

From the Editor's Desk



Nothing boring this time! This issue could stand all by itself as a trusted primer in cross-cultural evangelism. No mission field in the world can afford to ignore the kind of thinking presented here about India. This issue is about the Bible and church history!

First, Petersen's extensive exploration of multicultural elements (and what could appear to be dread syncretism) in the *Old Testament*. Then Hoefler's concise treatment of contextualization in general. For this task who would be better qualified? Next, guest editor H. L. Richard's startling descriptions of three fascinating movements within the immensely complex colossus of India's Hinduism.

If that were not enough, we can chew on a lengthy review of a significant and surprising book, *Caste in Question: Identity or Hierarchy*, by a professor at the Nehru University in Delhi.

There's more, and you can read about that in H. L. Richard's guest editorial.

Then, I am still getting letters from people who were surprised and even offended by my earlier (Vol. 23:3) observations about the gridlock in Palestine. I have taken the liberty this time to reply to one long, thoughtful and respectful letter, in some cases paragraph by paragraph. (I have received several other letters, some I have not gotten around to responding to even privately, sorry, which define me in outlandish categories.) Why do I consider my original (hypothetical) remarks so urgent to defend? Because far too much knee-jerk thinking has gone on about the question—a legitimate one—concerning when God wants to allow a believing Jewish people to return to Palestine. After 2,000 years is it suddenly now, and by courtesy of the UN?

Also, please don't understand my ruminations (see *Editorial Reflections*) about powerful new movements within the Catholic tradition to indicate any desire on my part for us necessarily to follow their lead. It is more likely the opposite. But there is an even more important point, much more important.

Finally, I know my days are numbered. It is time you understand that this journal has since Volume 18 been mainly the work of our Managing Editor, Rory Clark.

Enjoy!

Ralph D. Winter

Editor, IJFM

P.S. As always, the views expressed in *IJFM* are those of the various authors and not necessarily those of the journal's editors, the International Society for Frontier Missiology or the society's executive committee.

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From the Guest Editor

The Rethinking Forum is happy to continue its partnership with *IJFM*. Even the last issue of *IJFM* had a Rethinking Forum paper, Brian Petersen writing on Hans Staffer's perspective on Hindu followers of Christ maintaining solidarity with their birth community. This issue is full of rethinking issues in the Hindu world, and no doubt more will follow soon as the upcoming ISFM meeting (Dallas, Sept. 15-17) focuses on India.

Brian Petersen contributes another major paper to this issue, outlining the intriguing use of "pagan" cultural elements in divinely ordained ceremonies in the Old Testament. The Rethinking Forum is mainly about Hindu issues, but there must be constant reflection on the biblical basis for contextual ministry. Brian's ruminations have challenged and blessed many at various Rethinking Forum gatherings, and will now reach a much broader audience.

Herb Hoefler's paper is likewise rooted in the Bible, but also draws from church history to evaluate the challenge of remaining rooted in one's birth community while following Christ. "Churchless Christianity" will no doubt be associated with Herb for a long time to come, but as this paper indicates he has moved beyond that rather misleading and inaccurate terminology and now refers to *Jesu* (or *Yishu*) *bhaktas* (devotees).

My paper in this issue is an attempt to move discussions of "church" in Hindu contexts outside of Christian assumptions into the Hindu context. Hindu phenomena are multi-religious and more than merely religious, and by studying the sociological aspects of various Hindu religious movements one understands more fully what "Hindu" means. But the nature of the "church" and its relation to Hindu society is also immediately on the surface when studying these Hindu movements from a Christ-centered perspective.

The role of outsiders in insider movements needs more discussion and analysis. Chris Hale and his contextual music group *Aradhna* have a central role in the Rethinking Forum and it is encouraging to get more of their experiences into print for a wider readership. The tensions an outsider experiences cannot get much greater than when singing in worship to Christ in Hindu temples. This is a highly stimulating article.

Swami Dayanand Bharati reflects on the complexity of caste, an unavoidable topic in Hindu contexts and a seemingly irresolvable issue as well! Various new insights from sociological studies are outlined in his paper. Some book reviews introduce other important studies from Hindu contexts. Watch the *IJFM* for details of the next North American Rethinking Forum gathering to be held in May 2008 in Minneapolis! We hope you will join us there.

H. L. Richard
Guest Editor

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." (Acts 26:18)

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.