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New

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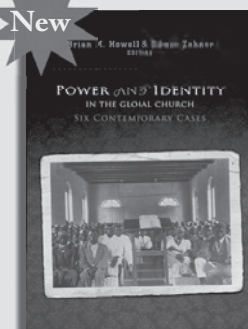
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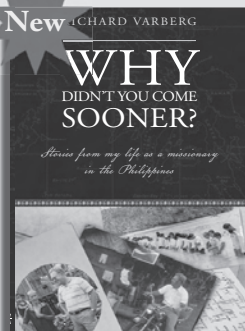
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Richard Varberg
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A grieving Filipino man, worried that his son died without knowing Christ, asked author and missionary Richard Varberg, "Why didn't you come sooner?" Touched, Varberg gained a new resolve early in his ministry that inspired his unforgettable devotion to reach the unreached. Today, more than one hundred churches and a Bible college founded through the Varbergs' ministry continue under Filipino leadership.

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New

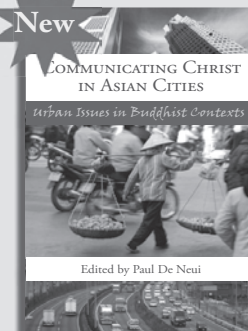
Communicating Christ in Asian Cities

Paul H. De Neu, editor
ISBN: 978-0-87808-007-6

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This is the sixth volume in a series produced from the annual SEANET Missiological Forum held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. All authors included here write from many years of experience as Evangelical mission theologians, scholars, pastors and practitioners working within Asian urban Buddhist contexts. This book is divided into three sections with the first focused on foundational issues of ministry within the framework of Asian Buddhist cities. The second section includes four chapters addressing several contextual issues specific to peoples within Asian Buddhist cities. The final section includes three chapters on the topic of strategic means of evangelization found useful in specific Asian urban Buddhist contexts.

From the Editor's Desk

Ralph D. Winter (December 8, 1924–May 20, 2009)

After a seven-year struggle with multiple myeloma, Lyme disease, and (since February) lymphoma, innovative mission thinker and former *IJFM* editor Ralph D. Winter died peacefully at his home in Pasadena, California.

I spent a few hours with Dr. Winter the day before he died and got to give him a short update on this *IJFM*. Though too weak to respond, I think he'd be pleased with this issue, the contents of which illustrate some of his many concerns: the lasting impact of the Bible, making the gospel truly intelligible, impacting extended relational networks vs. just scattered individuals, emphasizing the kingdom of God over "religion"; I'm sure you'll find others.

As I sat beside Dr. Winter, my thoughts turned to the many hours we'd spent together (hundreds in *IJFM* meetings alone), his frequent kindnesses and encouragement, his humor, and his unique way of looking at almost everything. As I realized that this might be our last time together, I finally mustered the composure to say the things I didn't want to leave unsaid, or didn't want to say, like goodbye.

Dr. Winter abhorred hagiography and regularly deflected attention away from himself. The truth is that *IJFM* would not have made it into its 26th year—and probably not past the first issue—but for his early encouragement and later substantial personal involvement (at 77, he became the journal's "senior" editor and thereafter a regular contributor).

While his *Mission Frontiers* editorials were more widely read, the far less space-inhibited *IJFM* would become home to some of his most "outside the box" musings. (For your convenience, ijfm.org/dr-ralph-winter.html has all of his over 100 *IJFM* articles, editorials, editorial reflections and book notes, going back to 1984. Other articles and multimedia content—even audio of his famous 1974 Lausanne address—can be found at uscwm.org/about/rdw.html, where new material will be posted regularly. For an excellent summary of his life, see the family's obituary notice on pp. 61-62 of this issue, and the special May-June *Mission Frontiers* issue on his life and ongoing legacy.)

In This Issue and the International Society for Frontier Missiology 2009

It is fitting that this *IJFM*, which coincides with Dr. Winter's passing, includes innovative new research on issues that were close to his heart, and a book review by Dave Datema, his successor as general director of the Frontier Mission Fellowship. If you'd like to explore this line of research further, we invite you to Orlando, Florida for this year's annual meeting of the ISFM (September 15–17, right before CrossGlobal Link/EMS). Our theme this year is "Best Practices in Frontier Mission." Join us now (and in September) as we ask, In what ways is God using cross-cultural workers to most effectively make Christ known among unreached peoples, to disciple believers, to train leaders, to foster faith communities, and to nurture sustainable movements? And which of these ways seem most fruitful in different socio-religious contexts? For more information on the ISFM, see pp. 62, 103 and www.ijfm.org/isfm.

As you make your way through this *IJFM*, ask yourself: Are we simply talking about more fruitful practices, heart language, or social networks? Or is a paradigm shift really afoot? What is at stake if we heed or disregard what we read here? Let's continue to think together and humbly ask God to make his ways known among all peoples.



Rory Clark, Editor, *IJFM*

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Editor

Rory Clark

Managing Editors

Anya and Chris Gandy

Consulting Editors

Rick Brown, Gavriel Gefen, Herbert Hoefler, Rebecca Lewis, H. L. Richard, Steve Saint

Layout

Emily Cox, Anya Gandy

Secretary

Emily Cox

Publisher

Bradley Gill, representing the student-level meeting at Edinburgh 1980.

2009 ISFM Executive Committee

Rory Clark, Ginny Williams, Greg Parsons, Paul Filidis, Carey Childrey, Rob Stone

Web Site

www.ijfm.org

Editorial Correspondence

1539 East Howard Street

Pasadena, CA 91104

(626) 398-2108, editors@ijfm.org

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IJFM

1539 E Howard Street

Pasadena, CA 91104

Tel: (626) 398-2119

Fax: (626) 398-2101

Email: subscriptions@ijfm.org

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IJFM & Perspectives™

On the World Christian Movement

Whether you're a Perspectives instructor, student, or coordinator, you can continue to explore issues raised in the course reader and study guide in greater depth in **IJFM**. For ease of reference, each **IJFM** article in the table below is tied thematically to one or more of the 15 Perspectives lessons, divided into four sections: Biblical (B), Historical (H), Cultural (C) and Strategic (S). *Disclaimer: The table below shows where the content of a given article might fit; it does not imply endorsement of a particular article by the editors of the Perspectives materials.* For sake of space, the table only includes lessons related to the articles in a given **IJFM** issue. To learn more about the Perspectives course, visit www.perspectives.org.

Related Perspectives Lesson and Section

| | Lesson 8. Pioneers of the World Christian Movement (H) | Lesson 10. How Shall They Hear? (C) | Lesson 11. Building Bridges of Love (C) | Lesson 13. Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches (S) | Lesson 14. Pioneer Church Planting (S) |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Renowned Strategist Redirected Church's Worldwide Mission Efforts, Ralph Winter (1924-2009), (pp. 61–62) | X | | | | |
| Paradigms and Praxis, Part II: Why Are Some Workers Changing Paradigms? Gray & Gray (pp. 63–73) | | | | X | X |
| Seven Themes of Fruitfulness Adams, Allen & Fish (pp. 75–81) | | | X | X | X |
| Like Bright Sunlight: The Benefit of Communicating in Heart Language Brown (pp. 85–88) | | X | | | |
| The Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement: Social and Cultural Factors Necessary for Vernacular Bible Translation to Achieve Maximum Effect Dye (pp. 89–98) | | X | X | | |
| The Welser Scale: A Tool for Evaluating the Conditions Dye (p. 91) | | X | X | | |

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.

Renowned Strategist Redirected Church's Worldwide Mission Efforts Ralph D. Winter (1924–2009)

by Darrell Dorr



Recognized by TIME magazine in 2004 as one of America's 25 most influential evangelicals, Ralph D. Winter, a world-renowned scholar of Christian mission and the founder and creative activist in a wide range of mission initiatives, has died. He was 84.

Winter died Wednesday, May 20 at his home in Pasadena after a seven-year battle with multiple myeloma and after additional struggles with lymphoma since early February.

Many of the accomplishments of Ralph Winter's long career as a missionary, mission professor and "mission engineer" stemmed from his conviction that Christian organizations accomplish more when they cooperate in strategic ways. It was at the Lausanne International Congress on World Evangelization in 1974 that Winter burst upon the world stage with innovative analysis and advocacy that have redirected evangelical mission energies ever since.

Born in 1924, Winter spent his boyhood years in South Pasadena and was nurtured in Christian faith by devout parents and membership at Lake Avenue Congregational Church in Pasadena. He pursued a degree in civil engineering at Caltech, an M.A. at Columbia University in teaching English as a second language, and a Ph.D. at Cornell University in structural linguistics, with a minor in cultural anthropology and mathematical statistics. While in seminary at Princeton, he served as a pastor of a rural New Jersey church.

He married Roberta Helm in 1951 while studying for his Ph.D. at Cornell. Roberta's expert help in research, writing and editing, among many other gifts, made her a valuable partner to her husband from the time of his doctoral studies onward.

Ordained in 1956, Winter and his wife joined the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. They worked for ten years in Guatemala among the native Mayan people. Along with the development of 17 small businesses for bivocational pastoral students, Winter joined others to begin an innovative, non-residential approach to theological studies known as Theological Education by Extension (TEE), which has since been reproduced in countless mission contexts around the world.

Winter's creativity with TEE and other initiatives caught the attention of Donald McGavran, who in 1966 invited Winter to join the faculty of the new School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA). Between 1966 and 1976 Winter taught more than a thousand missionaries, but he also claimed to learn much from his students. During these years he founded the William Carey Library, a specialized publisher and distributor of mission materials. He also co-founded the American Society of Missiology, helped in starting Advancing Churches in Mission Commitment (ACMC), and inaugurated what is now the Perspectives Study Program (first called the Summer Institute of International Studies).

Building on McGavran's emphasis on people groups, and gleaned insights from his interaction with students and faculty, in July 1974 Winter presented a seminal address at Lausanne, Switzerland to the International Congress on World Evangelization, underscoring the necessity of pioneer, cross-cultural missionary outreach to thousands of "hidden peoples," later more commonly known as "unreached peoples." Winter's statistics and careful reasoning stunned an audience (and their constituencies) that had previously assumed that "near-neighbor evangelism" by existing churches would be sufficient in world evangelization.

To facilitate creative outreach to unreached peoples, in 1976 Ralph and Roberta Winter founded the U.S. Center for World Mission (USCWM), and in 1977 the related William Carey International University, on the former campus of Pasadena Nazarene College, mobilizing evangelicals to pay for the acquisition of the \$15 million campus through a series of campaigns that culminated in 1988 and that emphasized mission vision more than fund-raising. A community of workers in Pasadena and other locations, now known as the Frontier Mission Fellowship (FMF), has developed to sustain an array of cooperative mission projects, and until two weeks before his death Winter served as General Director of the FMF.

John Piper, author of *Desiring God* and Pastor for Preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church (Minneapolis, MN), commented, "Ralph Winter was probably the most creative thinker I have ever known. On any topic you brought up, he would come at it in a way you never dreamed of. This meant that stalemates often became fresh starting points." Likewise, Dale Kietzman, a professor at William Carey International

University, noted, "He was constantly thinking outside the box. He did this to such an extent that you weren't sure what the box was anymore." C. Peter Wagner, a colleague at Fuller Seminary, has observed, "History will record Ralph Winter as one of the half-dozen men who did most to affect world evangelism in the twentieth century."

Roberta died in 2001, the year of their 50th anniversary. In 2002 Winter married Barbara Scotchmer, who brought him much joy and who facilitated his continuing ministry. At 84 Winter continued to work full-time, finding personal satisfaction in addressing a wide range of new challenges and perplexing questions. John Piper noted on his Weblog, "He did not waste his life, not even the last hours of it. He was busy dictating into the last days. He taught me long ago that the concept of 'retirement' is not in the Bible." Greg Parsons of the USCWM observed, "He died with his boots on."

Winter is preceded in death by his parents, Hugo H. Winter (a civil engineer recognized as "Mr. Freeway" for his leadership in the development of the Los Angeles freeway system) and Hazel Patterson Winter. He is survived by Barbara Winter; by his and Roberta's four daughters (all of whom are active in Christian mission), Elizabeth Gill (Brad), Rebecca Lewis (Tim),

Linda Dorr (Darrell), and Patricia Johnson (Todd); and by 14 grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

He is also survived by his older brother, Paul H. Winter (Betty), a graduate of Caltech and a well-respected structural engineer; by his younger brother, David K. Winter (Helene), president of Westmont College in Santa Barbara for more than 25 years; and by nephews, nieces, and numerous friends and colleagues worldwide.

A memorial service is scheduled for Sunday, June 28, at 3:00 p.m. at the Worship Center of Lake Avenue Church, 393 N. Lake Avenue, Pasadena, CA. Details will be posted to the website of the U.S. Center for World Mission at uscwm.org. **IJFM**

The **International Society for Frontier Missiology** *presents*

Best Practices in Frontier Mission

Which practices are proving most fruitful for the gospel among Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Tribals and others? This event will seek to bring together perspectives from around the world to look at what the Lord seems to be blessing and why. Come and let's learn together. And as always, students are welcome!

NOTE: This meeting immediately precedes CrossGlobal Link And EMS.



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Paradigms and Praxis

Part II: Why Are Some Workers Changing Paradigms?

by Leith Gray and Andrea Gray

Background

In the Spring of 2008 we (the authors) were asked to take part in the Fruitful Practices Research Fellowship, an strategic interagency research project tasked with determining “fruitful practices” in church planting among Muslims. We were assigned to analyze 33 of the 115 interviews that had been conducted at a major consultation of church planters among Muslims the previous spring in Southeast Asia. The goal of our analysis was to assess what were “fruitful practices” among church planting workers, and how these workers identify such practices and adopt them. This paper is based on the analysis we submitted to the Fruitful Practices (FP) research team.

Two Models of Church Planting

In Part I of this article, in issue 26:1 of the *IJFM*, we saw that church planting workers tend to choose their mission strategies based on their view of what the church is. Some workers follow an attractional church planting model, in which the church is a new structure existing parallel to other social networks in the community. On the mission field, such workers share the gospel with various unrelated individuals and then gather them together into a “church” to which they gradually invite others from the surrounding community.

Other workers hold to a model of the church as the transformation of existing social networks. On the mission field, such workers share the gospel with a community of people who already know each other and that group gradually grows in knowledge of the Bible and obedience to Christ. In cases when such workers share the gospel with an individual, they carefully choose their practices to facilitate the spreading of the gospel message through the seeker’s existing social networks even before that person becomes a believer. Many other workers are in a transitional state in which they borrow some strategies and concepts from the transformational church planting model without having developed a complete paradigm or philosophy of ministry in relation to the practices they have found fruitful.

Leith and Andrea Gray work in West Asia, where Leith has been since the late 1980s. They are involved in training local and cross-cultural co-workers on how to present the message of Christ creatively and incarnationally in local contexts.

The importance of social networks in characterizing church planting models was discovered inductively during the process of classifying and coding the FP data according to many different dimensions. We take the term “attractional” from contemporary church planting literature (e.g., Frost and Hirsch), while the term “transformational” is reflective of the language used by some church planters following this particular model.

In this article, we will seek to discover why many workers are becoming dissatisfied with the attractional model and are returning to the transformational model that characterized the apostolic and immediate post-apostolic age. In order to answer this question, we will look at the analytical frameworks of social network analysis, paradigm shift and the missional church movement.

Worker Awareness of Church Planting Models

While most of the interviews we examined can be categorized according to church planting models, not all workers express an awareness of the model they are influenced by. Table 1 shows which interviews fall into each category, and indicates which workers interviewed expressed an awareness of their own paradigm. In this table, the cells that are empty are of as much interest as the cells that are full. Why is it, for example, that those who are seeking to establish a church that is parallel to existing social networks do not express their approach in terms of a particular model (box A)? On the other hand, why do we not find any of those who seek to

transform existing social networks in box B (do not express any model)?

A possible explanation is that the attractional model is the current popular model. While it was not the original model used in New Testament times or the apostolic church, the attractional model has been dominant since the time of Constantine,¹ and is a strategy for church planting that has been standard for the last 200 years of missions in the Muslim world. For example, for many denominations in the West, it is completely uncontroversial and normal to construct a church building, hoping

Why do those following the attractional model seem to follow it unconsciously and do not speak about it explicitly?

or expecting for people to come. Even when a physical church building is not constructed, it is quite normal and acceptable for the church planters to rent a facility, start a meeting, and invite people to join. On the mission field, this approach might involve setting up a denominational institution similar to that in the sending country and drawing people from many different backgrounds to join the institution. More recently, this approach has involved the cross-cul-

tural worker sharing the gospel message with many (often unrelated) individuals, and then gathering those who believe into a fellowship.

Returning to our question above, why do those following the attractional model seem to follow it unconsciously and do not speak about it explicitly? It may be the case that since the attractional model is the currently accepted practice, workers generally would not feel a need to question their approach or even reflect on it at all. Since they are not departing from contemporary practice, these workers do not encounter disapproval from adherents to the current model and so would not feel a need to explain their approach from Scripture, from books on church history, from missiological literature or from other fields such as social science.

On the other hand, those who are following the transformational model are diverging from current popular practice. In every instance in our sample, these workers have well-thought-out philosophies that guide their practices. Most of these workers clearly articulate their philosophies, showing that they have thought through the issues quite thoroughly and are accustomed to explaining their approach. Unlike those following the attractional model, these workers make substantial reference to Scripture, as well as to other relevant books. Consider, for example, the following excerpt:

One principle we've identified—there's a book called *The First Urban Christians* [by Wayne Meeks], there's a chapter in there called 'Paul People' -- Paul didn't go after the extremely rich and he

Table 1: Worker Model and Awareness of Model.

| | Expresses practices in terms of fully-thought-out paradigm or model | Thinks beyond practices, but has not formulated full model | Does not express practices in terms of any model |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Attractional Model | A | | 18, 22, 23, 37, 89, 90, 103, 73, 92, 97 |
| Transformational Model | 3, (7, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44), 76, 79, 82, 106, 108 | 104 | B |
| Transitional state | 77 | 13, 29, 52, 53 | 88, 102, 75 |
| Unable to determine from data | | | 31, 107 |

didn't go after the very poor. Many of them were people of initiative. The same with people that Jesus chose: when you look at Peter and John, Andrew and James and Matthew the tax collector. These were all business men and so I've encouraged (and just more recently I've thought more about this) our Muslim friends to—when they go to a village—think of who are potential leaders there.

So my friend went to a village where one has a relative, and his relative has believed and as they were going, I'm saying "Now who are the people of influencing ability? Who might be a religious leader or a political leader or a financial leader?" (Interview #42)

A few things are worthy of note in the above excerpt. Like other workers that were interviewed, this worker refers to a practice, in this case, the practice of reaching people of influence. However, he goes beyond talking about the practice and relates it to a broader principle. As support for his approach, he refers to a book on the early church and he also refers to the example of Jesus.

Let's look at another example from our interviews in which the worker explicitly mentions the model or paradigm being followed and refers to a book on church planting for additional support:

Another term that's been used is Organic Church...in Neil Cole's book, but for a Western context. And we're seeing that in our context. So in many ways, it's not so much about contextualization that's the issue—how contextualized are you? What's more important for us, at least in our context, is really thinking through "what is the church?" What does it mean to plant the gospel seed, and then for the churches to be formed? And so, that just had put a whole different paradigm on some of these questions we're being asked, or some of the statements that were being made, for fruitful practices. (Interview #82)

Another worker articulates a well-developed social network model in interview #79. The worker begins the interview by explicitly stating what has helped form his philosophy:

Unfortunately, in the set of interviews we analyzed, the C-scale was widely misunderstood by both interviewers and interviewees.

I could say that this whole journey for me has arisen from Scripture. And seeing how God historically has interacted with people... At the same time, I think, anthropology has played a significant role in trying to understand culture. But still the bottom line is: how does culture interact with the Word of God? (#79)

The worker then goes on to explain nine principles that guide his ministry. The first principle is "We need to figure out where we're heading." Later on in the interview, the worker further emphasizes the importance of vision by saying, "You get what you aim for. You get what you settle for."²

It should be noted that, of all the interviews, interview #79 is the one in which it seems that the goal of whole communities transformed by the gospel of Christ has actually been realized. Is it a coincidence that this worker had a clearly thought-out vision, goal and philosophy of ministry that makes explicit reference to the transformation of social networks?

The Role of Contextualization

In issue 26:1 of *IJFM*, Brown *et al.* summarize the results of their quantitative FP research noting that "higher degrees of contextualization appear more conducive to the development of movements" (2009:30). In our article in the same issue, we explained the relationship between contextualization and missiological model or paradigm. We suggested that contextualized practices on the part of the worker did not necessarily have a direct connection to fruitfulness in church planting. We suggested instead that contextualization was indirectly connected to fruitfulness as a supporting factor that helped the gospel spread through social networks. Our data indicated that contextualization of external practices, especially by the cross-cultural worker (e.g., growing a beard) was less clearly connected to the worker's church

planting model than contextualization at the level of worldview (including choice of language, understandable and "normal"—rather than ecclesiastical—terminology, issues of social identity, and the application of the Bible's teachings to felt needs of the community).

Another point of interest related to contextualization is the use of the C-scale by church planting workers. The C-scale is a continuum first developed by John Travis (1998) to describe a range of different Jesus communities that actually existed in Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, in the set of interviews we analyzed, the C-scale was widely misunderstood by both interviewers and interviewees. This confusion was exacerbated by a lack of specification about whether contextualization referred to adaptation to local practices by the cross-cultural worker, retention of local practices by the local believers or communication of the gospel message with a concern for worldview issues.

In many cases, the workers and those interviewing them considered the C-scale to be a description of the workers' philosophy and practices. For example, in interview #90, the interviewer asked, "You mentioned before you dress up and look like the Muslim when you go into a village.... Do some things look like C-5? Do some things look C-3? How would you describe how things look?" The interviewee responded to the question by describing whether the team members wear jeans and t-shirts or long-flowing clothes, whether the women wear bangles, chador or burka. He concluded, "You can call it C-5 or 6."³ And yet the worker described the local believers as having made a clear break from their community: "People said [to the believers], 'Oh you have left, you know, our faith, our community.'" This would indicate more of a C3 situation. In this conversation, both the inter-

viewer and the worker confused outward missionary practices with local believers' social identity issues.

In another interview, #75, the interviewer himself also shows a lack of understanding of the C-scale: "I'm actually exploring the whole issue of C5, C4 and how/if that can be appropriately used, so what does it look like?" When the interviewer talks about how C4 and C5 can be appropriately "used," it seems that he considers the points on the continuum to be a measure of workers' practices rather than a description of a group's identity.

The worker responds, "We were using, when we did evangelism, the way we dressed, my house, it would be a C5." The worker further shows that he thinks of C5 as a set of practices, not a description of social identity, by saying, "this kind of C5, trying to be a Christian within the Muslim context, [local people] don't see that. They see a clear distinction once you start to move and talk more like a Christian."

Given these misunderstandings, we did not find the C-scale to be the best way to describe what was going on in these case studies.⁴ Rather, we found that a description of several variables including socio-religious identity, community dynamics and how the gospel is spreading through social networks gave a fuller picture of the local church planting situation. While the difference between C3 and C4 is a matter of many variables, including language, social identity and contextualization of practices, when we look at the difference that Travis (1998) describes as existing between a C4 community and a C5 community, the most significant difference is that of socio-religious identity. As we will discuss below, identity is inseparably linked to social networks. This may account for our observations regarding the importance of using the local language and contextualized practices: these factors facilitate the spread of the gospel through social networks. Bob Goldmann has articulated the same dynamic: "contextualization is insuffi-

cient on its own to lead to movements, because two other factors need to be taken into account—*identity* and *community*." (2006:9, emphasis his)

We have noted how workers connect or fail to connect contextualization to their understanding of social networks. We have found that contextualization at the level of worldview is essential insofar as it upholds rather than seeks to destroy social networks. Sociologist of religion Rodney Stark notes that successful religious movements will of necessity contextualize:



"People are more willing to adopt a new religion to the extent that it retains cultural continuity with conventional religion(s) with which they already are familiar" (1996:55, emphasis his).

Thus contextualization, or what Stark calls "cultural continuity," seems to be an essential bridge to the message flowing through social networks without impediment.

Social Networks: Theoretical Considerations

Fruitfulness and Social Networks

What is the relationship between the church planting approach used by the cross-cultural worker, and the number and characteristics of actual churches planted? We seek to answer this question with our coauthors Bob Fish and Michael Baker with a statistical analysis based on data from questionnaires separately administered to the workers interviewed for this analysis (forthcoming). To complement that statistical

analysis, it is instructive to look at how religious movements in the past have benefited from the message spreading through social networks.

Current sociological research confirms that successful religious movements necessarily take social network dynamics into account, whether intentionally or by accident. Rodney Stark observes:

The basis for successful conversionist movements is growth through social networks, through a *structure of direct and intimate interpersonal attachments*. Most new religious movements fail because they quickly become closed, or semiclosed networks. That is, they fail to keep forming and sustaining attachments to outsiders and thereby lose the capacity to grow. Successful movements discover techniques for remaining open social networks, able to reach out and into adjacent social networks. (Stark 1996:20, emphasis his)

All the successful new religious movements and cults that Stark and his colleagues have studied make use of social network dynamics. Stark notes the difference in growth rates between random evangelizing and outreach targeted on networks, as seen among the Mormons:

Although they often get an isolated recruit on the basis of attachments built by missionaries, the primary source of Mormon converts is along network lines. The average convert was preceded into the church by many friends and relatives. It is network growth that so distinguishes the Mormon rate of growth—meanwhile, other contemporary religious movements will count their growth in thousands, not millions, for lack of a network pattern of growth. (1996:56)

Data based on records kept by a Mormon mission president give powerful support to this proposition. When missionaries make cold calls, knock on the doors of strangers, this eventually leads to a conversion once out of a thousand calls. However, when missionaries make their first contact with a person in the home of a Mormon friend or relative of that person, this results in conversion 50 percent of the time (1996:18).

Lest one think these findings are an anomaly, a Dutch study mentioned by Stark cites no less than twenty-five other empirical studies that supported his contention that conversions tend to spread through networks (Kox, Meeus and 't Hart, 1991). As for the interviews we analyzed, successful church planters made use of a similar transformational approach to social networks.

Tight-Knit Versus Loose-Knit Social Networks

In tight-knit networks there are multiple layers of relationship. Those ties are not easily broken. In societies characterized by tight-knit networks, the attractional model is not likely to work well. On the other hand, societies (such as those in the West) that are made up of loose-knit networks will find the attractional approach successful enough to justify its continued use. However, even in these societies, transformational-type approaches⁵ seem to be playing an important role.

Persecution from within the social network can be more detrimental to the growth of faith communities than persecution from outside the network. Referring to his previous work studying emerging fellowships of believers among animist societies in Mexico and the Philippines, T. Wayne Dye notes that persecution by government or powerful outsiders has less of an effect on the acceptance of the biblical message than persecution by family members and others within the network (Dye, 2009).

We can see an example of the effect of persecution from within the social network by contrasting interview #103 with interview #79. In interview #103, the believers are a group of unrelated men who are afraid to let their families know they are believers. The church planting workers set up a meeting between these believers and some other believers from another area, and the believers agreed to a meeting, but only if it occurred in a third area, away from both groups' social networks. One believer told the worker that he would like to be an evangelist, as long as it was in another

The worker reports that the believers are not embarrassed about sharing their faith. In fact, it is very natural for them to do so.

region, where nobody knew him. As the interviewee notes about the situation:

"...in most cases the strongest persecution in our area comes from within the family and not from the community around them." On the other hand, in interview #79 cited above, the worker expresses very clearly his desire that existing social networks be transformed by Christ. Indeed, in his situation the gospel is being shared and embraced in existing networks. The worker reports that the believers are not embarrassed about sharing their faith. In fact, it is very natural for them to do so.

Identity and Social Networks

Social identity is closely related to the strength and vitality of social networks. In cultures that Edward T. Hall dubbed "High Context" cultures, the identity of an individual is defined with reference to their social network (Hall, 1976). In the interviews, we found that the identity of believers could be categorized in four ways:

1. Believers retain identity of the existing social network
 - e.g., "Jesus is my Savior, but I will never stop being a Muslim" (#80)
2. Believers adopt the identity of a parallel social network
 - e.g., "Okay, I told my brother, and he's a Christian." (#75)
 - or a so-called neutral expression, e.g., "Teach me how I can be a believer." (#18)
3. Believers might adopt new identity consistent with existing categories
 - e.g., "Light of Peace" (#106)
 - "Jamaa'a of the followers of Isa" (#52)
4. Believers are still in the process of defining their identity
 - e.g., "If he was asked if he was a Muslim... he would manipulate

it in a way to say, 'Well, what is it to be religious?'" (#75)

- "For a long time, their identity was a very long explanation, such as 'We are people who believe in Isa but we are Muslim and we believe in Isa [as the MBBs would say it]. We get together to study God's word, and we pray together.' Every time they explained who they were it was a very long explanation." (#52)⁶

In our sample, category 4 (in which the believers are in a state of identity crisis) is the most unstable state. Believers do not seem to remain in this state very long. They eventually gravitate to one of the other categories.

While the transformational approach is not the same as what has been called the "insider approach" (these two approaches did not always correlate in our study⁷), the transformation of social networks seems to be an important aspect of insider movements. Rebecca Lewis (2007) notes how insider movements must necessarily have two elements working together. First, social networks are transformed into communities of believers. Secondly, they maintain their socio-religious identity, while being committed followers of Christ. Her conclusion that these two elements are essential for the viability and reproduction of movements seems to be consistent with our analysis.

In a subsequent article, Lewis (2009) contrasts insider movements with two other types of movements that involve whole social networks coming to faith in Christ while adopting a new socio-religious (i.e., culturally Christian) identity. Although we have generally found a connection between social networks that have been transformed by Christ and communities of believers

that maintain their Muslim socio-cultural identity, our data did reveal a few examples of situations in which the gospel traveled through existing family networks even while the church planting workers promoted a change of socio-religious identity among the believers. These interesting cases were discussed in depth in Part I of this article, along with an explanation of the factors that led to their occurrence, often a supernatural event. It would be worthwhile to follow up with these situations in a few years, to determine whether the degree of identity change demanded of believers in these situations had any influence on the sustainability of the movement one way or the other.

Paradigm Shift: Theoretical Framework

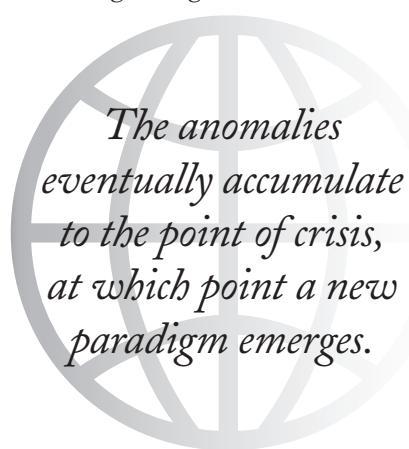
Overview of the Polanyi/Kuhn Model

As we observe many workers making a shift from an attractional model to a transformational model, we need to ask two questions: Why are they making this shift? And how are they making this shift? As we seek to answer these questions, it is helpful to look at how paradigm shifts have occurred throughout history in the field of science. It is important to mention here that while we retain the conventional terminology of “paradigm shift” used in the sciences, it would be more accurate to speak of a return to a previous paradigm (i.e., the paradigm that characterized the apostolic age).

In their deeply influential writings on the nature of science, Michael Polanyi (1958) and Thomas Kuhn (1970) have noted that science does not progress by the incremental accumulation of insights and discoveries, but rather can be characterized as slow linear progress interrupted by “revolutions” or “paradigm shifts.” Normally one paradigm dominates, is usually taken for granted as truth, and tends to drive all the assumptions under which scientists operate. During this period of “normal science,” scientists work at strengthening and extending the predominant paradigm

through problem solving, and when they fail to do so or come up with anomalies, they usually assume that they have failed, rather than thinking that the paradigm itself might be flawed.

However, over time more and more anomalies and loose ends emerge, so that scientists increasingly find it difficult to make sense of the big picture within the bounds of the existing paradigm. The anomalies eventually accumulate to the point of crisis, at which point a new paradigm emerges that better explains the old set of knowledge along with the anomalies.



This can be called a scientific revolution or paradigm shift.

Some examples of paradigm shift in the scientific realm are the move from geocentrism to Copernican heliocentrism and from Newtonian physics to the Einsteinian paradigm. What is of relevance to us as missiologists is that we can apply the Polanyi/Kuhn perspective to systems of knowledge other than the physical sciences. For example, in the social sciences, there has been a shift from positivist science, in which scientists rely on objective data collection and analysis, to a postpositivist or postempiricist position in which it is acknowledged that it is not possible for humans to attain complete objectivity. Nonetheless, it is understood that the interpretation of the data by a human being is still useful, even though it is necessarily subjective.

Paradigm shift can also occur in the worldview of a whole culture, with each paradigm sometimes defining

a whole age or era. The era that we call the Enlightenment is one such example. The medieval European worldview was a comprehensive system that made sense of the individual, the universe and God, but eventually was abandoned for what has come to be called the modern worldview that was ushered in with the Enlightenment. Even while the Enlightenment was a period of great learning and cultural development, it was not without problems, many of which came to light in the aftermath of World War II. Theologian Jurgen Moltmann calls the subsequent era “the reality after Auschwitz” when many people, including Christians, came to acknowledge that their search for enlightenment and progress through rational science and systematic theology had largely failed.

Just as the post-World War II years have presented special challenges to the scientific, theological and cultural communities of the West, these years have presented unique challenges to missions strategists and practitioners who are now asking the question: What does it mean to share the message of Jesus in a pluralistic, globalized and post-colonial world? In this globalized era, the lines are blurred between sending-country and mission field. In this post-colonial era, we see the importance of appreciating and preserving the dignity of other individuals and civilizations. It is not surprising, therefore, that some church planting practitioners and missiologists are wondering, “In order for Muslims to enter the Kingdom of God, do they have to leave their own social identity and culture to become (cultural) Christians?”⁸ The shift from an attractional approach to a transformational approach (or, as we mentioned earlier, the *return* to a transformational approach) is not the only way to describe some of the changes going on in the missions community as we seek to answer the above question. Therefore, we will relate the current discussion to Paul Hiebert’s model of bounded versus centered sets, as well

as to some of the insights from the missional church movement, represented here by the work of Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch. We will also consider the process of paradigm shift in general to help us understand some of the dynamics we should expect to see in this missiological shift.

Other Ways of Looking at These Models

Hiebert: Bounded vs. Centered Sets

Paul Hiebert (1994) used the mathematical concept of bounded and centered sets to graphically illustrate the different models for membership in the body of Christ. A bounded set is defined by its boundary, and every point on a plane inside of the boundary line is considered to be part of the set, with no difference in quality or degree acknowledged in “belongingness” to the set. On the other hand, a centered set is made up of all those points on a plane that are related to one particular center point (See Figure 1).

Hiebert notes that Christians who define themselves by means of the bounded-set model define true Christians as those who meet a list of doctrines and practices, a set of “boundary markers” that are usually highly visible. In this model, maintaining the boundary is all-important, and those who push the boundaries are either urged to toe the line, or are rejected as heretics. On the other hand, Christians in the centered-set model consider “belongingness” to the group to be based on how well members are connected to the center point, the person of Christ.

A corollary of defending the boundary in the bounded-set model is the understanding that other religions are in some sense competitors, and so to promote the well-being and growth of the Christian bounded set, one must be in conflict with other sets. In this logic, if a member of another set is forced to see the weakness of his own set, he will most likely be drawn to the stronger Christian set.

In the centered-set model of Christian faith, the key element is trust in Christ,

It is possible for someone who is seemingly far away and firmly within “other” socio-religious boundaries to be a true follower of Christ and a member of Christ’s “set.”

imitation of his example and obedience to his commands. This is possible for anyone, no matter what socio-religious category they belong to. It is possible in this model for someone to appear outwardly to be quite close to Christ, but in reality to have no living relationship with him and thus not to belong to the centered set of Christ. On the other hand, it is possible for someone who is seemingly far away and firmly within “other” socio-religious boundaries to be a true follower of Christ and a member of Christ’s “set.”

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch point out that these two models naturally differ in how they approach evangelism: “Evangelism in the bounded set is focused heavily on getting people into the religious zone.” On the other hand, “[a]s a centered set, the missional-incarnational church sees that its role is not just to “present” Christ in one fell swoop, but to tantalize not-yet-Christians into beginning the search.” (2003: 49-50)

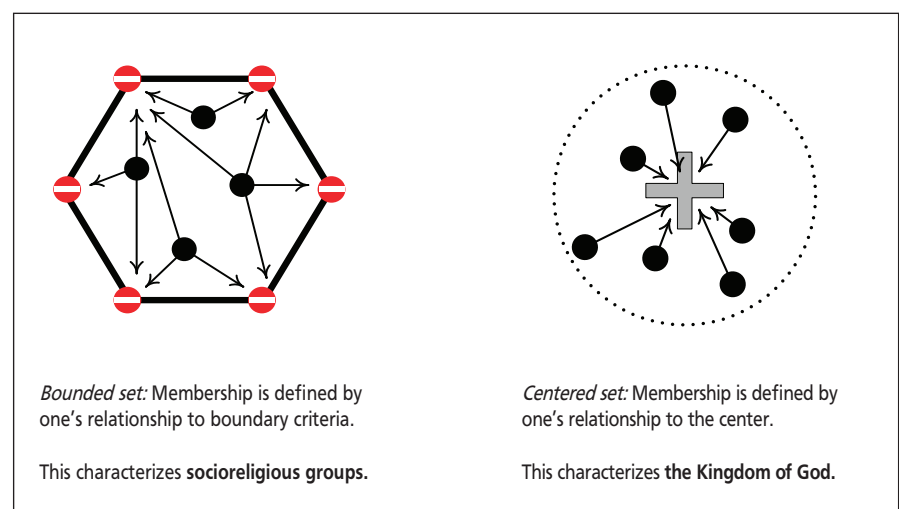
In the next section, we will discuss some further insights from the missional church perspective that help us understand the paradigm shift occurring among cross-cultural church planting workers.

Insights from the Missional Church Movement

While some Western church leaders are mourning the crumbling of Christendom, others—those in the missional church movement—are making the most of this opportunity to investigate and re-implement some of the values and emphases of the pre-Constantinian church. Some of these values include a holistic and conversational style of ministry, a preference for non-institutional leadership and a focus on relationships rather than meetings.⁹ Since some of these values seem to be present in the transformational model, we have found it to be useful to look at what is going on in the missional church movement among Westerners in order to understand some of the dynamics going on with the transformational approach among Muslims.

There are many similarities between the missional approach and the transformational approach; however, it is important to note that we do not claim that the Muslims who are coming to Christ through the transformational approach necessarily share the same characteristics as Westerners who are being reached through the missional approach. The point of comparison is

Figure 1: Bounded Sets and Centered Sets (see Hiebert 1994, figure from Brown 2007)



more in terms of the philosophy and attitudes of those doing the outreach.

For example, in the attractional model of “doing church” in the West, we might say that mission gets people into church, and ministry is what you do for them once they’re there. A missional model, on the other hand, would say that there is no separation between ministry (what we do in the church) and mission (what we do outside the church). Similarly, in an attractional way of doing missions, the accepted approach would be to first evangelize people and then disciple them. However, in a transformational approach, the line between evangelism and discipleship is significantly blurred.

However, each cultural context plays a role in how the transformational model of the missional model is played out. For example, in the tight-knit societies of the East, a transformational model usually means an entire extended family or group of friends or coworkers becomes gradually renewed by the gospel. However, in Western societies that are less tight-knit, the missional model often plays itself out as people join together around a shared activity in the name of Christ, such as feeding the poor. Both the missional and transformational approaches involve going to where people normally gather rather than calling people to come to us.

While Frost and Hirsch use the term “attractional” to refer to the conventional way of engaging in church planting, in a subsequent work Hirsch also points out that

...in missional settings, this *attractional* approach to church actually becomes *extractional*, because it severs the organic ties that the convert has with his or her host culture and creates something of a Christian cloister culturally distanced from its context. (2006:65 footnote, emphasis his)

In describing the ideals of the missional church, Hirsch and Frost borrow the following chart from Carol Davis to help explain the differences between the two missiological para-

digms. Although Davis is referring to a Western church planting situation,¹⁰ it almost seems as if she is describing the very case studies that we analyzed from the Muslim world (see Table 2)!

Various Jesus movements in church history have become institutionalized over time. In such situations it is often the case that the original Jesus movement contains many characteristics of the missional model or the transformational paradigm and that the institution that develops from it has many characteristics of the attractional paradigm. Perhaps it is inevitable that any movement will eventually ossify and lose its transformative power. Missional church practitioners claim that a transformational movement can be successful over long periods of time, but only by avoiding institutional structures and controls and keeping permeable boundaries, where non-believers are continually meeting and joining believers. These successful movements remain inclusive and open (Cole 2005, Hirsch

2006). Note that this is just what Stark observes about successful religious movements in our citation above.

The missional and attractional paradigms also differ in the emphasis they place on doctrines. Referring once again to bounded versus centered sets, Hirsch and Frost say this:

In the bounded set, it is clear who is “in” and who is “out” based on a well-defined ideological-cultural boundary—usually moral and cultural codes as well as creedal definitions—but it doesn’t have much of a core definition besides these boundaries. It is like a fenced farm. It is *hard at the edges, soft at the center*. Most established institutions, including denominations, are, for a host of reasons, bounded sets.

...[A centered set] is like the Outback ranch with the wellspring at its center. It has very strong ideology at the center but no boundaries. It is hard at the center, soft at the edges. We suggest that in the centered set lies a real clue to the structuring of

Table 2: Two Models of Christ Communities

| Extraction/Single Convert/“Growth” Model [Attractional Paradigm] | Incarnational/Reproduction Model [Transformational Paradigm] |
|---|---|
| Church culture | Mission culture |
| <i>Initial Focus is on ...</i> | <i>Initial Focus is on ...</i> |
| Individual converts | Group conversions, e.g., households, networks |
| Believers’ turf, e.g., church services | Unbeliever’s turf |
| Finding Christians to come to services | Finding persons of peace |
| Begin in the church | Begin in peoples’ homes |
| Large group meeting—celebration | Small groups—cell fellowship |
| Scripture taught as academic information | Scripture taught for application |
| Build programs and buildings | Build leaders |
| <i>Leadership...</i> | <i>Leadership...</i> |
| Pastor or lone-ranger | Apostolic/partnership team |
| Imported professional clergy | Indigenous new Christians become leaders |
| Leader of participatory audience at best | Equiper of emerging leaders and reproducers |
| <i>Finances...</i> | <i>Finances...</i> |
| Funded church planter | Bi-vocational church planter |
| Heavy financial investment | Minimal financial investment |
| Resources are imported | Resources are local |
| <i>Structure...</i> | <i>Structure...</i> |
| Needs of the church | Needs of the community |
| Clergy-centered/driven/dependent | Lay-centered/driven/dependent |
| For slow growth (leads to stagnation) | For rapid reproduction |

[Carol Davis, *DAWN Report* (June 2000), cited in Frost and Hirsch 2003:72.; our headings in square brackets]

missional communities in the emerging global culture and corresponding missional church. (2003: 206-8)

We can see this centered-set dynamic occurring in contexts where the transformational model is being employed. For example, in interview #79, the worker says, with reference to the local believers and pre-believers, "I don't have to do the theology for them." He trusts the Holy Spirit and the built-in accountability of the community to guide them in developing theology. He goes on to say that "so far they haven't developed any weird theology." For this worker, correct doctrine is not the criterion for entrance into the Kingdom of God. Rather, correct doctrine is a result of experiencing God in community:

Theology is not the domain of the experts, it is not the domain of individuals; it is the domain of the community of the followers of Jesus. (#79)

For missional church leaders and for workers following the transformational model, each community must work out for itself in conversation how it will respond to and express ancient, enduring and unchangeable biblical truths. Every community will find that they occasionally make mistakes in understanding God's Word and need correction. This process, however, leads to a theology that is both biblical and distinctly local.

The Process of Paradigm Shift

Let us return to our research questions. How do church planters grapple with their contexts and adopt fruitful practices, or fail to do so?

As we saw in our interview data, those in our sample who follow an attractional approach don't tend to speak explicitly about the paradigm they operate under. On the other hand, most of the workers following a transformational approach were able to speak clearly about the assumptions and perspectives of their model. This makes sense from a perspective of paradigm shift, since those operating under the prevailing attractional

We see this reaction in some of the interviews, in which workers move from practice to practice, trying to find a solution to their problems.

model may do so without being consciously aware of their assumptions.

A key point for our analysis is that during the period of "normal science," the prevailing paradigm and its assumptions are taken for granted, and assumed by most to be reality itself rather than a model to explain reality. We propose that missiology is no different; there is a prevailing paradigm of missions/church/fait that is currently in crisis, and there is an emerging (or re-emerging) paradigm that more and more believers and practitioners are adopting.

As predicted by Polanyi and Kuhn, what we call the conventional missiological paradigm is struggling under the burden of more and more anomalies. While this approach to missions has produced satisfactory results among many people groups for hundreds of years, there are major clusters of people groups where it does not work. In the Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist "megablocs" the methods used by mission practitioners have by and large failed to be fruitful at establishing reproducing fellowships, and many of these practitioners are desperately looking for what is wrong. The very fact that we are conducting this research as part of the Fruitful Practices project is an indicator of this crisis of paradigm. Just as Kuhn uses the term "normal science" to refer to the time when scientists work at reinforcing and extending, but not questioning, the current model, we can use the term "normal missions" to refer to the time when missions practitioners and administrators work to reinforce the current model. During a period of "normal missions," it is unlikely that missiologists would initiate a research project questioning fundamental assumptions of theory and practice.

According to Kuhn, the first reflex of people facing anomalies in the current system is to tinker with the existing model, to change a few details here or

there, to seek to adopt more effective practices. We see this reaction in some of the interviews, in which workers move from practice to practice, trying to find a solution to their problems. For example, in interview #73, the workers described how they would try different methods:

We tried a lot of different ways of evangelism and evaluated which ones seemed to be effective and which ones didn't. We were willing to try different and new things and the [local] believers, I believe, caught on to that eagerness and a willingness to try different ways of doing evangelism... and if it didn't work, just to move on from that and say, 'we learned a way that isn't a good way to do it.'

But the Fruitful Practices interviews indicate that a significant number of church planting practitioners and MBBs are moving beyond current assumptions and moving to a new paradigm—one that many practitioners call "the insider paradigm." These practitioners feel that the current model is broken beyond repair, and they are enthusiastic about the potential of the insider model to transform lives and communities for God.

The amazing spread of the insider model, and not merely insider-oriented practices, is a sign that something big is afoot. C. S. Lewis explained the motives behind such a change:

...the human mind will not long endure such ever-increasing complications [e.g., tinkering with the old model] if once it has seen that some simpler conception can 'save the appearances'. Neither theological prejudice nor vested interests can permanently keep in favor a Model which is seen to be grossly uneconomical. (Lewis 1964: 219-20)

What causes church planting workers to change practices? We can see from Kuhn's perspective that work-

ers adhering to an existing paradigm will experiment with adopting new practices in a piecemeal fashion, but are likely to drift away from them when circumstances change. The logic of their paradigm drives their choices and they are seldom aware of it. However, some others will adopt new practices while still operating under the assumptions of the old paradigm. The dissonance between the implications of these new fruitful practices and the assumptions of their existing paradigm will lead to dissatisfaction. They will find themselves in transition.

What leads to workers changing models or paradigms? Those facing the most anomalies are likely to be the first to shift. We also know from Everett Rogers' work on the diffusion of innovations (2003) that at first there will be a relatively small number of people who are very open to change and who will adopt this innovation. As they succeed with the innovation, others will be attracted to change, with the pace of adoption accelerating with time. In the same way, we should expect to see more and more church planters adopting the insider paradigm, and the new and fruitful practices associated with it, at an ever-increasing rate.

Conclusion

A key question for those who wish to see God's kingdom expand among Muslim peoples is, in the words of one worker (#79), "Are we going to settle for church planting or shall we plan for a movement?" We can see from the above discussion that cross-cultural workers who look forward to seeing a movement to Christ among Muslims are able to identify the social networks that exist in a community and consider how these networks can be transformed by Christ. Those workers who have a well-developed model that deals with social networks should expect to see the gospel moving through social networks, a situation that, from a historical perspective, is likely to result in a sustainable and reproducing movement of Christ-followers. **IJFM**

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Endnotes

¹ Frost and Hirsch describe the dominant model in this way: "When Christianity was recognized and accepted in 313 and then gained favored status with the imperial courts, it altered the fundamental *mode* of the church's self-understanding and its conception of its unique task in the world. Because a type of "contract" now existed between the church and the political powers, the church's understanding of itself in relation to that state, culture, and society was profoundly changed. We don't mean to discount the incredible mission movements that occurred sporadically in the fifth to the tenth centuries. But it is fair to say that by the triumph of Christendom in the eleventh century, mission was no longer seen as necessary in Europe. It was delimited to identifiable non-Christian religions both inside and outside of the realm, but no longer to those baptized by the official church. Theology was now used as a powerful political tool. So too were missions. Mission was used as a means of colonization and advancement of various state interests. Christendom set up a certain correlation, a complex of assumptions, about the association between the realms of politics, geography, church, spirituality, and mission. As a result the gospel was politicized, regionalized, as well as *racialized*. There was no longer any real place for the subversive activity associated with the New Testament gospel." (2003:13-14)

² While interviewee #79 does not mention author Neil Cole as #82 does, the principle he expresses is almost identical to

the vision articulated by Cole, who has been involved in several successful church planting movements: "Starting a single church was not an option for us; we would settle for nothing less than a church multiplication movement, and we would abandon all things, even successful ones that would hold us back from the goal." (Cole 2005:22)

³ In this example, the worker considers C6 to be an extreme form of contextualization, although the original C-scale describes C6 as isolated or secret believers without reference to their level of contextualization.

⁴ It is this kind of confusion on the part of both the interviewer and the workers that makes it difficult to take self-reporting of missiological paradigm and approach at face value. We have to look beyond self-reporting to the details of the story and the terminology the worker uses in telling the story to determine the worker's conceptual model.

⁵ Or what are termed "missional" approaches. These will be discussed later in this paper.

⁶ It should be noted that this group of believers later resolved their identity crisis as they were given a name by fellow worshippers at the mosque they attended.

⁷ For example, in interview #77, discussed in Part I of this paper, the worker describes himself as following an insider approach, but he is following more of an attractional or gathering approach rather than a transformational approach. In other interviews, such as #75, the worker deliberately works through social networks due to government restrictions on gathering, but he does not encourage believers to maintain a Muslim identity as would be characteristics of an insider approach. On the other hand, in many more interviews, there did seem to be a relationship between those who encouraged believers to maintain the socio-religious identity of their community and those who deliberately encouraged the movement of the gospel through social networks.

⁸ See Lewis 2009 for a discussion of this issue in her description of Kingdom Circles.

⁹ A useful chart describing this return to values of the apostolic and early post-apostolic age is found in Frost and Hirsch 2003:9.

¹⁰ Since the Western contexts that Frost and Hirsch and Carol Davis deal with are different from the contexts encountered by workers in this study, we are using the term "missional" to apply to church planting approaches (especially as delineated by Frost and Hirsch) in a Western context and "transformational" to apply to church planting approaches in a Muslim context. These two perspectives overlap, but are not necessarily identical.



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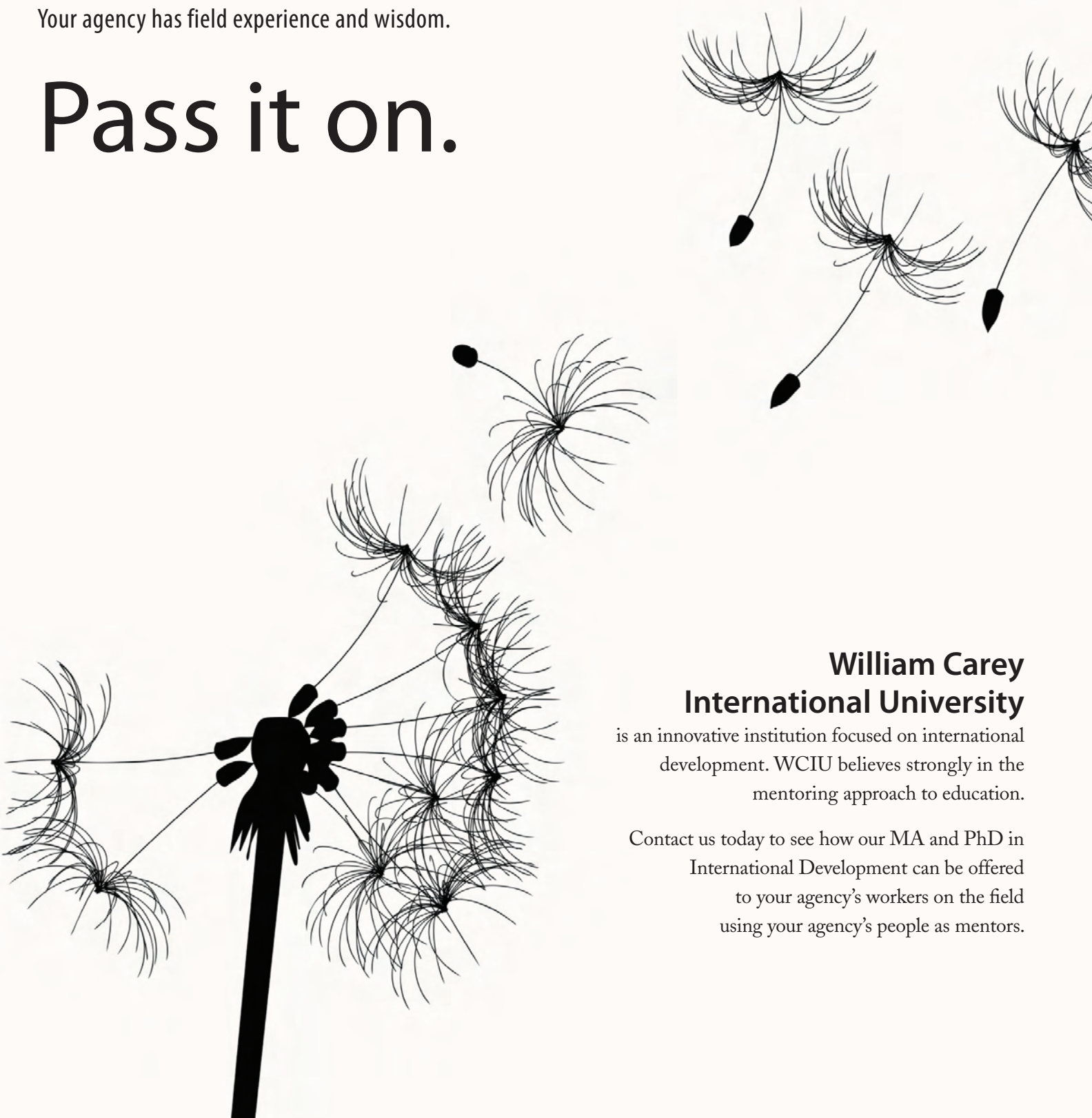
December 7–11 **Climate Change and Catastrophe: Paradigms of Response in Christian Mission.** Dr. Allison M. Howell, Akrofi-Christaller Institute for Theology, Mission, and Culture, Ghana, considers Christian responses to climate change—something that is not new in human history—and the catastrophes that often accompany climate change, so as to provide a framework for Christian mission today in facing new crises. Eight sessions. \$175

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Fruitful Practices: What Does the Research Suggest?

Seven Themes of Fruitfulness

by Eric Adams, Don Allen and Bob Fish

Jesus also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." (Mark 4:26-29, NIV)

As we gazed across a stunted field of corn along the edge of a dust-choked village in southern Africa, it was difficult not to compare with images of lush wheat fields on the farms of Punjab, stalks heavy with harvest. What accounts for the stunning contrast between these two images? Possible reasons abound, ranging from the cultural to the scientific. But the simplest is that one farmer has the capacity to master the conditions to ensure an optimal harvest, while the other possesses only a fraction of this ability.

The wind of the Spirit is scattering seed across the Muslim world today. Some of this seed develops only into a stunted harvest, some, however, to a lush bounty. As God's harvest laborers, we have been commissioned to nurture this seed and to learn what the Father is doing in order to better participate in his kingdom work. How can we be good stewards of what the Lord is doing in order to enhance fruitfulness?

In March 2007, a group of 300 practitioners met for five days in Southeast Asia to discuss what the Spirit is doing as they seek to facilitate communities of Jesus-followers among Muslims. This consultation represented a network of 34 agencies with members in the Muslim world. Their purpose: to explore the practices that they have learned from watching the Father—practices which seem to contribute to lasting fruit, or, more specifically, those that contribute significantly to the formation

Seven Themes of Fruitfulness

- Fluency
- Storying
- Reputation
- Social Networks
- Scripture Use
- Intentional Reproduction
- Prayer

The authors are members of the Fruitful Practices Taskforce, which is a collaborative, multi-agency network of missiologists who are studying effective field practitioners and how God is working through them. Through this they identify and publicize practices that are demonstrably "fruitful" in facilitating faith movements among Muslim peoples.

of communities of faith. Those meetings, which included surveys, small group discussions and interviews, resulted in a distillation of experience. Our subsequent analysis¹ of this rich deposit yields deep insights for those who work to see viable communities of Jesus' followers among Muslim peoples. While all of these themes of fruitfulness have been richly documented before,² this research confirms their effectiveness within Muslim contexts based on the experience of practitioners.

So, how do we cooperate with the Father in the process of establishing communities of Jesus' followers in the Muslim world? What is our part

in his plan to raise up communities of faith? This paper describes seven strong themes which appear to significantly correlate with fruitfulness.³

These seven themes emerged in an inductive study of our data and our participants. We compared the technical statistics from our survey and key themes from the 115 interviews we conducted with fruitful workers (those who established at least one fellowship). We then highlighted those themes (such as orality and social networks) which are crucial for fostering movements, but are sometimes overlooked by western workers. Here, then, are these seven themes.

1. Sharing the Hope within: Fluency

Two of the strongest associations with fruitfulness are that the workers are ministering in the local or "heart language"⁴ (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) of the people to whom they were called, and that teams include at least one person who is highly fluent in the ministry language (see Figure 3). While some participants noted that some workers seem to communicate effectively while speaking in a trade or regional language, the qualitative analysis indicates there was a far more likely chance of seeing mature fruit and/or multiplication of communities of faith when the gospel is proclaimed in the medium of the "heart language."

One respondent, a Muslim background believer who speaks Russian as well as his own local "heart language," remembers talking about Jesus during a visit by his cousin. "My cousin later said, had you shared this with me in Russian, I would never have put my faith in Isa al Masih [Jesus the Messiah], but because you shared it in our language, I said 'This message must be for me!'"⁵

A worker from South Asia concurred that the use of the mother tongue is vital:

I was introduced to a local Muslim woman who had gone to university in the West. There she had met Christians, believed in Jesus, been baptized and gone to church. When she returned to her family, she decided she could no longer follow Jesus because there was no church in her area. We gave her recently translated versions of Scripture in her own language. At first she resisted reading them. She was used to reading the Bible in English. However, when she finally did read them in her mother tongue, she was amazed at how much she had not understood and how the story of Jesus came alive in her own language. She now believes she can be a follower of Jesus in her own culture.⁶

Figure 1. The percentage of participants who saw faith communities established, for those who worked in the regional trade language and those who worked in the local language.²⁶

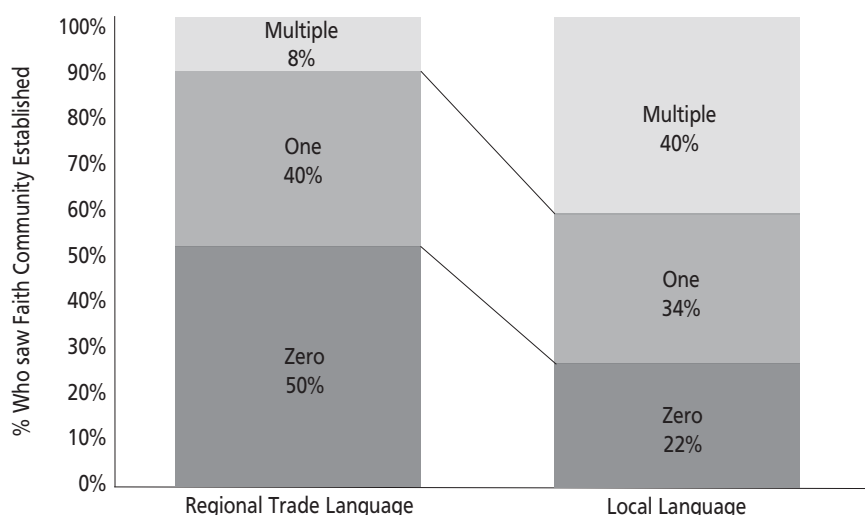
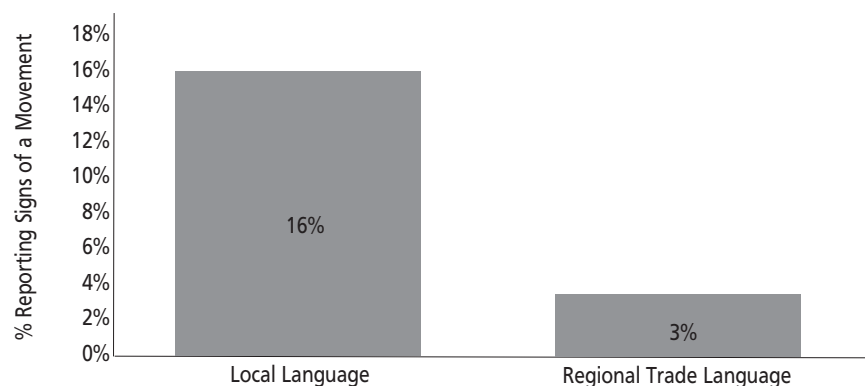


Figure 2. Language choice and percentage of participants who reported faith communities which showed signs of a movement towards Jesus.²⁷



Practitioners at the consultation emphasized the importance of perseverance and discipline in pursuing language fluency in order to minister in the heart language.

In addition, a recent survey of practitioners demonstrated an intriguing relationship between fruitfulness and use of terms familiar to Muslims, as shown in Figure 4. There are several alternative explanations of this figure, including that this relationship is influenced by other variables that we did not measure. More research is necessary to clarify this, but it does suggest that use of terms familiar to Muslims may be impacting fruitfulness significantly.

2. Engaging Hearts and Minds: Storying

The vast majority of Muslim people groups are functionally oral societies. Though they may be able to read and write, these societies generally prefer to share information orally. Among the consultation participants, 71 percent reported that the people group they work among were primarily oral learners.⁷ Fruitful teams recognize this learning preference and use storying to communicate the gospel in reproducible ways. In other words, they couch significant concepts in true-to-life examples that are told using story conventions natural to the people and their culture. Teams at the consultation that communicated the gospel in a way that respected the learning preference of the people saw over 4 times as many faith communities emerge as compared to workers who ignore this factor.

Storying and fluency make a powerful combination. Eighty-two percent of teams that worked in the heart language had at least one person on the team who was fluent in the ministry language, and incorporated the learning preference of the host people group into their gospel-communication strategy reported having formed a faith community. Among teams with none of these factors present, only seven percent reported having formed a community.⁹

Muslims are drawn to an authentic spiritual life that is adapted to their cultural values and shows an obvious love and respect for their culture.

One consultation participant said, “We have mother tongue stories that have been well-crafted by Muslim-background believers. These stories reflect their culture and worldview, and are true to the Bible. The stories are practical, allowing believers to share their faith naturally in everyday situations. So when asked a question about honesty or theft or something similar, the answer is in a story. When asked about salvation, or forgiveness, the answer is in a story.”¹⁰

From another interview: “These stories eventually change the worldview of the teller and of the listener. These stories, because they are the word of God, and because they are in a reproducible and understandable format, sink down in their heart and allow that tree of eternal life to grow there.”¹¹

Another reported an incident in which a group of twelve Muslim women brought her a new-born:

The baby was the size of my palm. The mother had died in childbirth and the father did not want the baby, so it had been discarded. Holding this child, I asked the family, “How old is this preemie?” They said, “Well, it was 28 weeks in the mother’s womb.” Looking at this tiny life in my hands, I just told them, “I’m not a witch doctor. I do not have supernatural power on my own. I am not a medical doctor. But I know the Physician who is all-powerful. Can I tell you some stories about his desire to heal?” I then told them stories about when Jesus healed. And then I said, “You know what? Jesus is after the ultimate healing of us, of our being reconciled to a Holy God. That’s what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Can I talk to you about that?” So these twelve women sat with me as I told them stories about the power of the Lord and the authority of the Messiah, holding this small infant all the while. After these stories, I asked them if they would pray with me for

this infant. They agreed and then we prayed for healing for the baby together in the name of the Messiah. The little girl was indeed healed and is now six years old!¹²

The majority of the practitioners from the consultation were from ‘text-oriented’ cultures, so they had to adjust their own perspective to communicate fruitfully in cultures with an oral learning preference. The distinction goes beyond the written versus spoken word. Text-oriented cultures reason by deduction from generalities, whereas oral cultures generally reason by instances (stories) and analogy, often leading to unexpressed inductions.¹³ By storying, practitioners can communicate the gospel in a way that is naturally reproducible—local believers can use these same stories to share their faith, disciple others, and develop leaders.

3. Exemplary Lifestyle: Reputation

The gospel is more powerfully proclaimed by our lives than by our words alone. Like most people, Muslims are drawn to an authentic spiritual life that is adapted to their cultural values and shows an obvious love and respect for their culture.

One participant commented:

I found that the key to gaining people’s trust and beginning to share with them was to be culturally appropriate. Because I respect them and I want to be like them, they feel valued. They feel their way is the best way—their dress, their way to move and cook and to be woman, to be a woman of God. They taught me to be more like them. I have three children, and whatever they do with their children, I do too. We ate the same food, we lived like them, and they now trust me.¹⁴

At the completion of a development project, an independent survey group questioned the people in a South Asian

village about the impact of the developers' work. A field worker told of one woman who called the survey team into her house, closed the door and said, "No one else in the village will tell you this about these infidels, but I want to tell you. Before they came, I did not believe that there were good people in the world—but these foreigners who have come have convinced me that good people do exist, and I want to raise my children to be good."¹⁵

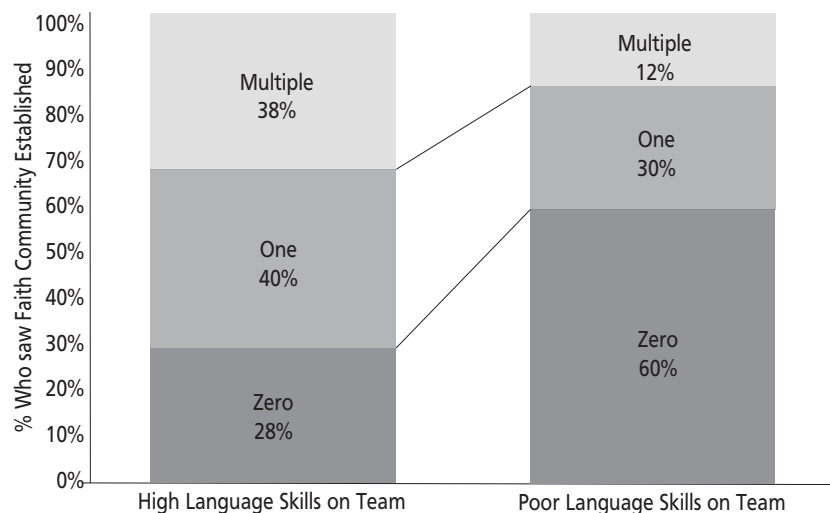
By far, the longest list of Fruitful Practices related to these seven themes falls into the area of the gospel-bearers' reputation—that of the individual, the gospel-bearing team, and the new faith community:

- **Individuals:** Fruitful cross-cultural workers were known as people who demonstrated honor and respect to the local people, who behaved in culturally appropriate ways, and who modeled lives of genuine spirituality, service and obedience of faith as followers of Jesus. They were considered people of God who met tangible needs. They both witnessed to and demonstrated God's kingdom. They persevered through difficulty and suffering.
- **Teams:** Fruitful teams demonstrated the ability to build each other up in love and display a diversity of gifting in service.
- **Faith Communities:** Fruitful faith communities retained the local culture and sought to bless the surrounding Muslim society through word and deed. These Jesus communities demonstrably loved one another. They redeemed traditional festivals and ceremonies, and shared meals and hospitality. The leaders of fruitful faith communities networked together, governed themselves and were locally accountable for finances.

4. Redemptive Bonds of Trust: Social Networks

Fruitful workers also tend to be more effective when they allow the gospel

Figure 3. The percentage of participants with zero, one or multiple faith communities and whether they had someone on their team with high language skill or not.²⁸



to transform networks among whom trust relationships already exist, such as within families and other natural social groups. Some call this a *transformational model* of forming fellowships. This approach was demonstrated to be more effective than an *attractional model* of forming fellowships, which extracts people from their natural social networks and gathers them into new parallel networks of relative strangers who may have little trust for each other.¹⁶ As one participant at the consultation said: "Bringing strangers together and calling them community is not comprehensible in most contexts."¹⁷ Figure 5 shows what appears to be significantly higher fruitfulness of transformational over attractional models.¹⁸

One respondent explained his breakthrough in this understanding. He had taken leadership of a gospel-bearing team that had established a group through an attractional model. "I had inherited a core group of believers who had been strangers and struggled still with trust and many character issues. It was a lot of work to hold this group together. However, we had an opportunity to share the gospel with a family in another region, and that whole family came into the kingdom together. They flourished in their faith and then shared with other family units." As more families across several villages entered God's

kingdom, he said, "Our focus turned to this far more fruitful approach and we allowed the 'core group' to naturally dissolve away."¹⁹

Another worker described the process of the gospel spreading through social networks:

The first follower of Jesus was an elder in the village. He was afraid that if he announced his faith in Christ he would be cast out of his village. He would lose his wife, he would lose his children, his grandchildren, and everyone else. So, he began doing Bible studies with his wife to seek to lead her to faith before he made a public announcement. She did come to faith. Eventually they let their children know that they were followers of Jesus Christ. That was important in setting an example for the community. Now there are many believers in the village, and they meet together regularly for prayer and worship. It's just natural for the gospel to flow along family lines. Now in this one region, forty families are either believers or sympathetic [to God's kingdom], and a majority of those have been baptized now. Most of these faith communities were organized around families, then also through friendship networks—people that they knew, people [who] had gone to university together, worked together, and things like that. Community was natu-

rally reproducible. Other groups were easily started.

Fruitful field workers (without imposing their own preferences) helped seekers and believers find appropriate ways to identify themselves to their community as followers of Jesus and to remain within their natural social network. Believers were encouraged to establish healthy relationships with each other. Fruitful workers and faith communities continued to share the gospel through existing social networks.

5. Getting the Word Out: Scripture Use

Fruitful teams use a variety of creative means to communicate Scripture. As already mentioned, this includes using terms familiar to Muslims (see Figure 4). This would suggest that culturally-appropriate translations of the Bible for Muslim societies could make a significant contribution to the receptivity of Gospel. Muslims value the Quran and many memorize it and recite it, so they value Scripture in written as well as oral forms. And because so many in Muslim societies have a preference for oral learning, effective practitioners often sow Scripture widely through creative use of oral Bible stories.

Creative methods of using Scripture include culturally relevant storying (described above), radio and video dramas, oral and literate inductive studies, incorporating Scripture presentations in festivals, lifecycle celebrations,²⁰ everyday use of proverbs, interactive Internet sites, phone texting, and much more.

One member of a team said, “We quickly found many of the Bible study packages from the West were culture bound and not relevant to the local believers. We discovered the power of inductive studies in the Scriptures. Believers were able to look at Bible passages with the filters of their own culture. So when they engaged in the inductive activities of observation, interpretation and application of the section of Scripture, they naturally contextualized their understanding

If you wait until they’re clearly identified [as followers of Jesus], then there’s a gap that grows between the new believer and the one he is talking to.

of the Scriptures—while still keeping hermeneutic integrity.”²¹

Fruitful workers and faith communities use the Bible as the central source for life, growth and mission. It is their primary means of sharing the gospel, training new believers and developing leaders. They identify and use culturally appropriate Bible passages to communicate God’s message in a wide variety of ways, while also seeking to sow it broadly. Believers are taught and encouraged to follow the Holy Spirit’s leading in applying the Bible to their context.

6. Faith, Community, Leadership: Intentional Reproduction

Fruitful teams keep the end in mind. They teach seekers and new believers to apply what they learn and pass it on to someone else. In the best examples, this principle of reproducibility is applied not only to believers reproducing faith in seekers, but also to communities reproducing communities and leadership reproducing leadership.

One respondent made it a priority to read the Bible with everyone who was interested. Afterwards, he told them that before they came to visit him again, they had to share what they learned

with someone else. He explained, “The question they always have is, ‘Who do I do it with?’ I tell them, ‘Start with your wife. Just sit down and tell your wife what you learned from me.’ Right from the beginning, they have this concept built in: what I learn, I share with someone else. As seekers, anybody can talk to me and just say, ‘Oh, I’m just asking about his religion.’ There’s no problem about talking about religion. The penalty is very low. If you wait until they’re clearly identified [as followers of Jesus], then there’s a gap that grows between the new believer and the one he is talking to, and that becomes an issue. When you pass on what you learn, you learn it yourself. Once you repeat a story to someone else, it becomes yours.”²²

Another participant interviewed encourages seekers to be change agents in their society and to share what they learn from the very beginning. “There’s much ground they still need to cover in terms of what they believe, who they are, but since they share it with others, the conviction of truth grows and everything becomes natural for them. They discover what they believe from the Word as a community. From the very beginning, even before they come to faith, all of the

Figure 4. Fruitfulness compared with responses of field practitioners to the statement: “When communicating the gospel, I intentionally use terms that local Muslims will understand from their own culture, language, or religious background.”²⁹

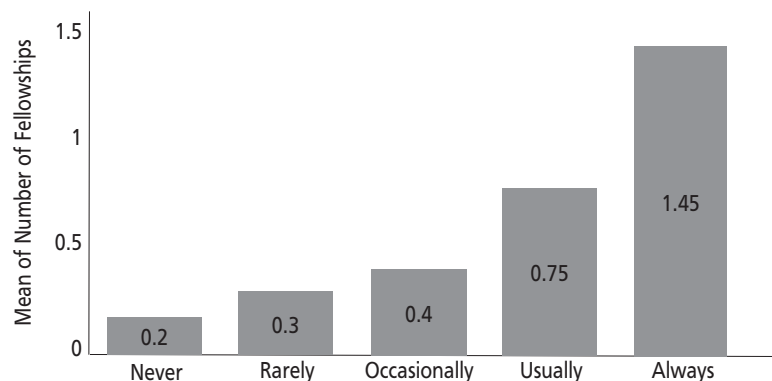
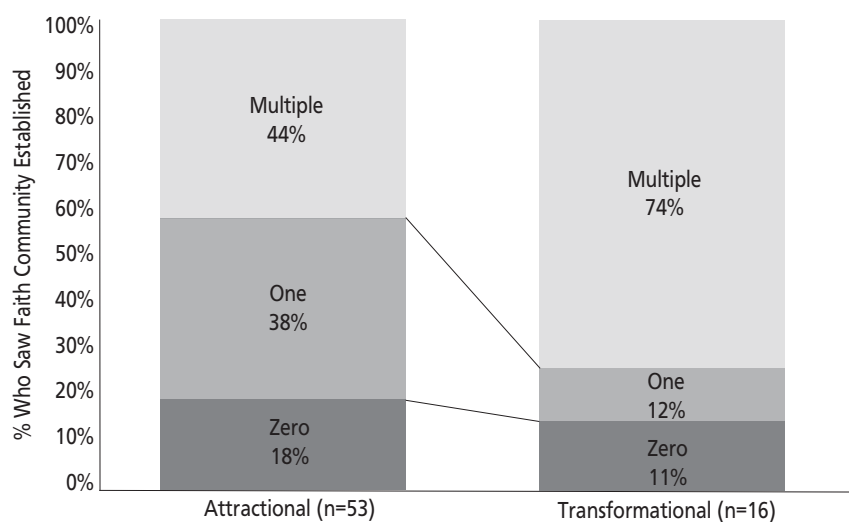


Figure 5. The average number of faith communities facilitated by those using an 'Attractional' model vs. a 'Transformational' model.³⁰



disciples and seekers are expected to share what they have learned.”

He describes what this looks like, saying, “After a Bible study, [several Muslim leaders who had come to faith in Jesus] were encouraged to go out and duplicate what they experienced with other leaders. They asked other chiefs if they could have a Holy Book study in their villages. So these guys are the ones now reproducing the model of deliberately going to leaders and engaging them in Scripture.”²³

Fruitful workers and faith communities intentionally model following Jesus in relationships with believers and seekers. They begin discipling seekers as part of the process of coming to faith, and they encourage seekers to share what God is doing in their lives from the beginning. They disciple others in settings that fit the situation, encourage believers to share their faith, and prepare believers to explain why they believe. Fruitful workers and faith communities intentionally develop and reproduce leaders, acknowledging emerging leaders early in the process of building a community of faith. They mentor leaders who in turn mentor others. Fruitful faith communities equip their members to share their faith in effective and culturally appropriate ways. They involve their children in worship and ministry to

encourage faith to pass on and reproduce in the next generation. A number of fields demonstrated that fellowships which networked together found it easier to reproduce new fellowships.

7. A Holy Sacrifice: Prayer

Prayer is not an afterthought. It is essential to every aspect of the process of forming faith communities. Fruitful workers are known as people of prayer, individually and corporately. They mobilize strategic prayer for the people they serve.

One interviewed participant told us:

One of the things workers at our NGO would do every morning at the beginning of their day was to pray together. They had a paper flip chart on which they write down prayer requests. Every morning, they prayed for these requests—expecting God to intervene—adding new ones and recording those that had been answered. An elderly Muslim gentleman, one of the elders of the village, watched this small group go through this ritual over weeks and months. He would come in periodically, going through all the flipped pages, looking over all of the prayer requests that had been answered. Over time he finally responded, “These people are the ones God is listening to. It’s their prayers in Christ’s name that are being answered. Our people’s prayers are rarely answered. The truth

is with Jesus.” One of the NGO workers observed that this was a kind of power encounter, leaving a profound impression on the elderly gentleman who witnessed it, and on the community around him.²⁴

Another team leader described his experience of a prayer movement that over five years developed from a handful of people to a network of more than 10,000 within the country who are committed to strategic prayer. He said, “As the annual prayer meetings grew and local networks of prayer sprang up across the country, we noticed a simultaneous ‘temperature change’ in Christians’ attitudes toward Muslims—from antagonism, to fear, to a tentative openness for Muslims to hear the gospel.” One night, he and a team mate were invited to talk about prayer to about thirty young adults. In the past, he had sat through countless prayer meetings while many prayed with tepid faith: O Lord, maybe someday you might do a little bit in our country. “But at this meeting,” he recalls, “when we told them that God had called us here to bless Muslims, the group surged around us, laid hands on us, and prayed: ‘O God, pour out your power! Move on our land!’ Their prayers revealed a tangibly different faith.” Today more Muslims in this country are putting faith in Jesus than ever before in their history.”²⁵

Fruitful workers and faith communities engage in regular, frequent corporate prayer and fasting. They mobilize extensive, intentional, and focused prayer. They pray for God’s supernatural intervention as a sign that confirms the gospel, and they pray for the needs of their friends in their presence.

Fruitfulness in Our Work

These seven themes summarize categories of fruitful activities distilled from the experience of the 300 practitioners at the 2007 consultation. They are not prescriptive—that is, they do not ensure success. Contexts and “soils” are different, as are the spiritual gifts and competencies of the gospel

bearer. And of course the Holy Spirit often moves in surprising ways.

Similarly, each farmer throughout the world works with a different set of contexts, soils, competencies and weather. Yet an understanding of effective agricultural practices is relevant among widely diverse circumstances. Successful farmers learn to understand and apply sound principles of agriculture to their specific conditions to produce the best possible harvest.

This initial analysis suggests emerging categories of activities that are associated with fruitful efforts in the Muslim world. They may be the beginning of an understanding of how God is drawing the Muslim heart into His Kingdom—and allow us to better participate with him in this effort.

Over the next few years, we will continue to interact with practitioners to increase our understanding—making a special effort to include the experience of non-Western workers and the perspectives of Muslim background believers. May this allow us to be better stewards of opportunities to nurture the seeds of faith the Father is growing in the Muslim world today. **IJFM**

Acknowledgments

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Endnotes

¹ In our analysis, we used a mixed methods approach, specifically the Concurrent Triangulation Model. We analyzed surveys using quantitative techniques appropriate to the type of data collected and the hypotheses being tested. These included cross-tabulation with subsequent Chi-square testing, t-tests, logistic regression, multi-dimensional scaling and cluster analysis. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative methods (narrative and phoneme coding) based in grounded theory. For some analyses, this included the use of a computer program designed for this purpose (Atlas.ti). For more detail, please see Don Allen, "A brief review of mixed methods research and its application to Fruitful Practices for church planting among Muslims" (2008). This unpublished paper is available from the authors at fruitfulpractices@knowledgestewardship.org.

² See "Further Selected Reading" at the end of this paper for seminal discussions on each of these factors.

³ For a more thorough discussion of the insights from this consultation, see J. Dudley Woodberry, ed. *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues among Muslims*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2008.

⁴ We use 'heart language,' 'local language' and 'mother tongue' interchangeably to describe the language spoken in the home.

⁵ Fruitful Practices Consultation Interview 30, 2007.

⁶ Eric Adams, personal experience, S Asia, 1996.

⁷ The Knowledge Stewardship Team. 2008. Modeling the relationship between contextual factors and fruitfulness in church planting. In: *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues among Muslims*, Dudley Woodberry, ed. Pasadena: William Carey Library. CDROM Appendix, pp.41.

⁸ The Knowledge Stewardship Team, 2008.

⁹ The Knowledge Stewardship Team, 2008.

¹⁰ Daniels, G., *An Ethnography of Fruitful Practices*, Narrative Research Fellowship, The Knowledge Stewardship Team, 2008, p. 45.

¹¹ Daniels, G., 2008, p. 45.

¹² Fruitful Practices Consultation Interview 30, 2007.

¹³ Eric Adams, personal communication with Rick Brown.

¹⁴ Daniels, 2008, p.14.

¹⁵ Eric Adams, personal communication, 1995.

¹⁶ Gray, Gray, Baker and Fish. Manuscript in progress, 2009.

¹⁷ Small group No. 4 discussion, 2007 GTFP consultation.

¹⁸ Gray, Gray, Baker and Fish, 2009.

¹⁹ Interview between Eric Adams and Alex Dwight, 11 December 2008.

²⁰ Life cycle events include birth, coming of age, circumcision, marriage, death.

²¹ Eric Adams personal experience, S Asia, 1993.

²² Fruitful Practices Consultation Interview 13, 2007.

²³ Fruitful Practices Consultation Interview 79, 2007.

²⁴ Daniels, 2008, p.48.

²⁵ Interview between EJ Martin and Owen Campbell. November 17, 2008.

²⁶ The Knowledge Stewardship Team. 2008.

²⁷ The Knowledge Stewardship Team. 2008.

²⁸ The Knowledge Stewardship Team. 2008.

²⁹ Knowledge Stewardship Team, Regional survey project, 2008.

³⁰ Gray, Gray, Baker and Fish. Manuscript in progress.

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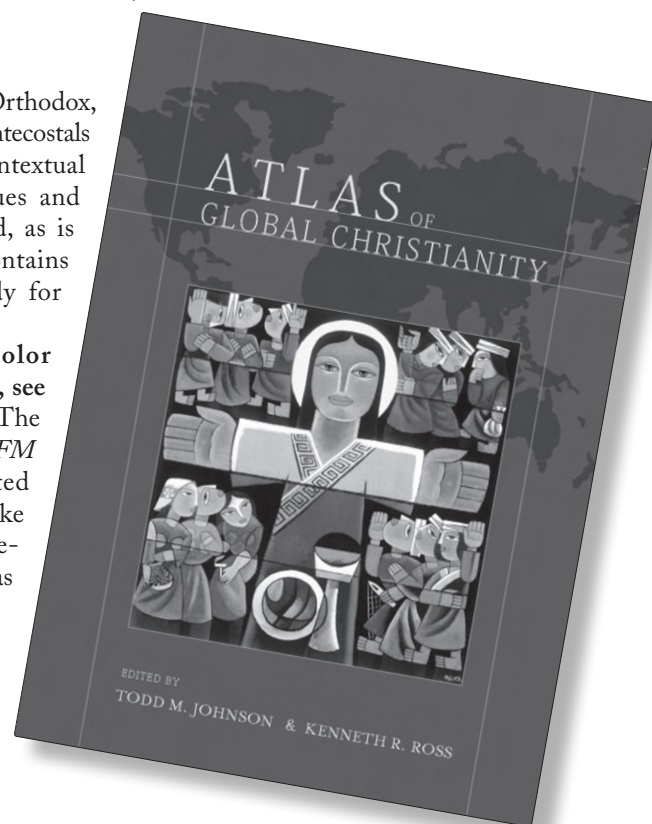
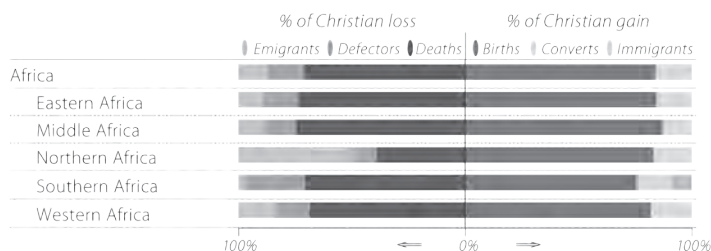


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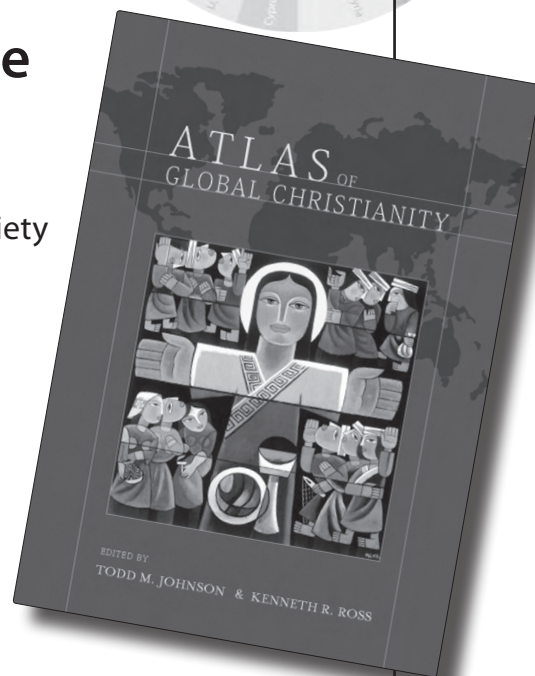
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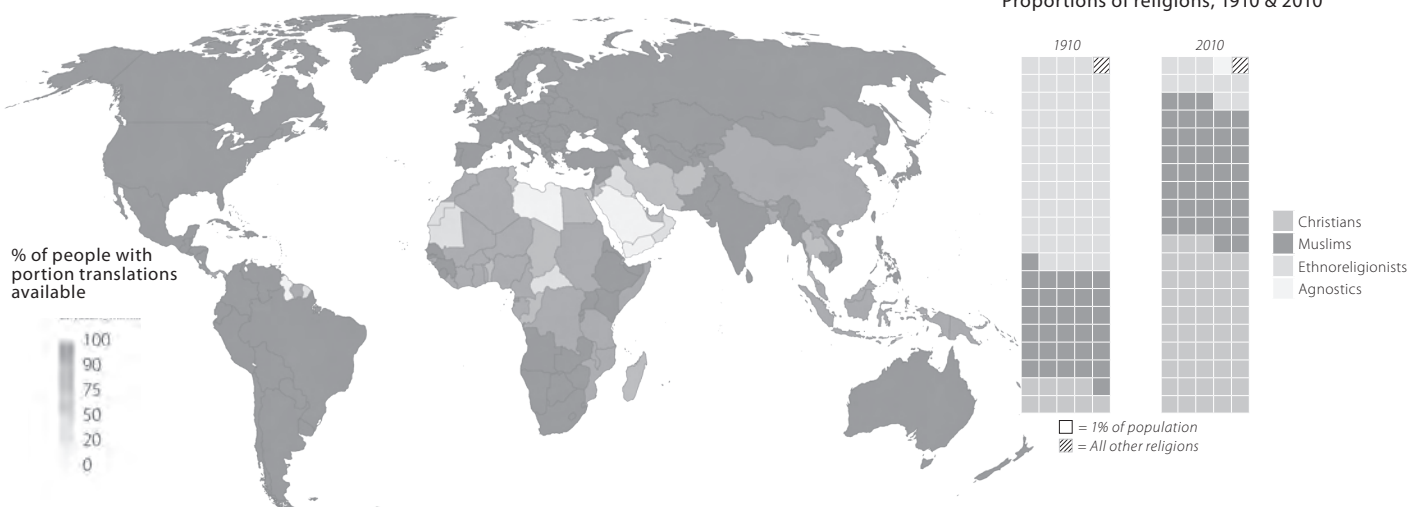
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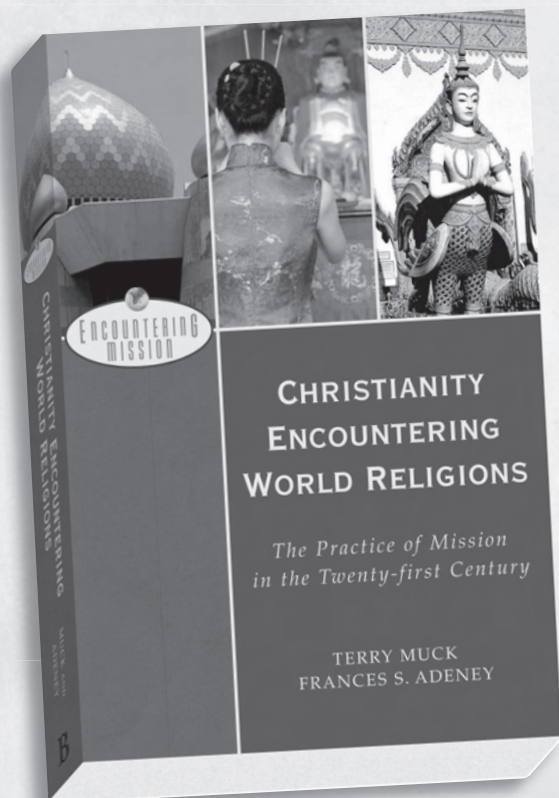
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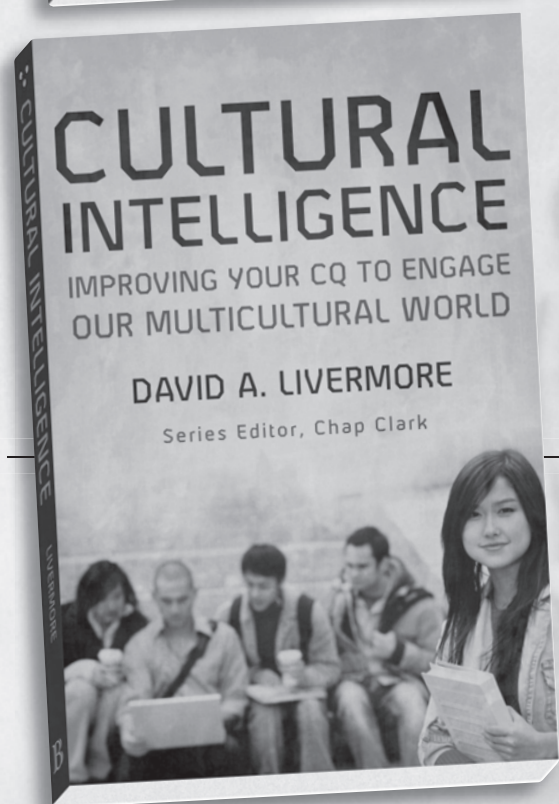
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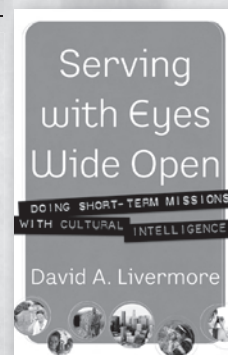
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Like Bright Sunlight

The Benefit of Communicating in Heart Language

by Rick Brown

Communication only occurs when a message is both successfully transmitted *and* received. In human communication, the sender's use of the receiver's heart language is a sign of love and respect, and it is an essential (and humbling) element of incarnational ministry. In their article "Seven Themes of Fruitfulness" (pp. 75-81 of this issue),¹ the authors cite quantitative research demonstrating the benefits of using the heart language of people rather than a second language. Their statistics show that ministry in the local language, as opposed to a regional language, correlates with four to five times greater likelihood of seeing multiple churches emerge and movements begin.²

There is an abundance of qualitative evidence as well. In an African country, a national mission leader told me they had shown the JESUS film for years to millions of people, using an official language, with only modest results. When they started showing the film using local languages, however, people responded in a marvelous way. He said, "It was like people were seeing a different film, even if they had seen the former one before. It was worth all the effort to put it into their dialect."

A believer in the Philippines said, "Now that I am reading the Bible in my own language, I have a clearer grasp of Christian doctrine. My confidence in the truth of God's Word is stronger because it is as if God is speaking directly to me."

A pastor in Asia had been using the regional language for twenty years before he discovered the clarity and impact of presenting the Gospel in the local language. The pastor said that using the regional language "was like reading in moonlight," but using the local language "is like bright sunlight."

Missions across the world have found it especially fruitful to conduct evangelism and discipleship through Bible storying and audio Bible discussion groups in the heart language of the people.³

Use of a people's heart language affirms their personal worth and opens hearts and minds to hear the message. Lamin Sanneh's historical research in this area concludes that it is Christianity's use of local languages, especially for Scripture, that "turned Christianity into the possession of the worldwide human family"

Rick Brown is a Bible scholar and missiologist. He has been involved in outreach in Africa and Asia since 1977.

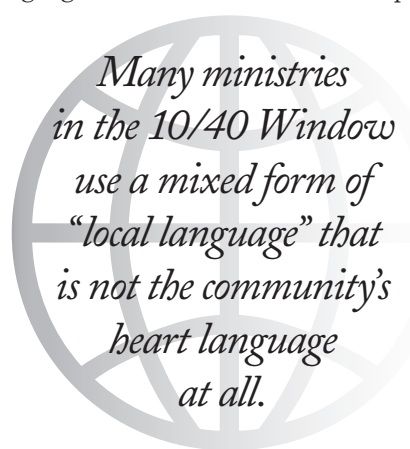
and that “without translation there would be no Christianity or Christians.”⁴

This language issue is not, however, a simple dichotomy between heart language and second language. Many ministries in the 10/40 Window use a mixed form of “local language” that is not the community’s heart language at all. The ministries do this by rejecting the people’s own religious terms and names and using ones from outside their socioreligious community. Some churchmen and missionaries, for example, have rejected local names for the Most High God and introduced foreign names like ‘Dio.’ Some have rejected the name ‘Isa Messih’ for “Jesus Christ” and used phrases like ‘Yezu Kristo.’ Some have rejected local words for priest, prophet, and prayer and used words from outside. This gives a foreign taint to the Gospel and those who follow it, estranging them from the rest of the community. While affirming the people’s language can open minds and hearts, rejecting their vocabulary still conveys rejection of their identity and worth. This in turn prompts people to reject both the communicators and their message. Muslims may be no more hostile or resistant than anyone else to the biblical Gospel of Jesus Christ but they are quite sensitive to rejection of their language, culture, and social identity. When presented with the biblical Gospel in their own style and vocabulary, open-minded Muslims often respond with exclamations of joy, saying “This is *our* Book!”⁵

The consequences of rejecting religious vocabulary are evident in the “Seven Themes of Fruitfulness” article, in the analysis of responses to the following statement: “When communicating the Gospel, I intentionally use terms that local Muslims will understand from their own culture, language, or religious background.” Correlations among responses and self-reported results indicate that ministries that *always* use authentic heart-language terminology are four to six times more likely to see churches emerge from their work than

ministries which never, rarely, or only occasionally use heart terminology. This huge difference boils down to a simple decision: to communicate with the audience using their own vocabulary or to reject that in favor of outside religious terminology. Looking at the history of Christianity, Lamin Sanneh observes that “in the relevant cases, Christian expansion and revival were limited to those societies that preserved the indigenuous name for God.”⁶

There is a human tendency to try to restrict God’s Word to a “sacred” language. Muslims around the world pray



and recite Scripture in ancient Arabic, while Jews do the same with ancient Hebrew.⁷ Does God really want His Word presented in “sacred” language, as so many people seem to think? Does not the Bible itself demonstrate that God reveals His truth through humble people in humble tongues, rather than in prestigious or “sacred” languages?

Consider the patriarch Abraham. He probably knew one or two of the international languages of his day. Growing up near Ur, he would have known Akkadian, the language of urban Mesopotamia. He probably learned the Egyptian language while he was in Egypt, since he talked to people there. As a shepherding nomad, Abraham would have known Amorite or some form of proto-Arabic, probably as his mother tongue.⁸ He likely knew Aramaic, because he lived for some time in Haran, an Aramean region.⁹ Abraham, however, moved on to Canaan. His two sons grew

up speaking Canaanite, as did his grandson Jacob.¹⁰ Jacob’s descendants continued to speak a dialect of this Canaanite language, which we call “Hebrew.”¹¹ Canaanite was not a major language used for literature or diplomacy. It was used locally for religion, but Canaanite religion was an abomination. Nevertheless, God used this Canaanite language, including its religious terms, to reveal His message to the children of Israel through the prophets and authors of the Hebrew Bible, no doubt because it was the language they spoke and understood. *If God had wanted to use a prestigious, literary language, He could have revealed His eternal truths in Egyptian or Akkadian, but he chose instead to use the language of the recipients of his message.*

By the time of Christ, the situation had changed. Most Palestinian Jews and Samaritans spoke Aramaic, but some knew colloquial Greek and some spoke colloquial Hebrew. Biblical Hebrew had become archaic and was treated as a sacred language for religious texts and ritual. Across the whole region, literary Greek was the language of literature and higher education. The common people, however, spoke colloquial (*Koiné*) Greek and used it to write personal letters. God could have used any of these languages. Jesus, however, chose to speak in everyday Aramaic, while the apostles He sent westwards used colloquial Greek. The New Testament was written, not in the sacred Hebrew language used for religious texts, nor in the Literary Greek used for literature and philosophy, but in colloquial Greek, no doubt because it was the mostly widely understood language of the time. *Instead of using sacred or prestigious language, God chose to reveal His Word to all levels of society by using everyday language.*

Jesus told His disciples to spread the Gospel to every people group, but not until they had received the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–8). When that happened on Pentecost, this power manifested itself in proclamations of God’s goodness in a multitude of

languages, such that those who heard this “were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:6 ESV). The miracle of Pentecost clearly indicated that God wanted the Good News was to be shared with the nations in their own languages.

It is instructive to look at the ministry of the Apostle Paul. He had success using Greek in Greek-speaking communities, but when he went to Jerusalem and faced a mob, the people did not listen to him until he began speaking their heart language: “When they heard him speaking in their own language, the silence was even greater” (Act 22:2 NLT).¹² Paul’s success was more limited with people whose language he could not speak. When he and Barnabas preached in Lystra (Acts 14:8–20), the local people failed to understand their Greek-language message and said in their own language, Lycaonian, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” (Act 14:11 ESV). Paul and Barnabas tried to explain who they were, but “even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them” (Act 14:18 ESV).

The early church spread the message to many places. In most places, the believers translated the Gospel into the local languages: into multiple dialects of Coptic, Syriac, and Aramaic, and into Latin. When they encountered people speaking languages that were not written, the early Christian missionaries preached the message in the spoken languages, and in many cases they developed alphabets and translated the Bible into them. These include Armenian, Ethiopic, Nubian, Georgian, Slavonic (Old Russian), Gothic (Old German), and others. When Saint Jerome translated the Bible into Latin, he did not use the Literary Latin used in all books up to that time; instead, he wrote in a colloquial Latin so that the common people could understand it. Lamin Sanneh describes the principle followed by the early church:

Each of the ancient people groups who had the Scriptures in their own language held on to the biblical faith.

The general rule that people had a right to understand what they were being taught was matched by the view that there was nothing God wanted to say that could not be said in simple everyday language. God would not confound people about the truth, and that made the language of religion compatible with ordinary human understanding. The gospel proclamation stripped religious discourse of the hocus-pocus and elevated the voice of the [common people].¹³

If these people groups had not been given God’s Word in their own spoken languages, their knowledge of the biblical faith would have been weak and unsustainable over the generations. This is evident from one of the tragedies of history, namely that the Scriptures were not translated by the early church into Persian, Arabic,¹⁴ Himyaritic (ancient Yemeni) or Berber, even though there were many believers among them and many churches and clergy. The churchmen in these places, many of whom were foreigners, insisted on presenting God’s Word in prestigious languages, namely Syriac, Greek and Latin. The result was that everyday believers lacked a good understanding of God’s Word and were vulnerable to other winds of doctrine.¹⁵ When Islam arose in the seventh and eighth centuries, these Bibleless churches nearly disappeared.¹⁶ Although the prophet of Islam had endorsed the Christian Scriptures and urged study of them, the lack of a Bible in Arabic prevented this, leaving the Islamic tradition to develop in a direction that lacked biblical foundations or any use for the Bible. *In contrast to this tragedy of dependence on second-language Bibles, each of the ancient people groups who had the Scriptures in their own language held on to the biblical faith.* Today, when the message of the Bible is made available to people groups in their own spoken

languages, through the JESUS Film, Bible storying, and new translations of Scripture, the result is that many people come to a fresh understanding and appreciation of the Gospel.

The lesson of Scripture and history, then, is that God’s message should be presented in common language that is clear and memorable and not just in language that is prestigious, sacred, or traditional. In the words of Lamin Sanneh, “We would do well to remember that the language of Christianity is the language of the people, whoever they happen to be.”¹⁷

The calling to use heart language was reiterated in the summer of 2000, when over 12,000 evangelists gathered in Amsterdam from over 200 countries for Billy Graham’s World Conference for Evangelists. They summarized their conclusions in the “Amsterdam Declaration” on evangelism. Their eighth point highlights the importance of communicating God’s message in the local language, and it is a fitting conclusion for this article:

The Bible is indispensable to true evangelism. The Word of God itself provides both the content and authority for all evangelism. Without it there is no message to preach to the lost. People must be brought to an understanding of at least some of the basic truths contained in the Scriptures before they can make a meaningful response to the Gospel. *Thus we must proclaim and disseminate the Holy Scriptures in the heart language of all those we are called to evangelize and disciple. We pledge ourselves to keep the Scriptures at the very heart of our evangelistic outreach and message, and to remove all known language and cultural barriers to a clear understanding of the gospel on the part of our hearers.*¹⁸ [emphasis added] **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ Eric Adams, Don Allen, and Bob Fish, "Seven Themes of Fruitfulness," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, 26/2 (2009), pp. 75-81. See also in this issue Dye, T. Wayne "The Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement," (pp. 89-98) where it discusses the use of "local languages" as "the key" to engaging people effectively with Scripture.

² Some situations, however, require use of the regional language because the community includes speakers of diverse mother tongues or ones who speak the regional language as their mother tongue. These situations may account for many cases where church multiplication occurred in a context of regional language use.

³ See www.chronologicalbiblestorying.com and www.faithcomesbyhearing.com/faith-comes-hearing-program. See correlations with fruitfulness in the "Seven Themes of Fruitfulness" article.

⁴ Sanneh, Lamin, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 107, 97.

⁵ Unfortunately, many Bible translations are produced by and for cultural Christians, with little thought for the Scripture needs of other major cultures, such as Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc., who generally need a version of their own, in authentic heart language and style.

⁶ *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* pp. 31-32.

⁷ This tendency is widespread. Hindus treat Sanskrit as a sacred language, and Theravada Buddhists use Pali, neither of which are living languages. The Greek Orthodox Church conducts ritual and Bible readings in ancient Greek, the Russian Orthodox Church in Old Church Slavonic, the Syriac churches in ancient Syriac, and the Armenian Orthodox churches in ancient Armenian. The same was once true of Latin in the Roman Catholic Church, and many Anglophone Protestants used to regard the archaic English of the King James Version, with its many borrowings from the Latin Vulgate, as a "sacred" language.

⁸ Traces of Amorite survive in some Amorite names written in Akkadian. If proto-Arabic was distinct from Amorite at that period (2000 B.C.), there is no evidence of it.

⁹ Abraham's brother Nahor, who settled in Haran, is called the father of several "Aramean" tribes (Genesis 22:20-23).

¹⁰ When Jacob and Laban named a monument they had built, Laban named it with an Aramaic phrase, but Jacob named it with a Canaanite name (Genesis 31:47).

¹¹ Their dialect is never called "Hebrew" in the Old Testament, but it is called "the language of Canaan" (Isaiah 19:18), while the variety used in Judah was called "Judaean" (2 Kings 18:28; Isaiah 36:11, 13) or "the language of Judah" (Nehemiah 13:24, 2 Chronicles 32:18).

¹² This verse uses a term that means the language of the Hebrews, but it is not known which language Paul used. Some translations put 'Hebrew' and some put 'Aramaic', while the New Living Translation just puts 'their own language.'

¹³ *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* p. 98.

¹⁴ In *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), author Kenneth Cragg points out that Arabs were present at Pentecost and that Arabian bishops attended the Council of Nicea.

¹⁵ The churches of St. Thomas on the Malabar coast of India have used a Syriac Bible and a Syriac liturgy since ancient times. On the other hand, they have also had a rich oral tradition of Bible stories and ballads in their own Malayalam language, which they say goes back to the disciple Thomas, and this heart-language "oral Bible" nourished their faith through the centuries (from personal correspondence with Rajan Mathews).

¹⁶ The Scriptures were eventually translated into Arabic, many times in fact, but for centuries the churches continued to use Syriac and Coptic, even when these had become dead languages.

¹⁷ *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* p. 69.

¹⁸ *The Amsterdam Declaration*, §8 <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/augustweb-only/13.0.html>>

The Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement

Social and Cultural Factors Necessary for Vernacular Bible Translation to Achieve Maximum Effect

by T. Wayne Dye

Modern scholars recognize the power of the Scriptures in one's own language. Yale University professor Lamin Sanneh attributes the dramatic expansion of the African church to the translation of the Scriptures into the local language (1989, 123–125). As historian Mark Noll has observed,

Over the course of the last century, Christian penetration of local cultures has accelerated as never before. The great vehicle of that acceleration has been translation, primarily translations of the Bible into local languages . . . In a word, the world Christian situation is marked by multiplicity because of how deeply the Christian message, translated into local languages, has become part of local cultures (2005).

Local Languages are the Key

The Scriptures themselves, as well as cultural and sociolinguistic factors, illuminate why it was the Bible in local languages that has brought this transformation, rather than just the Bible in some other language used in the local area. These differences can be summed up as “understanding” and “proximity.”

We Christians worship a God who wants a very intimate relationship with each person. Jesus taught us to pray to our “Father,” our “dada” as Paul put it in Romans 8:15. Jesus said we are loved and He wants us to love Him with every part of our being. This kind of love requires the engagement of our minds. As Paul said, “This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:9–10).

Jesus spoke of repentance as the natural result of understanding. When Philip met the Ethiopian official, he did not ask whether the man was really committed or whether he had actually gone to the temple. He first asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Understanding is an Old Testament emphasis as well; more than fifty passages speak of understanding as a basic requirement of faith.

In many parts of the world, two or more languages are in regular use, and it is critical to use the best one for Christian teaching. As Donald McGavran put it,

Wayne Dye teaches full time at the at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics and is a member of Wycliffe Bible Translators. He has also served with SIL International as a Scripture use consultant since 1983 when he pioneered the role for the organization. He served as a Bible translator in Papua New Guinea for 20+ years. With his wife, Sally, he has consulted in about 30 countries on Scripture engagement. His MA is in anthropology from the Univ. of Michigan and his PhD in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary.

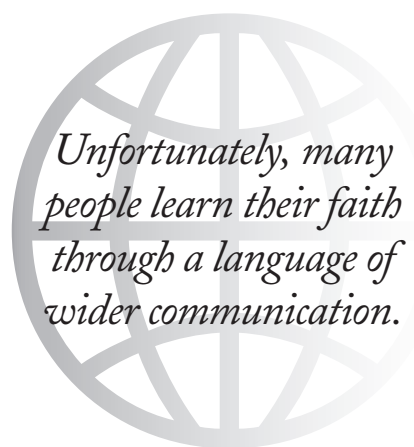
Hundreds of millions live in two worlds. The first, of great importance to them, is that of intimates who speak the same language; the second, of relatively slight importance, is that world of a strange tongue in which we trade and work with outsiders. In the first, the medium of *communication* is the language of the heart; in the second, the language of *confusion* is a trade language or standard language, good enough for buying and selling, taking orders and finding one's way, but pitifully inadequate for the things that really matter. People fight, make love, and mourn in their mother tongue (1990, 159–160 italics his).

Linguists call the second language the Language of Wider Communication, or LWC. When the Bible is read and the faith taught in the LWC many people are unable to decipher what was said. Typical of many minority groups was the situation of the Bajju in Nigeria, studied by Carol McKinney (1990, 279–290). Many Bajju believers had been active in church for more than twenty years, but their level of understanding of Christian teaching varied from reasonably good to not even knowing who Jesus is. Their understanding was directly proportional to their fluency in Hausa, the LWC of that area and the language spoken in church. Since Christian growth depends on understanding, faithful church members who didn't understand Hausa were blocked from growing in their faith.

Even when people understand the Bible in a second language, the truth often loses its impact because hearers perceive God as distant and Christian faith as of little relevance to their daily lives. Good Christian living is about interpersonal relations, about emotion, about the deep springs of human life. Teaching that is all in the LWC suggests that Christian living is only for one's public persona, and internal spiritual growth is seriously hindered.

Unfortunately, many people learn their Christian faith through a language of wider communication, while traditional folk religion is in their local language.

This problem was widespread when I worked with some missionary and local colleagues in the Central African Republic. Witchcraft accusations and sorcery were part of daily lives of active church-going Christians. We reported this in a seminar for leading evangelical pastors in the capital. They responded that they fully believed the whole range of African Traditional Religion and assumed that God had given it to them for their welfare. Since they knew and used the national language in all their church teaching, I asked them which national language terms they used for



witchcraft, sorcery, amulets and other concepts in their traditional religion. After pondering for a while, one finally said, "We don't know what the terms would be in the national language; we only talk about traditional religion in our local languages" (T. W. Dye 1996). They believed and taught two incompatible religions, but by using different languages for each they had never noticed a conflict.

To sum up this section, the vitality of Christian faith depends on the Bible being understood and its teaching brought into daily life. Both are hindered when only a language of wider communication is used with people who are most at home in their local language. This hindrance can be tragic, because when the Word of God does get into their lives, people are transformed.

Why Scripture Engagement Work Is Needed

Scripture engagement does not happen automatically, however. Many trans-

lations are actually read or heard by very few in their target audience. In recent decades the Bible translation movement has recognized that more than translation is often needed. Workers have therefore sought ways to encourage people to actually use the Scriptures in their language in life changing ways. Many organizations have formed to promote literacy, create books, pictures, audio, and video, and develop a great variety of equipment to present the Bible in creative ways for various cultural contexts.

However, these materials leave Christian workers with an important question: "Which resource will be strategic in my situation?" That was the question put to me when I returned to Papua New Guinea in 2007 to further study the Bahinemo language. Workers there had gathered a very wide array of wonderful tools for communicating the Bible. They told me that despite having so many good methods, they could offer little help to their colleagues working in any particular language. They wanted to know how to use these materials most effectively.

I could not evaluate these methods without knowing much more about each specific situation in order to see which of a bewildering variety of factors might be influencing Scripture engagement. I offered a two and a half week workshop to teach their consultants how to categorize the various factors that influence the use of Scriptures, how to use a numerical score to see where an intervention is most needed, and how to choose strategic Scripture engagement activities for the specific issues in each translation project. These workers learned a model for choosing the most strategic activities to foster Scripture engagement. They are now teaching it to others.

The Conditions Necessary for Effective Scripture Engagement

The Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement proposed here form an analytical framework that draws from the disciplines of linguistics, sociolin-

guistics, ethnography, and missiology. Interventions can be made to improve each condition to make the situation more conducive for people to use the Scriptures in their language. This model is built on twenty-five years of consulting and on the research and experience of many involved in Bible translation.¹ The model is informed by the work of a steadily growing number of trained people who are using it.² Together we have identified numerous social and cultural factors that influence people to use Scriptures.

It is possible to group the helps and hindrances into a small number of categories, which I call “conditions.” The conditions proposed here are not a list of single items; instead, they are categories of multiple factors that can affect the eventual use or non-use of the Scriptures. There are many different ways to change a condition, each appropriate to some situations but not others. When all eight conditions are met,

Unless these weak conditions are strengthened, the Scriptures are not likely to be used in that situation.

good Scripture engagement is highly likely. When even one is unmet or very poorly met, engagement becomes problematic. These eight conditions are:

Condition 1. Appropriate Language, Dialect and Orthography

Condition 2. Appropriate Translation

Condition 3. Accessible Forms of Scripture

Condition 4. Background Knowledge of the Hearer

Condition 5. Availability

Condition 6. Spiritual Hunger of Community Members

Condition 7. Freedom to Commit to Christian Faith

Condition 8. Partnership Between Translators and Other Stakeholders

Condition 8 addresses the essential factors of interpersonal relationships with local pastors and leaders and inter-mission relationships. Condition 8 is more important and pervasive in its effects than the other conditions. Positive relationships and cooperation between missionaries, local leaders, linguists, and Bible translators are the essential factors that enable consideration of and action on the other conditions. Conditions 1 to 7 cannot be positively met or effectively improved without first successfully addressing Condition 8.³

Over-riding cultural factors sometimes influence several of the conditions positively or negatively. In such cases we consider them under each of the conditions they influence. For example, a dominant religion that controls the social system

The Welser Scale: A Tool for Evaluating the Conditions

Since 1999, Matt and Marcia Welser have used the Eight Conditions model in their work as Scripture engagement consultants in the Americas. At that time, Marcia proposed using a scale of 0 to 10 to evaluate the strength of each of the conditions for facilitating Scripture engagement. The “Welser Scale” proved to be practical and helpful as a planning tool for determining which condition most needs improvement, a key step in determining how to encourage Scripture engagement.

Local Christian leaders, the translation team and those people ready to work on Scripture engagement begin by discussing all aspects of their language situation. In some cases they divide the situation into subgroupings, such as urban and rural or believers and unbelievers. After choosing a situation, they consider each condition separately and record a tentative “strength” score. Zero means that category of factors is entirely negative, completely blocking all Scripture engage-

ment. For instance, a language that as yet has nothing of the Bible is 0 for condition 3, accessibility of the Scriptures. At the other end of the scale, 10 means that set of factors really couldn’t be better. In the United States there are English Bibles for every conceivable viewpoint and interest, so the character of the Scriptures themselves would have a score of 10 for American English speakers. In this way, they examine each condition in turn.

When this process of clarifying intuitions is carried out by the same team and over a short period of time, it becomes realistic to compare the scores for each condition relative to the others. The scale does not, however, enable anything to be said about how one language situation compares with another, or even about how one person’s assessment of, say, Condition 3 compares with an independent judgment by another person about condition 5.

After setting a value for each condition, the team looks for those with lowest

scores. This is where they will focus their energies first; other conditions can wait. Unless these weak conditions are strengthened, the Scriptures are not likely to be used in that situation. If the Welser score for the strength of a condition measures between 7 and 10, it is reasonably well met and the situation can be left as it is. The goal is to put major effort into strengthening the conditions that most seriously block the use of the Scriptures.

The planning team must then take another step. They must closely examine the conditions that most hinder the use of Scripture, and work out which of the many Scripture engagement interventions would be most useful in that situation. Using the Welser Scale enables workers to move from awareness of Conditions for Scripture Engagement to a practical plan for bringing the most change to the situation.

For a pdf with more information about this scale, write wayne_dye@gial.edu.

will influence nearly every condition, and particularly Conditions 6 and 7.

The Eight Conditions Model provides Bible translators, community church leaders, and missionaries with a framework for strategically assessing the dizzying array of factors affecting any Bible translation project. It is a simple but effective tool for clarifying what needs to be done in each situation.

In what follows, I will first explain the nature of each condition, show how to evaluate its importance, and mention a few interventions that have made a difference in various language areas. For more information on useful interventions, see Hill and Hill, 2008 or visit the Forum of Bible Agencies International site, www.scripture-engagement.org.

Condition 1: Appropriate Language

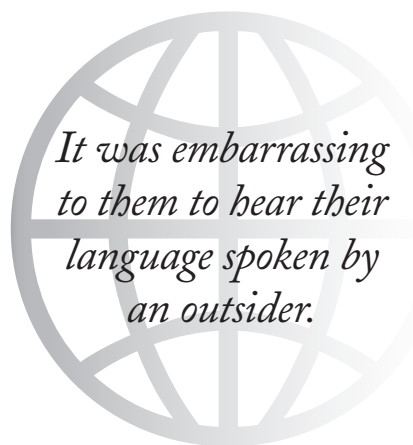
If people are to use Bibles in any language, that language, dialect, and orthography must be considered appropriate for expressing Biblical truth (Walker 1991). People only read Scriptures if they see their language as an adequate vessel for carrying the eternal Word of God. It is not uncommon for speakers to think of their own languages as too unimportant to merit a translation of the Scriptures.

For example, the Central Subanen on Mindanao Island in the Philippines had such a low view of their own language that when a missionary translator first began to learn it, they protested, "Please, do not speak my language." It was embarrassing to them to hear their language spoken by an outsider (Brichoux 1988, 27). If people consider the local language to be too menial, unimportant, or inappropriate, they are not likely to use Scriptures in that language.

When a group is switching rapidly to the official language, they will not perceive the local language to be appropriate (Hatfield & Lewis 1996). If there are high and growing levels of bilingual proficiency among a significant number of people, translated Scriptures are less likely to be used. The appro-

priate language must be determined carefully, usually through a formal sociolinguistic survey. In many such language groups, bilinguals consider the second language more proper, more appropriate for prayer and teaching, and especially for the word of God.

Walker (1988) suggests that the Scriptures in a particular language are likely to be used only when that language is dominant in at least one of these domains: church, singing, school, or occupation. This points to a serious problem. People might use the LWC for all of the above yet rarely use it at home



or for traditional religion. Such people usually do not hold their core religious concepts in that second language. Bible translation into the local language is then essential for helping them to understand the Gospel message and recognize that it is appropriate for their lives. When the LWC is used for public domains but core concepts are in the local language, an effort is needed to encourage people to value their language and recognize that it is appropriate for literature and for speaking to and about God. Positive attitudes toward local language for Christian expression may result from a socio-ideological movement among the people themselves or from a mission agency promoting the concept of relating to God in the vernacular language. Signs of positive attitudes include believers talking about issues in local language and idioms and using local music to express their Christian faith.

In multi-dialectical situations, the choice of dialect strongly influences

the use of a translation. People usually accept either their own dialect or the most prestigious dialect in their area, but may reject other dialects. Dialects tend to be rejected for very strong reasons: they may be spoken by a rival subgroup or a group which is disdained. If an inappropriate dialect is chosen for translation, it is unlikely to be used.

In addition to the language and dialect, the orthography (alphabet and spelling) and script need to be acceptable. Recent Bible translators often find serious weaknesses in missionary orthographies used before the development of modern linguistics. If a faulty orthography has led to serious ambiguities, one must work with leaders to change it and to do promotional work explaining and teaching it. If any local language orthography is much more difficult to read than the official language orthography, people will quit trying to learn it (Bendor-Samuel 1988).

In addition to being usable, an orthography and script need to be perceived as adequately prestigious for reading the Bible in that language. Often this requires that both be as much like the national language orthography and script as possible. For the most part, the choices are best made at the beginning of a project, with representatives of future users having a major part in the decision. They may need to have the choices and their possible results explained to them. Even after the choice is made and books are available, further explanations may be required before the whole community can come to a positive consensus. Building appreciation for local language and culture may be an ongoing need for Scripture engagement.

Condition 2: Acceptable Translation

People will only use a translation if they think it is really the Word of God and is in an appropriate form. The category "Acceptable Translation" encompasses a number of factors ranging from the style of the translation to the moral qualifications of translation team members. Mission agencies and indigenous churches alike must take great care to

ensure that decisions about the translation project are made with prayer and after careful consideration of local church expectations, because these can determine whether they will choose to read or hear that translation.

The way translators live can affect whether their Scriptures are accepted. Alphaeus, a Bible translation consultant in the South Pacific, was discussing his translation project with a local community leader. Some members of the translation team had had significant, protracted moral failures. Alphaeus asked that leader his opinion of the Bible translation project. He replied, "It is incredible that you translators are able to translate this very powerful book. It is even more incredible that this powerful book is not able to translate you translators; you translate the Word, but the Word is not able to translate your words and your works." The reputation of the translation project and the acceptability of the translation suffered significantly from the immoral lifestyle of a few members of the team (Zobule 2007).

In addition to acceptable translators, the translated Scriptures must be seen as an accurate rendering of the original and doctrinally correct (Reimer 1983). Normally this requires official approval by each denomination before its members will use the translation. Approval usually requires that some approved member from that denomination has participated in the review process so that they are sure it was done accurately. Local church leaders need to be a part of the translation team, either as members of the board or as reviewers. This encourages input and trust throughout the process. In current literature, the term "authenticity" is used to describe this developing conviction that the Scriptures are trustworthy and in an appropriate form. Local Christian leaders should also approve of the style of the translation. Some groups want it to be adapted to local speaking style; others want it close in grammatical form to the original (Dooley 1989).

Mission organizations teaching or translating Scripture need to agree with local leaders on the key biblical

"It is incredible that you translators are able to translate this powerful book. It is even more incredible that this book is not able to translate you."

terms to be used. Depending on how biblical terms such as salvation, grace, and the Holy Spirit are translated, the Christian message can be clear or it can be misunderstood and distorted. Key terms need to be the best equivalents of the original, accurate and natural for the language. Borrowing key terminology from an LWC Bible, while tempting, is usually less communicative than using local terms. Unfortunately, translators frequently find people using key terms that were borrowed or translated before adequate study had been done. Local leaders may need to be taught biblical background and translation principles so they can make an informed choice. The process of coming to agreement on key biblical terms can be time-consuming, but it has the additional benefits of teaching translation reviewers and building mutual trust.

The perception that a translation is acceptable is primarily a result of decisions made in the course of translation with the participation of local church leaders. However, if older translations were completed without this participation, all is not lost. It is possible to improve this condition by explaining through courses for pastors and in other ways how the translation was done and why. Such explanations are seldom as effective, however, as community participation in the decision-making process from the beginning.

Condition 3: Accessible Forms

People groups must be able to "access" the Scriptures once they are translated. "Access" in this context means that individuals can read the Bible or hear it read or see it in drama or other communicative arts. If the Scriptures are written, some people must be able to read. If they are promulgated in oral forms, then people must be able to tell Bible stories or there must be electronic forms of Scripture. The focus in this condi-

tion is therefore on either increasing the number of people who can read (literacy) or developing avenues for making the Bible available orally or visually.

Because many minority group members do not read regularly if at all, in the last decade the focus has shifted to creative methods of oral and video Scripture products. See the next issue of *IJFM* for a brief description of these.

Condition 4: Background Knowledge

People need background information about the Bible before they can make sense of it. To understand this need, try reading an article on theoretical physics or microbiology or any other complex topic with which you are not already familiar. The normal reaction is just to walk away from that information source, because it doesn't make sense. Many people do not read the Bible because they find too many parts they don't understand, even though they believe that it is trustworthy and important. They lack knowledge about the historical and cultural context of the Bible (Hill 2006).

Hearers without enough background knowledge are forced to fill in the cultural blanks themselves. For instance, in Papua New Guinea, some believers were confused as to why or how Peter would go on top of the house to pray. Papuan houses have grass roofs pitched too steeply to walk on.

In addition to its socio-historical settings, some idea of the primary teachings of the Bible is needed to understand Scriptural passages as the authors intended them. In many places in the world, the Old Testament is used as a justification of polygamy. As the renowned linguist Kenneth Pike often put it, "If the text is not given a context, the culture will dominate the text." Alternatively, hearers can simply lose

interest altogether and the translation never brings its intended result.

Many people who come from a background of folk religion or Hinduism or Islam or Buddhism believe that the power of holy words is not appropriated through understanding their contexts and basic doctrines. They believe that books containing holy words are for ritual use, for the power of their words, not for study and application by lay people. In these systems, much of the magical power of a holy book is found in its incomprehensibility. Therefore, a new orientation to holy writ will be needed for people with those backgrounds to realize that this holy book is meant to be understood.

An important source of key background information for many passages is the Bible itself, especially parts of the Old Testament (Brown 2002). This is the reason for the “chronological” in the discipling methods Chronological Bible Teaching (McIlwain 1991) and Chronological Bible Storying.

Background information can also be communicated through footnotes, study helps, artistic expressions of the Scriptures, and through sermons. It is vital that each language group be adequately equipped to make sense of the newly translated Scriptures. Bible teaching is inherently the work of local churches, because it needs to continue indefinitely. If churches neglect this their parishioners will have an inadequate framework for interpreting the Scriptures.

Condition 5: Availability

To engage with Scripture, people must be able to obtain a copy or they must be able to hear someone telling it to them. A system is needed for distribution, sales, and informing people about where the Scriptures are available (Collins 1984). Translators in one east African language group asked me why no one was buying copies of the local language New Testament books. It turned out that this language group of over a hundred thousand people was spread out over a wide area, but

the books were available only in the unmarked translation office. Very few people in that group even knew a translation was being done. Even those who knew about the books would have had to travel all day to buy one, then stay overnight among strangers where there were no public accommodations. Before the translators could expect users, they needed to seriously rethink their distribution structures.

Missionaries and pastors are key people for increasing the awareness of the Scriptures and encouraging their use. Missionaries need to know



what vernacular Bible translations and Scripture products are available in their regions and promote them wherever they can. It is best if missionaries speak the minority language, but even if they don't they can at least support local people in engaging with the Scriptures in their heart language (Landin 1990).

It is usually necessary to have a trained person responsible for distribution over a long period of time, if sales are to continue after the translation project ends. A well-defined financial system for distribution with a local system of accountability is also necessary for sustainability. Although pastors are key people for promoting the Scriptures, they are seldom good distributors because of obligations to be generous in distributing books and cash to needy parishioners.

Distribution systems should extend beyond the printed Bible or New Testament to include audio products and Scripture-based materials that

address the felt needs of individuals in a people group. In some regions of the world, the Internet is the most practical and widely used system of distribution of Scripture, in the form of downloadable texts, mp3s and videos. As of mid-2009, FOBAI has provided a website, www.findabible.net, that aims to provide links and information about finding the Scriptures in as many languages as possible.

Lives will only be changed by the Scriptures when people are aware of them and can find them.

Condition 6: Spiritual Hunger

The number of believers within a people group and their level of spiritual hunger can be a strong predictor of the level of Scripture use. In most ethnic groups, only Christians and people interested in becoming Christians will read the Bible for any length of time. The best way to increase the number of Bible readers is for the church to evangelize more people. At the same time, local language Scriptures are a powerful tool for evangelists (Brown 2002).

Church attendance is an indicator of the number of believers and thus of the potential readership. Usually, the number of Christians in an ethnic group is not larger than the number who regularly attend church. Conversely, in many parts of the world there are large numbers of people who attend church but have no vital faith. Hunger for the Bible might be missing even with a large apparent readership. Such people only become interested after experiencing personal renewal.

Many Muslims are interested in hearing parts of the Bible. This is usually related to their hunger to know God and the high respect which Islam teaches for most of the Bible. Any renewed interest in traditional or organized religion is a strong indicator of unmet felt needs and spiritual hunger (S. Dye 2003), but it is not a strong predictor of Scripture engagement unless Christians are showing them that God can meet those needs.

A key component in spiritual hunger is the perceived relevance of Christianity and the Bible to felt needs of whatever sort (S. Dye 2003). In an extensive study several years back, the author discovered a strong correlation between use of local language Scriptures and the degree to which people saw them as relevant to their daily lives (T. W. Dye 1985, 9). When people saw how the Scriptures spoke to their daily lives, their interest in the Bible increased significantly. Identifying the legitimate needs of the community and demonstrating how the Word of God addresses their important life issues is one of the most important tasks that local pastors, missionaries, and Bible translators can undertake (Loewen 1967; T. W. Dye 1985; S. Dye 2003; Hill 2006).

A powerful way to communicate that the Bible is relevant is to be ready with a Scripture-based answer when people bring up a felt need. This answer can be an appropriate biblical story, a more recent example of how God met a similar need, or a word of promise or correction from Scripture. I call these “Good News Encounters”—small episodes in daily life when God or the Bible are seen to meet a felt need (T. W. Dye 1985, 45ff).

Such encounters can have a powerful effect. In one language group the expatriate translators had done no formal Bible teaching or training; they only shared Good News Encounters. People soon began coming to them for help, and the translators never turned them away. Within a few years the translators were spending an amazing 16 hours each day in Good News Encounters. They only had time to do their translation work when away from the language area. Many people became strong believers through these encounters.

Soon these believers began to develop their own churches and then to disciple people in other villages. Many strong churches grew up from those disciplined in this way. By the time I visited them, there were more than a hundred churches. They had developed their own Sunday schools, Bible training

At the end of the Bible study Kalif said, “I can now see that one can be a follower of Jesus and a good Bwandan.”

courses, in fact a whole functioning local denomination. Their language had five tones, tonal glides, and consonant clusters, but the Christians had taught themselves to read just to be able to read for themselves the Bible that they could see was the source of this life changing information (T. W. Dye 1985, 51).

Especially when done in the form of relevant Bible stories, Christian workers are finding that Good News Encounters are well suited to informal witness in resistant and even relatively dangerous areas. One can prepare for witnessing opportunities by preparing Bible stories and biblical answers to address specific needs within the culture. Whatever form the witness takes, it is important to show that God and the Bible meet felt needs in order to help people see their need to know God. When dealt with this way felt needs become an avenue to spiritual hunger for not-yet Christians.

In summary, spiritual hunger in anyone can contribute significantly to the use of a Bible translation.

Condition 7: Freedom to Commit

Freedom to commit means exercising spiritual freedom to choose to follow Christ wholeheartedly, including turning from ancestor worship, traditional magic, fetish worship, and any other belief or practice that conflicts with the teaching of the Bible. The Bible makes demands on people, demands to accept God’s solutions to life problems and to give one’s life over to obeying its teaching. If there is no freedom to do so, then people will not continue to read or hear the Scriptures.

Lack of freedom to follow Christ wholeheartedly is the great hidden obstacle which hinders Scripture engagement more than most Westerners imagine. Social factors such as the need for family unity in traditional religious practices are a crucial part of this hindrance to

becoming a follower of Christ and the Bible. Religions and religious practices are closely tied to group identity. To change these is often equated with ceasing to be part of the group.⁴

There is some evidence that response to Christ is not seriously hindered by persecution from governments or powerful outsiders even when it is severe, involving destruction of property, injuries, and sometimes deaths (T. W. Dye 1985, 167-70). Indeed, if people resent the government or those outsiders, persecution by them can lead to response. In contrast, ostracism or mere disapproval by beloved family members or other important people in one’s social network can cut off response to faith. Regardless of the reason for their fear, potential believers who are afraid to follow the teachings of the Bible often quit reading or hearing it. Contextualization addresses group identity issues by demonstrating that people can express their faith in Christ in local social and cultural forms (Whiteman 1997; S. Dye 2003).

Heldara,⁵ a Muslim background believer, worked as a member of the Bible translation team in her language group. Her husband, Kalif, disliked her involvement, saying, “The Bwanda people are Muslim. Christianity is a foreign religion.” Finally, he agreed to come to a Bible study. The believers began singing original worship songs in the Bwandan language and style. When they opened the Bwandan language New Testament, the pages were decorated with traditional Bwandan ornamentation. At the end of the Bible study Kalif said, “I can now see that one can be a follower of Jesus and be a good Bwandan.” In a few weeks, Kalif chose to become a believer.

Not infrequently, believers will continue their contrary religious practices in spite of their professed belief in Christ. Nominalism may be acceptable. These practices hinder commitment to

spiritual growth, which in turn limits willingness to read the Bible and the degree to which Bible reading leads to changed lives.

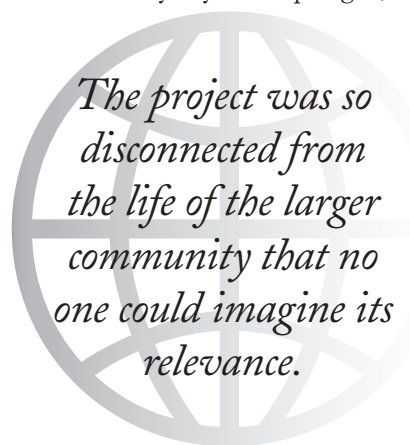
Beliefs in local supernaturalism are often very deep; they are the things rural people “know” are true. Typically, the beliefs which most hinder Christian commitment are traditional religious means for protection from witches, ghosts, local demons, or other perceived sources of evil attack. Where traditional religions are strong, even Christians may be utterly convinced that their lives depend on following traditional religious practices at some points, for protection against witchcraft, for healing, for good crops and good hunting. If they do not see a Christian solution to these practical problems, they may not even hear when someone points out that there are problems with their traditional answers.

It is common that missionaries do not know the actual beliefs and practices of local Christians in matters such as witchcraft, magic, and ancestor veneration, which frequently are barely distinguishable from the beliefs of pagans of the same ethnic group. If missionaries in the past have reacted negatively, denying the validity of traditional beliefs, church leaders and national translators may deny that any such beliefs exist, or claim that they only result from ignorance. An expatriate who builds close friendships, then accepts local ideas as having basis in reality, soon finds these denials replaced by open discussion of actual beliefs. Phased Bible teaching in an atmosphere of mutual respect is crucial to any change in this situation. Such teaching must be accompanied by demonstrations that God has real power in daily life and can meet their needs better than traditional resources.

Three young researchers in the Central African Republic listened to the traditional beliefs that had been hidden from missionaries for generations. When they shared these with missionaries there, one mission leader told the young women, “You have learned more about

the people’s beliefs in four months, than our missionaries have learned in forty years.” She apologized to these congregations for the missionaries’ failure to listen to the people and welcomed their honest sharing. The missionaries were then able to show them specific biblical teachings in answer to their questions. Many repented of their witchcraft and sorcery killings in the church. They were finally free to hear the Word and understand it (T. W. Dye 1996).

In addition to the social and worldview hindrances, which can be delineated by any anthropologist,



missionaries note that satanic opposition hinders Bible reading and understanding of Christian teaching. In His explanation of the parable of the sower, Jesus warned us that “the devil comes and takes away the Word from their hearts, so that they cannot believe and be saved... Others believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away” (Luke 8:12–13). Christian workers have observed that Satan operates below the surface of events, but his actions are a crucial aspect of the problem. Prayer and actively resisting Satan may be necessary to free them to commit to Christ.

Condition 8: Partnership

Partnership issues are among the most important factors contributing to the success or failure of Bible translation projects. David Landin’s breakthrough research (1990) concluded that two of the most important factors affecting vernacular Scripture engagement

among minority language church members were whether local church leaders and missionaries used and promoted the vernacular Scriptures. When the local church and other missions are not invested in vernacular Bible translation projects, these projects can have little hope for success.

Bible Translation organizations have, in the past, often labored as if their work were completely independent from the life of the church. In Papua New Guinea, a missionary Bible translator asked his local colleague how many copies of the completed New Testament they should publish. “Two,” he replied. “No one else will be interested in it but you and me.” The project was so disconnected from the life of the larger community that no one could imagine its relevance.⁶

If a Bible translation team helps fulfill the vision of local churches, their translation is far more likely to be used. After discovering the visions of the local church and other missions, Bible translators in close dialog with the church can discover ways Bible translation can help fulfill these visions. Where no local church exists, translators should seek to partner with missionaries and other stakeholders working in that area.

On their part, local church leaders and missionaries can view vernacular Bible translation projects as partnership aspects that support their own ministries. Bible translation teams need to encourage missions and local leaders to facilitate the translation work in every way possible, soliciting prayer on behalf of the project, supplying gifted mother-tongue speakers as personnel for the team, and promoting the translation project throughout its life. By taking part in the process, local leaders and missions have a better understanding of how the translation supports their ministries. Communities should be owners of the translation process. This not only provides the key to Scripture use, but respects the local rights to determine their language development needs. The translated Scriptures are

used more when a community owns the translation process.

It is often the case that many potential readers understand their mother tongue best, but key leaders are adequately bilingual, so they may not as easily see the need for use of the mother tongue. In that case, use of translated Scriptures is heavily influenced by the attitudes of these leaders. Bible translators should seek to show the value of the local language for common people and to speak frequently in favor of its use.

Vernacular translations belong to the whole church and should not be perceived as being overly influenced by one denomination or mission. If a translation is seen as theologically biased towards one group or another, this will greatly reduce its acceptance by other Christian groups. Thus, expatriate missionaries and local churches of all kinds need to cooperate within a translation project, authentically valuing the perspectives of other groups of believers.

When cooperation between translators and local church leadership works, the results can be dramatic. Several years ago, I consulted with a translator working in the Philippines who had partnered with a group of four thousand Baptists in an area of 100,000 Catholics. Near the completion of the New Testament project, the translator approached the Catholic bishop to ask if he would approve his churches using the translation. The bishop did not trust the translation because the translator had been working only with the Baptists, who preached against Catholics. At the request of the translator, this busy bishop began reviewing the draft New Testament. Four years later, he still had not finished, and the translator and the Baptists were tired of waiting. The translator asked me whether or not to abandon the review process with the bishop. I said that it depended on whether her goal was to engage 4,000 readers or 104,000 readers. She stuck with the partnership and the bishop finally approved the translation. The New Testament dedication

I said that it depended on whether her goal was to engage 4,000 readers or 104,000 readers. She stuck with the partnership . . .

was the largest ever in that area, and it included both Baptists and Catholics. A few years later, a people movement had sprung up among the Catholics using the translated Scriptures.

There is one important exception to the need for partnership. In some parts of the world, there is a dominant religion and a relatively small, and often old, minority Christian community. McGavran noted many years ago that such Christian communities have survived by keeping to themselves and emphasizing their separateness from the dominant culture (McGavran 1990). In that way they minimize persecution and decrease the likelihood that their children will change to the dominant religion. Christian communities of this sort have much to lose by making the adjustments necessary to engage in extensive evangelism. Many of them vigorously resist even using terms in the translated Scriptures that are the same as those used by the dominant religious community.

When there is such a socially separate church, it is sometimes necessary to have two translations, one for them (if they even want a new translation) and one translated for those unfamiliar with the Scriptures. This second translation must be used by those Christians, often foreign missionaries, who are committed to evangelism. It is mainly the dominant community, by definition not yet believing Christians, that needs to be comfortable with this second translation. Since the Bible is widely recognized as an important literary work, such a community might accept a translation for the prestige it brings even though they don't believe the Bible.

There is one major religious community that does indeed consider most of the Bible an important holy book that people should revere and can appropriately read or hear. This is the

Islamic community. Muslims consider the Old Testament and the Gospels to be holy books, albeit with errors compared to the Holy Qur'an. It has therefore proven acceptable for good Muslims to distribute Bible stories and to publish books of the Bible if they are in appropriate form for a holy book. Some Muslims are even willing to help translate biblical books (James 2006). Sometimes respected scholarly Muslim organizations will publish them.

Today there are millions of copies of oral biblical stories being sold and circulated by practicing Muslims in the Middle East. There are also an increasing number of published copies of various biblical books. It is not possible to directly assess the impact of this literature, but there are some indicators. For instance, in a recent survey of first person testimonies of Muslim background believers, Maranz found that nearly all of them had read the Bible before becoming followers of Jesus (2004). I conclude from this that Bible translation and Scripture engagement in such a context is best done by those in cordial relationship with leading Muslims.

To my knowledge, however, this is the only important exception to the generalization that Bibles are mainly read and heard by Christians, so partnership with the Christian community is vital to Scripture engagement.⁷ For that reason, it is inaccurate to think of Condition 8 as on the same level as the other conditions discussed in this article. The issue of partnership permeates all of the other conditions, the success of the other conditions being dependent on the success of this condition.

Conclusion

If all eight of the above conditions are strong in a language area, then people in that area are very likely to use the local language Scriptures and

be transformed as they do so. If even one condition is too weak, the use of Scriptures can be seriously hindered. There are certainly other pervasive factors that contribute to these eight conditions, including the national political, economic, and social environment. It is natural therefore to wonder if the Eight Conditions for Scripture engagement suggested here is an exhaustive listing. While other factors might well be discovered, they are likely to fit naturally under the categorical groupings of these Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement.

Does the system work? Within a year after my wife and I taught translators how to use this approach, they were so empowered that they made plans to eventually enable all the hundreds of translation teams in Papua New Guinea to learn this system. We returned to take part in a second workshop; this time they did most of the teaching.

The listing of these Eight Conditions or eight categories of factors used as a tool for evaluation can prevent surprises and help the church, missionaries, and Bible translators alike to focus on those activities that are likely to have maximum impact. It's the great longing of my heart that the people groups of the world will not only have the Scriptures in their heart language, but that the Scriptures will have greatest spiritual effect. **IJFM**

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Endnotes

¹ Of the many people who have helped me develop and refine these ideas, I am most grateful to my wife Sally, the originator of many key concepts, to fellow teacher Michelle Petersen, who has helped me clarify many of the concepts, and to Tim Hatcher, whose insights have contributed much to the re-thinking that finally led to this article.

² They were taught in our classes at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics in Dallas, Texas, by Michelle Petersen at SIL Vancouver, and in other locations as well.

³ Condition 8 was not included in earlier in-house drafts of this model. Interpersonal relationships with local leaders and inter-mission relationships were considered as somewhat different because they affect all the conditions. However, that approach did not give partnership issues their appropriate prominence.

⁴ For the importance of social networks in the spread of the faith, see Gray and Gray, "Paradigms and Praxis, Part II: Why Are Some Workers Changing Paradigms?" pp. 63-73 in this issue of *IJFM*.

⁵ Names of persons and this language are pseudonyms.

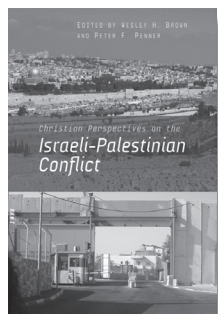
⁶ This story has a happy ending, but not until a generation later when carefully researched Scripture Engagement methods were finally applied to that situation.

⁷ It is possible that some Hindu and Buddhist communities would read the Bible if it were translated by a team that included their own people. Considering the success with the Islamic community, that approach needs to be tried. However, I am not aware of any current attempts to do so.

Book Reviews & Notes

Christian Perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, edited by Wesley H. Brown and Peter F. Penner (Pasadena, CA: WCIU Press, 2008, 238pp.)

—reviewed by Dean Gilliland



This volume reveals what takes place when followers of Isa-Yeshua face the painful issues that divide them and come together to find ways to build fellowship as Christians. From the 13th to 17th of November, 2006, Jewish and Arab spokespersons from twenty countries gathered in Prague (Czech Republic) for a Conference convened by the International Baptist Theological Seminary to discuss the topic,

“Christian Perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.”

The Introduction and a recording of The Prague Declaration (which was the final work of the Conference) are followed by thirteen chapters. The eleven authors are made up by three from the Palestinian side, three from the Jewish side and five who write from the perspective of the West. The first chapter by co-editor Wesley H. Brown provides the historical background by laying out eight stages of the Palestinian crisis and the confrontation that has resulted. With helpful illustrative maps, it is valuable reading for understanding the political/cultural history of the conflict. The last chapter is a review of ten practices for just peacemaking which the author (Stassen) had laid out in a previous book. These practices have been useful for general situations of impending war but there is no attempt to apply them to the topic of this Conference in a contextual way.

This review cannot do justice to content or differences in writing styles. While uniformity is impossible, the overall objective is unmistakable. Some chapters show great care in promoting respect and in reflecting the spirit of reconciliation. Others state quite abruptly the presenter’s position but with little or no attempt to recognize the other side. Two aspects are consistent throughout: a recognition of the convoluted history of both peoples and the repeated use of quite familiar biblical passages. While many subsidiary biblical statements are dealt with (primarily regarding Israel), commentary on one question seems most frequent: “Can scriptural references to biblical Israel which occur with very different connotations be applied to Israel today?”

Differences in interpretation of Old Testament passages (by Palestinians, Messianic Jews, and more rigidly, by Christian Zionists) do seem almost unbridgeable. This led one writer to lament that biblical tensions are a second major barrier to fellowship, in addition to the conflict itself.

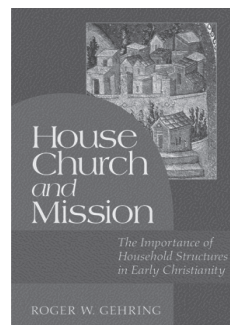
Certain terms come up frequently throughout the book and are used by both sides. Perhaps, listing some of them would help in summarizing content. Such words are: chosen, Christian Zionism, diversity, election, evangelical, Messianic, national election, eschatological, occupation, people-land, plain-literal hermeneutics, justice, replacement theology, restoration and rebirth. Knowing how these words are dealt with in this special context commends the book to all who truly want to understand.

Participants from Europe and the U.S.A. make interesting theological and biblical contributions such as the implications of national election as a theological paradigm; another, speaking from the German context, compares Christian Zionism with Restorationism, while a third sees the conflict between Samaritans and Jews as having corollaries to the Palestine dilemma. He also discusses the contextual models, C-4 through C-6, with some hope for relevance. However, at present, the breach between Israel and Palestine is such that it is hard to conceive of this as a useful approach.

Thankfully, the six areas addressed in the Prague Declaration were “unanimously confirmed” and is the “fruit” that was hoped for. Reading this book is at once a wrenching yet hopeful experience which you will be the better for having.

House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity, by Roger W. Gehring (Hendrickson Publishers, 2004, 408pp.)

—reviewed by Dave Datema



What are the odds that a translated dissertation could be compelling, intriguing and actually fun to read? This book beats the odds in a way many dissertations do not. Accepted in 1998 as the inaugural dissertation toward a ThD degree in New Testament Studies from the University of Tübingen, it was initially published in German in 2000, then printed in English in 2004. Roger Gehring,

a long-time member of Campus Crusade and now Adjunct Professor at George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Portland, Oregon, has produced a first-rate work of scholarship on a topic important to those involved in mission work. Thanks to a good use of discernment in deciding what to put in the extensive footnotes and what to include in the text, Gehring has made this scholarly work accessible to the non-scholar. One hindrance a non-scholar will encounter is that the many Greek words and phrases under discussion are never translated. Another possible hurdle for some will be the amount of space Gehring uses to explore the “historical reliability” of passages under consideration or the “undisputed Pauline letters.” Aside from these issues, the book is accessible to scholars and non-scholars alike.

A significant number of people mentioned in Acts and Paul's letters were people of influence and wealth. Only the relatively wealthy could afford to own or rent a home large enough to serve as a house church.

Gehring uses the introduction (chapter one) to give a history of research on the topic of house churches. The rest of the book is divided into time periods with a final chapter on the significance of house churches.

Chapter two is entitled "The Use of Houses Before Easter." Gehring argues for the following ideas in this section:

- While in Galilee, Jesus used the house of Peter as a center of operation for his ministry (Martha's home in Bethany may have been the Judean counterpart).
- The mission discourses in Luke 10 and Mark 6 indicate that Jesus taught his disciples to follow the same strategy: to set up fixed quarters in houses as a base for ministry. "The mission instructions indicate that the pre-Easter house mission, as Jesus and his disciples practiced it, was likely the embryonic form of house-to-house missional outreach and church development practiced after Easter" (58).
- "The picture of Jesus and his disciples as engaged exclusively in a 'shotgun' missional approach needs to be revised. Even before Easter he practiced 'regional mission' from a central operational base in one village or town out to the surrounding area" (61).

Chapter three is called "The Post-Easter Use of Houses in the Primitive Jerusalem Church," with the following major points:

- It seems likely that there were at least two house churches in the early days after Pentecost—the home of Mary (mother of John Mark) for Greek-speaking Jews and the home containing the upper room (plausibly the home of James) for Aramaic-speaking Jews. In time "a plurality of house churches existed alongside the local church as a whole in Jerusalem" (89).
- "the primitive church in Jerusalem came together in the temple in a large meeting as the *whole church*, and in private homes as individual church bodies in small groups as *house churches*" (83). Prayer, proclamation and instruction took place in the temple, whereas the house churches provided the occasion for the Lord's Supper, something that could not have been practiced publicly.
- Exactly how leadership in Jerusalem transferred from Peter and the Twelve to James and a council of elders remains elusive. The idea that elders were patterned after the synagogue is unlikely because elders in synagogues did not hold office but came to their position "on the basis of their seniority and social position in the community" (102). Instead of elders as an office, it seems rather that householders filled a leadership function since "it was inevitable that the patriarchal structures of the ancient household would partially

and in some respects largely determine the leadership structures of the church" (103). Apparently, "a tension existed between the circle of the Twelve and oikos structures regarding leadership structures in the Jerusalem church" (104). It also appears that the title "elder" eventually became a designation for office.

- "As early as 40/41 C.E. (Acts 10:1-48), then, we have a clear example of a house mission approach in the home of Cornelius in Caesarea" (108).
- Evidence also supports the idea of a plurality of house churches in Antioch.
- "The similarities of the Pauline mission with the house-to-house, itinerant, and regional missional approach of Jesus and his disciples can best be explained by assuming some kind of connecting link through which elements of the tradition of the mission discourse were transmitted from Jesus to Paul. The Hellenists, who, as we have seen, practiced such a house mission approach, seem the most likely to have been that link" (114).

Chapter four is called "The Use of Houses in Pauline Missional Outreach," and includes these major ideas:

- Acts and the Pauline letters indicate a plurality of house churches within cities, the combination of which constituted the whole church in that location.
- While trying to pin down the social class of early Christians is exceedingly difficult, it is nevertheless a fact that a significant number of people mentioned in Acts and Paul's letters were people of influence and wealth. Only the relatively wealthy could afford to own or rent a home large enough to serve as a house church. In fact, "it was typical of the Pauline missional approach in any given city to initially target individuals from higher social levels. In this way Paul was able to win homeowners, along with their entire households, for the gospel and to set up a base of operations in their house for local and regional mission" (187).
- The "house mission" approach was adapted by Paul into the "center mission" approach. "The term implies a series of young congregations networked with and equal to one another in the (capital) cities, that is, centers, which then became bases of operation for the Pauline mission" (181).
- "House churches opened the door for Paul to a whole network of relationships... Paul was automatically an insider" (188).
- "Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slaves and free alike came together in the house churches and sat at one table. Social tensions that became evident

(cf., e.g., 1 Cor 11) arose as a consequence of this principle, but they do not negate it. Pauline house churches were both a training ground *in* brotherly love for Christians and a showcase *for* brotherly love to non-Christians.” (190)

- Again, it is likely that the leadership structure of the house churches already existed in the form of the household. So not only were existing structures (households) used, their leadership structures (house leaders) were also used. “For the congregation that met in a house, a leadership structure was already in place from the very beginning, built into the social infrastructure of the ancient *oikos* in advance” (201). Thus household leadership found its origin from within the household and was legitimated later by Paul (Ac.14:23).
- Such household leaders were later considered “overseers” or “bishops,” while the group of such leaders within a single city were “elders.”
- The prominence of women in the early church is not surprising since “in the ancient world religious matters within the household were the woman’s classic sphere of influence” (211).

Chapter five is entitled “The Continuing Influence of *Oikos* Structures” and contains these important points:

- Significant tension existed between the ancient *oikos* structures and the new spiritual communities housed in them. “In the church, women were to be valued just as highly as men, slaves as their masters, Gentiles as Jews... The structure of the family in the *oikos* society of the ancient world was set in its ways, however, and it was not at all the intention of the church to destabilize that society. This would have happened, however, if the Christian movement had radically changed the *oikos* structures” (237). “The structure, hierarchical as it was, was left unaltered, apart from the introduction of the new principle, ‘as is fitting in the Lord’—which was to be more revolutionary in its effect than was generally foreseen in the first Christian century” (237, quoting F. F. Bruce in footnote). “Early Christians had no intention of instigating a social revolution” (250).
- The Pastoral Epistles indicate a change in leadership structures as Paul felt the need to create structures to stabilize the churches for the long term. It appears most likely that the role of the overseers/bishops, originally designating leadership of one house church, was expanded to the idea of leadership of all the house churches in one city, represented by a council of elders. One of the elders in a city-church, already a

“bishop” of his own house church, became the bishop for the entire group of city-churches as well.

The sixth and final chapter is called “The Ecclesiological and Missional Function and Significance of House Churches” and highlights the author’s conclusions.

- Readers are cautioned to avoid a quick application from the early church setting to modern times. “The ancient *oikos* as extended family including slaves, hired laborers, and clients, with its fundamental significance for society and economy, does not exist as such anymore, at least not in the Western world. Our term for family is no longer synonymous with that of the ancient household” (301).
- The weaknesses of the house church model are the quantitative limitation, tendency toward divisiveness, unhealthy dependence on the leading personality and an elitist attitude.
- The strengths of the house church model are its suitability in places of persecution, financial attractiveness of not buying property, the attractiveness to the unchurched and the advantage of personal, accountable relationships.
- Interestingly, “house church models that are most vital on a long-term basis and thus the most convincing are the ones that are well integrated into such suprastructures, that is, under the authority and safeguard of a local church or major denomination” (305).

As is the case with all issues related to biblical exegesis, understanding what happened in the original setting is always easier than applying it to the present one. Mission strategists will have much to ponder in this book, but those interested specifically in frontier missions will find the following issues of primary importance:

1. The relationship between *oikos* structures (including leadership) and insider movement thinking. Much of what Gehring says lends credence to the insider idea. In fact, it could be reasonably argued that this was in essence the approach in the NT, to use existing structures and leadership patterns in establishing the church. Here is biblical precedent for insider thinking.
2. The relationship between the ethnic and social diversity of neighboring Christians and the best way forward in places like India. On the one hand, Gehring argues that believers of diverse ethnic and social background did in fact worship together, crossing significant boundaries to do so (why else would Paul have de-emphasized such distinctions, e.g. Gal.3:28?). On the other hand, it is also obvious that an attempt to radically alter the hierarchical and discriminating social structure was not pursued by Jesus or Paul. Where does this leave us with regard to

The weaknesses of the house church model are the quantitative limitation, tendency toward divisiveness, unhealthy dependence on the leading personality and an elitist attitude.

responding to caste in India, for example? It may be that God expects more social action from Christians today who wield much more power and influence than did the early church, but this argument is not biblically explicit. What is explicit is that in Colossians 3:11 ethnic and social distinctions are seemingly wiped out, only to reappear seven verses later in the household code where Paul gives instructions to believers representing these same distinctions (3:18-4:1)! Perhaps we can at least be wise to recognize ethnic and social distinctions in our strategizing without discarding the longer-term ideal of mixed worship. After all, according to Gehring, it was just this reality that gave the early church its unique and distinctive punch. It is one thing for individuals or groups to come to faith in Christ and yet quite another for them to cross ethnic or social boundaries as a result.

3. The relationship between biblical history and mission strategy. Since Paul deviated from (or at least significantly developed) Jesus' house mission approach to a more center mission approach, we would be wise to recognize that the Bible doesn't appear to lay down a universal mission strategy. Instead, it would appear that context goes a long way in determining strategy. The diversity of context does not easily fit into our models.

Reading this book will be time well spent. **IJFM**

In Others' Words

Editor's Note: In this new department, we point you to resources outside of the IJFM that we hope you'll find helpful: other journals, print resources, DVDs, web sites, blogs, YouTube videos, etc. We welcome suggestions, but cannot promise that we will publish each one we receive. Standard disclaimers on content apply.

Some favorites from IJFM author Leith Gray

Incredible Online Bible

www.biblos.com has Bible texts, images, parallel Bible and Greek interlinear layouts, story lists, maps... this site seems to have it all. Most is public domain or sharable.

Theological Papers on Muslim-Christian Issues

www.yale.edu/faith/rc/rc-rp.htm

Joseph Cumming has presented papers on "Did Jesus die on the Cross?" "The Meaning of the Expression 'Son of God'" and other issues to gatherings of major Muslim leaders with very positive reactions.

Interview with Carl Medearis

www.prairie.edu/servant/InnerviewCarl%20Medearis.pdf

Excellent interview from an online journal of Prairie Bible Institute.

Don't Miss These

www.jesusinthequran.org

"Radically transforming the conversation."

www.globalchristianity.org

See sample pages of the *Atlas of Global Christianity*.

www.worldchristiandatabase.org

Extensive data on 9,000 Christian denominations, 13,000 ethnolinguistic peoples, as well as data on 5,000 cities, 3,000 provinces and 238 countries.

International Orality Network

www.ion2008.ning.com

Lots of resources, groups, blogs, videos, forums, etc.

IJFM consulting editor in Popular Mechanics?

www.popularmechanics.com/science/air_space/4316243.html?page=1

Other sites worth checking out:

www.missioninfobank.org

www.4kworldmap.com

www.peoplegroups.org

www.worldmap.org

www.joshuaproject.net

www.ethnologue.org

Asian Mission Leaders' Forum (AMLF) 2009 September 2-5, 2009

CALL FOR PAPERS

"GLOBAL COOPERATION, ASIAN INITIATIVE, AND THE INSIDER PARADIGM"

Hosted by the Asian Frontier Mission Initiative (AFMI) and the International Society for Frontier Missiology (ISFM)

Forum Background

The Asian Frontier Mission Initiative (AFMI) was formed to encourage and initiate Asian frontier mission movements within an insider paradigm. This year, a forum is being called to probe the question of how to cooperate globally while retaining Asian initiative. Thus we are inviting not only Asian leaders but also select, influential Western leaders and practitioners.

The AFMI will co-host this year's Asian Mission Leaders' Forum with the International Society for Frontier Missiology (ISFM). One hoped-for outcome is the creation of a society whose purpose will be to discuss, share and publish reflective papers that pertain uniquely to frontier missiology in Asian contexts.

Nature of Papers

Our primary focus this year will be to seek ways to cooperate globally in promoting an Asian-initiated insider paradigm. Participants are encouraged to submit papers providing relevant insights, models, and/or case studies toward the purpose of Kingdom advance among Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto, and postmodern atheist groups. The due date for submitting papers is July 31. Decisions on which papers to include will be made by the steering committee.

Forum Details

The Forum will be held in one of the prominent cities of Southeast Asia, September 2-5, 2009. For more information on submitting papers, the Forum venue, or other questions, please contact John Kim at john_yoon@psmail.net.

ISFM 2009 and IJFM Call for Abstracts

In what ways is God using cross-cultural workers to most effectively make Christ known among unreached peoples, to disciple believers, to train leaders, to foster faith communities, and to nurture sustainable movements?

Which practices seem most fruitful in different contexts: Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Tribal, etc?

Come to Orlando in September and let's learn together.

Theme: Best Practices in Frontier Mission

Dates and Venue: September 15-17, 2009 at the Orlando Airport Marriott in Orlando, Florida, just before the joint meeting of CrossGlobal Link and the Evangelical Missiological Society (September 17-19). See ijfm.org/isfm/annual.htm for more details.

Background: Initial results of the Fruitful Practices Task Force (FPTF) research into practices in the Muslim world appeared in the book *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues Among Muslims* (William Carey Library, 2008). Since then, a series of noteworthy follow up analyses have been appearing in this journal. The FPTF's empirical research has identified a number of the most fruitful practices among workers

reaching out to Muslims, some vital and perhaps unexpected. We believe their methodology and findings could significantly help those working beyond that context. Members of the task force will be among this year's primary presenters.

We are not aware of any empirical research of this scope that has been conducted with workers among Hindus, Buddhists, and others. We seek practitioners and researchers who can contribute to our understanding of what is happening beyond the Muslim sphere. We hope that this ISFM will draw many working within the different major blocs (Hindu, Buddhist, etc.) We expect that those interested in doing research similar to what the FPTF has done will find interaction with their efforts and thinking to be refreshing, candid and challenging.

Call for Abstracts for IJFM

We are welcoming abstracts on this topic for papers to be considered for possible publication in the *IJFM*, especially from workers in the Hindu and Buddhist worlds.

Deadline: July 31, 2009

Word limit: 100-300

Abstracts and questions should be sent to isfm@ijfm.org