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From the Editor's Desk

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Dear Reader,

This is not your usual issue of IJFM. It may even “seem” to have nothing to do with missions. I assure you, however, that we are dealing here (in my opinion) with one aspect of an immense roadblock to missions at precisely the time when the expansion of the Gospel is becoming more visible for all to see, and therefore the world—the educated world all over the globe—is being forced to take the Christian movement more seriously.

I do not wish in this editorial to review the articles of this issue, but briefly describe why we chose them (one is written by a thoroughgoing scientist, one by a long-term missionary now college professor in retirement, one by a seminary professor, and one by a missiologist).

First, none of them is an attempt to persuade anyone of a particular perspective about the age of the earth. The last three articles are actually (and specifically) pleas for a more generous and accepting attitude toward the entire range of commonly held Evangelical views about the age of the earth, the idea being that we can't be of any help to each other in our quest for understanding if we don't listen to other Bible believing Evangelicals who might interpret the Bible in a different way. We are not talking at all about people who don't hold to a high view of the Bible; they aren't Evangelicals.

The second article (mine) about Darwin vs. the Intelligent Design (ID) movement, is not actually opposed to ID thinking. I am a solid proponent of ID theorizing. I just don't think ID goes quite far enough when it does not even attempt to absolve God from authoring evil and violence in the world of nature and the human species. Shall we insist that the “design” of 10,000 attacking viruses is God's work? Even Darwin, it turns out, was deeply concerned to produce even a wacky theory like evolution if it absolved God of the bewildering conclusion that He created a nature that was good and then made it full of violence and suffering.

The first article is by what may be the most prominent scientist in the USA who is an Evangelical. It will be a shocker. It was to me. We lifted just two pages out of a lengthy, highly technical article consisting of last year's highlight address at the annual meeting of the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA). The ASA is an organization of thousands of Evangelical scientists and professors that has been around for 55 years, and was started partly due to the initiative right here in Pasadena of a member of my local church, Dr. Peter Stoner, who was for some years an astronomy professor at the local community college. The ASA is a fine, sober group, not easily carried away by whims.

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The two pages we chose from that long ASA article retain his own personal testimony, which you can judge for yourself, and then (unbelievably to me) the very extreme view among Evangelicals that there is nothing basically wrong about the theory of evolution as conventionally understood. I could not believe my eyes. Thus, his perspective represents one extreme end of the spectrum that divides Evangelicals on the age of the earth issue. That is why we accompanied his personal testimony with his scientific testimony. I am not dropping my objectivity to disagree wholeheartedly with his view. I am doing what this entire issue wants us all to do, namely, to respect the people behind the existing range of opinions. We can totally disagree with someone else's interpretation of the Bible without accusing them of not believing the Bible itself.

The fifth article has a special reason for being here. It is the longest and most detailed—but also the most diplomatic we have ever seen—as it deals with the age of the earth issues. It is a marvelously delicate handling of the issue. It is quite amazing that it comes out of a radio Bible class. It is outstand-



ing in its appreciation of the many factors in the discussion.

This is, finally, the first time we have completed our listing of eleven frontiers. This not intended to be everyone's list. It is simply a description of my own actual experience. It is intended to elicit insights from readers about still other frontiers.

The "eleventh" frontier is the Religion of Science, which is clearly a barrier found today across many different ethnic traditions. It is one of the few frontiers that does not correlate specifically with the concept of unreached peoples, but rather runs throughout many different ethnic and cultural entities. Most seriously it limits people's sense of God's glory and thus even

interferes with growth into the fullness of the Gospel for people within the major "reached" groups. Ironically, as primarily an impediment to glorifying God and of declaring His glory to the nations, it impedes a proper appreciation of God's handiwork in His creation—which ought to be the means of knowing and glorifying God!

In the pursuit of His frontiers,

Ralph D. Winter

Ralph D. Winter
Editor

Editor's Note: As before, the articles in this issue are presented in the form they were received. They have not received extensive editorial effort.

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.