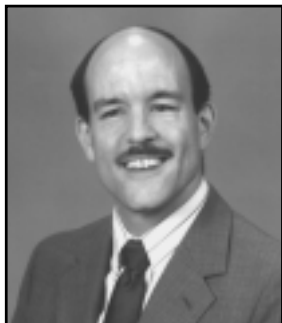


MF Behind the Scenes

Rick Wood, Managing Editor



We Need a New Standard for Church Planting

Until recent times the need has been almost totally overlooked and ignored. It has been a devastating cultural blind spot that has often crippled church planting efforts around the world. It has taken us almost two centuries to recognize the need. I am speaking of the need to make worship indigenous to every people on earth in fulfillment of Rev. 5:9 and 7:9.

Making the Gospel indigenous to every tribe and tongue involves helping every people learn to worship God in a way that is natural and meaningful to them within their culture. Unfortunately, the common practice of the past of simply translating Western hymns like *Amazing Grace* into the local language still goes on today. This can no longer be the accepted standard practice in church planting if an indigenous and naturally reproducing Gospel within every people is our goal.

It is already generally recognized that translation of the Scriptures into the mother tongue of every people is essential for a church planting movement to be established and nurtured to maturity. Likewise, it is now time for the development of indigenous worship music (ethnomusicology) and worship forms (ethno-worship) to become the widely accepted standard for all of our church planting efforts. It must become a high priority along with the translation of the Scriptures if our church planting efforts are to have the full

impact that we desire. An ongoing reliance on Western worship forms will not do.

In this issue of *MF* we describe the impact that worshipping through indigenous music and forms is having on church planting efforts around the world. You will read many stories of how it has made a heartfelt difference in the lives of the people we want to reach for Christ. See the section starting on page 10 with the interview with Dr. Roberta King of the Fuller School of World Mission.

There is a growing recognition of this need for indigenous worship on the part of a number of mission agencies and training institutions. See the list of training courses on page 27.

The choice of whether to embrace indigenous worship music and forms is an important one with eternal ramifications for those we want to reach. Not only will it affect whether the Gospel becomes indigenous and therefore understandable and available to people, but as Dr. King indicates in our interview with her on page 15, people can be drawn away into heretical movements like the African Independent Churches because these movements satisfy the hunger of these people for indigenous worship. Continuing to try to satisfy this hunger with translated western hymns or modern praise music will only exacerbate the problem.

In Rev. 5:9 and 7:9 we see all of redeemed humanity, represented by every tribe, tongue, people and nation, worshipping Christ because of the sacrifice He made to save us. They are not a uniform mass of humanity but a diverse group of peoples that God has ordained to offer up the praise and worship that Christ deserves. John Piper in his book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, says, "This diversity will not disappear in the new heavens and the new earth. God willed it from the

beginning... When their diversity unites in worship to God, the beauty of their praise will echo the depth and greatness of God's beauty far more exceedingly than if the redeemed were from only one or a few different people groups."

By helping the various peoples of the earth develop their own unique indigenous worship we become partners with God in completing the international choir of worship that God has ordained from eternity to be offered up to Christ. This is indeed a task worthy of our greatest efforts.

Saying Good-bye to a Good Friend

For over twelve years now *Mission Frontiers* has reported on the accomplishments and exploits of the global effort known as the AD2000 and Beyond Movement. We have probably given more pages of coverage to this amazing global movement than any other publication in the world because they were effectively implementing our common vision to bring the Gospel to every people. Starting on page 32, you can read the final words of the leaders of this historic movement and read a summary of what the thousands of participants in this movement accomplished by working together toward a common goal.

In accordance with their bylaws and original intentions, the AD2000 and Beyond Movement closed its doors on March 31, 2001. It is now up to all of us to take the baton that they have passed to us and carry it across the goal line of a church for every people and the Gospel for every person.

For His glory,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Rick".

Please continue to remember our need for your financial support by sending in a gift of \$18 or more. We'd be grateful if you could take a moment now to make out your check to *Mission Frontiers* and return it in the reply envelope provided. Thank you! -Rick