

From the Guest Editor

This issue contains a number of papers from the Rethinking Forum. H. L. Richard's paper, rethinking the concept of "Rethinking", was presented at a consultation at the U.S. Center for World Mission in July of 2001. The history of Rethinking the gospel, church and mission in India is outlined, with an application to the current situation.

Contextualization has long been a buzz word in mission circles, but serious discussion and writing on its meaning and implications in Hindu contexts has been negligible. For this reason, the Rethinking Forum was organized from that July 2001 consultation. The Forum is a loose network of individuals who share a common concern for contextual ministry among Hindus, aiming towards "the birthing of Christ-centered movements within Hindu cultures and communities."

In September of 2002 a larger consultation was sponsored by the Forum, again at the U.S. Center for World Mission. Three papers from that gathering are also in this issue, and other papers may follow in later issues. Richard Fox Young opens with his own brief rethinking of Rethinking, identifying a key term in the Sanskrit and another in the biblical tradition that should mark Christian rethinking of Hindu-related issues. Young then reviews (with stimulating analysis) the history of the Christian interface with Advaita Vedanta, concluding that much fruit should yet be borne in the dialogical encounter between these two traditions. Some of the discussion that followed his presentation follows his article; interaction following the paper presentations was one of the highlights of the Rethinking Forum gathering.

Art McPhee's paper is a study of Bishop J. W. Pickett, most noted for

his study of the Christian mass movements in India. Pickett stood outside the mainstream of the Rethinking tradition in India, yet McPhee shows how sympathetic he was to many distinctly Rethinking concerns. And Pickett was a rethinker in his own right; his influence on Donald McGavran alone is significant enough to make him one of the seminal figures of twentieth century missiology, but McPhee develops much more than this theme in his striking paper. Again some of the discussion follows the published paper, focused of course on Rethinking issues.

Herb Hofer, president of the Rethinking Forum, continues his grappling with the realities of "churchless Christianity" in his paper. From his encounters with this striking development in Tamil history Hofer summarizes and analyzes the basic theology of these disciples of Christ who choose to live outside traditional church and mission institutions. In the end it may prove that their faith and theology should challenge ours, rather than we attempting to sit in judgment on theirs.

Watch for future papers from the Rethinking Forum here in IJFM. The next major Rethinking Forum gathering will be in Chicago from Jan. 2-4, 2004. Dr. Christopher A. Smith will lead the Forum in rethinking the work and legacy of William Carey, along with other stimulating papers. For details please contact the Rethinking Forum at rethinking@aol.com.

H. L. Richard
Guest Editor

Missed the 2001 Rethinking Forum?



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didn't.

Lessons from India

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