

# From the Editor's Desk



Three very crucial mission frontiers are addressed in this issue. But, they should not, at this date, still be frontiers. They should have been settled by now. They aren't. In each case enormous tension, confusion and misunderstanding reigns—politely of course.

The first frontier—the first two installments of which appear here—is the question of who ultimately calls the shots in mission operation and strategy decisions, especially delicate ones. This seemingly technical issue, amidst the gush of emotion, enthusiasm and heady commitment young people and congregations carry into the mission soup (all of which is essential to mission) is a small matter with big implications in the long run.

When a young man named Hudson Taylor first went to China one thing he learned, vividly: the board back in Britain under which he served did not know what it was doing. With fear and trepidation but firm in faith he later started a new board. All by himself. No discussion about who ultimately calls the shots.

And only 25 years later was this issue (home board or field council calling the shots) the cause of five long years of anguish and confusion. He very nearly resigned from the mission he started. I have often wondered if he knew nothing of the similar and tragic case of that other young man, William Carey, years earlier, which turned out the opposite (the home board pulling the rug out from under Carey)?

Note that while Joseph and Michele C. discuss the issue in terms of field versus home control, the issue is basically the same as that of an internal versus an external board. In the history of the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, internal boards were always allowed until certain pressures pushed the IFMA into suggesting member missions have a board with a majority of outside members—a real step back. An external board is a good idea where an organization employs and pays its people. But when the members of a mission society are themselves the largest contributors (in the sense of accepting a relatively modest support), an internal (or field) board makes a lot more sense.

Joseph and Michele were asked to explore this issue by their own mission, Frontiers, which is already grappling with such concerns. Their amazingly detailed treatment will extend into the next two issues of IJFM. But it begins solidly here with two of its five parts.

The second frontier in IJFM 18:2, namely, the challenge of the unreached peoples, also ought not still to be a frontier. But this subject has special significance to the very existence of this journal as well as the society (the *International Society for Frontier Missiology*). As with Joseph and Michele, Alan Johnson, a field missionary, was asked by higher-ups in his mission to explore this frontier in a special study. He tackles the entire emergence of the now virtually completed transition in mission strategy

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from missions setting out to 1) win individuals in countries to 2) seeking to plant churches within unreached peoples. He also deals with the larger question of what a mission frontier really is. Again, the first two of five parts of this study appear here.

The third frontier is the least resolved. But it is not going away. In a way it is the most crucial of all—if we will allow it to be what it truly is. Ted Yamamori, who addresses this frontier, has had a long and varied career, from doing his Ph.D. at Duke in church growth theory to being academic dean at Biola University, to running Food for the Hungry where he forged ties between field service and U.S. academic credit. He seeks to sanctify the word holism. It has become the settled term among

those who use it. The word wholism would seem to be better, would seem to mean getting the whole together. But holism, which would seem to mean a hole is left, is nevertheless the in-word in this vast sphere of mission endeavor. If we want to speak their language and understand their insights we might as well get used to it.

But the frontier here is not the question of which of these two words to use. It is the exceedingly profound issue that is unavoidably raised when the work of the holism sphere of mission agencies is compared to standard missions. The public perspectives are perhaps wider apart than the actual work, since holists like Yamamori have always understood the importance of church planting and evangelism.

But Yamamori brings out a new angle. He claims that “the gospel of the Kingdom,” which focuses on God’s authority and His glory “coming on earth,” cannot be properly be pursued unless both “holistic” and standard mission is seen as part of a single engagement of the forces of evil on earth, and indeed, the attempt to redeem and restore all of God’s creation. I have myself wondered what kind of a gospel we promote if we may leave the impression that God cannot—or does not wish to—deal with earthly problems such as disease and injustice but really can only get people tickets to heaven.

*Ralph D. Winter*  
Editor

*P.S. We apologize for an Asbury Seminary ad in the last issue which was correct for the date of the issue but which was no longer correct by the time the issue was mailed. The new ad will appear in 18:3, which will correspond to the period to which it is appropriate.*

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The IJFM is published in the name of the International Student Leaders Coalition for Frontier Missions, a fellowship of younger leaders committed to the purposes of the twin consultations of Edinburgh 1980: The *World Consultation on Frontier Missions* and the *International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions*. As an expression of the ongoing concerns of Edinburgh 1980, the IJFM seeks to:

- ☞ promote intergenerational dialogue between senior and junior mission leaders;
- ☞ cultivate an international fraternity of thought in the development of frontier missiology;
- ☞ highlight the need to maintain, renew, and create mission agencies as vehicles for frontier missions;
- ☞ encourage multidimensional and interdisciplinary studies;
- ☞ foster spiritual devotion as well as intellectual growth; and
- ☞ advocate “A Church for Every People.”

Mission frontiers, like other frontiers, represent boundaries or barriers beyond which we must go yet beyond which we may not be able to see clearly and boundaries which may even be disputed or denied. Their study involves the discovery and evaluation of the unknown or even the reevaluation of the known. But unlike other frontiers, mission frontiers is a subject specifically concerned to explore and exposit areas and ideas and insights related to the glorification of God in all the nations (peoples) of the world, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.

Subscribers and other readers of the IJFM (due to ongoing promotion) come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Mission professors, field missionaries, young adult mission mobilizers, college librarians, mission executives, and mission researchers all look to the IJFM for the latest thinking in frontier missiology.