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## 06 BIBLE TRANSLATION 3.0: EMPOWERING THE GLOBAL CHURCH
/ TIM JORE

## MISSION FRONTIERS

# OWNERSHIP—IT'S WHAT MAKES MINISTRY HAPPEN.

**by Rick Wood**
Editor of *MF*

What is the one thing that is most deadly to the spread of the gospel to every tribe and tongue? Many would say the lack of money, manpower or vision. I believe it can be safely argued that *dependency* and the passivity it breeds is the most deadly problem for the spread of the gospel. Whether it is dependence upon foreign missionaries and foreign funds or even our own dependence upon the pastor of our local church, dependency is a ministry killer. It burns out the people and ministries that people are dependent upon and it prevents God's people from realizing their full potential in fulfilling the mission that God has given to each one of us to make disciples. We have talked about this problem for years in *MF* with columns by Glenn Schwartz and others. See our latest column by Chris Little starting on page 42.

Dependency prevents the one thing that is essential to all ministry success—ownership—ownership of the gospel and the Great Commission call to disciple all peoples. As we go to reach people for Christ, if we do not engender in those we reach an ownership of the process of ministry and discipleship, then they will not reproduce their faith in the lives of others. The God-designed organic reproductive nature of the gospel is snuffed out when dependency is created and ownership of ministry is not developed.

We are ordained by God to be a kingdom of priests, not to be dependent on just a few priests or pastors or missionaries to do the work of ministry for us as we passively sit and listen. We are all called to spread the gospel to others. The vital essence of every Church-Planting Movement growing around the world is that people quickly take personal ownership and responsibility for the work of ministry. By definition dependency cannot exist in a Church-Planting Movement. The missionaries who are catalyzing these movements are not doing the ministry for people but are equipping them to do it themselves.

The biggest mistake that missionaries have often made is staying too long and doing too much for the people they seek to reach. In their landmark, must-read book, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor…and Yourself,* authors Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert state forcefully, "Never do for others what they can or should do for themselves." Like others studying this problem, these authors have learned that dependency keeps people from lifting themselves out of poverty or taking full ownership for the work of ministry. There is tremendous power released when average believers are empowered to take ownership of the ministry of the church. The power of ownership is now beginning to be released in peoples around the world through new technologies and methods of Bible translation.

## Setting the Scriptures Free

In this issue of *MF* we feature the tremendous power of God's people to speed the completion of desperately needed Bible translations when average Jesus followers are empowered to take *ownership* in the process of Bible translation. The spread of digital technology along with crowdsourcing Bible translation methods within a people opens the door of hope that we could actually see a Bible translation in the language of every people group that needs one in just the next 10 years. It is being referred to as Bible Translation 3.0 and it is explained in our lead article starting on page 6. This convergence of digital technology and crowdsourcing in Bible translation has earth shaking potential because the word of God is the essential element in the growth of the church within every people. Likewise, the current lack of Scriptures in many peoples is hindering the spread of the church and the gospel.

The truth is that the process of Bible translation in the recent past has taken too long and has cost too much. As a result, thousands of people groups still lack a New Testament translation in their language and many of the language groups that do have a translation desperately need it revised. A little known fact to many outside of Bible translation circles is that too many New Testament translations sit on the shelves, largely unused, after their completion. One reason is that the very people who are meant to use the translation were not actively involved enough in its development. The translation was done *for them,* but not really *with them.* The people became dependent upon outsiders for their translation and a lack of ownership of that translation was the result. In their minds, they did not create it, it doesn't really read the way they speak, so it is not really theirs.

But indigenous churches around the world that lack adequate Scriptures in their languages are starting to take matters into their own hands—empowered by new digital tools like MAST (see page 18) and Sovee (see the article on page 23). They are refusing to be dependent upon outsiders to find the time to get around to them and are taking ownership of the translation process.

In most cases where a Bible translation does exist, the church that uses it does not have control over it. They do not own the translation of the Scriptures in their own language. Someone else does. The results of this can be disastrous.  Here is just one of the tragic stories that results when indigenous churches do not have ownership of their own language's Bible translation. See the sidebar on page 15 for more of these tragic and unacceptable stories.

## The spread of digital technology along with crowdsourcing Bible translation methods opens the door of hope that we could actually see a Bible translation in the language of every people group that needs one in just the next 10 years.

"For many years, a people group in Africa has had a huge demand for a second print run of the translation of the Bible in their language. The Bible society that owns the Bible in that language has not been able to pay for the minimum run but they have not permitted the use of lower-cost options like print-on-demand. Churches are now, once again, reading in the national language and doing on-the-fly oral translations, just as though the Bible had never been translated in the first place."

This people group was dependent on an outside organization in order to do ministry. That dependency was keeping them from the Word of God in their own language. They did not have ownership of the process of translating the Bible in their language and they did not have ownership of the final product. As a result they could not use it or revise it. They were cut off from the Word in their own language because of that dependency. Unfortunately, this is not a unique situation.

You can understand why church leaders around the world are eager to use the new digital translation technologies that hold such great promise for providing them with the Scriptures and involving them in the translation process at the same time. It is time for us who care about getting the Scriptures into the hands of every people group to start recognizing and tearing down the barriers to Bible access as soon as possible. It can be done and it must be done, now, within the next 10 years.

### Taking Some Time to Recover

On July 1st, I was working on this issue of *MF* when a lightning bolt hit my house and started a fire. We all got out safely but the fire and the fire fighters did significant damage to the roof and attic area of my house. The repair and recovery efforts are going to take a significant amount of my time over the next couple months so I have arranged for a guest editor to fill in for me for the next issue of *MF*. I anticipate that I will return for the Jan.-Feb. 2016 issue of *MF*. See you back here then. (MF)

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# BIBLE TRANSLATION 3.0

EMPOWERING
THE GLOBAL
CHURCH
TO BRING
ABUNDANT
ACCESS TO THE
SCRIPTURES TO
EVERY PEOPLE

BY **TIM JORE**
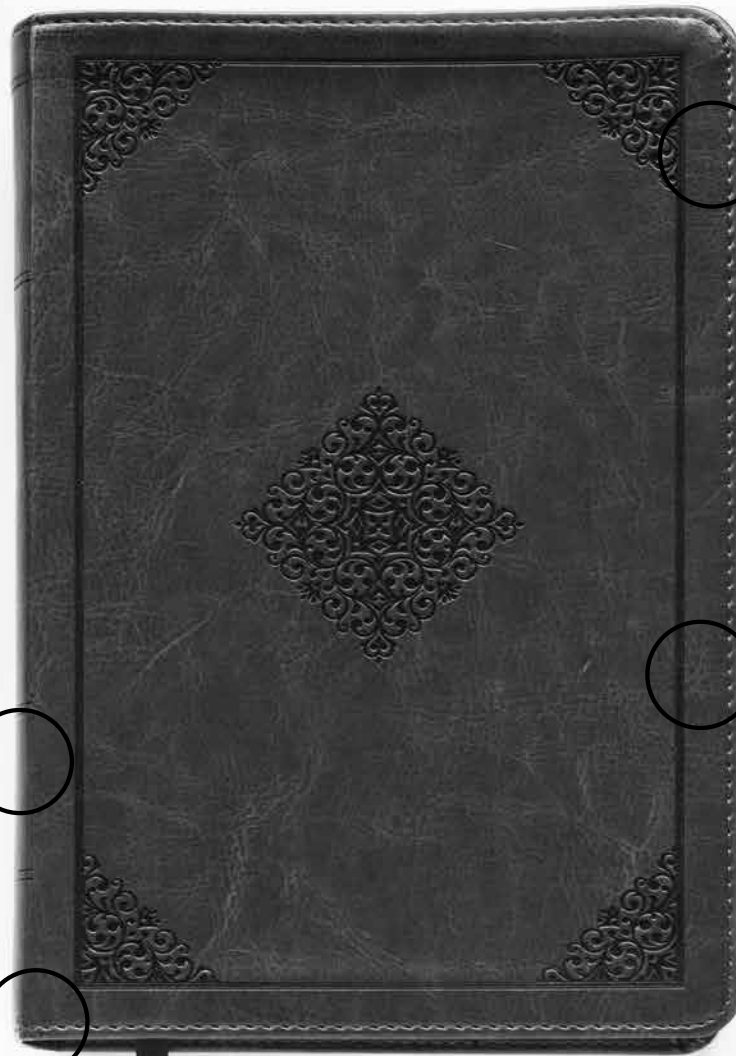
**TIM JORE** | wycliffeassociates.org

Tim grew up overseas and, after earning degrees in Biblical studies and Linguistics, worked for ten years as part of a Bible translation organization in various translation-related roles in Brazil, Papua New Guinea and Thailand. He currently serves as the unfoldingWord project lead and the Director of Translation Services with Wycliffe Associates.

## Bible Translation in Transition

A major transition is occurring in Bible translation. This transition has been triggered by a foundational shift of historic proportions: the ownership of and authority over all aspects of Bible translation is returning to the global Church.

It is assumed that where the Church exists in a people group, it is considered to be the spiritual authority for that people group. Where the Church does not yet exist in a people group, the Church in people groups that are geographically or socially close to and missionally focused on the unreached people group (the "proximate Church") has the clearest perspective of the need and opportunity for translation of biblical content as part of evangelistic outreach and church planting. As such, the proximate church in these contexts is considered to have the primary responsibility for the unreached people group, until the church is present in the people group. At that point, the ownership of and authority for the process of Bible translation is expected to transfer to them.

This transition of Bible translation back to the church would be significant at any point in history. What makes this transition even greater in impact and speed is that it is happening in the Digital Era where mobile phones are nearly ubiquitous, bridging the so-called "digital divide" all over the world. For the first time in history, the global Church—soon to span every people group and language—is equipping themselves with digital technology that is not only useful in the distribution of translated Scriptures, but can play a key role in the Bible translation process itself.

### A New Paradigm

In 1876, a revolutionary breakthrough representing decades of research and development by many different inventors finally occurred: the first telephone call was made. The landline telephone was an invention that forever changed the way people communicate. Over time, it became so common in many parts of the world as to make life without it difficult to imagine.

In 1973, another revolutionary breakthrough occurred: the first cell phone call was made. The technology took some time to mature, and then all of a sudden it reached a tipping point and disrupted everything.[1] By the end of 2013, just four decades after its invention, nearly seven billion mobile phone subscriptions were active worldwide—a global penetration rate of 96%. By comparison, it took the landline telephone nearly 14

**For the first time in history, the global Church—soon to span every people group and language—is equipping themselves with digital technology that is not only useful in the distribution of translated Scriptures, but can play a key role in the Bible translation process itself.**

decades to connect just over one billion people, a global penetration rate of approximately 16%.[2]

The massive increase in capacity, usefulness, and reach that occurred in the global shift from "landline telephone" to "Internet capable, multimedia mobile phone" in no way diminishes the importance and significance of the landline telephone. The telephone launched a new era of communication and freedom that had never before been possible. It was an extremely important paradigm shift. It just wasn't the last one.

This article describes a paradigm shift occurring in the realm of Bible translation.[3] The emerging paradigm is clearly indicating that the changes ahead may bring exponential increases in capacity, usefulness, and reach to Bible translation. Not only does this paradigm greatly increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness, it can be extended to reach literally every single people group with the Word of God in their own language, with no exceptions. In the same way that the mobile phone surged past the landline telephone to connect the entire world to each other, this new paradigm in Bible translation appears poised to connect speakers of every language in the world to the Word of God.

In the process of describing a new paradigm, it is necessary to explain what is changing and (where possible) why the change is occurring. The objective of this article is to describe these changes with clarity and in a balanced manner. Before describing the transitions that are occurring, we will briefly consider the history of Bible translation.

## A Brief History of Bible Translation

The patterns of Bible translation in the past 2,000 years can be separated into three fairly distinct eras. The objective of translators in each era was generally the same: translate the Bible into other languages with the highest possible degree of faithfulness. Certain factors changed through time, such as the availability and quality of original language source texts. The key factors that we are considering are those of the ownership of the Bible translation process and the efficiency of the work.

## The Historical Era (pre–1800s)

This era covers the time from the translation of the Septuagint through the translations during the Reformation and the colonial expansions of the 17th and 18th centuries. In general, the vast majority of the translations completed during this era were done by members of the Church into their own "mother tongue." For example, Ulfilas was ordained a bishop of the Church and translated the Gospels and some Epistles into his own Gothic language (360 A.D.). Jerome was born and raised in a Latin-speaking Roman province and translated the Bible into Latin (circa 405 A.D.). Wycliffe and Tyndale translated into their native English. Luther translated into his native German.

By the year 1800, there were 40 languages that had a translation of the Bible and another 27 that had some Scripture. [4]

## Bible Translation 1.0 (1800s-Present)

In the early 1800s, two significant events occurred in the realm of Bible translation: the first Bible Societies were formed and the so-called "Modern Missionary Movement" began. The efforts of missionaries like Robert Morrison, William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Henry Martyn and many others saw Bible translation expand far beyond Europe into many of the world's major languages. In the 20th century, other Bible translation organizations were established that helped accelerate the work.
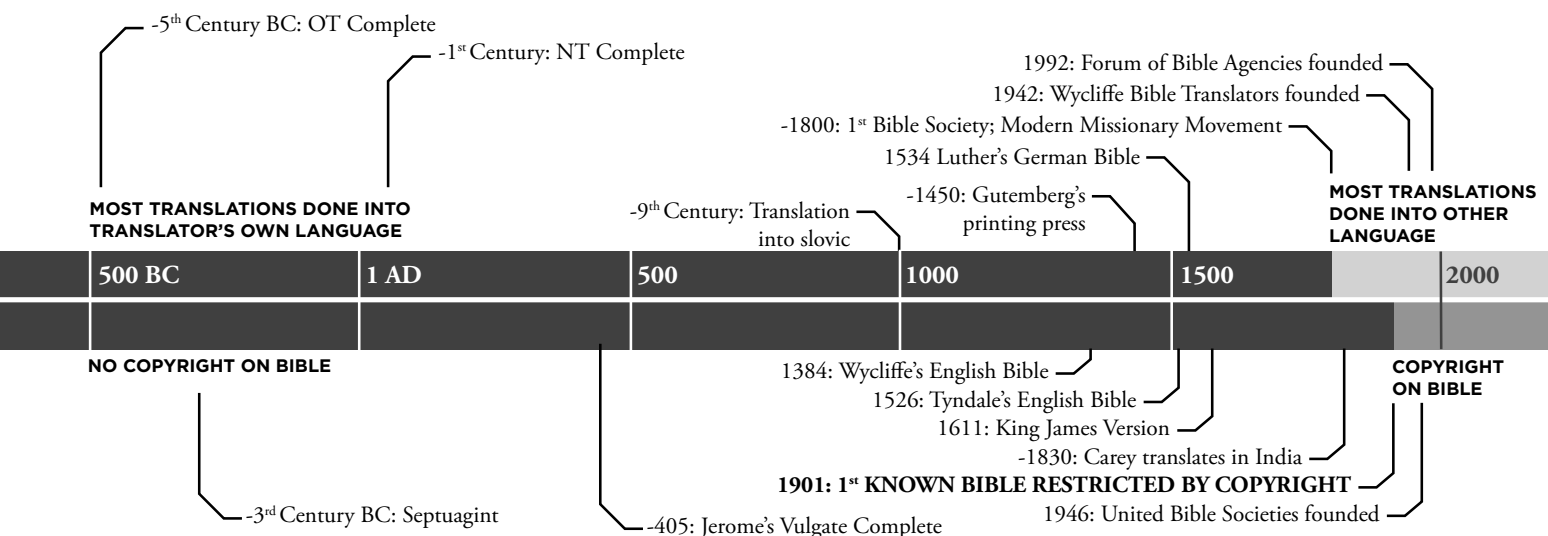
In this era, the work of Bible translation was often tied to the work of evangelization of unreached people groups. In some places, Bible translation preceded church planting. In general, the Bible translation process during this phase was owned and operated by those outside the target culture and language. Missionary translators studied linguistics, defined orthographies, and wrote grammars of previously undocumented languages, with the goal of making an effective translation of the Bible into them. The net result of the work in this era was a significant rise in availability of the Word of God in other languages.

By 1982, the entire Bible had been published in 279 languages, the New Testament in 551 more, and at least one book of the Bible had been translated into 933. [5]
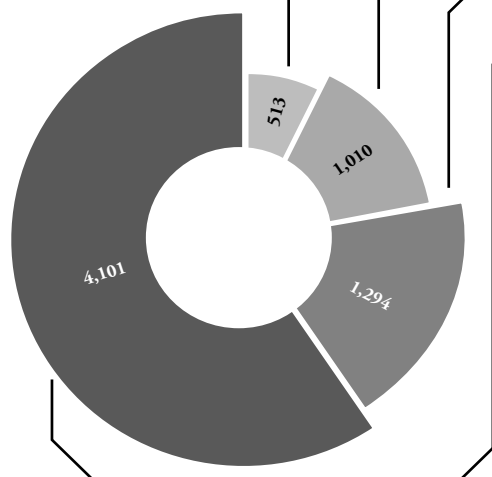
## Bible Translation 2.0 (~1980-Present)

In the early 1980s, a shift in Bible translation strategy began to be implemented by some organizations. Whereas the actual work of translation in the preceding era was generally done by expatriate translators, some translation teams began using native speakers to do large parts of the translation work. Frequently, these translation projects were still managed and funded by outsiders, but signs that a broader shift was taking place began to be visible.

By 2011, the entire Bible had been translated into 471 languages, the New Testament into 1223, and Scripture portions had been translated into another 1,002 languages.

-5th Century BC: OT Complete

-1st Century: NT Complete

1992: Forum of Bible Agencies founded

1942: Wycliffe Bible Translators founded

-1800: 1st Bible Society; Modern Missionary Movement

1534 Luther's German Bible

-1450: Gutemberg's printing press

-9th Century: Translation into slovic

**MOST TRANSLATIONS DONE INTO TRANSLATOR'S OWN LANGUAGE**

**MOST TRANSLATIONS DONE INTO OTHER LANGUAGE**

| 500 BC | 1 AD | 500 | 1000 | 1500 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

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1384: Wycliffe's English Bible

1526: Tyndale's English Bible

1611: King James Version

-1830: Carey translates in India

**1901: 1st KNOWN BIBLE RESTRICTED BY COPYRIGHT**

-3rd Century BC: Septuagint

-405: Jerome's Vulgate Complete

1946: United Bible Societies founded

## CURRENT STATUS OF BIBLE TRANSLATION

## THE LAST 36 YEARS OF BIBLE TRANSLATION



COMPLETE BIBLE — 513

BIBLE PORTION — 1,010

NEW TESTAMENT — 1,294

NO SCRIPUTRE — 4,101

7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000

1978 1984 1990 1996 2002 2008 2014
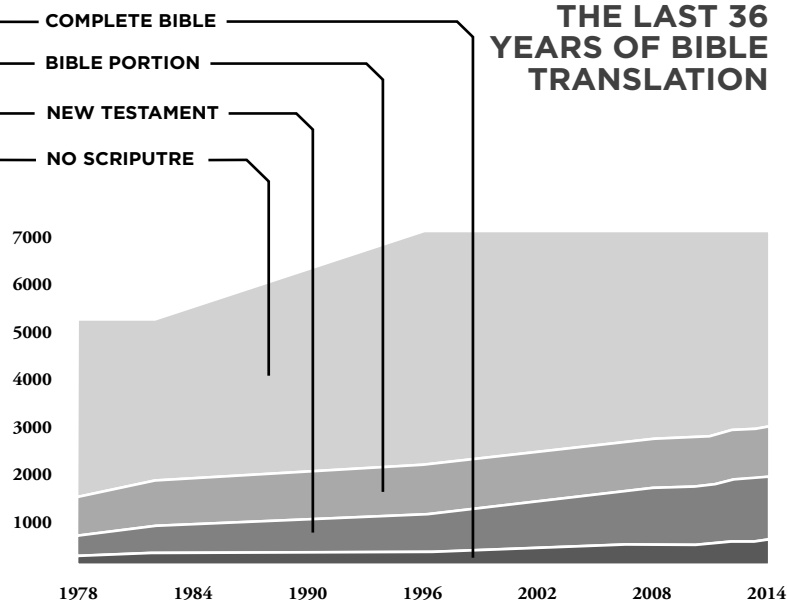
### Bible Translation 3.0 (Digital Era)

The transition that began in the preceding era is completing its trajectory: the responsibility for and ownership of all aspects of the process of Bible translation in the Digital Era are returning to the global Church. This foundational transition affects every aspect of Bible translation, and we will consider each element in detail below.

### The Status of Bible Translation Today

As the global Church continues to rise to the challenge of learning to translate the Bible into their own languages, it is important to understand the status of Bible translation in relation to the world's languages today. Arriving at accurate statistics regarding the status of Bible translation worldwide is a complicated undertaking. Arguably the best statistics available to the global Church are compiled by the Wycliffe Global Alliance and are available online at www.wycliffe.net/statistics. These are the statistics as of 2013 assembled as a chart[6]:

The numbers in this chart are arrived at by adding the known number of translated Bibles (513), the number of New Testament translations (1,294), and the known number of languages with translated Scripture portions (1,010), then subtracting that total from the known number of living languages (6,918) to arrive at the number of living languages without any Scripture (4,101). These numbers do not show languages with work in progress (see below) or imply anything with regard to assumed need or desire for translation. The

chart also does not show the number of translations in the list that are listed as "finished" but are not in use because of the need for revision of the translations. Some estimates put the number of languages that have translated Scripture in need of revision as high as 400–500.

The chart above ("status of Bible translation") is a snapshot of the current status of languages and Bible translation today. A more complete picture is provided by tracking the progress of Bible translation through time. Detailed records are not publicly available from before 1978. This chart ("The Last 36 Years of Bible Translation") shows the progress of Bible translation as compared to the known number of living languages through time for the past 36 years[7]:

### Bible Translation in the Past 200 Years

This table is based in part on research done by Wycliffe Associates and provides a general overview of key aspects of Bible translation:

### The Significance of Each Language

In light of the reality that over 4,000 languages still do not have translated Scripture, it is important to consider the value of each language in light of Scripture and the sociolinguistic context of the world today. Scripture seems to suggest that the value God places on each people group and each language is equal, regardless of the number of speakers. In the Great Commission of

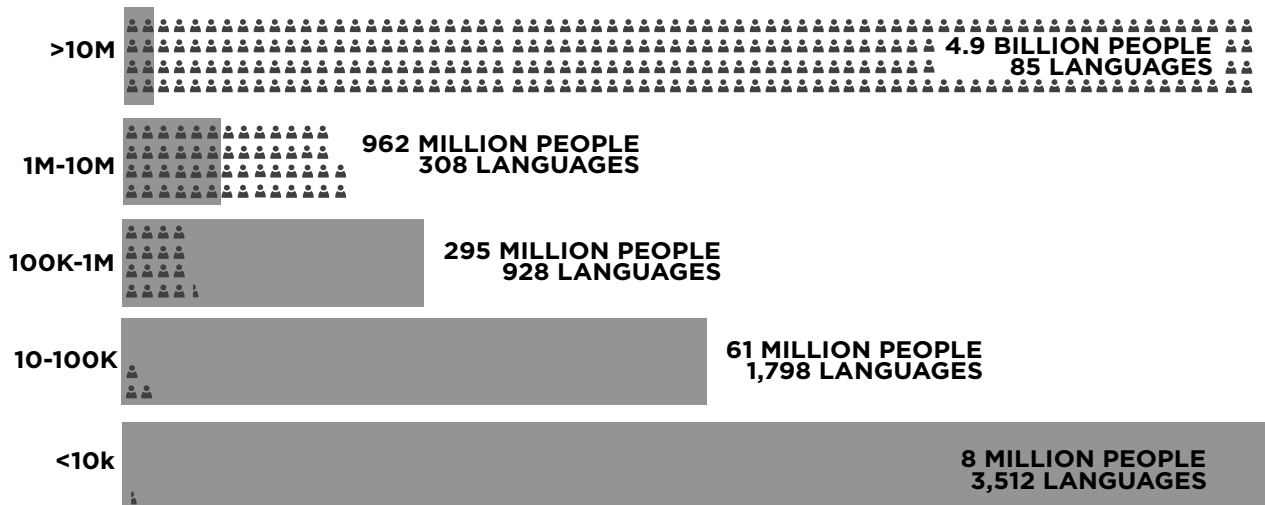| | BIBLE 1.0 TRANSLATION | BIBLE 2.0 TRANSLATION | BIBLE 3.0 TRANSLATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| **TRANSLATORS** | "Other Tongue" translators | "Mother Tongue" translators | "Mother Tongue" translators |
| **LEADERSHIP/ MANAGEMENT** | Outsiders | Outsiders | Local church & church network |
| **ASSISTANCE** | Outsiders (some locals) | Outsiders (some locals) | Insiders (some outsiders) |
| **CHURCH ENGAGEMENT** | Separate | Increasing | Integral |
| **TIME TO NEW TESTAMINT** | ~25yr | ~10yr | 2-4yr |
| **COST OF NEW TESTAMINT** | ~$1-2 million | ~$200,000 | ~$50,000 |
| **HORIZON** | ~2150 | ~2037 | Unknown |
| **REVISIONS** | Rarely | Infrequent | Frequent |
| **FORMATS** | Printed book | Digital, audio, & printed book | Digital, audio, video, mobile, & printed book |
| **LEGAL POSITION** | All rights reserved | All rights reserved | Free & open |
| **TARGET** | New Testament | New Testament & scripture portions | As much as the church wants |
| **CONTENT REDISTRIBUTION** | Expensive, restricted | Expensive, restricted | Free, unrestricted |
| **QUALITY ASSURANCE** | Parachurch decides for church | Parachurch decides for church | Church is highest authority |
| **PUBLISHING** | Exclusive, usually with Bible society | Exclusive, usually with Bible society | Non-exclusive, lowest possible cost |
| **LANGUAGE TARGETED** | ~75% of church's languages | ~75% of church's languages | 100% of church's languages |

Matthew 28:18–20 the Church is given the task of making disciples of "every people group." In the vision of the global Church before the throne of God are the redeemed from "every nation, tribe, people and language" (Revelation 7:9).

One approach is to prioritize languages based on the "return on investment" of a translation project. If someone is going to pay money to translate a resource into a language, the logical approach is to start with the languages that have the most speakers and work down from there. This makes great business sense, but it falls short in accounting for the missiological reality that if this is the only strategy employed, the last and the least will continue to wait indefinitely to get biblical content. Translated biblical content may never get to the last and the least in this model, because there is a point where the cost eventually exceeds the perceived value to the owner of the process.

# THE LINGUISTICALLY LEAST OF THESE



| | |
|---|---|
| **>10M** | **4.9 BILLION PEOPLE / 85 LANGUAGES** |
| **1M-10M** | **962 MILLION PEOPLE / 308 LANGUAGES** |
| **100K-1M** | **295 MILLION PEOPLE / 928 LANGUAGES** |
| **10-100K** | **61 MILLION PEOPLE / 1,798 LANGUAGES** |
| **<10k** | **8 MILLION PEOPLE / 3,512 LANGUAGES** |

This chart ("the linguistically 'least of these,'" created from the language data available at www.ethnologue.com) shows the breakdown of the populations of every language in the world, by number of speakers:

The top row shows the number of languages (85) that have more than 10 million speakers each. The combined populations of these largest languages is 4.9 billion people. By contrast, the bottom row shows the number of languages (3,512) that have fewer than 10,000 speakers each. The combined population of these languages (more than 50% of the living languages in the world) is around eight million.

### A Partial Solution

To illustrate the challenge intrinsic to the institutional model for Bible translation, consider the analogy of the landline telephone and the mobile phone. Telecommunications companies that deal in landline telephones have to make difficult decisions about where (and how far) to extend their reach. Running cables and building telephone poles is time-consuming and expensive because landline telephones and the infrastructure that make them work are inherently scarce. In the world of scarcity, not everyone gets reached, simply due to the high costs associated with the infrastructure required to deliver the service.[8]

By contrast, the mobile phone world is driven by an abundance model. It costs the telecommunications company virtually nothing to add another mobile subscriber to a wireless network. Any mobile phone kiosk can sell someone a SIM card, and the only additional hardware required is a mobile handset, which the consumers pay for themselves. Even when huge numbers of subscribers join, the cost of putting up new cell towers to accommodate new users is vastly less than trying to build and maintain telephone poles and lines across an entire country.

So the telecommunications companies that are attempting to solve the communication problem by using

**Scripture seems to suggest that the value God places on each people group and each language is equal, regardless of the number of speakers.**

**ACTIVE BIBLE
TRANSLATIONS
NEEDED**
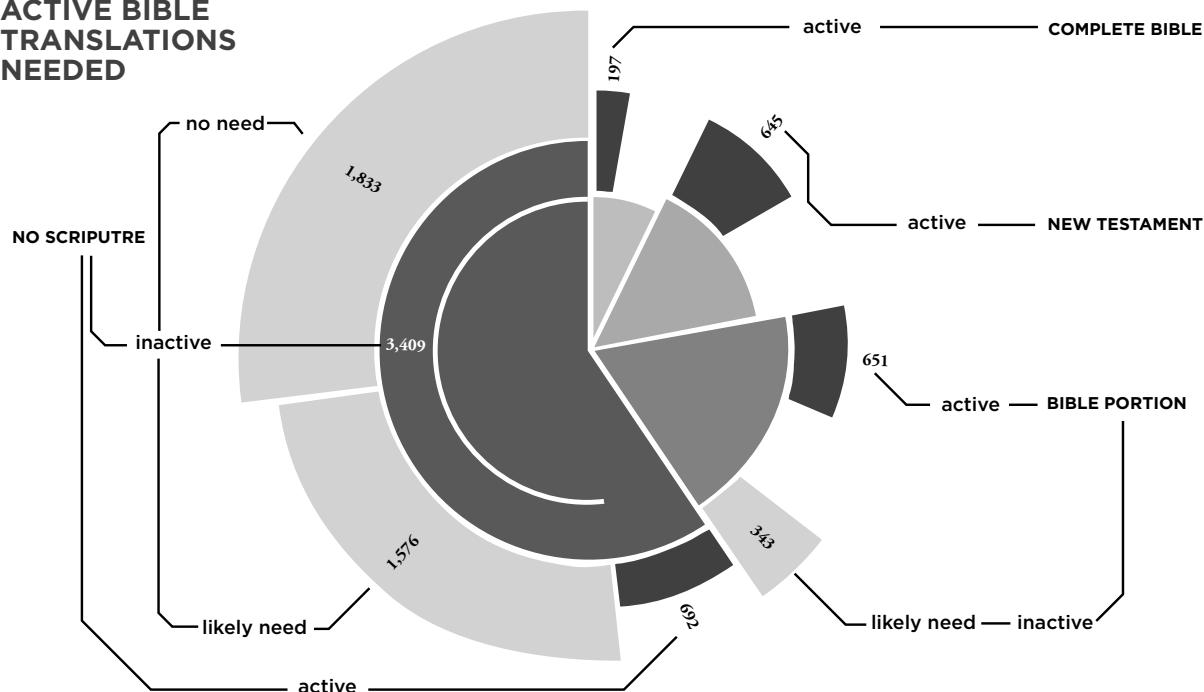


landline telephones must choose who gets and who does not get a telephone, based on their organizational capacity and the inherent costs of using landline telephones. This external, top-down, unilateral determination by the power-holder is intrinsic to the scarcity era. It is unavoidable. The landline telephone company might reason that some villages are close enough to other villages so that phones in one village could be used by the people in the other. The objective could become one of providing a telephone for everyone who is considered to have a need for one.

Things become complicated when the inevitable happens: someone from a village not scheduled to receive a telephone line decides they want one. Who wins? Does the telephone company reconsider, given that someone has determined for themselves they actually do need a telephone? More likely, the telephone company may simply not have the capacity to change their decision and

## The global Church is rising up and beginning to determine for themselves that they need the Bible in their own language.

the person will just have to go without. The decision in this context does not rest with the person in the village— it rests with the institution.

The institutional model of Bible translation is faced with a similarly unenviable task: deciding which languages of the world will receive Bible translations, when, and how much of the Bible they will receive. While these decisions are not usually made without input from language communities, institutions have limited resources and personnel and, regardless of their desire to the contrary, they are unable to go the distance to the last and the least. So they must prioritize projects and establish a cutoff point beyond which their organizational capacity simply cannot reach.

This cutoff point can be visualized by continuing to chart the statistics available to the global Church regarding the collective Bible translation task. In addition to the Bible translations currently available, "there is known active translation and/or linguistic development happening in 2,167 languages… This includes 692 languages for which there is no known Scripture; 197 languages with a Bible; 645 languages with a New Testament; and 651 languages with portions of Scripture, such as a book."[9] These nine active projects can be displayed in the same chart as follows ("active Bible translations"). Note that the active language projects are labeled on the languages that also have translated Scripture:

From this we can see that **the total number or languages with available Scripture or an active translation project covers roughly half of the world's languages** (again, disregarding translated Scriptures needing revision). Of the remaining 3,409 languages having no Scripture or active translation project, "1,919 languages are understood to 'likely need Bible translation to begin.' These estimates represent 1,576 languages with no known Scripture… and 343 languages… with some Scripture but no current activities in place."[10] The criteria by which individual languages are determined to be a "likely need" (or not) are not available to the global Church. The languages determined to be a "likely need" are labeled in the chart to the left ("likely need" for Bible translation).

From this we can see that after we add together all the languages with Scripture, those with active projects (but no Scripture), and those considered to be a likely translation need (but with no Scripture or active project), there are still 1,833 languages that are not accounted for. Presumably, these last 26% of the world's languages are considered to be too small or too weak ("unviable") for the institutional model to be able to serve. Because the institution has the authority to make the decision and owns all the tools and resources, their decision is final. Which raises an important question: **When the Church disagrees with the Bible translation institution what happens?**

The global church is rising up and beginning to determine for themselves that they need the Bible in their own language. It is at this foundational point in the process— the assessment of translation need and priority—that the global church in many languages is in crisis and the transition into Bible translation 3.0 begins. They are in desperate need of God's Word in their language, but frequently their language is not on the "needs translation" list or the church is no longer willing to wait for others to permit them to start. In some places they have nothing more than a bootlegged copy of Microsoft Word and Bible in a trade language. But the church has assessed their own need for Bible translation, and they are getting started. With or without help.

### In Honor of Those Who Have Gone Before

As stated above, the objective of this article is to address topics pertaining to Bible translation with clarity and balance. It would be easy to misconstrue efforts made to objectively assess the limitations of previous Bible translation eras as an attempt to discredit or diminish the work of those who have gone before. Nothing could be further from the truth. The changes in the global context that create new opportunities for the acceleration of Bible translation in every language without limitation do not implicitly suggest that the people, organizations, and strategies of previous eras were deficient in any way. The history of Bible translation is filled with those who have worked with incredible diligence and laid down their lives for the advance of the Gospel in other languages, making the most of the opportunities available to them at the time. They are worthy of honor for their work to that end. (MF)

*You can learn more about the unfolding Word at http://ufw.io/bt3. You can learn more about Wycliffe Associates at wycliffeassociates.org.*

1 Disruptive innovations are is described by Clayton Christensen as technologies that typically underperform established technologies at the outset but, because they are usually cheaper, simpler, smaller, and more convenient to use, they rapidly outpace existing technologies. (Christensen 1997)

2 "The World in 2014: ICT Facts and Figures" 2014

3 The concept of a paradigm shift as used in this document is described by Thomas Kuhn: "Normal science is characterized by a paradigm, which legitimates puzzles and problems on which the community works. All is well until the methods legitimated by the paradigm cannot cope with a cluster of anomalies; crisis results and persists until a new achievement redirects research and serves as a new paradigm. That is a paradigm shift…" (Kuhn and Hacking 2012).

4 Cowan 1983. Some sources suggest higher estimates of languages with available Scripture by 1800.

5 ibid

6 "Scripture Access Statistics 2013" 2013. During the writing of this document, the 2014 statistics were published and are available online. The numbers for the categories in the pie chart for 2014 are as follows: 531 Bible, 1,329 New Testament, 1,023 with Scripture portions, leaving 4,019 languages with no Scripture, assuming a total of 6,902 living languages (see www.ethnologue.com/statistics), not including the 204 languages listed as living but having zero speakers. Key data regarding the number of languages included in multiple categories is not included in the 2014 statistics, for reasons not stated.

7 This chart is arrived at by performing the same calculations as in the preceding chart, with the number of languages in each category in the vertical axis and the years from 1978 to the present running from left to right. The source data is listed in the references for this document. Note that this chart includes data for 1978, 1982, 1996, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013.The values of years for which data is not available are assumed to be the average of the preceding and following years. Note that it is possible the total number of languages worldwide may have been relatively constant in the years preceding the mid-1990s, though the full number of living languages was unknown at the time.

8 The difference between "scarcity" and "abundance" and the role of digital technology in the rise of the latter is explained by Clay Shirky (2010, p. 42ff).

9 "Scripture Access Statistics 2013" 2013

10 Ibid.

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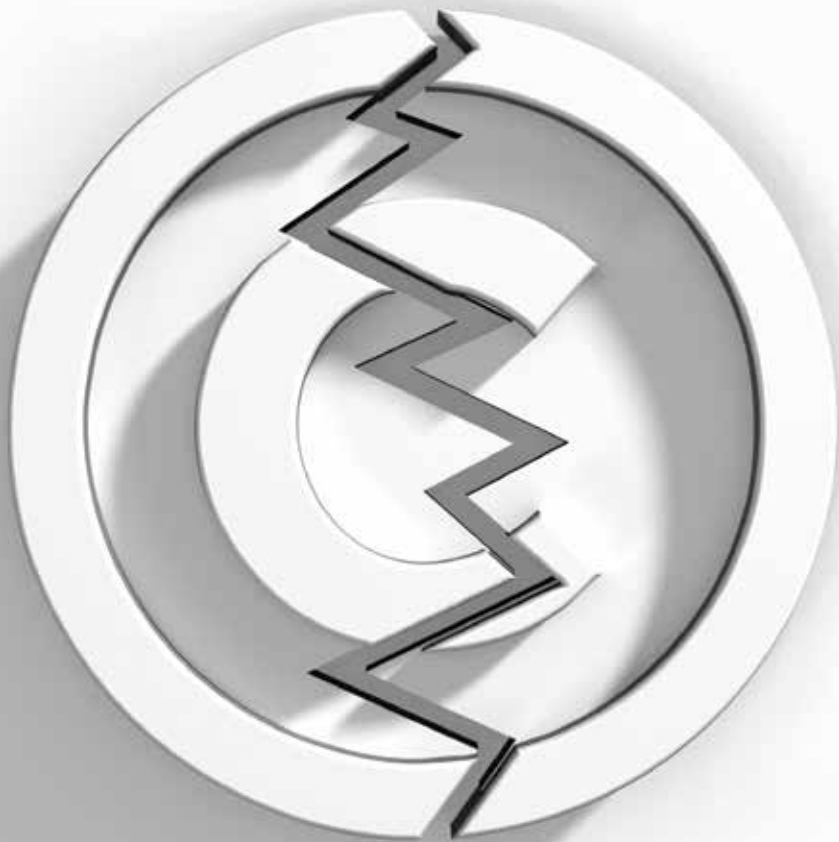


A cry of dismay ran through the assembly. The pastors had just been informed that, due to licensing issues, the Bible they had used for over a decade was no longer permitted for use. "How can you take the Word of God from us?" they asked. "We urgently need it. Why is it being taken away?" But without further explanation, their access to the Bible was terminated.

This is a true story, and there are many more like it. From the beginning, the Bible was the common property of the Church. But today, in virtually every language where it is available, the Bible is not the common property of the Church and it is not freely available without restriction. The Church is under the rule of "gatekeepers" who mediate between the people of God and the Word of God. How did this happen?

**How we got here**

It started about 200 years ago, when the Church established Bible societies to provide bibles as rapidly as possible, at the lowest possible cost. Then in 1901, the ASV was copyrighted to prevent unauthorized publication. Copyrights on Bibles soon became the norm. Those who had been entrusted by the Church with distribution of the Bible now became its owners. Officially, this was for "stewardship" of the Word of God and copyrights "protected" the Bible. (Though being the exclusive distributor

> **In every language where available, the Bible is not freely available without restriction.**

of a sought-after Bible translation did have its advantages.)

Then the *Digital Era* dawned. What had been expensive (creating new copies of Bibles) was free for everyone. What had been difficult (distribution of Bibles) was so easy anyone could do it. Many organizations that made their living from managing the scarcity of the *Print Era* found the abundance of the *Digital Era* threatening. But, as the collective owners of the copyrights to virtually all existing Bible translations, the law was on their side. If the preservation of their institutions in the name of "protecting the Bible" required restricting the freedom of the Church, so be it.

### Does the Bible need to be protected?

Disregarding, for a moment, the intrinsic theological implication that the Sovereign God who has preserved His Word for two millennia is now dependent on human institutions to preserve it, it is worth considering: *From what does the Word of God need to be protected?*

The fear usually pertains to corruption of the text. The assumption is that the ease with which a Bible can be intentionally corrupted requires use of restrictive "all rights reserved" licenses to prevent it. But consider the implication of the logic. If the Bible can only be protected by copyright, how is it that the KJV, ASV, and dozens of other bibles (as well as hymns like "Amazing Grace") that are in the public domain *where there is no copyright* are uncorrupted?

Derivative translations have been made that mock them (e.g., the LOLcat Bible) and intentionally distort them (e.g., the Queen James Bible). Yet the historical pattern holds: originals are fine, derivatives are judged on their own merit. Copyright is not the

## STORIES LIKE THESE MUST COME TO AN END

——————

**"***A Bible society in Southeast Asia does not consider there to be any financial value in printing more copies of the Bible in certain languages, so they do not, even though the Church is pleading for more.***"**

**"***A Bible society in Africa is deliberately starving the Bible market to keep prices artificially high. So the Church pleads for the Bible but cannot afford it, while the warehouses of the institution are filled with the Bibles the Church needs.***"**

**"***A Central Asian Bible society has a warehouse full of a brand new Bible translation that they own. This translation is urgently needed by millions of speakers of that language, but the institution will not make it available, due to the style of the translation and the word choices used. The only way the Church can gain access to them is by the compassion of an unbelieving employee of the publisher who smuggles the Bibles out of the warehouse.***"**

## Copyright is not the means by which Bibles that have no copyright are flawlessly preserved.

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means by which Bibles that have no copyright are flawlessly preserved.

Regardless, the default licensing model of Bible owners today appears to permit good people to do good things, but prevents bad things from happening. On the surface, this sounds like a very good approach. There are, however, at least four significant shortcomings with it.

### 1. It Doesn't Work

This approach reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of how copyright actually works. Copyright prevents nothing. All over the world people consistently violate "all rights reserved" licenses that "protect" copyrighted content including Bible translations. Copyright law merely provides the owner of the resource with a legal platform from which they can sue infringers in public courts.

### 2. It Hinders the Church

There is no evidence that people who are antagonistic toward the Bible are dissuaded from misusing it due to the presence of an "all rights reserved" license. Instead, copyright restrictions actually hinder the Church from using it.

### 3. It Reproduces the Errors that the Reformation Corrected

When God gave His Word to the Church, it was "free and open" and anyone who encountered it could do anything with it; they were accountable only to God for what they did (c.f. Revelation 22:18–19). Eventually, heretics who had

access to the Bible began to teach corrupt doctrine. The leaders of the institutional Church responded by putting gatekeepers between the people and the Bible, to protect it. These ecclesiastical restrictions eventually prevented commoners from having access to the Word of God at all.

So when the Reformers came on the scene with their "heretical" belief in things like the priesthood of all believers (no segregated hierarchy), they were reviled, excommunicated, and sometimes martyred. But the Reformers' crowning scandal was the translation of the Bible into the languages of the common people. This the elites simply could not allow.

> "That pestilent and most wretched John Wycliffe, of damnable memory, a child of the old devil, and himself a child or pupil of Antichrist... crowned his wickedness by translating the Scriptures into the mother tongue." —Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury[1]

Why all the angst? Because the elites believed God had granted the Bible to their safekeeping as its stewards. But now, because of Wycliffe, everyone could have unrestricted access to it, unprotected, and terrible things were sure to happen:

> "Christ gave His Gospel to the clergy and the learned doctors of the Church... But this Master John Wycliffe… by thus translating the Bible, made it the property of the masses and common to all and more open to the laity… And so the pearl of the Gospel is thrown before swine and trodden underfoot..." —Henry Knighton, Chronicler of the Catholic Church.[2]

*"An almost completely illiterate people group in Africa has a translation of the New Testament, but a Bible society owns the copyright on the translation and refuses to allow the recording of audio Bibles for free, widespread sharing of the MP3s for the building up of the Church."*

*"For more than 10 years a Bible society in Africa that owns the rights to a Bible has refused to print more copies. They cannot afford the print run and, even if they could, the Church would not be able to purchase all the copies. Instead of making the Bible available for lower-cost printing options (like print-on-demand), the Bible is simply not made available at all."*

*"In Central Asia, a Bible society refuses to print any Bible that does not have traditional Christian artwork placed prominently on the cover. Even though such artwork places the Church in religiously antagonistic contexts at lethal risk, the institution owns the copyright and insists on their tradition, regardless of the danger to the Church."*

With the publication of Luther's translation of the Bible into German, the Reformation ignited into an uncontainable blaze. The Church's unrestricted freedom to access, use, and redistribute the Bible in their own language severely threatened the gatekeepers' privileged position. So they sought to maintain it by decree:

> "...if the Holy Bible… be indiscriminately allowed to everyone, the rashness of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it... bishops or inquisitors [may]… permit the reading of the Bible translated into the vulgar tongue… this permission must be had in writing… Regulars shall neither read nor purchase such Bibles without special license from their superiors." —Pope Pius IV[3]

Note how similar this anti-Reformation papal edict is to licenses restricting use of Bibles today. Both contain the same key elements of the "gatekeeper" strategy:

The fear that bad things will happen if the Word is not protected.

The discrimination policy, where only those who are considered worthy are granted permission to handle the Bible.

A gatekeeper in authority over the Church makes the decision.

The permission must be had in the form of a written license.

Given the Reformers' unanimous stance in favor of "free and open" access by all people to the Word of God in every language, one might wonder on what side of the same issue they would be today.

4. It is Disproven by History - We could expect to find in the pre-copyright era a chaotic mess of corrupted derivative translations purporting to be the original and confusing many, due to the absence

of copyright. But we don't. Instead of chaos, a notably different pattern emerges: the originals still exist with virtually perfect fidelity while the corrupted derivatives have all but vanished from the scene.

**Why does it matter?**

At this point, you may be wondering: "So what? Why does it matter that the Bible is restricted by copyright? It may not be ideal, but what's the worst that could happen?" Without overstating the case at all, the worst that can happen is what actually is happening all over the world today: **the perpetuation of a total famine of God's Word in thousands of people groups**. This is true for people groups where a Bible has already been translated but is not freely accessible to the Church. It is also true for the thousands of living languages where the Church is restricted from using existing biblical content, tools, and training to engage in effective Bible translation in their own languages.

**Where the Church is going**

A worldwide transition back to freedom is already occurring. The Church is starting to openly collaborate to provide the Bible without restrictions in every language. A new generation of unrestricted biblical resources, training, and tools is being created to fuel a Church-centric Bible translation movement in every language. This "free and open" movement has four key components:

- Unrestricted biblical resources— Bible texts, exegetical resources, lexicons, and checking questions that provide maximum comprehension of the text.

- Unrestricted translation training— Principles and best practices for effective and accurate Bible translation.

- Unrestricted translation tools—

*"For many years, a people group in Africa has had a huge demand for a second print run of the translation of the Bible in their language. The Bible society that owns the Bible in that language has not been able to pay for the minimum run but they have not permitted the use of lower-cost options like print-on-demand. Churches are now, once again, reading in the national language and doing on-the-fly oral translations, just as though the Bible had never been translated in the first place."*

Open-source technology tools that provide everything from Bible translation on mobile phones to digital publishing platforms with output to web, multimedia, and print-on-demand (and anything else).

- The "Gateway Languages" strategy - These resources are being pushed out from English to the smallest subset of Languages of Wider Communication that cover 100% of all the languages in the world through bilingual speakers. In this way, the Church can access everything, whether their language has three speakers or 300 million.

**Toward an unrestricted Church**

Most of the men in the room had, up until recently, been bomb-makers, special operatives, and senior leaders of terrorist networks in the Middle East. Now, as disciples of Jesus, they had been appointed by their Church leaders to translate the Bible. Legacy resources were inaccessible to them, but now they were receiving everything necessary for effective Bible translation, at no cost, and without restriction. Smiles spread across their faces as they browsed the biblical content on their new tablet computers. "Thank you!" they exclaimed, "It is like you have given us the answers to the test. Everything we need to translate the Bible into our own language is right here." (MF)

*This true story is one of many like it in the "free and open" movement. Find out more at unfoldingWord.org.*

[1] Cited in: "Why Wycliffe Translated the Bible Into English." 2014. Christianity Today Library. Accessed August 13. http://www.ctlibrary.com/ch/1983/issue3/326.html.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Cited in: Schaff, Philip. 1910. Modern Christianity.The German Reformation. Second edition, revised.Vol.VII.VIII vols. History of the Christian Church. http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc7.html.

# AN
# UNLIKELY
# MIRACLE

## BUT THEN, AREN'T THEY ALL?

BY **DR. BRUCE SMITH,**
PRESIDENT & CEO
OF WYCLIFFE ASSOCIATES

### INTRODUCTION

In a remote corner of South Asia, among ancient rocks and militant thorns, Christ's church has taken root among the Ng people. It can only be described as early growth. Tender shoots are springing up in shallow soil as rain falls in the distant mountains and the water seeps into valleys that have been parched for generations. Leaves and flowers strain toward the *Sonlight*, eager to grow.

The Joshua Project counts 0.0% Christians among the Ng. This either confirms their insignificance, or their significance, depending on your perspective. External estimates of their population are less than 3,000. Language surveys diagnosed their language as near-death forty years ago. They are isolated geographically, politically, religiously, economically, linguistically, and missionally.

But once a week Ng believers hike for hours to gather in three small congregations to worship, to confess and repent, to embrace one another, to sing praises, and to hear God's Word – in a foreign language.

> they are unwilling to see their families and friends pass into eternity without hearing God's Word in their own language.

For years these congregations have only heard God's voice in a foreign language. With no scripture recorded in their own language, their only option has been spontaneous personal or pastoral translation as they read and listen. The cumulative result of this experience has been twofold.

First, their thirst for God's Word has increased to passion. For many, God's Word is their highest priority. They ponder, pray, plan, and persevere toward having God's Word in their own language. This is their dream, their goal, their calling.

Second, they are unwilling to see their families and friends pass into eternity without hearing God's Word in their own language. By their own count 30,000 people speak their language. They are not praying for a missionary or waiting for someone else to care and come. They are not asking permission. They are the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, His church. They are responding to the Holy Spirit and moving forward in faith.

### HEARTBROKEN

For several years our English Language Learning (ELL) team had been working with our international partners in this country to increase their English competency. Because most of the global training resources and references for Bible translation are in English, competency in English translates directly into access to these resources. As the global Bible translation team has expanded internationally in recent decades this English training has become extremely valuable.

**DR. BRUCE SMITH** | wycliffeassociates.org

Dr. Bruce Smith is President and CEO of Wycliffe Associates. You can learn more at wycliffeassociates.org.

Talking, eating, praying, laughing, crying, and learning English together created a deep relational bond between our ELL team and these local partners. While reflecting on the impact of both the training and the relationship, one of the young local leaders in Bible translation opened his heart and shared the burden that had been weighing on him for years. His burden was the agonizing pace of progress in Bible translation for the languages of his nation. His heart was broken for the lost and dying, for his friends and neighbors, and for the millions vainly pursuing ungodly darkness – for lack of light.

### THE QUESTION

At the convergence of encouragement from our ELL team and his own deep discouragement for the lack of God's Word in local languages, he ventured an unanticipated question. "Could you use the principles of English Language Learning to teach us how to accelerate Bible translation for our people?"

The only immediately obvious answer to his question was, "I don't know." But love and relationship demanded the follow-up response, "I'll try."

### A NEW APPROACH

In the ensuing months Wycliffe Associates' ELL Director, Dan Kramer, researched the existing resources for Bible translation and began building a new training approach for translators on the same educational foundation that supports English Language Learning. Since he has described the theoretical and practical underpinnings of this new approach in a paper titled *MAST – Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation: Brain-Based Bible Translation Methodology*, I will not attempt to recount the details here.

One fundamental tenet of MAST is that it builds on God-given language ability. Language is not a unique specialty. It is pervasive. It is part of God's image in mankind. Even its astonishing diversity is a result and reflection of God's redeeming grace. From a practical perspective, language competency is the readily available natural resource for any community beginning Bible translation.

Another teaching principle integral to MAST is that

you begin with the students. Most teachers do not have the luxury of selecting or deselecting students. The community sends the students. The teacher teaches whoever shows up. The practical implication of this in MAST is that the translators are chosen by the community. In fact, every aspect of Bible translation is entirely decided by the community. They choose who is involved, when, where, and how. They decide who to include in the process, and who to exclude. They decide which book, or books, to translate first and last. They decide the pace of translation. They decide when, where, and how the translation is published and distributed.

### LATE ARRIVALS

After months of curriculum planning and preparation, Dan organized an initial MAST training workshop in South Asia. Translation teams from five languages were invited. Four of the translation teams had already completed traditional training and translation of significant portions of scripture during the years preceding the MAST workshop. One team, from the Ng, had neither training nor translation experience. Since one of the translation teams had completed all of their New Testament except 1 and 2 Thessalonians, this became the translation priority for the first MAST workshop.

The workshop was scheduled for four weeks in June 2014. The first two weeks would be MAST training. The second two weeks would be actual translation.

On the first day of the MAST workshop only four of the teams were present. The fifth team, from the Ng people, did not arrive. So, the MAST training proceeded without the Ng.

> ## "Could you use the principles of English Language Learning to teach us how to accelerate Bible translation for our people?"

At the end of the two weeks of training the four teams were ready to begin translating 1 Thessalonians. It was at this point that the Ng team finally arrived. They had entirely missed the MAST training. As the other teams began translating, the immediate question was, "What should the Ng team do?"

Dan considered the options, then encouraged the Ng team to just begin translating 1 Thessalonians along with the other teams. They could just learn "on the job."

### INSPIRATION

At first the teams that had prior Bible translation experience struggled with the MAST method.

The MAST method starts with a group overview of the book, chapters, and passages. After the group discussion the chapters, passages, and verses are delegated to individuals to work on separately. So, instead of working sequentially through the translation as a group, the individuals initially work in parallel. This naturally accelerates the process based on the number of translators involved.

Each translator then reads, or listens, to a small portion of scripture from source translations. The portion must be brief enough for the individual to hold it in short-term memory, but long enough to be a coherent thought. Once the translator has the scripture portion clearly in mind they close the sources and think through the passage in their own language. As they think about the passage they make an initial "blind draft" in their

own language. This gets the draft started with a very natural expression of the passage in the target language.

Blind drafting was not part of their prior training, so it took some time for the experienced teams to learn this new approach.

Once the initial draft is written the translator returns to the source texts to check whether anything has inadvertently been added, subtracted, or distorted. The initial draft is then revised to increase the accuracy and

**Wycliffe Associates Installing Print On Demand Systems for Quick, Easy Access to Printed Scriptures in Dangerous Areas**

(Orlando, Florida, USA)—Wycliffe Associates has launched a program that enables local Christians to print the Bible on demand in nations where owning a copy of the Bible can lead to arrest or worse. The program will facilitate the printing and distribution of the Scriptures for language groups without any of the Bible.

"Following Christ can be a death sentence in many hostile countries around the world," says Bruce Smith, President and CEO of Wycliffe Associates. "Christians are persecuted, arrested, hunted down, and may lose their lives for translating the Bible. Wycliffe Associates provides the most effective technology and equipment

to empower national translators in this life-changing work—especially when it means keeping translators safe in the most dangerous areas imaginable."

Each high-speed digital printing system provided by Wycliffe Associates includes a computer, printer, binder, laminator, and paper cutter. Local Christians are trained to operate the system, which is set up in a safe house. Then, when a language group is ready for printed copies of the Scriptures, they can be printed from a flash drive and discreetly hand carried and distributed.

"Even in a hostile nation where it is life-threatening to follow Christ, Print On Demand will allow Bible printing and distribution to proceed," says Smith. "A group of believers secretly meeting in a closed country is already asking us for one of these systems. I am deeply committed to helping national believers share

As the experienced translation teams moved forward, the Ng team also stepped out in faith. Dan and others coached and mentored them along the way, but the Ng translators quickly learned the MAST method and put it into practice.

1 Thessalonians is not a lengthy book, with just around 89 verses. Within just a few days each of the teams had drafted and revised 1 Thessalonians through three quality checks. In addition, two experienced translation consultants reviewed each of these translations. To everyone's great encouragement, the translation consultants concluded that the quality of the translations done using the MAST method was equal to the quality of translations that had taken months longer to accomplish. The translation by the Ng, who had missed all of the MAST training, was also high quality.

As you would expect, the local believers were exhilarated by the translation progress MAST enabled.

### THE MIRACLE UNFOLDS

Based on the encouragement from the June 2014 MAST workshop, the Ng believers began planning for a second translation workshop late in 2014. Their goal was to recruit 26 translators. This would be almost 10% of all Ng believers! For a variety of reasons they ultimately had 13 translators at the second workshop, just half of their goal.

But in just two weeks these 13 translators drafted and checked Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and 1 Timothy – 48% of the New Testament!

clarity. After each translator completes their delegated passages they then exchange their drafts and peer check each other's work. After this check the group begins harmonizing the individual translations to assure they are using the same words for key terms and are consistent in their descriptions of the people and events in the book. Already, immediately following the initial drafts, there are three stages of quality checking under way: individual, peer, and group checking.

God's Word, while doing everything we can to protect them. Now, with Print On Demand, God's Word is available in increasing measures."

In one West African nation where a system has been installed, hundreds of copies have been printed of the newly translated Old Testament books of Hosea, Amos, and Haggai, and the New Testament book of Luke.

"The systems not only print Scriptures and Bible resources with great speed, but they are also cost efficient," Smith says.

Wycliffe Associates is currently raising $225,000 to provide 15 Print On Demand systems at a cost of $15,000 each for Christians in hostile nations who are without the Scripture in their language.

"Right now, we have the opportunity to provide a remarkable resource for printing and distributing

God's Word," says Smith. For more information go to wycliffeassociates.org.

### About Wycliffe Associates

Organized in 1967 by friends of Bible translators, Wycliffe Associates empowers national Bible translators to provide God's Word in their own language, partners with the local church to direct and guard translation work, harnessing their passion and desire for God's Word, and engages people from all around the world to provide resources, technology, training, and support for Bible translation.

Because millions of people around the world still wait to read the Scriptures in the language of their heart, Wycliffe Associates is working as quickly as it can to see every verse of God's Word translated into every tongue to speak to every heart. Last year, 2,544 Wycliffe Associates team members worked to speed Bible translations in 73 countries.

> **the translation consultants concluded that the quality of the translations done using the MAST method were equal to the quality of translations that had taken months longer to accomplish.**

Because they were the only language working at the second MAST workshop they added an additional evening session of community checking to thoroughly discuss key terms, spelling conventions, and dialect choices among their three different dialects. The energy of this team was inspiring! As they gained experience applying the MAST method each translator averaged drafting and checking 34 verses per day. With 13 translators that yielded 442 verses, drafted and checked, per day!

### THE NEXT CHAPTERS

At the close of the December 2014 MAST workshop the Ng team printed their scriptures and sang their way home for the winter. Their plan to reconvene to complete the Ng New Testament in April 2015 was disrupted by local events, so their current plan was to gather again during June 2015.

In the meantime, word about MAST has begun spreading virally through global church networks. As of June 2015 the MAST method has reached 115 languages in Asia and Africa. A little more than half of these are languages where Bible translation was stalled for a variety of reasons, but has been reinvigorated by MAST. The rest are languages where no Bible translation has previously occurred. Churches are excited by the opportunity they now have to steward Bible translation and revision for their own communities.

Based on the current requests for MAST training we expect that this strategy will be in use in at least 230 languages by the end of this year.

### OBJECTIONS

As I saw the Ng teams translating the New Testament at an unprecedented pace and quality I struggled to find the right words to describe it. The only word that seemed to fit was "miraculous."
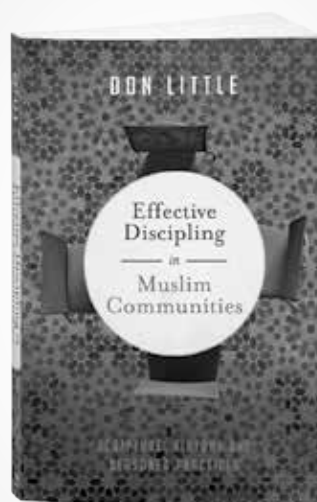
In recent days I have often reflected on the experience of the blind man in John 9. His blindness was assumed to be a judgment against sin, either his own or his parents'. When he began to see, his neighbors assumed he must be someone else. As he described how Jesus healed him, the authorities opened an investigation and accused Jesus of violating the law. Then the authorities questioned whether he had ever been blind and accused his parents of deception. They insulted him, invoked their superiority, and threw him out. As for the formerly blind man, he believed in Jesus as Lord and worshiped him.

All of these objections, and more, have been leveled against MAST, Wycliffe Associates, Dan, myself, our friends and families, and the Ng. In the coming days the number of languages, and experienced partners in Bible translation, will multiply. If MAST is "iron" we pray and trust that it will be sharpened by the "iron" of God's people. If MAST is "clay," it will perish.

### BY FAITH

In the meantime, we worship and praise God along with the Ng and every language group pursuing His Word. Ⓜ

**DR. ALEX ABRAHAM** | sovee.com

Dr. Abraham has been actively involved in several national and international ministry initiatives. Dr. Abraham and his team are deeply committed to mobilizing indigenous leaders in South Asia for engaging the Unreached and Unengaged people groups and languages. They have also been involved in valuable mission research initiatives and have published books on unreached people groups and languages, as well as training materials and tools for church planting. For more information, you may contact the author at friendsofagape@aol.com or go to sovee.com

# A NEW ERA IN BIBLE TRANS-LATION

Sovee Smart Engine &
Community-Empowered
Translation

BY **DR. ALEX ABRAHAM**

I t has been 2000 years since the Lord Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations." What is hindering the gospel's progress in reaching all of the unreached people groups and languages? Is it a lack of money, lack of human resources, or a lack of technology? Or is it something else? One major reason is that, over time, paradigms lose their effectiveness because the world changes. These days, what kinds of paradigm changes are needed in Bible translation to see all the remaining languages in the world have free access to God's Word in their heart language, and in this generation?

When we think about Bible translation, a verse that comes to mind is Daniel 7:14, "People of every language worshiped Him." Revelation 7:9 describes people from every nation, tribe and language standing in the presence of the Lord. The essence of these verses is "*every language.*" This is the challenge before us.

## The Magnitude of the Unfinished Task

*Ethnologue* (18th Edition) reports 7,102 living languages in the world as of now. There may be more languages since survey data is still

incomplete. Wycliffe Global Alliance (wycliffe.net) reports the unfinished task as follows:

- The complete Bible is available in only 531 languages (7.5%). That means, 1.3 billion people are denied the privilege of having a full Bible in their heart language, whereas major languages, like English, can afford to have 10-20 or more different versions of the Bible.

- The New Testament is only available in 1,329 languages (18.5%). This means 5,773 languages still do not have a complete New Testament.

- There are an additional 1,023 languages (14%) with only scripture portions translated.

Languages with the Old Testament, the New Testament, and those with scripture portions adds up to 2,883 languages with Scripture. This represents just 40% of the world's languages. Wycliffe Global Alliance (Wycliffe.net/ statistics) reports there are currently 1,860 languages that will need scripture translation.

However, this data is primarily based on socio-linguistic surveys and not on whether a church wants a Bible or not. *Who should decide if a Bible is needed in a language?* To have a better assessment of translation needs, we need to ask the Church, rather than only relying on linguistic experts to determine actual translation needs. *Scripture*

## The translation work should be church-based and church-owned. This results in early Scripture adoption.
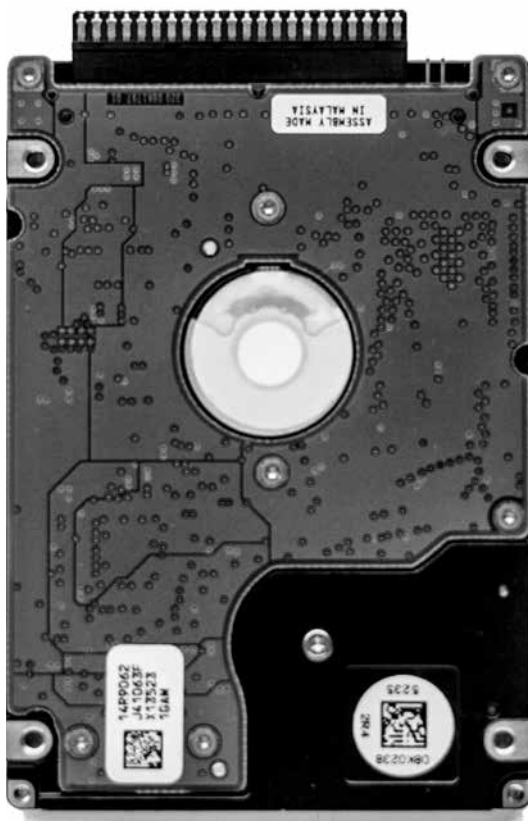
*translation needs are likely to be more than what is currently estimated using current methods for assessment.*

A central question that needs better discussion is, *who is responsible for making the Bible available to every person in the world?* Is it the Church or para-church organization?

Everyone in the world needs to have the entire counsel of God from a full Bible translation in the language that best speaks to their heart, not just a few verses from Scripture, as is now the case in many languages.

### The Paradigm Shift: Acceleration through Sovee + Community

When is the earliest we achieve zero languages without Scripture? Passionate great commission leaders may respond saying, "In our generation, because that is the only generation we have to live and make a difference." If achieving that vision in our generation is the goal, then surely we need a new paradigm.

To accelerate translation starts and completions, we began working with the local believers in 18 South Asian languages. A key to acceleration is getting translation drafts completed sooner. We have been doing this by using the Sovee automated translation engine to produce Bible translations. Acceleration should be understood as production, completion, acceptance and use.

However, the product should be produced and owned by the believing community--the Church. It also has to be acceptable to that community. To achieve these things, the community must be involved in every stage of the translation. The work should be church-based and church-owned. This should result in early Scripture translation, acceptance and engagement. The goal of the Sovee translation project has been to complete a community-produced version of the New Testament for each of the targeted 18 languages within two years.

### The Strategy

In April 2014, 2-4 mother tongue translators were selected in each of the 18 languages chosen for this project as an initial trial of the Sovee strategy. An important criterion for selecting languages was that there should be a community of believers who wanted to have scriptures in their heart language. Another criterion was that the language must have competent mother-tongue Bible translators available who can assist. Selection was based on the recommendation of the local community of believers.

The translators met every two months for training, evaluation of their progress, and to hear feedback from the team. The selected translators were then trained in using the Sovee translation engine technology. They also received ongoing church-based theological education using a biblical theology approach in addition to training in basic principles of Bible translation.
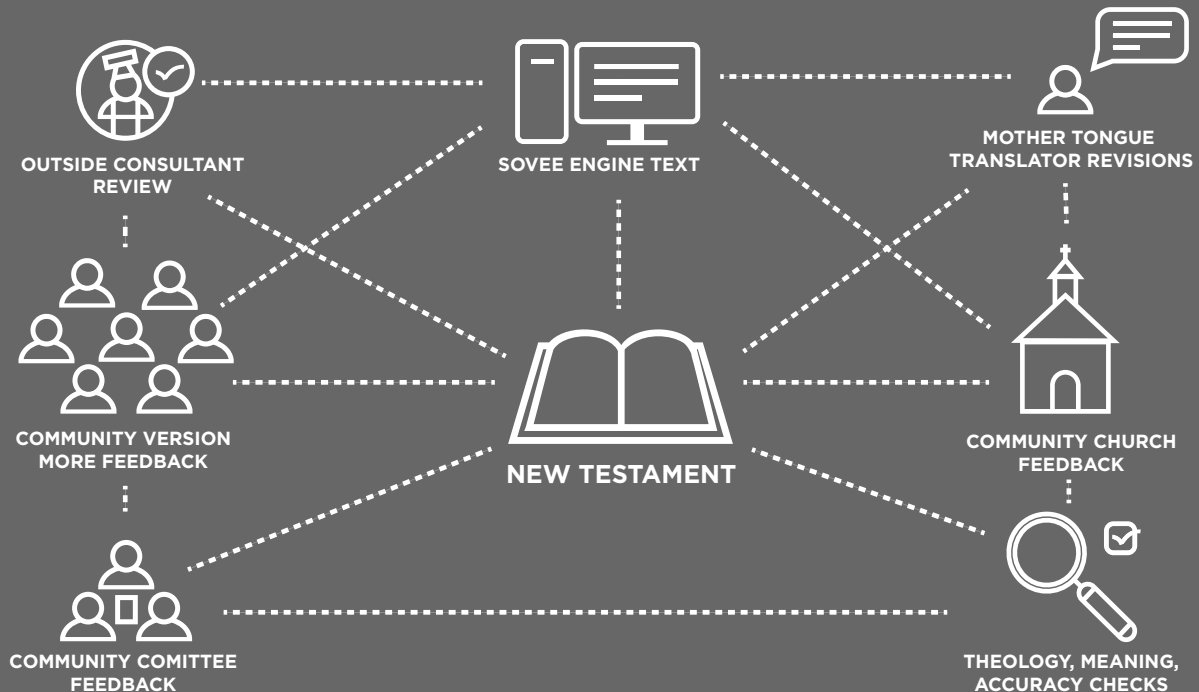
### The Process

Acceleration of translation is also acceleration of community participation, acceptance and use. In 2014, the first step was for the local language speakers to make a list of the top 7,000 common words in the Bible. The words are from the Bible in basic English, which has about 1,000 words in total. Using other translations, we

# THE PROCESS

**CURRENT PARADIGM**: Product-oriented. Linear, discrete stages, low feedback, low church involvment



TRANSLATOR 1ST DRAFT → TEAM CHECK → COMMUNITY TEST → CONSULTANT CHECK → PUBLISH AND DISTRIBUTE

**SOVEE BIBLE PARADIGM**: Transformation-oriented. Lateral, iterative improvement, high feedback, diverse feedback, high church involvement



OUTSIDE CONSULTANT REVIEW

SOVEE ENGINE TEXT

MOTHER TONGUE TRANSLATOR REVISIONS

COMMUNITY VERSION MORE FEEDBACK

NEW TESTAMENT

COMMUNITY CHURCH FEEDBACK

COMMUNITY COMITTEE FEEDBACK

THEOLOGY, MEANING, ACCURACY CHECKS

added more commonly used Bible words. We also added names of people and places, producing a list of 7,000 words. The words were placed in an Excel spreadsheet. This comprises the first dictionary in these languages. Mother tongue translators translated these words in the selected languages in consultation with language experts and Christian leaders from the communities.

The words were loaded into the Sovee smart engine translation software. The software quickly produced a draft translation of the entire Bible. At this point, it was still a rough translation, so we called it Draft Zero. The translation team then began to refine and improve the

translations. The revision process involves five stages as shown at the bottom of this page.

**The Pahari Mahasi Community Takes Action**

Santhosh is a mother tongue translator in South Asia. Her language, Pahari Mahasi, is spoken by over 1 million people. There are now hundreds of believers in this language group. In 2007 the Gospel of Mark was published after nearly five years of work by a small translation team. The people rejoiced to finally have a Gospel in "their" language, but they wanted more. After several more years of waiting, the Gospel of Luke was

# THE SOVEE REVISION PROCESS

**STAGE 1** The mother-tongue translators review the Sovee Engine translated content verse-by-verse, making corrections as best they can. They also compare this initial translation to the nearest major language translation available. Next the translators come together and discuss the translated content, making further corrections online. From this, Sovee produces a new output called *Draft 1*.

**STAGE 2** Five copies of *Draft 1* are printed and given to the local church community for evaluation, suggestions, and further corrections. This is a form of crowdsourcing feedback and improvement because a wide variety of people from the community participate. The translators feed these community improvements back into the Sovee translation engine software. The output translation is *Draft 2* because it now includes feedback and improvements made by the community.

**STAGE 3** This is the local consultant checking stage. In this stage, we use at least two local consultants and language advisors (as opposed to professional, mainly western, linguistic outside experts). The local consulting team consists of theologically trained leaders from the same language community or from a near-language group. These consultants go through *Draft 2* with the help of the mother-tongue translators. The consultants also receive training in the Sovee/Community translation process,

including translation principles. They will do checking for scriptural accuracy, spelling, grammatical errors, and ease of reading and listening. All the corrections are fed back into the Sovee engine and the output is *Draft 3*.

**STAGE 4** At this stage, we advise the translators and their local churches to form a language committee which consists of the mother-tongue translators, local consultants, community leaders, and language experts. They all work together to approve the translation. The approved draft will be released for wider testing with other churches and ministries working in the language group, giving them opportunity to make further corrections and improvements.

Following this process the translation is subjected to wider community scrutiny, both within the church community and also with people from outside. After incorporating corrections produced from this wider community testing, *Draft 4* is produced. This draft is called the "Community Version of the New Testament", and it is now ready for still more testing and evaluation.

**STAGE 5** In this final stage, we request a professional Bible translation consultant to do a random spot check of the translated material. This helps us know if there are many gross errors or only a small number of errors, which informs us how much more work is needed for each translation.

produced and dedicated in 2014, and that generated renewed excitement about getting God's Word in Pahari Mahasi. Some people were so happy they even kissed their copy of the Gospel. Even so, it still took two years to produce that translation. It was discouraging. At this rate the people wondered how long it would take to have the whole Bible in their language.

Translation, as slow as it was, was making a big difference for the people. Up until then, pastors had been preaching in Hindi, but the people did not understand the messages fully. Reading the Bible in their trade language was hard, too. In Pastor Ram Nath's words, "It felt like a foreign god was being preached." But when they starting preaching in their Pahari Mahasi language, people paid more attention. They listened more closely to the sermons and they participated more in worship. They said, "Jesus is no longer a foreign God!" They realized having the full Bible in their language would be a great blessing. They could more effectively establish their believers in faith by teaching God's word in their heart language.

When the people heard about the Sovee Bible project, the church decided to take action. They pulled together a team of five mother tongue translators, received training in the Sovee method, and got right to work. Now a year later, they have reached the *Draft 2* stage of the entire New Testament. Santhosh says the people are very happy that translation progress is accelerating now because they realize they can have the whole Bible in their language— sooner than they could have hoped for.

Other language groups cling to the same hope. They say, "If a Bible translation project is going to be started, then it must also be completed." This is in reference to the "Scripture portions" only approach that takes so long. The starts and stops are simply too frustrating for them. Indeed, they won't be satisfied until they have all 66 books of the Bible translated in their language.

### Bible Stories in Pahari Mahasui Attract Interest

Pastor Kalam is a mother tongue translator for the Pahari Mahasui Bible translation project. His son, Arun, is in the eleventh grade at a government school. He is keen to learn Bible stories in his language. Whenever he shares stories, tells jokes, and acts in school dramas, he does it all in his Pahari Mahasui language. Students and teachers get excited hearing these things in the local language. It draws their interest, so they give him opportunities to do more. It's plain to see that Bible translation in their local language does not only impact the Christians. It can also have an effect on the wider community. The local church

## The current paradigm takes 10-25 years to complete a New Testament. Our goal: less than one year.

wants to stimulate this interest by providing translations of some non-Scripture material in the local language, too.

The Pahari Mahasui translation team says they are getting more rooted in God's Word through the translation work. They feel privileged to be a part of Bible translation ministry and see it as a trust given to them.

### General Results Thus Far

In less than 12 months we have completed stage 1 of the entire New Testament in 13 languages. Another 6 languages have finished stage 2 and have reached stage 3. We hope to complete the entire New Testament in less than 2 years. However, the ultimate goal is to reduce NT translation time to 1 year as we gain more experience.

Importantly, with this paradigm we are also seeing early Scripture acceptance and engagement by the church community as they are involved in the translation process. Including the community at every stage leads to this early use.

### Costs

Currently, using the Sovee process, translation costs about $10 per verse, but this is only a fraction of what translating costs under the current traditional paradigm. In terms of timeframes, the current paradigm takes 10-25 years to complete a New Testament. As stated above, the goal of this new paradigm is to complete a New Testament within one year.

### Conclusion

The goal is zero languages without scriptures in all the remaining languages without a New Testament, and at a financial cost that is well within the reach of the church at large today. Today's smart engine translation technology and new ways of working within the community greatly empower the whole body of Christ to accomplish this goal in our lifetime. But we need to unlearn some old operating paradigms that prevent us from moving forward. Can the goal of zero languages be achieved in our generation? Quoting D.L. Moody, "IT CAN BE DONE, IT OUGHT TO BE DONE, IT MUST BE DONE. (MF)

ACHIEVING THE

# HOPE AND PROMISE OF USING TECHNOLOGY

## FOR BIBLE TRANSLATION WHILE AVOIDING THE PITFALLS

BY **STEVE STEELE**

**REV. STEVE STEELE** | sovee.com

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The Word of God is what changes lives and makes the growth of the Church possible in every people. Yet there are still thousands of languages that do not have a complete Bible and thousands more that have no access to Scripture or only just a few portions. As recently as the year 1999, Wycliffe Bible Translators estimated that it would take eight generations or around 150 years to get the Bible into the hands of all the peoples who need one. Imagine being able to complete a New Testament in a language with no Scripture in less than a year when it used to take 7 to 10 years. Imagine being able to complete the initial task of getting the Bible translated into every language group that still needs one in just the next 10 years, not 150. That is the potential when mixing new machine translation technologies like the Sovee "Smart Engine" Bible software with the efforts of the people who will actually be using the translation. But is it possible for this dream of rapid Bible translation to take place and still maintain high quality translations? What are the pitfalls of these new technologies and how can we avoid them?

Some form of "machine translation technology" has been around for decades. Why are today's results any different than what has been produced in the past (which was considered inadequate)?

The big pitfalls have been centered on lack of quality (we want God's Word to be accurate and correct) and lack of work flow process to ensure that quality.

Doing translations of the Bible is a sacred honor and should not be taken lightly. On the other hand, we should not oversimplify a process simply because we can do it faster now while achieving the same level of quality output.

More and more global Christian communities are feeling that they know their language better than anyone else and have the theological understanding to make good translations possible. The use of technology (in any form) is only there to help make individuals more efficient, not to replace those individuals. If anyone suggests anything different, they are falling into one of the biggest pitfalls.

To put it bluntly, machine translation technology should not replace ANY individuals but rather make those same individuals who will be responsible for making quality decisions (regardless of the process used) more efficient. When used in this fashion, we should embrace any technology that helps us accomplish the task of seeing the Word of God in everyone's language within our lifetime (preferably the next 6-10 years).

Imagine in less than a decade having a Bible in every person's language (both written and oral). This is the very real possibility that Bible translation technology allows us to consider.

**What does a viable work flow process look like?**

The biggest pitfall to address is the quality issue. Once this is addressed, then scaling or rapid production can be looked at while having the same underlying core value of quality.

Historically, Bible translation was done by a team of people that then had a designated group or person checking for the quality and accuracy of that translation.

Nothing really changes that in the context of using Bible machine translation technology to help make recommendations to the initial translators so the first draft (NOT finished product but draft for review) can be accomplished. It is just done faster than by doing the recommendations manually.

Research has shown that proof reading and editing a suggestion can be between 5 and 50 times more efficient than translation from scratch with no recommendations. With today's modern Smart Engine technology, the "Smart Engine" has the ability to learn words, phrases,

# Imagine in less than a decade from now, having a Bible in every written and oral language on earth. It can be done!

meanings and context. This allows for suggestions to improve very quickly even in languages that have very little translation work previously completed.

In order to avoid pitfalls, it is critically important to understand that the Bible translation process using a tool like the Sovee Bible App combines human and machine translation, stressing human involvement at all levels.

This method takes a more iterative approach to community production of a translation. That is, trained theologians interact with the Sovee generated drafts; then mother tongue speakers improve the drafts. Finally the local church reviews and improves the drafts.

As a result, more people from the community are familiar with the translation and contribute to its successful completion. ***It becomes their translation!*** The Sovee translation engine becomes more intelligent with each improvement. Additional Sovee-generated translations produce better rough drafts with less improvement needed. This method is not product-oriented, but rather community process-oriented.

Consultants review the final drafts when all parties believe it is ready for wider distribution.

The biggest pitfall of using machine translation technology with no checks and balances is avoided using this kind of community based and expert based work flow process.

**Does it really work?**

We now have examples of many languages that have finished the New Testament in 6-9 months. These languages have sometimes had some verses or chapters already completed which were utilized to train the Smart Engine to help make better suggestions and in other cases had no known scriptures already completed and the whole project started from ground zero.

There is no question that utilizing this technology with a good work flow process to maintain the quality output can and is producing New Testaments and complete

# Using a Smart Engine to do a translation draft of the entire Bible can take as little as 11 minutes.

Bibles in much shorter time periods than in the past.

Does this mean that the old ways were a waste of time or not good stewardship of resources? The answer is emphatically NO!!

All the technology has done is looked at different steps of already proven processes and determined if there were ways to speed them up without compromising the quality output. The ability for the current technology to be created would have been an impossibility if the models for Bible translation and good work flow processes had not already been established.

## Quality vs. Quantity in Bible Translation – Is it possible to have both?

One of the big myths about using machine translation is that it must by default compromise quality. How can you speed up the process without taking short cuts?

Just as computers have helped accelerate many of the tasks we work on, so too can the software that helps us with Bible translation technology.

As stated in the work flow process above, the machine output has nothing to do with the final quality control checks. This is and always will be reserved for those who have the theological training necessary to ensure that the Word of God is not marginalized through a translation process.

The technology just helps us get drafts into the hands of the final verification people much faster. There are many verses in the Bible that really are not hard to translate. So and so begat so and so is pretty easy and doesn't lend itself to much interpretation. Using a Smart Engine to do a draft of the entire Bible can take as little as 11 minutes. That is the quantity part. Doing all of the careful proof reading, checking, editing and so forth is what takes the

6-9 months to get a New Testament completed. That is the quality part.

A big pitfall would be to believe that a 100% accurate Bible can be translated in about 11 minutes versus the reality of needing that 6-9 month time period for peer and theological review to get to a final community approved version.

However, using this technology, we can see a gospel (like maybe John or Luke) start to be available in about a month to an indigenous church for preaching and teaching. Imagine what it would be like if you were in a language that never had a Bible before and the idea of getting the Word of God to preach from in your language could start to happen that fast. Imagine also that you have been waiting your whole life to see this happen and the joy that you would feel to finally see it come to reality.

One pitfall to avoid would be to let the temptation of rushing the translation out the door before these final proof readings, edits and checks were done. How do you avoid that? I think Timothy 2:2 says it best by entrusting this work to faithful men and women. While I have not been involved in every country of the world, I have worked with Christian leaders in at least 150 nations. And based on that experience, I can tell you that there are faithful men and women in every country who take serious responsibility for a quality output of God's Word. God has anointed leaders all over the world who already know their own language and are more than capable of ensuring the quality of any translation.

### So, where can we go from here?

• First, we never compromise the work flow process to ensure quality.

• Secondly, we only work with trusted men and women who have been given the abilities to work in this area.

• Thirdly, we make the technology available on a massive scale at a cost that assures that anyone who meets the first two steps above can participate.

• Fourthly, when a new version is completed, it is made available freely to the whole Body of Christ in that language so everyone, of every class, kind and condition in that language can access the Word of God.

Let me speak briefly as to the third step of making the technology available. Many groups have over the years, decades and centuries been involved in this process of Bible translation. We have usually implemented whatever technology (printing presses, computers, software, etc.)

comes along that helps us accomplish the task without compromising our quality standards. Often, it seems that financial resources have limited how quickly we can adopt new technology or benefit from it.

In an effort to see all the remaining languages have the opportunity to be completed in the next decade, Sovee has intentionally decided to fund the technology, as long as people utilize our Bible translation application. That does not mean we fund the indigenous translators or the editing / checking process. We look at this as a Body of Christ partnership.

The indigenous community provides the manpower and we provide the technology engine. There is no charge to use the Sovee engine for Bible translation. It is not wide open though for anyone to use. We are looking for those trusted men and women who have the capability and understanding to be able to produce a quality translation for a language group. We know who they are because they always have the backing of the Christian leaders from that community and often involve the main Christian leaders themselves.

To have full disclosure, while they are doing the Bible translation they are also "training" the Smart Engine so it can be used to translate other materials with topics like evangelism, church planting, discipleship, stewardship, children's ministries and so forth. There is a small charge for these additional translations. These charges range from $99 for a month of 30,000 words translated to $1450 to translate a million words.

Even if any group never translates anything else using the Smart Engine, we will not change the free access to the Bible app. Our motivation is not financial compensation, but rather seeing a Bible in another language that has never had it before...all in less than a year.

We simply wanted this information included so people wouldn't say or feel that there must be some other reasons why Sovee is doing this. The acceleration of the Great Commission is reason enough. God has blessed so many of us in so many ways that all of us should be looking at how we can use our time, treasure and talents in ways that help see lost souls saved for an eternity through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

All of us have only so many years on this earth. I hope we can look at all technology and processes through the lens of whether it will help us complete what we understand the Great Commission to be in our lifetime. If it does, we should certainly consider it. (MF)

# BIBLE TRANSLATION IN
# THE DIGITAL AGE

BY **GILLES GRAVELLE**

PSALM 71:11

1023
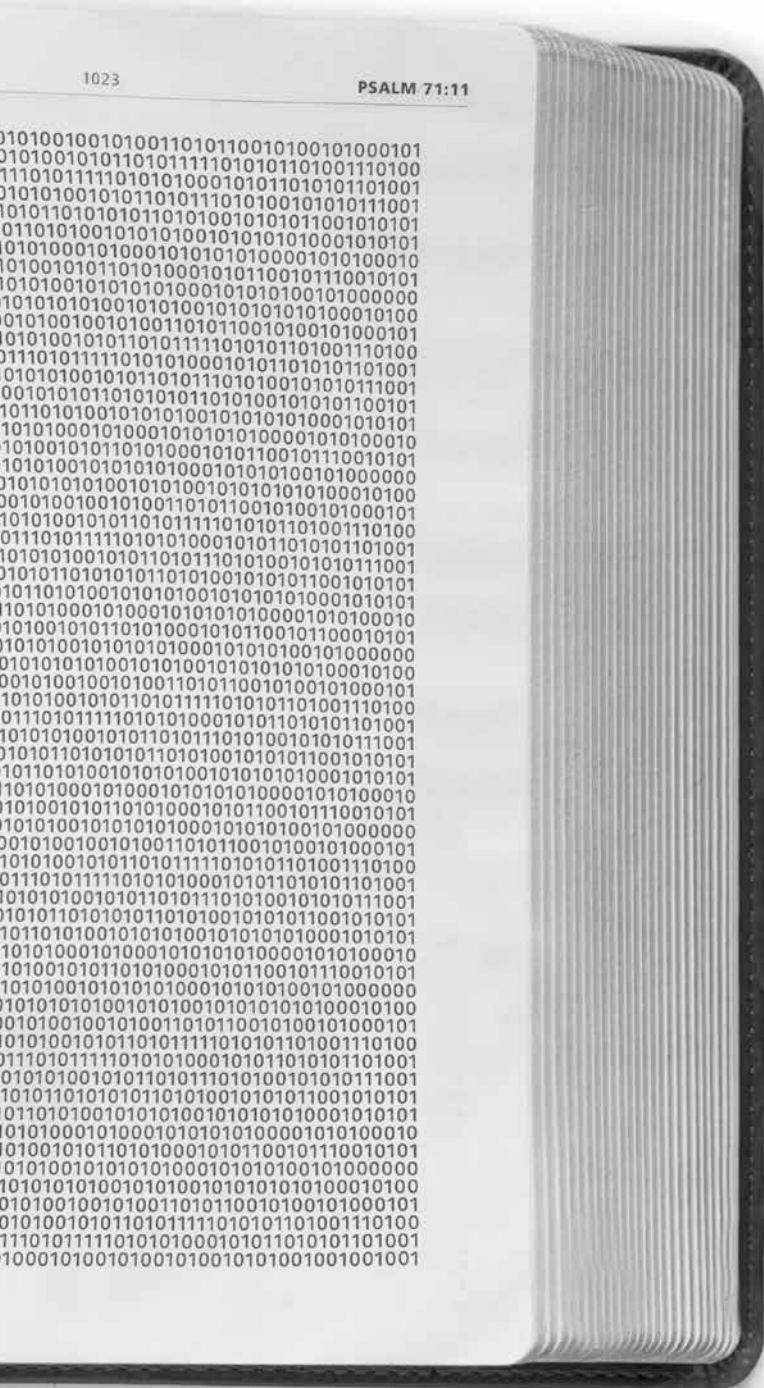
The author of *Where Good Ideas Come from: The Natural History of Innovation*, says that "change happens when you take a configuration and rearrange it in new ways."[1] His point is that most new ideas are not the result of something coming from nothing. It has more to do with aggregating proven things and rearranging them in new ways for greater effects.

At certain points in history key technological innovations can be directly correlated with the accelerated growth of Bible translation. In the mid to late 19th century, typewriters, communications, and rapid transportation (relatively speaking) generated a lot of change, and Bible translation surged with that change. In the early 1980s, the personal computer brought affordable word processing and immediate printing capability to the masses. Ten years later, the internet and email revolutionized communications. These innovations accelerated the completion of more than 1,200 language translations within a span of only ten years.

Clearly God has been moving throughout recent history to spread his Word to all to people and languages. Technological innovation has contributed significantly to the surge in Bible translation work, and it appears the surge is intensifying now in the 21st Century.

### Rearrangements: New Ways of Doing Old Things

These days, technological innovation still has much to do with rearrangements. That is, people are using new existing technology in innovative ways. Now in the digital age, constraints on the number of people who can participate in a translation program are significantly reduced. This allows for open collaboration. It increases the range of skills and abilities applied to an effort by insuring that more people are involved.

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In a book called *The Wisdom of Crowds*, James Surowiecki demonstrates through a series of stories and events in history how the collective wisdom (or collective intelligence) of a very large mix of disparate and generally uncontrolled people (the crowd) is wiser than a small group of homogenous thinkers, even if some of the group members are experts.[2]

The author's point is not that the intelligence of a few experts is irrelevant. Rather, to Surowiecki, the intelligence of a few trained people alone cannot guarantee different perspectives on a problem. "Grouping only smart people [or experts] doesn't work well because smart people…tend to resemble each other in what they do."[3] Research done by Surowiecki reveals the following:

- *Groups (the crowd) made up of smart agents (e.g. experts) and not-so-smart agents (the people at large) always did better than a group made up of only smart agents.*

- *Groups that are too much alike find it harder to keep learning.*

- *Homogeneous groups are great at doing what they do well, but they become progressively less able to investigate alternatives.*

- *If you can assemble a diverse group of people who possess varying degrees of knowledge and insight, you're better off entrusting it with major decisions rather than leaving them in the hands of one or two people, no matter how smart those people are.*

You may be wondering (or understanding) by now what all of this has to do with Bible translation. It may seem to some people that opening up the work of Bible translation to a large crowd of inventive-minded thinkers and tinkerers is a recipe for disaster, at least in terms of the handling of something as sacred and important as God's Word. Let's consider a few questions.

First, can the existing and necessary parts for doing Bible translation be rearranged in a way that could actually produce a better translation than has been previously produced in a given language? Second, could that rearrangement produce a much better

first-time translation for languages that have never had a translation? Third, could it produce the translation in far less time and at a significantly lower cost than it has traditionally taken a small group to produce?

Publisher's introductions to English Bibles reassure readers that many biblical language scholars were involved in the translation. Understanding how well the end users of the translations would understand and interact with the text has been less important so expertise in that area has not been generally sought.[4] Some people would say that the latter activity is not part of a translator's task, if they assume that translation is simply meaning transfer from one language to another.

A small group of experts can exert a lot of power and translators are not above suspicion. They bring certain ideology to their work based on traditional conformity inherited from others.[5] In this sense, they impose a certain way of translating on the wider community. Therefore, crowdsourcing could be viewed by some as a challenge to the power position held by the small group of experts.

### 21st Century Rearrangements

To crowd-source translation work, the key is assembling large groups of people. This has not been easy or pragmatically possible in most translation situations, especially with large language groups. However, greater access to the internet now makes this doable. It may actually even make it more feasible. Cramming a large group of people in a room to generate collaborative work in a short span of time has

**Crowdsourcing in translation efforts could be viewed by some as a challenge to the power position held by the small group of experts**

its challenges. There may be cultural dynamics which prevent younger people from speaking when older people are present. In some cultures a woman may be reticent to express opinions or ideas in the presence of men.

As a whole, group members are limited in their ability to express their own creative thoughts simply because of the amount of time it takes to process everyone's contribution. However, recent research indicates that increased utilization of internet-based collaboration helps groups to overcome some of the limitations of large group face-to-face interaction to more fully tap their creative power.[6] Could this sort of creative power produce better Scripture translations sooner?

The notion of a large group of people successfully working together to produce a Scripture translation has much to do with who those people are. For example, according to Beth Hennessey, "The Eastern view of creativity is far less focused on products or other tangible evidence of "work" produced. Instead, creativity is seen to involve personal fulfillment…"[7] In other words, the process is just as important as the product, if not more so. Yet, launching and completing a Bible translation project requires organization, schedules and benchmarks. Therefore, the methods proposed in this article assume both task-oriented and process-oriented people working together.

### Process for Including the Community

There are different ways to seek input from the community utilizing online collaboration.

1. The translation team could ask the community to simply use a voting method designed for their cultural context that allows them to grade each area in the list given earlier. This is combined with methods to elicit feedback, typically through comments. There could be multiple votes to hit on multiple facets of the translation.

2. The team could post a series of questions to guide the community in areas that need specific input.

3. They could allow the community to post comments, ask questions, point out errors and make suggestions for improvements. Recurring improvements are made by the community until the point when the project leaders determine that the translation quality has achieved optimality for

the time being. After this, the translation is ready for broad community distribution.

It is still important for collaboration to include people who are trained to do exegesis. This is still a highly critical role. If the translators have done their exegetical homework well, then they will know when the comments from the community are confirming exegetical accuracy or revealing its inaccuracy. The translators should know when contributors from the community are changing the text into something different.

This sort of broad community involvement can greatly improve every aspect of the translation. One particularly significant area that would benefit by wider community involvement is the development of key theological terms. In regard to open source collaboration, theological terms are not computer source code. But as flawed source code can degrade the entire software program, likewise weak or inaccurately communicated theological terms can greatly weaken or degrade a translation, especially in light of what that translation is meant to accomplish these days (see 4).

### Confirming Translation Quality and Fidelity

When it comes to quality control, self-monitoring for accuracy (or fidelity) seems to be a natural occurrence with open collaboration. When people work together on something they highly value, they develop a greater sense of ownership. This is likely to be true with a community approach to Bible translation drafting and review, as well.  If people have a high view of Scripture then they will guard the integrity of it in the process of refining it. This is a phenomenon common to many social networks and it is well-documented in the social sector.[8]

The open source and crowdsourcing concepts have major implications when it comes to who confirms the quality and accuracy of a translation. The traditional Western method still depends on a very small group of people. The group typically consists of the translator(s) and an outside translation consultant. The outside consultants do not generally know the language they are checking for fidelity and quality, therefore they depend on an oral or a written translation of the work under review produced in their own language. This means they actually analyze a translation through the filter of another language.

Some agency consultants only spot check certain books while consultants from other agencies check

every verse. Either way, all of these consultants only gain a glimpse at what is in the translation. This method is time consuming, but it does yield some reasonably good evidence in regard to fidelity. Confirming quality and community acceptance is probably a lesser outcome. While their analysis is helpful, it is hardly exhaustive. Yet, it is their approval that allows a translation to be published or not. This is hardly the precise science that Western-trained academicians have understood a consultant review to be.

Applying the notion of crowdsourcing to this area means that a wider community (the crowd), with guidance from experts, can confirm the quality and accuracy of a translation far better than a small group of 1-3 translators working with an outside translation consultant. Indeed, according to the crowdsourcing concept, the consultants are already part of the crowd and so their expertise is being applied along with all the other skills and abilities the larger community brings to the process.

Therefore, applying the traditional consultant review as the last step in a crowd-sourced translation project seems redundant by that time, if indeed consultants have participated more regularly as part of the crowd through face-to-face meetings and by means of online collaboration. This is another rearrangement of the translation parts that could change the way translations are reviewed and approved for publication. It would also remove the bottleneck that develops when a translation team waits months for an
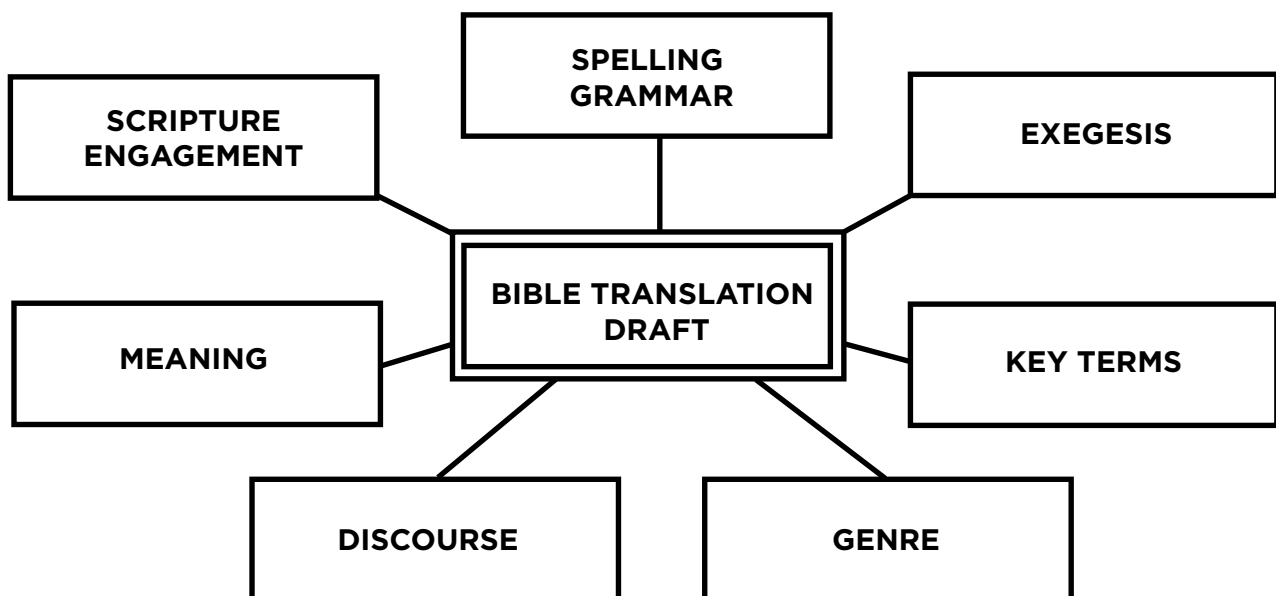
## Even in large crowdsourcing groups, if people have a high view of Scripture then they will guard the integrity of it.

available consultant to give their stamp of approval on the translation.

### Results: The Goda Translation

The concepts discussed in this article were tested in an isolated region of India among the Goda[9] speakers who have no translation in their language. Project planners developed a web-based crowdsourcing tool. The tool enabled anyone from the community to produce a rough draft of some Gospel of Luke chapters. Others could simply provide feedback on the drafts. People could engage in conversations around the translation work, or they could simply indicate whether they liked the work or not. The results surpassed expectations in the area of community engagement.

- 1,323 people responded by contributing their time to the translation.

- Over 100,000 votes have been cast dealing with various content topics.

- 78 users drafted verses and chapters.

- People from seven different regions where Goda



SPELLING GRAMMAR

SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT

EXEGESIS

BIBLE TRANSLATION DRAFT

MEANING

KEY TERMS

DISCOURSE

GENRE

people reside have participated.

- The group collaboration website, designed for the Goda project, allowed leaders and users to see the aggregated results of their work.

- Of the 558 users voting, over 100 have cast over 100 votes. Five voters were promoted to drafters after logging 800 votes.

People said they enjoyed working with their language and were growing in their understanding of that language as well as the regional language. They liked learning together and gained a better understanding of the Bible and the translation process. They also communicate joy in being able to contribute to development of their language and in making the Bible available to their people.

Even people with low to no exposure to the Web technology saw how it enables their participation and they enthusiastically utilized it. Even with unpredictable internet connections, participants were eager to work.

Eighteen to twenty nine-year olds were most responsive; however, older people and some women have also joined the groups and participated through a communal discussion process.

**Conclusion**

This is the difference between communities doing translation together for one another in comparison to a small closed group of people doing translation "for" the community. With the former method, the community is more likely to accept and use the translation in a greater variety of ways sooner because it is, after all, a result of their collaborative effort. With the small closed translation team approach, these effects are not usually realized on a large scale until long after the translation is completed and handed over to the community for them to use, if they ever widely use the translation at all.

The internet and smart phone technology open up the community to greater participation among non-

## For crowdsourcing groups, open collaboration with anonymity often proves to be an ideal process.

literate people who in the past could not be more fully involved in a translation project because of the reading requirement. Now visual translations from the JESUS Film coupled with recordings of regional language translations by Faith Comes By Hearing can be accessed via the Web or downloaded to a smart phone. By utilizing these resources, a non-literate person gains a deeper understanding of how important theological terms, concepts, and imagery could be translated into their language.

In places where Bible translation is not particularly looked upon with delight, the community cannot work together openly on a translation project. Even so, they can work together on a secure internet collaboration site. Open collaboration with anonymity provides the best of both worlds. In fact, a significant number of the larger unreached people groups that need Bible translations fall within this category. Because of this, more of the cultural and religious insiders are taking on the daunting and sometimes dangerous task of translating "for" their people.

Given their cultural and religious contexts, they have a lot to grapple with and with very little help. Therefore, it would be a shame if people in these situations were not able to build their own crowd-sourced translation work on top of existing internet, web, and smart phone platforms for the sake of the gospel. If they did, the effect of that translation collaboration would be felt soon after it began. (MF)

1  "Where Ideas Comes From." *WIRED*, Oct 2010, p. 122.

2  See endnote 5.

3  See endnote 5, chapter 2, location 619.

4  For more on this topic see, Gilles Gravelle. "Bible Translation in Historical Context: The Changing Role of Cross-cultural Workers." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*. 2.71. Spring 2010, 11-20.

5  Steven Voth. "Towards an Ethic of Liberation for Bible Translation; Part 1: Ideology," SBL. Forum, n.p. [cited Feb 2008]. Online:http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=754

6  See Paul B. Paulus, et al. 2003. *Group Creativity: Innovation Through Collaboration,* p. 7. Oxford University Press.

7  See Beth Hennessey. 2004. "Is the Social Psychology of Creativity Really Social? Moving Beyond a Focus on the Individual." In Paul B. Paulus, et al. 2003. *Group Creativity: Innovation Through Collaboration*. Kindle Edition, chapter 9, location 2865. Oxford University Press.

8  See Clay Shirky. 2010. Cognitive Surplus. Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age. The Penguin Press. New York.

9  Pseudonym
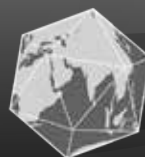
# Kingdom Kernels

### Living at the Top of the Mountain

**STEVE SMITH**
@kingdomcome

Steve Smith (Th.D.) was part of a church planting movement in Asia. He currently works with International Mission Board to catalyze biblical Church Planting Movements. He does this through consulting with and training multiple churches and organizations around the world. He (along with Ying Kai) is the author of the book *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (WigTake Resources 2011). You can follow Steve's musings from his devotional thoughts and kingdom ministry on Twitter @kingreigncome and Kingdom Kernels on Facebook.

A number of controllable factors can prevent a disciple of Jesus from getting to the breakthrough of a movement of God: lack of effort, non-reproducible methods, and inattention to the highest value activities.

But chief among them is *lack of faith* that God will start a movement "in this place, at this time, through me." Without such faith all our efforts are in vain.

Matthew 17 paints a striking contrast between what is possible with God and what is possible without Him.



## Living at the Top of the Mountain

Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus to the top of the mountain of transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-13). The pre-incarnate glory of Jesus was unveiled before their eyes, and the voice from Heaven spoke, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." The disciples fell on their faces terrified. Looking up, they saw Jesus alone.

In that rarefied atmosphere, nothing the revealed Son of God spoke to the disciples would have been doubted. No mission too difficult. No obstacle too great. No enemy too deeply entrenched.

*The heart of the Father was clear and the mission of the Son unstoppable. Period.*

Life at the top of the mountain is good. The mission is clear. The promise is sure. The power is infinite. The problem is that the disciples, as all disciples must, had to descend the mountain to the rest of the real world – a place where *competing realities mix messages and weaken faith.*

Kingdom practitioners face similar challenges. They attend conferences and climb to the top of the mountain. The heart of the Father is clear – a plentiful harvest of all peoples. The mission of the Son is unstoppable – to make disciples that can multiply generation after generation. The promises of God are enough to carry the practitioners past any obstacle. They make a good start, but eventually hit obstacles that mire them in their tracks.

Many of us live at the top of the mountain at conferences but at the bottom of the mountain in ministry.

## Living at the Bottom of the Mountain

At the bottom of the mountain, the remaining nine were fighting against another reality: the crippling bondage of the evil one (Matt. 17:14-21). The nine expended all of their efforts to cast a destructive demon out of a boy to no avail.

The twelve apostles had *already* been authorized by Jesus to cast out demons (Matt. 10:1) and
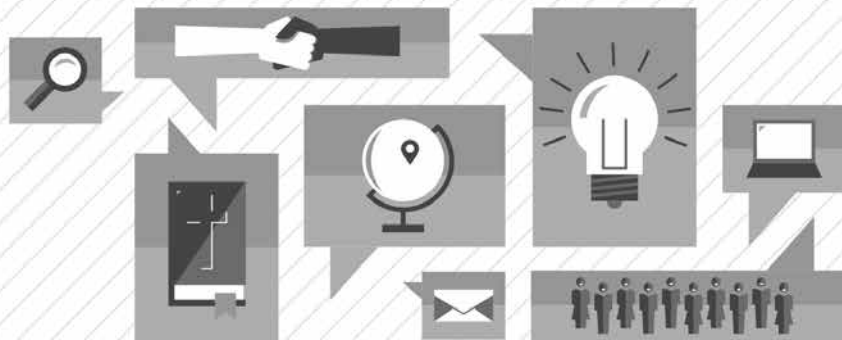
experienced great success (Mark 6:13). This was reality. But apparently in Matthew 17 they encountered a demonic stronghold that exceeded their experience and faith. I imagine the nine shouting louder and louder but to no avail. No matter what the nine tried they came up empty.

Similarly kingdom practitioners encounter strongholds that defy experience and exceed their faith. No matter how hard they shout and shove against the wall, nothing brings it down. At this point many give up and resign themselves to believing that a movement cannot occur in their contexts. End of story.

## Perverted Thinking

But in Matthew 17, Jesus suddenly entered the power struggle. A father knelt before him, crying out for the deliverance of his son. But Jesus' words are shocking:

> And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." (Matt. 17:17, NASB)

We reserve the word "perverted" for only the most heinous of sins. It is not that someone is simply off track (sin) but that they have taken the divinely created order and turned it upside down (twisting or perverting).  A man lying with a woman who is not his wife is sin. A man lying with another man, a child or animal is perversion.

Jesus' words sound harsh until we realize the depth of the spiritual lie Jesus was challenging. At the top of the mountain no doubt existed about Jesus' deity and power. At the top it was clear. But at the

bottom of the mountain a perverted lie continued its millennia-old march: *What is more perverted than to say that the enemy, created by Almighty God, has more power to hold a child in bondage than the Almighty has to release him?*

This was taking the divine order and turning it on its head. The father believed the lie. The nine believed the lie. They succumbed to perverted thinking. And such perverted thinking is epidemic in the kingdom expansion community.

## Three Types of Perverted Thinking

Today kingdom practitioners exercise their minds in three types of perverted thinking.

### 1. Not here
They engage in amazing spiritual gymnastics to explain why their people group, city or community is an exception to the plentiful harvest principle. The more I travel around to the six inhabited continents the more I become convinced of a truth: *Missionaries and church planters think their people group is uniquely challenging, and the reality is that they are no harder than most others.* They feel their group is an exception: A CPM could start somewhere else, but not here.

*Perverted thinking!* Such thinking flies in the face of the promises of God that a multitude from every people group will stand before the throne (e.g. Rev. 7:9). In essence they are saying: "My group is too hard for God." That's taking the

divine order and turning it upside down.

### 2. Not now
Some practitioners take a step forward and acknowledge that God wants a plentiful harvest in their people groups – perhaps even that He wants to start a movement. But the lie they buy into is that it will be *at some time in the distant future when certain conditions have been met.* They say, "Maybe here, but not now."

Such logic flies in the face of the promises of God that the harvest is ready and plentiful now (Matt. 9:37; John 4:35). They say "four more months." Jesus says, "Now!" In essence they are saying that the barriers of this people group are too hard for the conviction of the Holy Spirit at this point (John 16:8). Perhaps another generation will reap.

### 3. Not through me
Some practitioners become convinced that this is God's time for their people group or city to be the recipient of a movement of God. But when they look inward they say: "I can see it happening through _____ (some well-respected practitioner), but not through me."

Such thinking twists the divinely created order. It is as if they are saying that spiritual increase lies with us when the reality is that only God brings the increase (1 Cor. 3:6-7). As human servants, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The God who makes

two copper pennies worth more than all of the treasures of the wealthy can bring a harvest through any humble servant of God (Mark 12:41-44).

*At the bottom of the mountain, the heavenly reality becomes obscured and it is all too easy for us to succumb to perverted thinking.*

### Problem: Lack of Faith

The contrast between the top of the mountain and the bottom of the mountain is evident in what occurs next:

> *And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.* (Matt. 17:18, NASB)

The "at once" nature of Jesus' solution demonstrated how deep had been the perversion of the attempts of the nine disciples.

In private the nine asked Jesus why they could not overcome this stronghold. Jesus summed it up: the littleness of their faith.

Kingdom practitioners all over the world face a similar problem – a lack of faith that God will launch kingdom movements. The chief problem is a lack of understanding of what faith is.

Faith is not *the force* of Star Wars fame. Many disciples think that if they can just believe more strongly, feel more deeply, speak more loudly or utter the right words, the problem will be solved. That is not faith; that is the force or magic.

Faith is not *manipulating* God. Many disciples think that if they pray more fervently, they can twist God's arm to do something He does not intend to do. That is not faith; that is manipulation.

Faith is not *presumption*. Like the children of Israel in Numbers 14:40ff where some presume that they can claim the promises of God without meeting their requirements. That is not faith; that is presumption.

### Faith is REST

We have all heard faith defined many ways. But I find its essence clarified in one word: **REST**. I have the most dependable man on Planet Earth to thank for that – my father.

I am an exceptionally blessed son. In my five decades of life, I can remember no instance in which my father promised me something and failed to deliver on that promise.

In the first mission field in which I served, I had to register a legal business for visa purposes. I was at a loss for how to start and filled with tension. I remember calling my father, who was a businessman thousands of miles away, and asking him to register a business for me in the U.S. I still can hear his response: "I'll take care of it!"

At that moment all of my fears fled away. I was at complete rest. My dad was doing his part. I began doing my part (busier than ever) – filling out application forms and printing business cards – with a heart at rest. I knew that when my father said "I'll take care of it" he meant it. Not a shred of doubt remained. Rest!

is not the one believing but the One believed in. Faith is not about the believer but the object of belief.

For most of my life, my image of Jesus in this episode was one of frustration with His disciples. I imagined Him throwing up his hands in the air and crying out about their lack of faith. I imagined him castigating His followers: "Come on, guys! If you just had *this* much faith, you could do it. When will you ever learn?! What will I do with this motley crew?"

Watching the movie *The Visual Bible,* Matthew's presentation of this scene transformed my image. In that video, Jesus scratches His disciple's head playfully. With a huge grin he gives a pep talk that feels like this: "Come on, guys! Cheer up! All you need is faith the size of a mustard seed. *Just a little faith in a great God* and He will move this mountain for you!"

Too often we make faith about our faith (literally *faith in our faith*). Faith is about our God. Faith is about the object we believe in. *It is not about how strongly you believe but how strong is the God you believe in*! The devil is not afraid of your shouting but he is afraid of your God.

And so I repeat, our chief problem is a low estimate of who God is. This is the cause of our lack of faith. *What God do you worship*? Is He the God of the Bible or an impotent, truncated, era-limited shell of His former self? Know your God and rest!

## Faith that Grows and Expands

If faith is about the nature of our Heavenly Father and not about how strongly we can conjure up feelings of faith, then faith can only grow as

our understanding of God expands. Like a mustard seed grows into a mighty tree, so our faith grows as we understand our Father's heart – his majestic nature, intentions and promises.

Such understanding comes as we mine the depths of the Word of God and rest in that Word. Such understanding comes as we examine the works of God (Psalm 111:2-4) and ponder how this God has worked throughout history.

*If you want to increase your faith, increase your understanding of God!* At times my faith wanes being at the bottom of the mountain and my view of God gets clouded. In those moments, I love to listen to our departed brother S.M. Lockridge recite "My King." Search for it on the web, close your eyes and listen. Recall with him the majesty of your God and let your faith soar again to a biblical, mountaintop reality.

## Moving On to Victory

This obstacle at the bottom of the mountain served as a launching point for the nine to move to increased faith. As the disciples were sent out on a new mission with many others, they returned with joy declaring to Jesus: "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!" (Luke 10:17, NASB) The prior barrier served as an occasion to examine their perverted thinking. With a fresh sense of the majesty of their God, they pushed through the barriers and on to victory. With hearts full of rest!

Where will you choose to live? At the top of the mountain or the bottom? Let the King unveil His glory in your presence. Know your Father's heart and REST! **MF**

Faith is the quiet, assured expectation that our Heavenly Father will do what He has promised. If you have no faith in my earthly father, it is because you do not know him. If you have little faith in your Heavenly Father, it is because you understand Him too little. *Our chief problem is a low estimate of our Heavenly Father and what He is about. We don't understand His heart.*

## A Little Bit of Faith in a Great God

When Jesus presented the solution to His disciples he told them they only needed faith like a mustard seed to move mountains (Matt. 17:20). Jesus pointed to the essence of faith which

# Foreign Subsidy Under Scrutiny

BY **CHRISTOPHER LITTLE**

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Christopher R. Little, PhD, who continues to advance God's mission in Kenya, Europe, the Asian sub-continent, Mozambique, and Jordan, is Professor of Intercultural Studies at Columbia International University where he equips others for Christian mission. He is author of *The Revelation of God Among the Unevangelized: An Evangelical Appraisal and Missiological Contribution to the Debate* (William Carey Library, 2000), *Mission in the Way of Paul: Biblical Mission for the Church in the Twenty-First Century* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), and *Polemic Missiology for the 21st Century: In Memoriam of Roland Allen* (Amazon Kindle, 2013), as well as numerous articles on mission in various journals. He can be reached at: clittle@ciu.edu

[Note: this article begins a two part series on the unfortunate consequences of foreign subsidy and offers suggestions to avoid them. The material is excerpted from the second chapter of the author's book, *Polemic Missiology in the 21st Century: In Memoriam of Roland Allen* (Amazon Kindle, 2013). For more information, including bibliographic data, please refer to the original monograph.]

## Part I:

In 1927, Roland Allen wrote, "Another age may learn to look upon our use of activities much as we look upon the use of the sword by an earlier age. Because in them money takes so prominent a place, ours may one day be known as the age of financial Christianity, just as we look upon that earlier age as the age of military Christianity. As we regard the sword so a later age may regard money. . . . The time is not yet full. We have yet to learn the consequences of our use of money."

The time is now full as the adverse effects of foreign subsidy around the world have become painfully obvious. As Robert Lupton notes, the "compassion industry is almost universally accepted as a virtuous and constructive enterprise," but much of the money given toward charitable causes "is either wasted or actually harms the people it is targeted to help." Dambisa Moyo agrees. "Since the 1940s, approximately US$1 trillion of aid has been transferred from rich countries to Africa. This is nearly US$1,000 for every man, woman, and child on the planet today. Does aid work?" Her answer: "No. In fact, across the globe the recipients of this aid are worse off, much worse off.

Aid has helped make the poor poorer, and growth slower. . . . Aid has been, and continues to be, an unmitigated political, economic, and humanitarian disaster for most parts of the developing world." The data to support such a conclusion is overwhelming.

First, the microfinance industry, once acclaimed as the way to alleviate global poverty, has resulted in "exploiting the poor for profit. . . . The reputation of the industry has declined so badly that Muhammad Yunus, who received the Nobel Peace Prize for founding Grameen Bank, wrote recently . . . , 'I never imagined that one day microcredit would give rise to its own breed of loan sharks... The drive to better serve the poor had unintended consequences." Thus, "changes in the industry have opened it up to abuse and ill-gotten profit" to the point that in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh "85 borrowers killed themselves because they could not repay high-interest loans."

Second, it is being acknowledged that food donated "by the U.S. government and sold by charities to finance anti-poverty programs results in low-priced crops being dumped on local markets and small-scale growers cannot compete.

. . . [Such donations do] not help in regions where people consistently go hungry because local farming has been weakened by international competition."

Third, regarding contributions for the AIDS crisis, African economist James Shikwati reports, "Millions of dollars earmarked for the fight against AIDS are still stashed away in Kenyan bank accounts and have not been spent. Our politicians were overwhelmed with money, and they try to siphon off as much as possible."

Fourth, George Mulrain brings attention to "the phenomenon in Jamaica of 'barrel kids.' These are the children of those who have migrated and who await the arrival of barrels containing items of food, clothing and other supplies that have been shipped from their loved ones abroad. . . . Naturally there are those who cherish the easy way, namely having a *fairy godmother* or a *sugar-daddy* to provide for them. . . . The mentality seems to be: Why work, why exert oneself, why sweat it out if there's an easy way?"

Fifth, Laurie Garrett observes that "more money is being directed toward pressing health challenges than ever before. . . . [However] there is a grave danger that the current age of generosity could not only fall short of expectations but actually make things worse on the ground.

. . . Some analysts . . . insist that massive infusions of foreign cash into the public sector undermine local manufacturing and economic development. . . . [These] exacerbate such conditions as malnutrition and homelessness while under-mining any possibility that local industries could eventually grow and support themselves through competitive exports."

Finally, reports from around the world demonstrate the negative effects of outside funding on indigenous Christian movements. In fact, one of the reasons for the slow emergence of indigenous mission movements is "churches were supported by foreign mission boards," which results in a receiving mentality.

In view of the foregoing, one should not be surprised by the blatant criticisms concerning foreign monetary and material dumping on those in the majority world. For instance, "ministers of health in poor countries now express frustration over their inability to track the operations of foreign organizations operating on their soil, ensure those organizations are delivering service in sync with government policies and priorities, and avoid duplication in resource-scarce areas. . . . Most funds come with strings attached and must be spent according to donors'

priorities, politics, and values." What this indicates is that despite the end of colonialism, "Western dominance continues through the allocation of resources." This neocolonialistic posture surfaced in Kenya when in 2001 certain foreign donors required the "banning [of] corporal punishment" in the public schools which resulted in widespread chaos.

In addition, there is the charge of inciting corruption on the part of national churches. According to Bhoj Raj Bhatta, the senior pastor of Hope Church in Kathmandu: "Corruption in mission is more widespread than has been acknowledged. Fake boards are formed, fake audit reports produced, fake receipts printed, and so on. . . . The giving constituencies never get the true picture of the mission work; the receiving constituencies never have a clue as to what and how much has been given in their names. . . . If the Church is to be the guiding light for the nation, then there has to be a genuine attempt. . . to address this issue of corruption in missions and ministry." (MF)

*Part II of this article will appear in the "Raising Local Resources" column of the Nov/Dec 2015 MF issue.*

# *William Carey Library*

## Christian Mission and Economic Systems

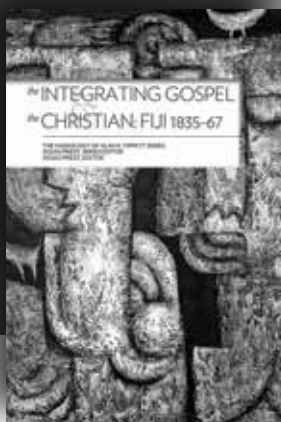*A Critical Survey of the Cultural and Religious Dimensions of Economies*

John Cheong, Eloise Meneses (Editors)

Christian mission in the twenty-first century has emphasized endeavors that address poverty alleviation, business as mission, marketplace ministry, rural/urban development, microeconomics, and Christian attitudes toward money and consumerism. However, neither the macroeconomic circumstances in which the church does such ministry nor the assumptions that believers have absorbed from the larger economy have been adequately explored.

*Christian Mission & Economic Systems* gathers scholars, experts, and practitioners to address the relationship of Christians to the economic systems in which they are embedded and do ministry, and to evaluate the different cultural and religious dimensions of both micro- and macroeconomic systems around the world from a kingdom perspective.

List Price ~~$19.99~~ • **Our Price $15.⁵⁹**

## The Integrating Gospel & the Christian: Fiji 1835-67

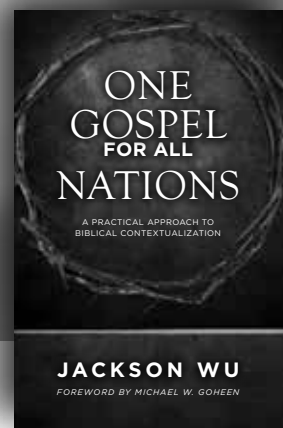*The Missiology of Alan R. Tippett Series*

Alan Tippett (Author),
Doug Priest (Editor)

This volume contains two manuscripts. The first, *The Integrating Gospel*, combines a historical ethnolinguistic study of Fijian language, an examination of Fijian culture patterns in interaction with the church, and Tippett's own firsthand experience as a communicator of the gospel to specific receptors at a specific place and point in time. From this, Tippett is able to extrapolate broader ideas on contextualization and methods of gospel transmission.

In *The Christian*: Fiji 1835–67, Tippett addresses the establishment of the Christian church and the spread of Christianity in Fiji, with special attention to Ratu Cakobau. In this brief but in-depth study, Tippett presents a strong case against the understanding that Fijian conversions to Christianity were primarily political, as he offers evidence of the genuine religious and spiritual experiences behind these conversions.

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## One Gospel for All Nations

*A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization*

Jackson Wu (Author)

The Bible tells us what to believe––the gospel. Did you know it also shows how to contextualize the gospel? In *One Gospel for All Nations*, Jackson Wu does more than talk about principles. He gets practical. When the biblical writers explain the gospel, they consistently use a pattern that is both firm and flexible. Wu builds on this insight to demonstrate a model of contextualization that starts with interpretation and can be applied in any culture. In the process, he explains practically why we must not choose between the Bible and culture. Wu highlights various implications for both missionaries and theologians. Contextualization should be practical, not pragmatic; theological, not theoretical.

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# *New Releases*
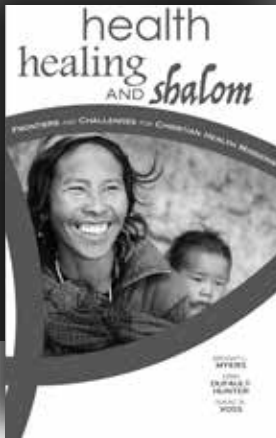
## Health, Healing, and Shalom
*Frontiers and Challenges for Christian Healthcare Missions*

Bryant L. Myers , Erin Dufault- Hunter, Isaac B. Voss (Editors)

Ever since Jesus's proclamation in word and deed as the Great Physician, his followers in mission have assumed that salvation and health are intertwined. Yet for every age, Christians need to examine how they can best announce the gospel message of God's healing in word and deed in their own context. In our era, we are often simultaneously grateful for modern medicine and frustrated by its inability to care for the whole person in effective, affordable ways.

In this edited volume, authors with an interest in health missions from a wide variety of experiences and disciplines examine health and healing through the theological lens of shalom. This word, often translated "peace," names a much more complex understanding of human well-being as right relationships with one another, with God, and with creation.

List Price $24.99 • **Our Price** $19.99

## Becoming the People of God (SEANET 11)
*Creating Christ-centered Communities in Buddhist Asia*

Paul H. De Neui (Editor)

How do Christ followers celebrate unity in the midst of diversity? How do we become the people of God in more than name only? A unifying Christ-centeredness demands living out kingdom values and bearing witness to transformation in and through a multitude of cultural manifestations. We struggle to serve, worship, and witness in the midst of this age-old challenge.

This collection of perspectives comes from settings where the good news of Jesus has not been the dominant historical norm. All contributors in this volume are practitioners. They have a deep appreciation for the cultural heritage and important moral values found in Buddhist contexts.

We believe these chapters hold valuable lessons that speak to all of the family of faith. Here you will find a wide range of topics and approaches that address what it means to become the global body of believers.

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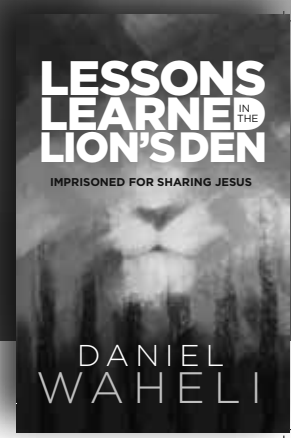
## Lessons Learned in the Lion's Den
*Imprisoned for Sharing Jesus*

Daniel Waheli (Author)

*Lessons Learned in the Lion's Den* shares the journey of one missionary family as the father is detained in a predominantly Muslim country in Africa.  Daniel Waheli's time spent in prison is ripe for building intimacy with the Lord in the midst of confusion, suffering, and uncertainty. The accounts of his wife and two young children offer a glimpse into the inner life of the family during this trying time. The heart of this story is not a man imprisoned, but a family united—in hope, love, and a pressing desire that God be glorified in all things.

In a world where mission strategies come and go and often fall short of being effective, Waheli distills his experience into twelve principles for building character to better serve the Lord and persevere in His call.

List Price $13.99 • **Our Price** $11.99

# Permission to Worship Creatively

**by Greg Parsons**

Director of Global Connections
Frontier Ventures

During a recent event in Asia, I was a bit discouraged that the locals leading singing each morning used songs I knew. They did a very good job and I realize that the event had an international audience that used English as the language medium. The irony was that the same people had done a traditional dance/song performance at the beginning of the event—but never used any of those instruments, styles, dress or movements after that point. Somehow, in cultures all over the world, Christianity has not given "permission" to use cultural dress, music and styles in appropriate ways.

I've heard the same kind of reports from all over the indigenous world for years.

When I travel to conferences around the world, I always hope I will hear what I think might draw the average person just outside the meeting room toward the Lord. I want her/him to be attracted by the worship. I realize I could be misunderstanding the situation—I am no expert in every culture. And, I realize that the world is becoming so "globalized" that worship is becoming more and more like the pop music culture—with "Christian" words, simple lyrics and lots of repetition. Perhaps that attracts some.

There are, however, many cultures who rightly resist this trend. Yet, we continue to send teachers around the world to put on seminars from a Western worldview. And that includes worship leaders and teams teaching what they know well, but which is often disconnected from the receiving cultures. In fact, one of the specific points our Asian brothers and sisters made at this event was that this kind of training is often done without a clear understanding of the culture where it occurs. Funding from the outside gets a larger audience, whereas a local teacher or worship leader can not do so.

This whole topic may seem like it is not related to "frontiers in mission." Think about that a little harder. If the only "kinds" of believers that non-believers see are just like what they see coming from the secular west, will that draw them to Christ? Sometimes it does—but not within many of the remaining unreached peoples.

My hope is that you who read this might share it with worship leaders you know to help them grow in their global awareness. Encourage them to consider additional aspects of worship and to think globally—even when they are leading worship here in the U.S. And, there are some great books on these subjects that can prompt our thinking. One published in 2013 by William Carey Library is *Worship and Mission for the Global Church* (Ed. Krabill). It also has a companion workbook: Creating Local Arts Together (Schrag)

Here are a few ideas.

- Observe and ask how they sing, celebrate, suffer, struggle, etc. in the broader surrounding culture. What does that tell you about what the emerging fellowships could do?

- Ask God to give church leaders and global workers insight into what should be done in worship in each situation. Perhaps he will grant something special, like he did in China through the "Canaan Hymns" in the house church movement.

- Spend time working on how to integrate the reading of the word in worship more effectively. Be sure to practice that also, like worship teams do with songs.

- Think and plan for the use of creative energies from those in your church—or those you might attract—who have non-musical worship giftings. Is your church "plain" looking? Perhaps that is what you want, just be sure to be intentional. Are there ways to include meaning-filled art or other expressions to prepare hearts and minds for worship and learning—individually or corporately?

- While I love the great classic hymns of the faith and many Christians around the world feel an ownership of these, they may not work in new cultures where the gospel is just breaking through.

- Consider how to "sing a new song." (Psalm 96:1-2) Are we writing Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs ourselves?

Please share your own ideas and stories in our comment section. Look up this issue at www.missionfrontiers.org and scroll down to my page "Further Reflections" at the bottom. ⓜⓕ

# Authentic Disciple-Making
# in Any Context

MAKING DISCIPLES
ACROSS CULTURES

Missional Principles for a Diverse World
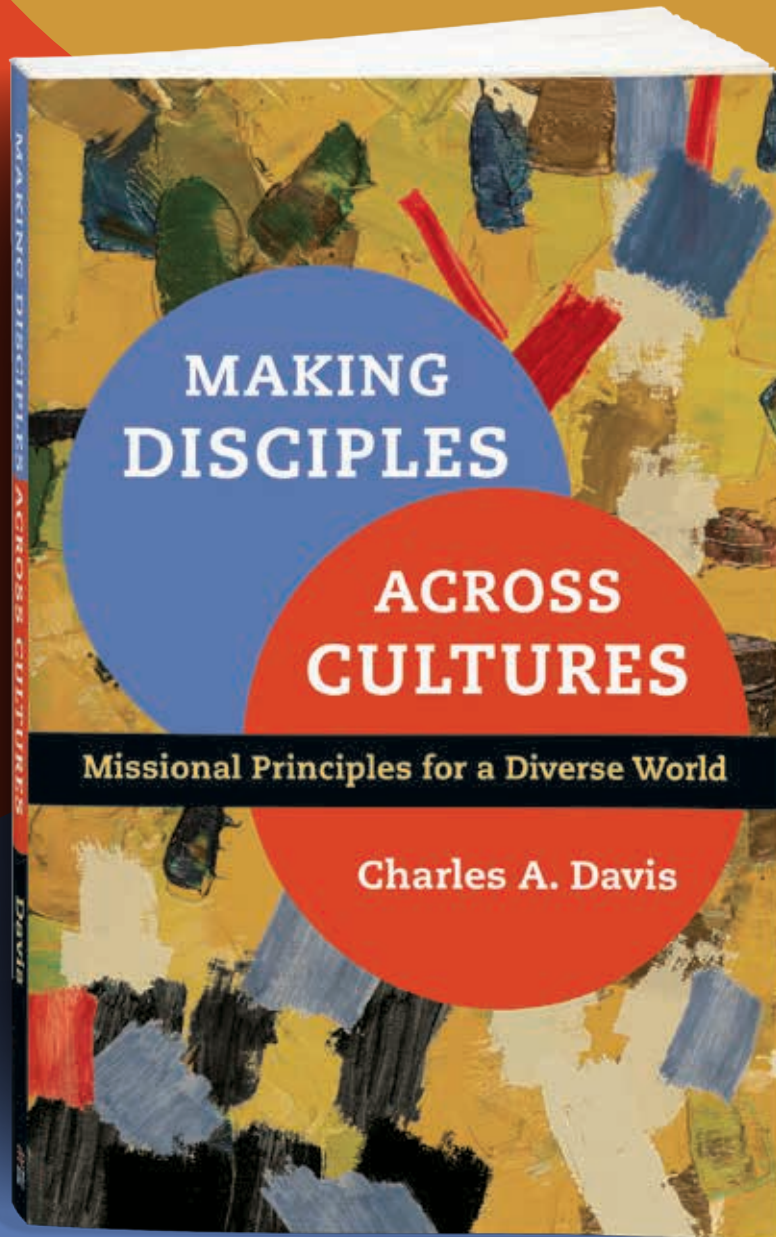
Charles A. Davis

Culture affects how we make disciples. In this insightful road map, Charles Davis, former director of TEAM, provides a framework for missional disciplemaking across diverse cultural contexts. With on-the-ground stories from a lifetime of mission experience, Davis navigates cultural tensions to help Christian workers minister more effectively at home or overseas.

*"In this book, longtime mission leader Charles Davis applies a distinctively missionary analysis to the worn-out ecclesiologies of our time. But it's not all critique and analysis: built on narrative and experience, he lovingly provides the church with a very useful diagnostic tool that gives us viable pathways toward renewal of church life and mission."*

**ALAN HIRSCH**
founding director of Forge Missional Training Network and author of *The Forgotten Ways*

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