

Editorial: In Pursuit of the Vision

The goal and the vision.

Once again frontier mission stands at an important juncture in its history and efforts to reach the unreached. Holidays have come and gone. We've entered a new year and are coming closer to the year 2000. In that light we might ask whether the goal of a church for every people by the year 2000 is still practical and viable. A careful reading of this issue, coupled with an obedient response, will still all doubts.

With a faith response in our great God the goal is still feasible, realistic and practical. Compared to by-gone years, we have better data and more accurate information now than ever. The frontier mission movement is gaining momentum and growing year by year. As Luis Bush reminds us in this issue: "There is a growing conviction of the do-ability of the task. Never in the history of the church has the completion of the Great Commission been so feasible as it is today. Great Commission Christians are proportionately higher, and the church is more international than ever, the resources available to us are greater than ever and our understanding of the task before us is clearer than ever."

The wise men's star.

In this season of the year we are reminded of the star clearly pointing wise men to Bethlehem. The story is well known. Wise men coming from afar in search of the king of the Jews. They had seen his star, and so they came from the far east to worship him. Gentiles, representatives of the nations, received this glorious vision. To them God disclosed the greatest truth of all, the birth of his Son—the Savior of the world.

Today the church at large needs to see the vision clearly and pursue it as well. Unlike God's people Israel, who by and large missed the vision of his glorious first coming, we today must not miss it now. All Great Commission Christians need to see his star today, in preparation for his glorious return and second coming.

The entire issue of this special edition of the *Journal* is dedicated to seeing the vision of the final frontiers in all its clarity and help us pursue it with gusto. In its covers we will find reports, addresses and highlights of the seventh annual meeting of the International Society of Frontier Missiology which assembled in Kansas City, Missouri, on September

17-19, 1992. The conference theme spoke loud and clear: "The Year 2000—How can we reach all peoples?" This indeed is the clarion call of the frontier mission vision, providing the whole movement with ever-increasing momentum and impetus. The question is do we see it clearly, is it becoming more focussed, is it gaining definition and clarity especially as we are drawing nearer to its goal?

This after all was the case with the magi in the Matthew account. They had clearly perceived the star which was their certain guide. After their encounter with King Herod in Jerusalem we read that "the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed." Have we today clearly seen our star—a clear vision of the task the Lord has entrusted unto us—and are we greatly rejoicing in it? My hope is that this issue, in a very special way, will help us see our star with greater clarity than ever, with more definition than before, and that it will guide us exactly to the place where we need to be according to God's disclosure to us. Above all else, may we understand it as God's revelation to us, not just a nice idea, and like the magi, pursue it with great gladness and joy.

In this issue.

Greg Parsons from the U. S. Center for World Mission leads off with the article—right on target—regarding the vision of the International Society of Frontier Missiology. It is the vision and goal of finishing the task of world evangelization by the year 2000. This is the awesome challenge and urgent task facing the Body of Christ today, which needs to become our clear vision in this decade.

Parsons' article is followed by the challenges of our historical heritage. Both Richard Winchell of TEAM and Edwin Frizen's address of the IFMA focus on the invaluable lessons available to us in our rich past. Many of the founding missions of the IFMA truly had seen glimmers of the same frontier mission vision which now stirs our hearts. The IFMA frontier mission declaration reminds us that the task of reaching all the peoples of the world is still unfinished. It draws us to the challenge that reaching the unreached peoples of the world is indeed "our chief

and irreplaceable duty," that it is "our highest strategic priority" and that our vision consists of planting the Church of Jesus Christ among all the remaining unreached peoples by penetrating the last frontiers of world missions.

Perhaps the main vision-building and clarifying articles are those of David Hesselgrave and Luis Bush. Hesselgrave addresses the fundamental question of our understanding and interpretation of Scripture. He makes the case for a mission hermeneutic, that we need a "pre-understanding" of seeing Scripture with world missionary eyes. This more than anything else will give us clarity of and permanence in the vision of the final frontiers. As Hesselgrave says, seeing Scripture from this vantage point "will change your life." This happens to us as Christians because we as the "expanded Israel"—see Bill O'Brien's response article in this issue—receive the vision of our star from Sacred Scripture. When we see it there it gives our lives purpose, focus and deep significance. Truly it "will change your life." (For further examples of the "mission hermeneutic" see "Part Two: The Prophetic Background—A Study of the Olivet Discourse" in Hesselgrave's *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Mission—An Evangelical Perspective on Trends and Issues in Mission*, Zondervan Publishing House.)

Luis Bush faces the question head on: "How can all peoples be reached by the year 2000?" He shares four answers—four aspects of the vision—which we need to take to heart in order to finish the task and reach our goal. Above all else we need to understand and affirm the biblical priorities of missions to the unreached peoples of the world. We need to clearly see the vision of the task in God's Word. Bush challenges us that we need to understand the nature of the goal of a viable Christian church among every unreached people group and affirm the do-ability of the task. Bush warns us not to be sidetracked, "but keep in view God's deepest passion: reaching all the unreached nations and peoples of the world with the good news of redemption in His Son," and to do it in this decade.

Significant articles are presented by Todd Johnson, the former editor of the *Journal*, and by Frank Kaleb Jansen, the director of the Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse. Johnson's article is a response to Gary Corwin's presentation regard-

ing good communications in frontier missions. Though Corwin spoke at the ISFM meeting in Kansas City in September, his address does not appear in this issue since it was published in the October 1992 issue.

Kaleb Jansen's presentation and article focus on "the ins and outs" of listing the unreached peoples of the world with a view toward adopting them for prayer, financial support and information-sharing with churches and mission agencies. Bill O'Brien and Robby Butler respond to Jansen's article, showing the overall value, the need for and the pitfalls of making a list of the unreached/adoptable peoples of the world.

All of this leads up to publishing two additional unreached people profiles, this time prepared by the Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse. In our October 1992 issue we published five people profiles, of the *Ethnoscan* series, prepared by David Barrett and Todd Johnson and the Global Desk of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Like the *Ethnoscan* profiles, the AAPC profiles are single sheet two-page profiles that provide the location, population, religion and current status of Christianity. The purpose of the profiles is to identify, locate and provide accurate information on the truly unreached peoples of the world. Chris-

tians and churches can then adopt the groups for support and prayer that the Lord would prepare them for the gospel and missionaries may be sent to them.

This raises some disturbing questions: Why are large groups such as the Qashqa'i and the Turkmen of Iran, the Kazakhs of Russia and the Susu of Guinea and Sierra Leone still unreached? Have these large groups truly been hidden from our sight and therefore have remained unreached? Why haven't Christian mission agencies shared the "glad tidings of great joy" with such large and important people groups? Have Christians and mission agencies consistently or inadvertently ignored them thinking that others will reach them somehow? Or as Robertson McQuilkin charges in his powerful little book, *The Great Omission*, "We don't care all that much." Is that the reason?

We sincerely hope that all who read these pages truly care, that our eyes have been opened, that we have seen the star and that the articles, including the people profiles herewith produced, will help us pursue the vision of the unreached with joy unspeakable for the glory of God.

Past and present editors.

Starting with the April 1993 issue, we

will hear much from the former editor of the *Global Prayer Digest*, Richard Cotton, who will assume the editorship of the *IJFM*. We're thankful for his wealth of experience and his leadership in journalism. We will look forward to the Lord's direction in his life to guide us and the *Journal* in our pursuit of the frontier mission vision on behalf of the unreached peoples of the world.

We also want to say a huge "Thank you" to Todd Johnson for his outstanding work as editor and leader of the *Journal* for the past four years. No doubt about it, Todd has made every attempt to keep the vision clear and bright. He has consistently reminded us of the great imbalance between those who do not have access to the gospel of Christ. He has challenged us as Christians, pointed mission agencies toward their responsibility, as well as made serious attempts to rally the Church of Christ at large to clearly see the imbalance and to become committed to a proper response to share the gospel with them by the year 2000. Truly we commend Todd for all his hard, dedicated and excellent editorial work over the past four years!

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The purpose of the **International Society of Frontier Missiology (ISFM)** is the promotion of thinking and sharing on an international level in the area of missiology, oriented toward a concern for the unfinished task and toward the significance of the year 2000 for the completion of that task. While we do not feel it is possible to be dogmatic about the precise meaning of "the Great Commission," we do believe we should try to evaluate the various possible meanings of "the unfinished task." We hope, furthermore, to evaluate goal statements, both short and long term, for both the year 2000 and other years. The ISFM also seeks to promote intergenerational dialogue between senior and junior mission leaders and cultivate an international fraternity of thought in the development of frontier missiology. The Society also has five main objectives:

1. To promote within the global Christian community the cause of the peoples of the world which have the least access to the Christian gospel.
2. To stimulate prayer and spiritual warfare on behalf of the "Unreached Peoples" of the world.
3. To facilitate the presentation of accurate and timely information to adequately describe the "Unreached Peoples" so as to enable Christians, churches and mission agencies to formulate strategies to reach them.
4. To provide a forum for Spirit-led, scholarly, realistic and thorough discussions regarding issues and goal statements related to reaching in the shortest time possible those peoples which are still unreached.
5. To provide a means whereby those individuals and organizations which are actively engaged in efforts to take the gospel to the "Unreached Peoples" may share their experiences so as to learn from one another, and where deemed appropriate, to consider coordinating their efforts.