

# From the Editor's Desk



There is an occupational hazard in dealing with frontiers. In reading these papers (assembled as a special issue for the Singapore 2002 conference on frontiers) one could easily become depressed or even cynical. Not that the authors of these papers are discouraged. It is rather that the realistic terms with which they speak are inherently scary.

Why wouldn't they be scary? Obviously the remaining unreached peoples are unreached for substantial reasons which these papers clearly outline.

Todd Johnson's paper suggests that the still unreached may in many cases be more receptive but he is not denying Malcolm Hunter's point that they may also be more difficult to get to and get through to.

Even my own paper may at first glance be dismaying, for I suggest that in some huge spheres we may need to start all over. Even there, however, the whole point is, for example, that the uncommonly "resistant" field of Japan will likely become amazingly receptive if only we make sure to get the right combination and move distinctly beyond the present westernized church tradition.

I am especially intrigued by Hunter's emphasis on the strikingly different structure of culture of the constantly moving nomads—the need for "a church on the back of a camel."

Why? Because I am very convinced that if we can rediscover the New Testament family-level "church" (ecclesia), we then may discover the reason we are slow to recognize the "church" that is looming among middle caste Hindus in India, where literally millions are devout followers of Christ while declining to associate themselves too closely with the "visible church" tradition of Christianity in India.

Even in the United States our pervasive urbanization has enabled the bulk of all would-be believers to associate quite superficially with congregations of more than 200—the kind of group where New Testament accountabilities are hard to find. This ought to disturb us.

This is why, indirectly, the nomadic challenge is dual: the need to make sense to the nomads themselves and the also huge need for global urban-

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ized and westernized Christianity to realize afresh the bed-rock importance of worship and accountability at the family and household level.

Note that that level is a solidly established feature within the Mormon tradition which undoubtedly accounts for a great deal of the surprising strength of that movement. If we can't learn from the New Testament and we can't learn from the Mormons, let's hope the challenge of the nomads may lead us in a more profound understanding of the reality of the church.

One other thing—from the sublime to the ridiculous: this issue of IJFM is right on time, as the fourth quarter of its 19th year. It is being produced to coincide with, and to be of use to the people at, the Singapore 2002 conference on frontiers.

But please don't think you have missed 19:1, 19:2, and 19:3. We will catch up on those even as we have been catching up already from where we took charge of editing this journal. Our plan from now on is to come out with the right issue at the right time and to provide the missing issues as we are able along the way.

The talk at this conference about closure regarding certain stages of mission effort that can be measured is not intended to disguise our human inability to grasp the authentic details of completing the Great Commission, which are known only to God. But every intermediate objective, whether adopting, engaging, or reaching all peoples can legitimately speak in closure terms.

In any case your ideas about the remaining frontiers are welcome

in these pages. My own thinking encompasses many challenging frontiers other than the mere bean counting of people lists.

Some of those will appear in 2003.

*Ralph D. Winter*  
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.*

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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.