

From the Editor's Desk



Dear Reader,

Here, finally, the gauntlet is thrown down for us. India is merely a symbol of challenge to traditional missions, which attempts to “do church planting” along Western lines. It is not just India’s 600 million caste Hindus who hang in the balance. Please read between the lines as the same disturbing challenge is at the bottom of our “global stalling” in missions wherever there is a strong traditional society which has overall withstood the various attempts thus far to implant the Gospel.

We truly appreciate the work of our guest editor, H. L. Richards. A long time resident of India, it would be hard to think of a more daringly honest thinkers, researchers, investigator—persistent, avid, patient, meticulous ...

But don’t blame him for what is said here. It is not really a criticism of missions to note that most global mission success has taken place within small, minority groups oppressed by larger groups. The culture and religion of these minority groups has not saved them. Impressive Western outsiders have offered them alternatives which they can more easily accept because these groups often have very little to lose. And missions have been a truly marvelous benefit to them.

By contrast, major global traditions don’t feel inferior. I am thinking of what we loosely call “Hindu,” or the incredible diversity which we call Islam, and of the Japanese. They have (compared to the USA) low divorce rates and highly stable “extended” (read “normal”) family structure. Both Hindus and Muslims have figured out what we haven’t, that they do not want a religion which condones the pervasive use of alcohol as a beverage—with consequences to which we are culturally blind, such as broken families, extensive wife abuse, massive highway slaughter as well as the background of most murders and college student mayhem.

So, the New Testament question arises insistently: can these huge traditions keep their own cultural traditions and work out a valid unity of Biblical faith—just as did the Greek “God-fearers” of the book of Acts?

H. L. Richard concludes that this is perfectly possible and thoroughly Biblical, but that it is not likely if we expect it to arise from within the existing church in India, much less from the direct efforts of those outside of India.

However, all four articles on this seemingly overdue struggle for the birth of a new faith tradition are fascinating and hard to put down. You can expect this issue of IJFM to become a close companion and soon to be dog-eared due to frequent consultation.

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I also challenge you to find more candid and illuminating, if hard-hitting, reviews of key books.

At the opposite end of the mission reality on the field is a quagmire of confusion about how best to promote missions at home. Truly major denominational players are falling by the wayside as conditions and perspectives change no matter what we do. There is, in a way, as large an "adjustment" of perspective needed in this sector as, in the rest of this issue, on the field amidst the major world religious traditions.

Further addressing this "opposite" issue, Bob Blincoe's three part series ends in this issue. He speaks very specifically, and very knowledgeably, as he ticks off a number of flagging approaches as well as bright new alternatives.

Now, on a totally different subject. The International Journal of Frontier Missions stumbled in its transfer of editorship from El Paso, Texas to Pasadena, California. We began our work here in Pasadena more than a year behind.

With this present issue of Volume 19:3 we are now caught up! The inevitable confusion, however, is that the "current" issue for 2003, number four is Volume 20:3, which will be sent out in a few

weeks. That is, beginning with 19:4 in 2002 we decided to produce on time what would keep us up-to-date relating to current events, but at the same time we continued producing the three earlier, still-missing issues of Volume 19—19:1, 19:2, 19:3. With 19:3 (what you have in your hands), we are now caught up. In the process, however, we may have made some mix-ups in mailing.

Thus, Volumes 18, 19, and 20 (2001 to 2003) represent the Pasadena period of editorship. If any of you have missed any of these issues, most of which contain parts of series, or if we have failed to mail any of these issues to you, we want to make things right (just tell us what you have paid for and not received). Or if any of you were not subscribing at the time of, say Volume 18, you may want to take advantage of our very special offer of \$10 per year for sets of back issues, and, when ordered in addition or more than one at a time, \$3 per copy for individual issues. For future issues (which have to be mailed one at a time) the price is still the low \$15 per year, \$28 for two. But individual back issues, ordered by themselves, cost \$5.00 (due to shipping).

You will notice on your label a terse indication of the final issue of your pres-

ent paid up period. Can you correct this for us if our records are wrong?

Also, for the future, we want gradually to get all subscriptions on an annual basis. If your subscription ends in the middle of the year, please send \$15 for the following calendar year (or \$28 for two years), plus \$3.50 for the issues necessary to connect you to that calendar year.

In issue 20:3, which is soon to appear (as well as in 20:4), we present a long list of "new frontiers," which we will continue to address in later issues in Volume 21.

In 20:4 we introduce the frontier defined by the question, What role do advances in scientific knowledge of God's creative wisdom have to do with evangelistic outreach to people in today's scientifically oriented world?

In pursuit of His frontiers,

Ralph D. Winter

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Editor

Editor's Note: As before, the articles in this issue are presented in the form they were received. They have not received extensive editorial effort.

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.