

Editorial: The Old Must Become New Once Again

The success of the missionary enterprise has led to the presence of the Christian church on six continents. This is largely the result of voices in the history of the expansion of Christianity crying out for a region or country of the world yet unevangelized. The result, well documented, was often a new wave of evangelistic energy with an new indigenous church as a product. We are especially reminded of these voices in the approaching bicentennial of William Carey's landing in India.

Today, these voices continue, but are being effectively drowned out by the many legitimate concerns that crowd the churches of six continents' agenda. "Injustice among the poor must end." "Jesus Christ must be the focus of our worship." "We need a fresh baptism of the Spirit among the churches." Now that the church has become so large and complex and perhaps, overburdened, its tendency is to respond to a cry for the unevangelized with the familiar words of a past age, "sit down, young man, God will win the heathen without your help or ours."

Thus, if the church of six continents is to become the church of all peoples, today's call for evangelization must be heard. The peoples who weren't evangelized at the time of William Carey but are now in vibrant and growing congregations must reach out themselves to the unreached peoples. Who will, if they will not? William Carey, and so many before and after him, would not take no for an answer. That is why you and I know Christ. Let us respond now in the same spirit and finish the remaining task.

YWAM in frontier missions

Floyd McClung, international director of Youth With A Mission (YWAM), gives a penetrating look into the development of frontier missions and church planting in YWAM. One might naturally wonder how a short-term agency like YWAM would gain interest in frontier missions. After all, most short-term assignments are among previously evangelized peoples working in concert both with local churches and mission agencies. That is often what makes a short term exposure so effective.

On the other hand, since its inception, YWAMers have had a desire to preach the gospel beyond the boundaries of mission and church successes. They found themselves in the Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, tribal, and non-Han Chinese worlds where there were few, if any, churches. The only choice in this case was to plant churches—for many years causing a real dilemma to YWAM leadership. How could an agency founded on the principle of cooperating with churches plant their own churches? And what would these churches look like considering the denominational diversity in YWAM? This is well illustrated by one of YWAM's early church planting teams which consisted of a Danish Lutheran, a Samoan Methodist, and a Singaporean Pentecostal! McClung's treatment of these issues follows the well-traveled paths of other older interdenominational missions and yet, at the same time, introduces new concepts appropriate for mission in the 1990s.

THE ISFM

The International Society for Frontier Missiology met in Denver, September 13-15, 1990, prior to the joint meeting of the IFMA and EFMA. The theme of the meeting was "Crucial links in the frontier missions chain." In this issue and the April 1991 issue we will present detailed transcriptions of the workshops given at the meeting. Many of these subjects have not been covered in other forums.

Why another society?

A prominent mission executive asked me the other day what the rationale for the ISFM's existence was. The answer is really quite simple. Other societies are focused primarily on where missions have been successful—creating many interesting and important issues to be dealt with. The ISFM was formed to deal with mission to peoples currently beyond the reach of the gospel. Mission to these unreached peoples is a distinct focus and a crucial one if the world is to be evangelized.

Adopt-a-People

In our last issue (7:4) Darrell Dorr

gave a fresh rationale for the Adopt-a-People concept and clearinghouse. At the ISFM he walked the participants through this paper adding important clarifications along the way. We have reproduced his talk in this issue.

The Adopt-a-People concept is indeed a crucial link in the frontier missions chain. If local churches can connect directly with mission agencies working among unreached peoples, their work will definitely be lighter.

Prayer and frontier missions

Another link closely connected to Adopt-a-People is prayer for frontier missions. Most of us are convinced that prayer is important but John Robb contends that prayer is too often underrated as a strategy. Prayer, then, may not simply supplement existing strategies but be a crucial part of strategy itself. Many examples are given that illustrate how prayer has opened up peoples to the gospel.

One controversial area that Robb raises is that of spiritual beings assigned to particular peoples. Thus it is no longer simply prayer for a particular people but prayer against demonic forces surrounding a people that is critical. This is where the term "spiritual warfare" comes in. In practice among Christians, spiritual warfare is often limited to "the enemy attacking me." If occasionally I do fight the enemy on someone else's behalf they are normally Christians too or at least in a reached people. Now comes the idea that peoples who have no opportunity to know Christ could use the intercession of Christians on their behalf. Certainly not a new idea, but a necessary one.

Another way of looking at the globe

Finally, a new global diagram has been developed that shows how the two minicommissions "Evangelize!" and "Disciple!" have been obeyed and disobeyed by the church. May we soon see the day when both are fully obeyed and no one is beyond the pale of the gospel.

Todd M. Johnson
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Rockville, Virginia, USA