



So what are we really trying to do?

Ralph D. Winter



In this issue you will find a brief but truly masterful summary of the mysterious strategy of promoting cross-cultural faith movements, that is, movements that may or may not look like church-planting movements.

Yes, we are accepting the durable possibility of genuine personal faith despite a wide diversity of social structures within which that faith is nurtured and expressed. To illustrate this, Bob Goldmann not only proposes *what ought to be done* but gives specific descriptions of *what will happen* if these proposals are not followed.

Warning: at first glance you may think some of these guidelines are crazy. Everything you have heard and everything within you may cry out, "That won't work, don't do that, that's wrong."

However, an immense amount of experience (centuries, really) stands behind Goldmann's marvelous list of guidelines. Bob not only draws on his own considerable experience in the field, but his points also derive from the hard-won insights of many others. I will say it again: this is a very unusual and truly significant article. I have never seen so much crackling wisdom in so few and efficient words.

Explosive Growth

Of course, these insights could have and should have come 200 years ago. In any case, today such strange thoughts are popping up all over the world as the momentum of the gospel itself gains speed in dozens of fields.



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As I have often reported in this column, the Bible itself is now clearly "out of control" in many parts of the world. Wycliffe Bible Translators are right: once people get the Bible in their own language, you can readily expect what in many cases will be explosive growth of "faith movements to Christ."

What Is The Goal?

One friend has said that we basically want to see genuine personal and family faith spread throughout a society. This might happen somewhat like the Biblical parable of yeast working its way through a lump of dough.

Others want to see at least families gathering weekly to worship.

Others want church buildings to be built, and, I suppose Bible schools and seminaries.

Others are scared to death that these strange movements will not follow their own denominational and theological standards. I know of several missionaries (I can think of three within ten seconds) who were asked to leave their mission agencies when it became clear that they were not producing the expected church movements the home boards had in mind.

So what *are* we really trying to do?

I recently had a serious (and friendly) e-mail exchange with a young person who had at first been captured by my own often misunderstood emphasis that there are times in history when mobilization for missions is more strategic than for potential mobilizers to go to the field. He rightly pointed out that we cannot simply go on

forever mobilizing young people to mobilize young people for more mission mobilization! Someone must go. Of course – I will grant that.

However, there is an interesting and little-discussed parallel. When people are won to Christ and we set them to win people to Christ, to win other people to Christ, to win still other people to Christ ... isn't that somewhat the same?

My young friend explained that in India he is still essentially mobilizing: he is winning Hindus to Christ and urging them to set out to win more Hindus for Christ. Is there no other job for a new believer but to recruit other new believers? But around the world today millions of new believers have problems with which "the new creature in Christ" does not directly deal.

Jobs need to be created, or starvation will continue. Diseases need to be fought, or two-thirds of the workforce will be disabled. Laws need to be changed and enforced, and order achieved. Honest new believers are an essential ingredient in God's answer to these problems, but just becoming a new believer is not the full answer.

It is crucial to get people regularly and faithfully to worship a God who will

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pardon their sins, whether they worship in a church building or at the family level (which is more important in some ways). But in addition, how about worshipping a God who hates dishonesty, who hates to see wives and children beaten by the man of the house,

who hates to see impurity or selfishness or the lack of generosity of spirit?

"Wait a minute," you may say, "What *do* you want these new believers to do besides behave well and win others to Christ?"

Curiously, "what to do" is a prominent, unnoticed problem within the USA. Churches don't seem to care much about *what kind* of a job a member has: just get a job and support the church! Also, here in the USA we don't usually

Our greater problem is that we can't see clearly how we can give to effectively fight the most serious types of evil.

need to find jobs for new members, or get them off drugs, or solve their physical problems.

In his unique little book, *Revolution*, George Barna says that millions of Evangelical believers in America today are so sold on Jesus and the faith that they are not attracted to church anymore.

They are much more concerned to be out doing the will of God than to be content with easygoing, safe church life. Really?

If in fact Barna is right, what nevertheless comes to my attention is the strong impression that these millions of "revolutionaries" are mostly *lone warriors* for Christ.

Nowhere in his book do I see the necessity of these revolutionaries joining or forming *teams* to fight pervasive social, medical and spiritual evil. The idea is mainly to spread the faith to more and more individuals, and do deeds of kindness here and there. But that won't deal with the roots of

nationwide gangs or defeat malaria, poverty and disease in general.

Okay, no hand-wringing about how little Evangelicals give, for our greater problem is that we can't see

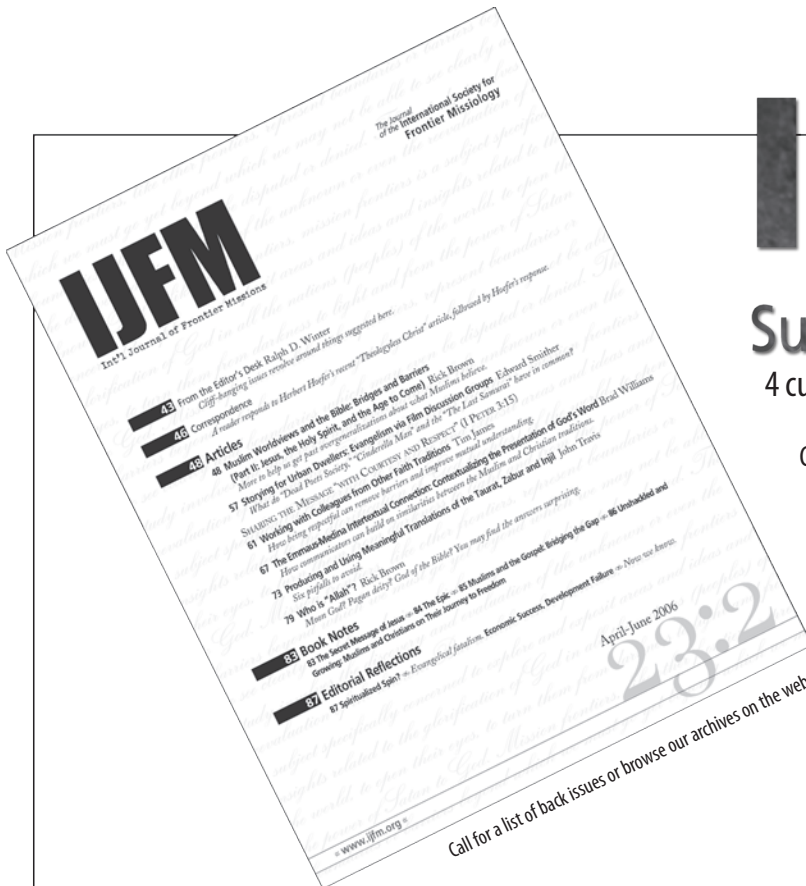
clearly *how* we can give to effectively fight the most serious types of evil. We need our eyes opened. Getting more and

more people to believe in a God of love and heaven is not all that is necessary for His "will to be done on earth."

Here is a poignant parallel from World War 2: when American soldiers invaded Europe and finally began to push into Germany, they ran into German death camps and saw stacks of corpses six feet high in 400-foot rows. General Eisenhower then remarked, "We are told that the American soldier does not know what he is fighting for. Now, at least, he will know what he is fighting *against*."

We tend to flee evil, to seek security, safety, ease, sweetness and light, even "holy lives." Spreading hope is basic. Personal integrity is essential, but it is not enough. Can't we deliberately find, face and fight evil, and in the name of Christ? 🌐

What do you want these new believers to do besides behave well and win others to Christ?



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