32), or at least not the issue of IJFM in which to do so. This particular issue, however, breaks new ground in several ways.

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We are not for the present going to continue with the four-color splendor which only a larger subscription list can justify. The same goes for meticulous prepress copy editing. When our number of subscribers grows sufficiently we can go back to that.

The contributions to this issue are the sole responsibility of the authors. World history has turned a corner now that all our writers have spelling checkers. We have in this issue, due to the time constraints of major events in India, been unable to impose our normal "style sheets" which require more thorough referencing than some contributions this time have.

Speaking of unusual time constraints, read carefully the editorial of the guest editor. His years of residence in India, and his appreciation for the massive and portentous events unfolding there in these very weeks are the catalytic force bringing into existence IJFM's first issue wholly on India.

He is not to blame for the slightly mischievous theme I have concocted: "Evangelical Neo-Marxism in India?" That is in part a teaser, but only in part as you will see as you peruse these significant articles.

What I mean by "neo-marxism," with tongue in cheek, is the simplistic idea that there is a good class of people and a bad class of people and that by

revolving the "good" oppressed class, so it will now be on top, thereby justice and peace will be automatically achieved. But in fact few of the articles deal directly with this eye-catching heading. In this issue are astoundingly different points of view, all helpful in certain crucial ways as we approach an equally astounding mountain of complexity.

The degree to which the world's largest democracy has been slighted by the mission movement in general is hard to understand and evaluate. *Now, however, major forces far beyond anyone's control are poised to transform India possibly beyond recognition.* This is potentially even far more significant than world terrorism. We can think of other nation-states destabilized almost without warning due to gradual awarenesses and sweeping convictions.

It is very late but not certainly too late for even a hastily assembled group of papers to focus our attention on the immensity that is India, and the forces there which are moving ever more swiftly, almost like flood waters in this amazingly advanced and yet surprisingly and dangerously troubled collective giant. I have to congratulate our guest editor for including such an arresting, scintillating and diverse set of earnest and informed perspectives.

But back to the future. As a default editor I can promise you that every article in every issue from now on, and perhaps for the past, will be available for downloading from the Internet (www.wciu.edu/ijfm). It is already clear that the Internet nicely complements the printed page. But it is apparently not likely to replace the durable and handy sort of thing you hold in your hands.

Indeed, we expect a web site will enlarge our hard copy subscription base, not reduce it nor compete with it. Ever try underlining on an Internet screen?

Hard copy you can take with you where computers cannot conveniently go. But once a hard copy article captures our attention, we may wish to download it for interleaved comments to be sent by email to the author and to friends. Furthermore, the Internet will shortly function as a breeding ground for future issues, attracting additional contributors to article-themes which will focus on a series of frontiers. We already have planned two-years of issues by guest editors focusing on specific arenas of thought. On our web site you will see posted these themes and you can ponder your own contribution to them.

Now, make sure in the next few weeks you find two friends who will join our growing subscription list!

Ralph D. Winter
Editor