

The IJFM: Looking Back on the Last Eight Years

by Ralph D. Winter

Hans Weerstra was editor of IJFM longer than anyone before him. After eight years he felt he had to turn things over. I became the “default editor,” and now after eight years I too am hoping to turn things over!

Rory’s idea of our 25th anniversary year touching on the past in each issue brings me to comment on the issues covering 2001–2008.

My first editorial for volume 18:1 clearly stated the fact that mission frontiers come in various sizes and shapes, and that the phrase “unreached peoples” by no means covers them all. After all, once you find out *where to go*—to all the unreached peoples—you still have to decide *what to do* once you get there. And that’s a much more complex question than where.

During these eight years the task of editorship has gradually moved from me to our managing editor Rory Clark. He is now doing the lion’s share of the work and is very much appreciated by me as well as, I’m sure, everyone who reads IJFM.

I also want to express my gratitude for the key thinking of the network of consulting editors and regular contributors to this journal. This is a remarkable group of people, and, of course, the journal is totally dependent on the quality of the contributions.

Another observation is that during this period we have often clearly expressed our own sentiments, while at the same time trying very hard to generously offer space for opposing perspectives to express their views. As a result you can find some very far-out ideas expressed by myself, perhaps, and some others, but these are simply for the edification of our readers. They are not, in any sense, canonized creeds sent down from heaven that we expect everyone to accept.

I actually contributed an article entitled “Eleven Frontiers of Perspective” in issues 20:3 and 20:4, and we have tried very hard to make clear that mission frontiers are anything and everything that holds back the extension of God’s grace and His will in this world. At this point I will simply refer you to the

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fourth page of every issue where a standard statement of frontiers can be found. This very clearly states the policy and perspective of this journal.

It is also to be admitted that just as the world has changed, and factors in mission strategy have changed as a result, so has the thinking of some of the people who contribute to the journal. I can at least speak for myself. I feel I have learned a great deal in the last eight years, and there is evidence of the progression of perspective in these pages.

Perhaps the most specific example would be the concept of Kingdom mission versus Church mission. Church mission is defined as the extension of the church through winning people to Christ and incorporating them into accountable fellowships. Kingdom mission is when the church goes beyond its membership boundaries and intends to seek God's will in this world for His glory. The latter concept of Kingdom mission has a long history of waxing and waning. There will be more, perhaps, in future issues about this but it

is certainly—as you can see in some of our recent issues—a very weighty and current topic.

The world seems in some ways to have gotten ahead of the Christian mission movement in terms of tackling world problems, disease, poverty, corruption, etc., yet this is something which evangelicals were famous for doing in the 19th century. In the 20th century a polarization took place in which some people sought to get people out of this world and other people sought to get the glory of God into this world, to speak simplistically.

Since I am also editor of *Mission Frontiers*, the official bulletin of the US Center for World Mission, there are a number of things in that periodical along this line. Generally speaking, things are stated in more popular language there and in briefer expanse. However, it is often true that the *IJFM* carries the weightier length of original articles and goes into greater detail. Often, of course, in the *IJFM* we treat subjects that are much

more delicate than could be blazoned in the pages of a popular periodical like *Mission Frontiers*. **IJFM**



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