

From the Editor's Desk



This issue of IJFM falls in the middle of a significant series of events. Long before the Singapore '02 conference itself (October 28-31) key people all over the world were wrestling with the agreed-upon theme: *Advancing Strategies of Closure among All Unreached People Groups*.

Thus, our last issue, 19:4, anticipated the Singapore '02 conference by presenting some of that advanced "wrestling with the theme" in the form of most of the plenary papers to be given there. Issue 19:4 was, in fact, employed as a study document at the conference itself.

This issue, 20:1 offers a detailed running summary of the entire conference as well as presents several of the presentations at Singapore in workshops and even between sessions (by which I refer to my own unofficial presentation on the Rise and the Fall of the IMC).

I doubt if you will be captured by every single detail in Greg Parson's summary of the conference. You are permitted to find the sections that are of greatest interest to you!

The next few issues will bring to light some additional presentations made at Singapore not available as yet. That is why I say that this issue falls in the middle of a series of significant events.

But how significant? At this date we are in a much better position to evaluate the conference.

Of conferences there is seemingly no end. However, in some ways this particular meeting (and its accompanying series of events) was in the league with the germinal Edinburgh 1980 meeting, which, in turn, attempted to repeat the most famous mission conference of all time, the World Missionary Conference that met at Edinburgh in 1910.

The 1910 Edinburgh conference gathered world missionary leaders like no conference before it, and set in motion enormous energies and entities, many of which are still moving today. One of those entities, with great purpose, which unfortunately is no longer moving is highlighted in this issue of IJFM—the International Missionary Council (IMC). Its purposes urgently need to be replaced.

The 1980 Edinburgh conference actually attempted to promote a replacement for the IMC but did not quite succeed, possibly because the global

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interest in a new push for closure was not as alive then as now.

The 2002 Singapore conference, amazingly, reflected almost universal interest in an on-going unnamed entity, the results of the various study groups can be seen on page 12, and are commented on again on page 19.

The conference was a very gratifying mix of highly dedicated and intelligent people from the whole globe, about as representative as 212 people could be, all focusing on "Advancing Strategies of Closure," wording which fairly describes the concerns of both 1910 and 1980.

Thus these three conferences are kindred in spirit and excitingly sequential. I could easily get carried away describing the "advancing" perspectives undergirding the progression of strategies reflected in each of these conferences.

Just a bare-bones comment:

Comparing who came: 1910 did not attract a single delegate from a third world mission agency. They probably did not even think that was possible, although it actually was, and Bishop Azariah attended not as an agency delegate but as a church delegate. 1980 attracted one third of those attending from the third world while 2002 attracted 39 percent of the total, a slight improvement.

Comparing strategy: 1910 conceived of closure in purely in terms of a head count of human beings yet to accept Christ. 1980 decisively shifted from

people to be reached to peoples to be reached, a major and drastic semantic shift for the word "reached."

Of less import is the fact that almost everyone spoke English in 2002, again, a major change from a century earlier.

The cliff-hanging question, in my opinion, is not about what happened at these conferences but what happens

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after them. For me the most important result of 1910 was the IMC, of 1980 was the failed attempt to establish a global entity linking mission agencies both North and South, and of 2002 is the hope of a global office of some sort which will interface specifically with mission agencies pressing forward into the frontiers. I have called such entities "frontier active" agencies, which most mission agencies are, in one way or another.

So don't just read what happened. Read thinking and praying about what will happen in on-going contact that can be substantial.

The largest difference in the last 100 years is, in one sense, simply the fact that the very mobility of the ethnic realities with which we are concerned. Just imagine, 20 million diaspora Indians earn an equivalent Gross Domestic Product to the other 980 million back in India. If you are working with India's peoples it is no longer just a national or regional but a global challenge.

This is true in hundreds of other cases. Actually, thousands of people groups are scattered across the entire globe.

For example, the annual gathering of agencies from fifteen countries concerned to reach the Fula peoples who are at least that scattered, must follow the Fula whether they end up in Paris, Amsterdam or London.

Every reason for believing in the value of associations of mission agencies on the national or regional level applies at least as cogently to an association of mission agencies on the global level.

In my mind this is the key "issue" of this 20:1 issue. **IJFM**

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.