

The Trail of a Footnote

It all started with a footnote. A missiologist friend recently shared how he had seen a reference thirty years ago to the field research of a former missionary to South Asia. That reference pointed to a strategic study documented decades earlier, of which only one document remains extant today. The study was historic, brimming with (potential) discovery, innovative in its day. That footnote sparked a search that spanned decades. Letters were written, phone calls made, and family members pursued. Sadly, in the end, it became evident the entire collection—with the exception of one document—probably lay molding in a chest somewhere in Asia.

A footnote can be a signpost at the head of a trail. Yet the pursuit to rediscover buried insights usually plays second fiddle in mission innovation. You've probably noticed there's no little talk of innovation these days,¹ but those efforts most likely pursue *originality*. We're less likely to dig for long forgotten innovation. My missiologist friend knew that something had been covered over, stored away, buried with time, and lost to our missiological memory. Could a former style of missiology have devalued valuable insights? Could our mission institutions in any way have restricted the capacity to recognize an innovation? Could we rediscover a lost innovation?

William Carey Publishers: An Open-Handed Missiology

This kind of research brings us to books—especially *academic* books—where extensive footnoting is normative. Back in the 1960s, Ralph Winter was prescient in recognizing they were on the front side of a wave of new missiological studies. He and his colleagues at Fuller's School of World Mission represented just one of the emerging faculties coalescing around world mission. Each was mentoring field-based mission personnel, students whose innovative insights needed to be diffused across a wider mission enterprise. But these dissertations—steeped in references that led down many trails—were not marketable. Publishing houses avoided them.

Winter pivoted and birthed William Carey Publishers in his garage. Originally titled a "Library," it rode the coattails of Donald McGavran's *Church Growth Bulletin 2* and its monthly Book Club by offering more extensive research. This upstart mom-and-pop operation was a welcomed broker for the missiologist who believed he held an innovative dissertation in his hand yet who faced the daunting complexity of a publishing world. Winter came alongside and begged, leveraged, and collaborated with that world as a way to transmit missiological innovation.

Editorial *continued on p. 4*

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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A half century later, WCP is still cranking out mission books. Denise Wynn, who has brought fresh technical and innovative leadership to this publishing house, believes “the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.” It’s all about the effective diffusion of missiological innovation across the church’s global sending base. And, in that spirit, she has stiff-armed publishing propriety and made a generous offer to our journal.

WCP is allowing the *IJFM* to dip into their stacks and publish a handful of chapters. They recognize it’s inevitable that good innovative thinking can get lost in the pages of a book. And, consequently, those venturesome footnotes leave no trail. These articles represent chapters from six different books, each addressing the potential for innovation in distinct missiological domains: partnership, diaspora, movements, theology, and corporate mission agency structure.

- **Partnership**—Mary Lederleitner, who is widely published on the challenges of partnership in mission, offers a fiduciary’s perspective on the more ethical realities of global and inter-cultural partnership.

- **Diaspora**—Gary Fujino exegetes the anthropology of the global Japanese ethnoscape by highlighting the imperceptible barriers that divide this relatively homogenous population. And Tim Shultz reflects on how Hindu *Dharma* should sensitize us to the way Christ draws people experientially and devotionally.
- **Movements**—S. T. Antonio has offered a rare, balanced and very comprehensive history of the collegial—but often contested—development of the missiology surrounding so-called “insider movements.” (Follow the footnotes!)
- **Corporate Innovation**—Derek Seipp, a keen consultant widely published on innovation science and mission, directs his thoughts to the mission agency and how it can cultivate an ethos of innovation.
- **Theologizing**—Michael Cooper argues for the place of the missiological theologian with his deep exegetical dive into the role of the apostle John within the Ephesian movement.

We also offer a quiver full of book reviews in this issue. You’ll note the varying persuasions and vantage points of our reviewers, and the freedom they take to engage and critique the issues

raised by these authors. Such diversity keeps us alert and prevents us from settling comfortably into our own schools of thought.

Even as I write this editorial, plans have cemented for the ISFM program at this year’s EMS annual meeting, September 17–18 (totally virtual, see ad for details on p. 2). You’ll not want to miss our plenary speaker, Dr. Kang-San Tan, general secretary of BMS World Mission, and the ISFM sessions addressing issues in a Buddhist world. We apologize for the lull in production, but know we are very excited about an upcoming issue on emerging missiological perspectives within the Buddhist sphere.

In Him,



Brad Gill
Senior Editor, *IJFM*

Endnotes

- ¹Ted Esler, *The Innovation Crisis: Creating Disruptive Influence in the Ministry You Lead* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2021).

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.