

Kingdom and Church on the Debatable Frontier

The death of John Stott this past month will prompt many a fond retrospect. At a crucial time in the emergence of contemporary missiology, he represented the gold standard of biblical mission to a generation of baby boomer Christians.¹ Any young student attending the Inter-Varsity Urbana missionary conferences can't forget the authoritative clip of his English-accented diction as he expounded the biblical basis of mission. His editorial brilliance in drafting the Lausanne Covenant in 1974 helped synthesize the controversial mission perspectives emerging at the time.² It was Stott's biblical integration that effectively umpired the arguments in and around the "evangelism vs. social action" debate that intensified that historic week in Lausanne. Now more than three decades later, after many sign posts of discussion and debate, the Lausanne declarations from Cape Town 2010 indicate that this conflict is almost passé. Stott's early advocacy of the equal partnership of these 'two wings' of mission seems to have succeeded.

This issue of the IJFM contends that a residue of this missiological tension still remains. A more complex dichotomy now runs silent and deep and profoundly shapes how we identify and classify the frontier of mission. This competition is sharp and clear in Dana Robert's recent review of the changing definitions of 'mission frontiers' through twentieth century Protestant mission discourse.³ (p. 98) Two world wars tore at the mandate of world evangelization and the idea of a mission frontier broadened to include a church crossing boundaries into the problems of the world. Her assessment indicates that the language of the frontier swings between the *unreached* and the *oppressed*.

Both these emphases were given a platform at the Lausanne Congress in 1974. Ralph Winter's anthropological sensitivity to cross-cultural distance in evangelism introduced a new demography of the world's 'unreached peoples'. Latin American leaders Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar introduced a political sensitivity that exposed the social injustices and economic inequities in many a majority-world context.⁴ One prioritized the cultural *differences* in translating and communicating the gospel for cross-cultural extension of the church; the other emphasized the ethical *disparities* that called for the transformation of social, economic and political institutions. Ralph Winter's more recent reinterpretation of Protestant mission history reframed this same binary tendency

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in his two paradigms of *Kingdom Mission* and *Church Mission*.⁵ While not inherently contradictory, they represent two distinct ways of marking the frontier of mission.

This issue of the journal continues to explore the tension between these two classifications. The second part of Bill Bjoraker's interaction with James Davidson Hunter's *To Change the World* captures how a new understanding of culture orients mission towards the transformation of institutions (p. 75). Hunter's 'slight twist' on the great commission reclassifies the *ta ethne* of the world as 'spheres of life', as 'realms' of engineering, health care, commerce, art and law.⁶ He calls for a mission "that seeks *new patterns of social organization* that challenge, undermine, and otherwise diminish oppression, injustice, enmity, and corruption and, in turn, encourage harmony, fruitfulness and abundance, wholeness, beauty, joy, security and well-being."⁷ He distills how many would identify Kingdom-minded mission today.

Part two of Rick Brown's article might also resonate with a generation which faces increasing religious pluralism (p. 49). His theology of the Kingdom might help younger minds transcend a 'conflict-of-religions' approach they so often suspect of traditional 'church mission'. According to Bradford Greer, it's a new voluntarism calling for a more *integral mission* among the unreached (p. 61). Their praxis indicates a greater demand for the *strategic intersection* of church planting and Kingdom transformation in mission agency thinking. Alan Johnson picks up on Christopher Wright's paradigm of 'ultimacy' as a most effective paradigm for this integration (p. 67). And after years of work with disability in the overwhelming conditions of India, T.S. John has discovered the complimentary role of church planting movements (p. 89). Of course, a new generation isn't waiting around, but spawns new hybrid ministries from their own intuitive blend of *evangelization* and *emancipation*. In a spirit of integration so indica-

tive of John Stott, we'll continue to examine this interface of Kingdom and Church at this year's ISFM in Scottsdale, AZ, September 27-29. Stay informed at ijfm.org.

Looking forward,



Brad Gill
Editor, IJFM

Endnotes

¹ *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, InterVarsity Press, Downer's Grove, IL 1975.

² John Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant – An Exposition and Commentary*, Lausanne Occasional Papers, No. 3, (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1975).

³ Dana Robert, "Mission Frontiers from 1910 to 2010", in *Missiology: An International Review*, Part I (Vol XXXIX no. 2, April, 2011) Part II (Vol. XXXIX, no. 3, July, 2011) (Electronic Issue).

⁴ Rene Padilla, *Evangelism and the World, Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Int'l Congress on World Evangelization* (Worldwide Publications, Minn., MN, 1975) p. 116f.

⁵ David Hesslegrave and Ed Stetzer, ed., *Missionshift* (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids) pp. 164f.

⁶ James Davidson Hunter, *To Change the World* (Oxford University Press, 2010) pp. 256, 257.

⁷ Hunter, p. 247.

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.