

*Editorial: A Church for Every People by the year 2000*

By Brad Gill

En route to the United States after a year on the mission field, I picked up a magazine and began to browse. Almost immediately these words caught my eye: "cautious, unimaginative, and war-weary." They were imbedded in an article describing the fortieth anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy. The early weeks of the invasion had been murderous. With great boldness and extreme courage, the Allied forces had just barely established a beachhead. But, the article said, after that early, incredible success, certain Allied commanders became "cautious, unimaginative, and war-weary". Hmm...the words both challenged and threatened me. It had been a long year for me and my family, requiring a tremendous amount of energy just to survive the introduction to the thousand unexpected novelties of a new culture. Frankly, I was tired and, yes, a bit war-weary.

As my mind reviewed the year, however, I began to be caught up in another emotion: wonder. The missionary force in our adopted country was very small when we arrived. Now it was just about to double in number. Reinforcements have a way of generating new hope, and among all of us there was a cautious optimism that the tide had turned. I marveled at the momentum we were witnessing. The analogy of troops storming beaches, establishing beachheads and rooting themselves among the enemy forces caused my heart to leap in thankfulness that I had the opportunity to participate in this great venture. The lessons had already been numerous and life-changing.

But I was tired. War-weary. There had been cost in establishing ourselves in a society that disapproves of our ultimate objective. Would I succumb to caution and lack of imagination? As I continued to read the record of D-Day, it became apparent to me that I was actually at a key juncture: while we had established a significant beachhead, through a really marvelous series of breakthroughs, the ultimate objective was still in front of us. I needed fresh insight and inspiration for the next leg of our ministry, and I was determined to spend the time stateside getting just that.

It was just a few days later that I discovered that this journal, too, is at a key juncture in its development. I had been one of the persons involved when it was launched, and I was therefore expected to assume some leadership during a period of editorial reshuffling. I couldn't help but think that whatever else this journal does, it must provide perspective to young recruits like me who are attempting to penetrate unreached peoples with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The ~IJFM~ must also do more than that, but it must at least keep war-weary recruits from becoming "cautious" and "unimaginative."

I reviewed my understanding of the unreached peoples concern in the last two decades. Berlin, 1966...Lausanne, 1974...Pattaya and Edinburgh, 1980...Wheaton, 1983. While evangelical leadership had repeatedly convened to discuss strategy for world evangelization, the issue of fresh recruitment and reinforcement seldom surfaced. The notable exception was the International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions, the sister consultation to the World Consultation on Frontier Missions of Edinburgh '80. That consultation's search to understand the nature of mobilizing a new generation of frontier missionaries has had much to do with holding at bay other forces that would cause a movement of perhaps idealistic youth to become "cautious, unimaginative and war-weary".

But whenever young men and women seek to determine God's mission for them among the unreached peoples, they face the need for a comprehensive understanding of this unique and complex mission. A small group of us have therefore recognized the crucial value of a publication which would deepen and sustain the spiritual and strategic dimensions of their mandate--"A Church for Every People by the Year 2000".

Implicit in the perspective and functions of the two Edinburgh '80 consultations are the assumptions which guide the editorial nature of this journal. There is a bias to this journal and it should be clear right up front. Let me assure you that the bias is essentially evangelical and vigorously evangelistic. Yet the distinctive focus is on unreached peoples. The ~IJFM~ assumes that the Church should be concerned with issues much broader than the scope of this publication. It is also true that the breadth of issues relevant to world evangelization is greater than the contents herein. The editors of the *IJFM* leave such issues to other editors and other magazines. For its own editorial axioms, the *IJFM* unashamedly limits itself to the six components of Edinburgh '80, as follows.

*First, there must be an intergenerational fusion.* One of the distinctives of Edinburgh '80 was the way in which the younger generation of committed students consulted with each other in the context of the gathering of senior missionary personnel. The complementary nature of this ongoing marriage allows a movement to create as well as conserve, exert as well as mature, initiate as well as maintain. Young and noble spirits are given intellectual and emotional maturity if placed alongside elders of wisdom. Just as students and student leaders were inspired and challenged by the platform messages of missionary veterans at Edinburgh '80, so it is intended that this journal will be a means between meetings for the younger generation to hear from their elders of the challenges, complexities and tools needed in frontier missions endeavor. But just as senior leaders at Edinburgh '80 were challenged and encouraged by the dynamism and vigor of the concurrent student consultation, so it is intended that this journal will give the older generation of mission leaders access to the insights, concerns, discussion, and zeal of youth. To these ends, we hope that a senior editor and intergenerational editorial board will constantly advise the selection and publication of articles in this journal.

*Secondly, in the Edinburgh tradition we recognize the primacy of the mission agency,* and by this we mean more than mere appreciation. Inherent in the editorial philosophy of the *IJFM* is the mandate to encourage the maintenance, renewal and creation of mission structures capable of carrying recruits to the unreached peoples of the world. In a day when the challenge of reaching every people staggers our imagination, it is quite understandable that change, sometimes painful change, is needed in mission structures. But this generation must not confuse such a need for change with the denigration or elimination of agencies devoted singularly to crossing these cultural thresholds. Rather, we must promote the belief that more agencies are required if we are to finish the job.

Thirdly, we must encourage *an international fraternity of thought.* As is reviewed in Winter's article in this issue, the lack of intercultural communication between German and English-speaking missiologists in the previous century led to a 50-year lag in the latter's understanding of the concept of discipling peoples yet unreached. The attendance at Edinburgh '80 indicated that young mission leaders in the Third World are eagerly searching for ways in which to implement their own contribution to the frontier missions movement. These younger leaders have studied with Western missiologists and are beginning to sort out principles from practices. As they do, Western agencies

are beginning to learn, in a reciprocal way, what the essential components of the missionary vocation really are. This journal hopes to provide a simple means for this dialogue to mature. Practically speaking, we do hope that within a very short time editorial responsibility will be shared across the globe.

*The backbone of the journal is Edinburgh '80's mandate: "A Church for Every People by the Year 2000!"* This strategic, Biblical objective must dictate all editorial contributions. The frontier mission movement must work strategically and cooperatively towards closure, that is, toward finishing the task. The mandate which undergirds this journal recognizes the broader, follow-through concerns of world evangelization but maintains the strategic, first-penetration focus penultimate to the rest of world evangelization. "Churching" every "people" is distinctively Pauline in emphasis. It requires a sensitivity and professional expertise of its own. We cannot deny that all aspects of the Church universal and its mission have a bearing on the frontier mission endeavor we seek to assist, but we do believe there is place for a focused, separate publication which seeks the mind of Christ in the strategic effort to "church" the unreached peoples of the world. Let this journal be simply a first effort to encourage a frontier missiology which will carry us towards the closure of the specifically apostolic calling of the Church.

Let me reinforce that this journal will be *a multidimensional and interdisciplinary study of the mandate* of "A Church for Every People by the Year 2000." Even a hasty review of the preliminary Edinburgh '80 compendium, *Seeds of Promise*, reveals quite a breadth of issues to which this journal could apply itself. For instance, as you can see from this issue, we have wanted to advance the discussion of the concept of "unreached peoples". Included is the reprint of a recent article in the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, in which *EMQ* editor Jim Reapsome summarizes current discussions of the concept. Sam Wilson responds to Reapsome from a strategic perspective, while articles by Ralph Winter and Richard Showalter add historical and Biblical perspectives, respectively. As you can see, we do hope to raise questions, suggest solutions, direct dialogue, and recommend further inquiry. We intend to be sensitive to these same four facets (Biblical, historical, cultural, and strategic) in the discussion of all subjects which are included in future issues. This will be evident in the next issue of the *IJFM*, which will outline the challenges and complexities of the Hindu world and suggest some of the ways in which Hindu societies can be penetrated by the Church.

Finally, let me say that we hope this journal will be a *spiritual as well as a strategic exercise*. The mind and the spirit must be trans- formed as we seek to penetrate the peoples of the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This task is no mere intellectual exercise, but a cause for the utmost spiritual devotion. Yet the stuffy annals of journalistic history reveal the difficulty of bridging these two essential functions of man's being. But we must attempt to do so. As was the intention of the editors of the *International Review of Missions* when the journal by that name was first launched in 1914, let us so attempt to promote "not only an outward expansion, but an inward deepening and strengthening..."

"All study must be at the same time a prayer. Conscious of ignorance and weakness and of far distance from the mind of Christ, we lift up our eyes to Him from whom cometh our help and ask that this Review may be a means by which He may lead His servants into a knowledge of the truth; that in it and through it His name may be hallowed, His Kingdom may come, and His will may be done, as in heaven, so on earth."

As a young recruit, this is my prayer for this journal. May it grant insight and inspiration to the cautious, unimaginative and war-weary. And may every Paul and Timothy alike lay hold of that which God has already given--a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline.