

**THE WYCLIFFE GLOBAL ALLIANCE – FROM A U.S. BASED INTERNATIONAL  
MISSION TO A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR BIBLE TRANSLATION**

by

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## SUMMARY

This thesis deals with the complex question of how global Christian mission organizations must learn to function, especially the Wycliffe Global Alliance (WGA). I summarize how the Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) began in 1942 as the resourcing organization for the Summer Institute of Linguistics (now called SIL International) and how their mutual founder, American William Cameron Townsend, was influenced by Western mission strategy and conservative evangelical theology.

The changing global context is impacting how the *missio Dei* takes place and this is influencing how mission agencies interact with each other and the church worldwide. This is leading to new paradigms of how mission is conceptualized around the world.

The thesis outlines how the changing global context has forced Wycliffe to re-evaluate its place in the world because, half a century after its formation, the church has new homes in the global South and East. It follows that as a Western mission, Western resources have decreased and this has shaped how Wycliffe Bible Translators (International) has now become Wycliffe Global Alliance (WGA). However, this goes beyond a mere change of name and has resulted in a type of structure that enables it to better engage with the church worldwide.

The thesis also examines the complexity of contextualization in the global environment, noting how different languages and cultures are involved, each with its own rules and subtleties. I show how the shift of the centre of gravity of the church to the global South and East presents new theological challenges for the Bible translation effort and these directly impact WGA.

There are many missiological implications for WGA that come from influences in church history regarding the importance of language, the translatability of the gospel, the history of Bible translation and how missional reflection is necessary in various situations. These merge together to provide new implications which are influenced by globalization for mission agencies such as WGA.

The thesis also emphasises that WGA is a global mission movement, so I have identified methods of leadership development and structure, all of which are critical to WGA's effectiveness and involvement in the *missio Dei*. I show that forming global mission leaders is unique and complex, and how the leaders must embrace a wide variety of qualities, skills and capabilities, especially in responding to greater cultural diversity. Since most leadership principles are culturally bound, this creates obstacles in cross-cultural situations. Therefore, I emphasize that a successful

multicultural organization like WGA must learn to focus on both worldwide and local objectives.

The thesis outlines how theological, missiological, cultural, contextual and leadership values converge and therefore reshape a mission movement like WGA. My conclusion is that none of these influences can be ignored – all are relevant. Each must be reflected upon in order to provide directions for WGA as it seeks to be faithful to its vision and serve the global church.

## ABBREVIATIONS

CWME: Commission of World Mission and Evangelism

LCWE: Lausanne Congress for World Evangelization

WBT: Wycliffe Bible Translators

WBTI: Wycliffe Bible Translators International

WGA: Wycliffe Global Alliance

WCC: World Council of Churches

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### 1 PURPOSE

The goal of this research is to identify the implications for the Wycliffe Global Alliance (WGA) in respect to the church's demographic shift from the West to the global South and East. My underlying assumption is that WGA must transform itself from being an international mission agency to becoming a global alliance that participates in, and takes greater leadership for, a movement for Bible translation.

Underpinning this research is a missiological and theological framework that helps determine how WGA might achieve its overall vision and in particular its Vision 2025. With Christianity's centre of gravity moving away from its contemporary Western roots, this study will recommend changes to the strategy and structure of WGA.

Understanding Vision 2025 is an important background for this research. The vision has many components. A quantifiable one is the aim to have a Bible translation program in progress for every language that needs it by the year 2025. When the vision was adopted in 1999 the number of languages needing Bible translation was about 3,000 (plus or minus 10 percent). Now, it is about 2,000. Apparently the vision is already making a difference. But is this sustainable? The research will help answer that question.

There are certain challenges in conducting this research, mainly due to internal attitudes, such as resistance from those in the West associated with WGA concerning WGA's strategic partnerships with those in the global South and East. Some seem uneasy about the growing influence on mission strategy of this church. There may also be challenges associated with the financial resources needed to implement the changes anticipated for the WGA. This is because WGA relies primarily on funding from the West and in particular North America.

In order for WGA to achieve Vision 2025, it must reconsider its interaction with the objectives of the church of the global South and East. It is likely that this church in all of its diversity theologically and geographically, has different priorities concerning Bible translation than its Western counterparts. This is also a challenge because WGA has not always sought to consult with or respond to the church's missional interests.

#### 1.1 Clarifying terminology in this research

It should be noted that making general geographical statements about the church and the *missio Dei* is problematic. For example, when referring to the 'Western church' or the 'West' in general it is more appropriate in situations such as in Central and South America to refer to the West as the 'North' since the U.S. and Canada are located in the North, not the West. Another term is how some missiologists refer to the 'global South' or the 'church of the southern continents' (e.g. Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands, the Caribbean and Latin America). However, a more accurate description is to add 'East' since the church in Korea and China are in the East, not the South. Therefore for the sake of continuity in this research, when the terms 'West' or 'Western' are used, they include those who prefer 'North' or 'Northern' terminology. Likewise the 'global South and East' is used instead of the 'global South' or 'church of the southern continents'.

It is important to note that this research is focussed solely on the Wycliffe Global Alliance (WGA). From 1980-2011, this organization was called 'Wycliffe Bible Translators International' (WBTI). However, WGA will be used throughout. In certain contexts the generic 'Wycliffe', 'Wycliffe Bible Translators' or 'WBT' may be used. When this is done it most likely refers to organizations and organizational structures or historical contexts that pre-date 1991 when WBTI was restructured.

The focus of this research is only on WGA and not SIL International, WGA's strategic partner, even though the two organizations share a common history and heritage. Up until the 1990s, the two organizations shared the same structure and resources. Often they were thought to be entirely the same by friend and foe and the two words 'Wycliffe' and 'SIL' were regularly used interchangeably (e.g. 'Wycliffe/SIL' or 'SIL/Wycliffe').

## **2 GOAL**

The goal of this research is to understand the changing context of the church within the evolving global mission context and in particular how this affects WGA. From this vantage point I make conclusions about the direction WGA should take in order to achieve its vision.

There are numerous studies about the changing demographics of the global church. From them we learn in particular how for the first time in modern history the number of Christians in the global South and East has exceeded those in the West. Philip Jenkins describes this shift as "one of the transforming moments in the history of religion worldwide" (2002:1). Mark Noll writes, "it is as if the globe [has] been turned

upside down and sideways. A few short years ago, Christian believers were concentrated in the global North and West, but now a swelling majority lives in the global South and East” (2009:19). Jenkins further states that the “center [sic] of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably Southward to Africa, Asia, and Latin America” (2002:2).

In the annual table of the status of Christian mission, Todd Johnson, David Barrett and Peter Crossing give a comparison of the growth of the church between 1900 and 2010. In 1900 the total number of Christians in Europe and North America was 427.8 million or 82% of the total Christian population, with the rest of the world comprising 93.8 million or 18%. One hundred and ten years later (2010) Christians in Europe and North America total 789.8 million or 36% while the rest of the world – the global South and East – reached 2,185.5 million or 64% (2011:29). Lamin Sanneh calls this notable shift to the global South and East, “Christianity’s new stronghold” (2008:275).

Samuel Escobar states: “In the twenty-first century, Christian mission has become truly international, and in order to understand this phenomenon we need a paradigm change in our way of studying it that corresponds to the change in the way mission is now taking place” (2003:19). This gives credence to a re-examination of mission theory and practice.

The research that follows will heed Escobar’s call for a re-examination. I anticipate this will lead to insights about how and why the nature of global mission is changing and in particular how this impacts WGA.

The research will explore intersecting themes pertinent to mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century such as issues of contextualization, the impact of Bible translation in mission history, leadership and mission agency leadership development, missiological influences on mission strategy, globalization in mission and other factors. My research goal is to determine how these influence the strategy and structure of WGA and in turn how WGA should respond.

As a conclusion to my research, I provide insights into specific ways the leadership of WGA needs to implement changes necessary to reach its vision.

The application of the research should also benefit other international mission agencies. Principles learned from this research can assist these agencies as they grapple with workable solutions to their praxis in the global arena. The outcome of the study will also provide new information to the field of theology through noting the missiological shifts that are needed by iconoclastic Western mission agencies as

they examine their future role in the *missio Dei* and as they interact with the changing demographics of the global church.

In summary, the goals of the research are: 1) an overview of the understanding of the changing context of the church because of the shift to the global South and East; 2) an analysis of how this influences the current and future direction of WGA; resulting in: 3) practical applications to the strategy, structure and leadership model of WGA.

### **3 OUTLINE**

The structure of the thesis is as follows: Chapter two provides an overview of mission history, in particular the history of WBT in the context of the development of Bible translation as part of the *missio Dei*. The organization's past 80 years are summarized and the lessons learned from this period are outlined.

Some might ask why a historical approach important to the research. Andrew Walls states that the New Zealand Maoris “speak of the future as being behind us. We cannot see it. The past is what is in front of us. We can see that stretched out before us, the most recent plainly, the more distant shading away to the horizon” (2002:1). This insight about history means one cannot say what will happen to the church of the future. However, what we can do is to follow Walls’ advice and “look at the past in front of us and see what it suggests of the way that we have come and perhaps read in outline, as on a sketch map, the place to which we have been brought now” (2002:1).

Chapter three investigates theological implications such as contextualization issues that come from providing the Bible in the vernacular which is basically a theologizing activity. This topic is important because, as Kwame Bediako states, “Christianity has become a non-Western religion; which means, not that Western Christianity has become irrelevant, but rather that Christianity may now be seen for what it truly is, a universal religion, and that what has taken place in Africa has been a significant part of this process” (2004:3). African Christianity, as observed by Bediako, is a vernacular religion because the 18<sup>th</sup> century missionary movement into Africa gave priority to Bible translation in African languages. Equipped with the vernacular scriptures and largely released from influence of the West, theology was and continues to be contextualized into African forms.

A related topic explored in chapter three concerns how the church of the global South and East have taken the vernacular Bible seriously. This is critical to the

research because as Jenkins observes the Bible is read differently in the South and East than it is in the West. In particular, he notes that Christians from the South and East have

a much greater respect for the authority of scripture, especially in matters of morality. They also have a willingness to accept the Bible as an inspired text and have a tendency to literalism, with a special interest in supernatural elements of scripture, such as miracles, visions, and healings, a belief in the continuing power of prophecy, and a veneration for the Old Testament, which is considered as authoritative as the New.

(2006b:4)

It follows clearly that the way the Bible is read and understood by Christians in the South and East impacts the importance of Bible translation in these regions. This affects WGA because of its roots in the West, a region now known for a general disregard of the relevance of the Bible.

The fourth chapter explores the missiological foundations, including that of mission history in Bible translation, and the resulting mission practices that have shaped many mission agencies, especially the WGA. I suggest how these foundations should influence the future of WGA in the global mission context. Mission agencies do not operate in a vacuum but usually are affected by the churches that support and sustain them. James Engel and William Dryness (2000:18) outline three trends that Western mission agencies should consider: 1) how they are captive to their home cultures including Western political and economic pragmatism; 2) the initiatives for mission as they shift to younger churches; and 3) the loss of the theological roots of mission. These and other reasons give compelling support to investigating this theme.

Chapter five explores leadership themes that help or hinder the changing nature of international mission, mission structures and mission societies. The chapter concludes by exploring WGA's leadership development process. This is important to the research because of the kind of mission leadership required in rapidly changing global contexts and in particular because this will affect mission agencies like WGA that originate in the West.

Chapter six outlines the conclusions that follow from the previous chapters. These are intended to guide WGA's leadership in achieving and implementing the

recommendations from the research. Some unresolved areas in the research that need further investigation are also mentioned.

#### **4 MY MOTIVATION AND POSITION AS RESEARCHER**

The choice of the research topic is important to me because it influences my role as Executive Director/CEO of WGA, a position I have held since January 2008. My experience to-date indicates that WGA must set a course for transforming itself due to the changing nature of the global church. Furthermore, because WGA is a mission agency associated with the global church and yet has strong Western roots, there are important missiological and theological basics that will indicate or influence the directions WGA in the future.

Many academic studies have been conducted about mission and church leadership, on organizational change and on specific aspects of mission such as the technical, theological and missiological issues of Bible translation. However, I have not found any studies directly associated with my research topic. My conclusion is that the exploration of the research problem about the growing impact upon WGA of the shift of the church to the global South and East will lead to solutions for WGA. It will assist WGA's leadership to plan for the future with greater understanding of the changing contexts of the global church. The leadership of WGA give their support for this research and assure me that the recommendations and other outcomes will assist in WGA's understanding of itself, and will influence the development of its future strategies and operations.

#### **5 RESEARCH METHODS**

The four themes of the corresponding chapters are developed using two methods: 1) a literature study surveying available sources including investigating current research in other relevant disciplines and making missiological and theological deductions to help solve the research problem; and 2) an analysis and summary of my previous work (eight years in an executive leadership role in Wycliffe Australia and four years in WGA) including articles, presentations and other documents that are relevant to the research problem.

The methodology for each theme is: Theme one, an overview of Wycliffe's history, is developed from a study of unpublished documents from WGA's archives, along with a literature survey of published works about WGA's history.

Theme two, theological issues associated with contextualization and Bible translation and issues particular to Bible translation as church participation shifts to the global South and East, are addressed by means of a literature survey.

Theme three, missiological themes associated with mission history, especially Bible translation, marginalization of people groups, and mission strategy, are addressed by a literature survey on relevant published works.

Theme four, the operation and leadership of mission societies, including how past policies have influenced their present and future operations, includes a literature survey of published and unpublished works, an analysis of my writings and research, complemented by a brief survey of other large international mission agencies.

## **6 BACKGROUND**

In June 1999, both WBTI and SIL International adopted a vision to initiate a Bible translation program in every remaining language group that needs one by the year 2025. The context leading to that vision is an important foundation for this research.

### **6.1 Dr John Watters, 1999**

SIL and WBTI had just appointed an Executive Director (CEO) to provide joint leadership for the two organizations – Dr John Watters, a veteran leader of both organizations. As part of his preparation for the SIL International Conference and the Wycliffe International Convention in 1999 (called ICON 99), he wrote an internal document reflecting on the current status of the two organizations. He compared the situation to being at a crossroad with one road maintaining the status quo and another road going in a new direction. Further good work would be done with the present model but control would remain in the hands of those from the West. Watters also predicted that the presence of the two organizations would diminish because of dwindling resources and therefore the two organizations would become less effective (1999:6).

The challenge that Watters issued (1999:6) was that although the current road could lead to further products produced, such as New Testament translations, it would not provide for a greater percentage of trained local and national leadership. He also believed that progress of work begun in more languages would decline further than what had been experienced so far.

Watters therefore advocated a preferred future following the second road. This road would consider global factors and respond accordingly. The first factor was the globalization of the church – the demographic shift favouring the global South and East (1999:7). At the same time there was a decline in recruitment of the next generation of Christians from the West, as well as the growing rate of retirement from the current largely Western workforce. There was also the trend towards shorter term service. A dichotomy was growing between where future resources come from on the one hand, and where personnel come from on the other. The financial resources come from the West and the people come from the global South and East, yet neither SIL International nor WBTI were equipped to manage this trend. There was also the goal that the church from the South and East will assume require greater partnership in the ministry associated with the two organizations.

A second critical factor was the “problematic contexts where major translation needs remain” (Watters 1999:7). Watters observed that much of the remaining Bible translation needs are in three particular areas: the Indonesia-Pacific Islands region, central Africa and Nigeria, and mainland Asia from India to China. He observed that all three concentrations were in “many local contexts that are hostile to Christian activity, unwelcoming to a large Western presence, or difficult to serve in due to civil wars” (1999:7).

The demographic growth of the future, favouring countries in Africa and Asia, was Watters’ third critical factor (1999:7). The youth explosion would favour this region as mission agencies in the West experience an aging population.

A fourth critical factor was the noticeable desire across the mission world, including the Bible agencies, for new partnerships that exhibited “greater openness, vulnerability, and cooperation” (Watters 1999:8).

Watters’ fifth critical factor was the “increased interest in the ethnolinguistic minorities of the world” (1999:8). In particular, he noted an increase in mission focus on people groups. Here, the desire is for a greater understanding of local languages and cultures as “a resource for communication, a medium for education, and a social reality deserving of their own rights, status and attention” (1999:8).

The sixth critical factor Watters observed was the shifts in language use taking place globally, with the English language gaining prestige, coupled with language extinction in some parts of the world, growing multilingualism and sizeable unaddressed illiteracy (1999:8).



Watters' challenge set the stage for a rigorous discussion at ICON 99. There were approximately 350 leaders representing both organizations at this triennial meeting. However, what impacted discussions the most was the report on the status of Bible translation at the time. It was presented by the outgoing Executive Director, Steve Sheldon.

## 6.2 Mr Steve Sheldon, 1999

In his presentation Sheldon pointed out that Bible translation progress was quite slow throughout the first 18 centuries, despite significant milestones (the Septuagint, the Vulgate, John Wycliffe's English translation, the King James Version, Martin Luther's German translation, etc.). By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century only 68 languages had access to a Bible translation.

According to Sheldon, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was "a six-fold increase in translation worldwide so that in that 100-year period, an additional 450 people groups received Scripture in their languages for the first time, bringing the total number of language groups with SOME [sic] Scripture available to 522" (1999:4). This increase was attributed to the start of the so-called modern missionary movement and the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804, with additional Bible Societies starting in other countries in following years.

It was during the 20<sup>th</sup> century that Bible translation activity greatly increased with translation begun in 1,690 languages. By 1999 the total numbers of language groups that had some Scripture in their heart language was 2,212. This rapid progress could be attributed to the formation of SIL International and Wycliffe Bible Translators in the 1930s along with New Tribes Mission, Unevangelized Fields Mission and other agencies that had a particular focus on Bible translation for smaller languages. In addition indigenous translators were being trained, usually to work in their own vernaculars.

Upon further analysis of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sheldon noted that from 1981-1998 there was actually a slowing down of progress in Bible translation in new languages. Thus he concluded that "the estimate of how long it might take for all people groups to have SOME [sic] Scriptures in their heart languages COULD [sic] range from 100 to 150 years" (1999:6).

## 6.3 ICON 1999 declaration

This startling information from Sheldon and Watters alarmed the delegates at the 1999 ICON and they boldly set a new direction for the two organizations. The result was the adoption of a resolution, called ‘Vision 2025’, which reads in full:

Motivated by the pressing need for all peoples to have access to the Word of God in a language that speaks to their hearts, and reaffirming our historic values and our trust in God to accomplish the impossible, *we embrace the vision that by the year 2025 a Bible translation project will be in progress for every people group that needs it.*

We acknowledge that this cannot be accomplished simply by our working harder or doing more of what we are now doing. It will require us to make significant changes in our attitudes and ways of working.

Our desire is to build capacity for sustainable Bible translation programs and Scripture-use activities. Therefore, we urge each entity within our family of organizations to give priority to strengthening present partnerships, forming additional strategic partnerships, and working together to develop creative approaches appropriate to each context.

To this end we commit ourselves to pray for the fulfilment of this vision, seeking God’s guidance and obeying Him in whatever new directions He may lead.

(WBTI 1999:5)

The Vision 2025 resolution became historic and monumental for the leaders and organizations associated with both WBTI and SIL International. It outlined a new posture for the two organizations and came about because the leaders had prayerfully and thoughtfully re-examined the remaining Bible translation needs in the world, the current pace of starting new Bible translation projects, and the changing environment of resources needed by mission agencies.

#### 6.4 Mr William Cameron Townsend, 1934

The vision built upon the efforts of William Cameron Townsend. In 1934 the young American initiated a training course on a farm in Arkansas with only two students. Borrowing the name of John Wycliffe, who had championed the first Bible translation

in the English vernacular, Townsend called the course ‘Camp Wycliffe’ and its focus was on linguistic training in preparation for Bible translation in minority languages. Little did Townsend realize this was the beginning of a movement that would spread across the world.

Townsend sent his first recruits to Mexico where they worked under the name of an organization he founded – the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). As its growth continued, Townsend was faced with a challenge. He needed either a home office or a sending organization in the U.S. that would take care of the financial and prayer needs of his new recruits. He also needed a means of representing the work of SIL to the U.S. Christian public. At the time all financial resources sent to Townsend in Mexico were handled through the now defunct Pioneer Mission Agency (PMA) (Kernick, 2008:1). But as “Townsend’s group” (as it was called) continued to grow, PMA was feeling stretched.

Townsend and his friend Mr L.L. Legters who co-founded SIL with him, had not planned to organize another society. Instead their aim was to train translators who would serve under other established missionary societies. However, when Legters died of a heart attack in 1940 and in 1942 when the PMA declared they could no longer handle the growth of Townsend’s group, he decided to form his own sending body. Townsend approached his long time businessman friend, Bill Nyman, for help. As a result, in 1942 Nyman and Townsend set up the Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) office in Nyman’s home in Glendale, California (Svelmoe 2008:296).

## 6.5 SIL International and WBTI

In the structure that emerged from 1942 until the late 1990s, SIL was responsible for both the linguistic training schools (operating in a number of countries) and the overseas linguistic, literacy and Bible translation functions. WBT set up offices in a number of countries to recruit personnel and raise funds for SIL. Both organizations were from the West, although the first Asian recruits (from Japan) were accepted into service in the late 1970s.

Commenting on the present status of SIL International, Freddy Boswell, the current Executive Director of SIL, states:

SIL today has a staff of over 5,500 coming from more than 60 countries. Through the years, SIL has trained over 15,000 students. Our linguistic work has impacted nearly half of the world’s languages spoken by over 1.7 billion people in nearly 100 countries. The SIL

Bibliography holds over 40,000 titles. Through the years, SIL and Wycliffe, together with additional translation organizations, have participated in the translation of Scripture in 2,565 languages.

(2010:3)

This is impressive progress. However, as already stated in the research problem, the future looks quite different as the church continues its shift and the implications associated with that move impact international mission agencies.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

In the early 1990s WBTI was created as a separate organization from SIL and over time was given its own Board of directors (governors) and more recently its own executive leadership and financial and human resources. Furthermore, the restructuring of WBTI to become WGA that has taken place in the past decade has enabled WGA to change how it is made up. Currently it is composed of 45 Wycliffe Member Organizations and over 70 Wycliffe Partner Organizations. A quarter of these organizations manage Bible translation programs in their own countries. The remainder raise resources for Bible translation and related activities. Many of these resources are placed under the administrative responsibility and/or structure of SIL International.

In sum, the organizational structure of WBTI to WGA and its interdependency with SIL International is not as straightforward as it once appeared to be. This is rightly so, given the changing global contexts that affect mission agencies.

## CHAPTER 2 – BEGINNING OF A MOVEMENT

### 1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in chapter 1, WBT started in 1942 as a resourcing organization for the Summer Institute of Linguistics (now called SIL International). While these two organizations had a common beginning, the last two decades have fundamentally redefined both organizations, but especially WBT. Its character has been shaped by the changing dynamics of the global church.

The past seven decades of changes in church and mission agencies across the world include structural challenges for WBT and SIL. These provide a learning environment showing how organizations can adapt to new challenges.

Building on these changes, this chapter focuses on the history of WBT becoming WGA in the context of the development of Bible translation. WGA's past 80 years is summarized and the lessons learned from this period are outlined. This provides, as Andrew Walls says, an outline of "the place to which we have been brought now" (2002:1) and how WGA should respond in the future.

### 2 THE BEGINNING – 1914-1933

William Cameron Townsend, who founded WBT, was not the kind of person that one might have imagined for such a task. This is because, as one of Townsend's biographers William Svelmoe points out, Townsend was "not the typical evangelical Bible institute graduate burning with a long and zealously nurtured passion for the lost heathen" (2008:1). Nevertheless, the agencies he birthed have outlived him by more than 30 years and show no signs of ending.

Townsend's parents had moved to California from the East coast of the U.S. in 1893 in search of a better life and to find relief from poverty. Townsend was born three years later and eventually was joined by five siblings. His industrious father committed himself to raise his family as fundamentalist Christians (Svelmoe 2008:3).

In 1914, Townsend chose to attend Occidental College in greater Los Angeles. It had Presbyterian roots but it made no claim to be a Bible institute. At the college Townsend attended Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) meetings that made him restless because he was fascinated by the stories from the students of their jaunts in overseas cross-cultural mission. This became the primary influence on why

Townsend wanted to experience something of the world beyond California. This quest for something new stirred Townsend to board a ship headed for Guatemala in September 1917. He was only 21 years old.

The SVM played a major role in broadening Townsend's horizons along with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). However, both groups were criticized by fundamentalist Christians as succumbing to post World War 1 liberal theological influences in the U.S. Whatever the case, these two institutions did not seem to shape Townsend's theology of mission. Townsend himself admitted he was not a serious student of missions. He had read a pamphlet and the biography of David Livingstone, but that was about it (Svelmoe 2008:8).

Townsend did however believe he was obligated to go to Guatemala. He understood that he was obeying a calling from God and that was all that mattered. He felt so strongly about this that he suspended his undergraduate studies with only a year to finish.

This calling that Townsend felt led him to serve with the Bible House, a publisher of Spanish-language Bible portions and gospel tracts. Townsend encountered this agency while studying in California. Upon arrival in Guatemala he became a colporteur and handed out tracts and Scripture portions in Spanish to anyone he met who would accept his gifts. Townsend believed that getting tracts and gospel portions into the hands of people to read was a very worthy goal. As a Protestant he assumed that Scriptures alone gave all that was needed as a guide to God's salvation for humankind.

Townsend's audience was largely Roman Catholic and his fundamentalist Christian agency convinced him that the Catholics were in need of the gospel message (Svelmoe 2008:25).

In Guatemala Townsend was looked after by missionaries and administrators of the Central America Mission (CAM) – an arrangement negotiated by the Bible House. Townsend thought of these people as spiritual giants in his life.

Townsend had no formal cross-cultural missionary training and spoke only the broken Spanish that he learned in high school. His knowledge of the Bible was learned at church and from his parents. Svelmoe explains Townsend's lack of training by today's standards: "Years of college and seminary were not required to tell the simple gospel story to souls perceived as lost. Linguistic and anthropological training was therefore virtually nonexistent for prospective missionaries" (2009:630).

Francisco Diaz, a Cakchiquel Indian aged about 35 and a recent convert to Christianity, was paired with Townsend to help him sell Spanish Bibles and tracts. Diaz helped Townsend see that the needs of the indigenous Cakchiquel Indians were very different to that of the *Ladinos* (Spanish speakers with European ancestry – now known as *Latinos*). This was an important insight for Townsend since his focus had been limited to Spanish language literature and Bibles.

Diaz, with Townsend's help, soon started a school for Cakchiquel children that helped motivate him to improve his language ability. About this time Townsend met a fellow missionary named Elvira, and after marriage they settled at the school that Townsend and Diaz had started. The friendship with Diaz came to an untimely end when Diaz died of malaria in 1920.

These first three years (1917-20) in Guatemala made Townsend realize the importance of the Cakchiquel language community and their unique identity. He discovered essential principles about communicating in their vernacular language. This and the influence of Diaz shaped his vision that every language group should have the Scriptures in their own language.

Townsend's growing interests in the Indians and their native languages strained his relationship with CAM. The mission was more interested in ministry to the *Ladinos*. But Townsend's concern for the Indians would not go away.

In January 1921, Townsend and eleven other missionaries serving in Guatemala gathered for the General Indian Conference. They nicknamed themselves the 'Chichicastenago Twelve' after the town where they met. The focus of their conference was on the Indians – the ethnic minorities of Guatemala and nearby countries – because they had been neglected by the mission agencies in the region (Steven 1995:40). Their concerns aligned somewhat with already established agencies such as the British and Foreign Bible Society that focused on making the Bible available in major languages of the world.

Townsend and his like-minded Chichicastenago Twelve felt the pressing need to help the Indians find Christ through their own language and culture rather than being forced to do so through the Spanish language and *Ladino* culture. This concern became the seed that was sown for Townsend's burden and vision to help minority language groups.

Meanwhile Townsend and Elvira proceeded with translating the New Testament into Cakchiquel. It was dedicated on 10 October 1929 at the First Presbyterian Church of Santa Ana, California. The momentous work came with great misunderstanding because *Ladino* missionaries amongst the Cakchiquel preferred to use Spanish and seemed threatened by the fact that the Cakchiquel people now had the Scriptures in their own language (Steven 1995:199).

After 15 years of serving in Guatemala Townsend returned to the U.S. unsure about what he would do next. He felt a burden to help other indigenous communities in Central America. At the urging of his friend L.L. Legters, the two attempted to cross the border of Texas into Mexico to explore potential work there. However, the border officials put a stop to their entry stating that Protestant missionaries were not welcome in Mexico.

### **3 ATTEMPTS AT A NEW STRATEGY – 1934-1941**

Being refused entry into Mexico was a turning point that caused Townsend (the visionary) and Legters (the implementer) to found Camp Wycliffe in the summer of 1934. The purpose of the seven week camp was to train ‘pioneer’ missionaries with a particular focus on linguistics and Bible translation. It was held at an unfurnished rural farm house near Sulphur Springs, Arkansas. This simple environment helped the students learn basic survival skills that Townsend thought would be similar to what they would experience in the remote jungle areas where he wanted to send them (Stevens 1999:1). Three students sat under the instruction of Townsend, assisted by Cakchiquel speaker José Chicol. They used linguistic theory formulated from Townsend’s experience with the Cakchiquel language.

This was not a good time to try to start something new as it was the era of the Great Depression in the U.S. But this did not deter the faith of Townsend or Legters. In fact it was the pattern that Townsend became known for – trusting God for the impossible. It is worth noting that this theological foundation continues as a core value of WGA, stated as: “We depend on God and his sufficiency to equip and sustain for life and mission” (WBTI 2008:13).

Townsend returned to Arkansas in 1935 to hold his second Camp Wycliffe. This time there were five students and the subjects increased to include phonetics (recognition and formation of alphabets for previously unwritten and studying unknown sounds).

As soon as the course was finished Townsend, Elvira and several of the students put into practice what they had learned at Camp Wycliffe by going to an Aztec village



near Mexico City. Within a short time Townsend's work attracted the interest and support of key Mexican government officials. This too became characteristic of his mode of operating – building good relationships with leaders at all levels of a host government.

Townsend's relationship with CAM had been deteriorating for many years due to its focus on *Ladino* ministry and because Townsend's priority for Indian evangelism included Bible translation. It was only a matter of time before it would become an unworkable relationship. Townsend's new partner for his vision was the Pioneer Mission Agency (PMA) of Philadelphia, a small mission willing to provide U.S. sponsorship for his work since Townsend did not intend to set up his own agency.

#### **4 WYCLIFFE BIBLE TRANSLATORS IS BORN – 1942-1944**

After the first Camp Wycliffe, Legters remained in the U.S. to raise funds and promote Townsend's work in Mexico. Eventually, as more people took the training and went to Mexico PMA decided they could no longer provide sponsorship for these two men. What happened next usually gets explained in many ways.

Svelmoe gives an external perspective about the formation of WBT which he considered to be

an unwieldy merger of three different organizations: (1) Camp Wycliffe, founded to train missionaries with any board to undertake pioneer work in Indian languages; (2) the Summer Institute of Linguistics, initially founded to provide an organization for translators from Camp Wycliffe who were not already committed to other boards and chose to join "the Townsend group" in Mexico; and (3) the Wycliffe Bible Translators, which took over promotion and fundraising for both Camp Wycliffe and the Summer Institute of Linguistics when the PMA decide the work was getting too large for them to handle.

(2008:252)

However, from an internal perspective Townsend formed two distinct organizations rather than three. The first was the Summer Institute of Linguistics in 1934. It provided the strategy and structure needed to place newly trained linguist-Bible translators in Mexico and later other countries in South America, followed by Asia, the Pacific and Africa. The name was based on what the Camp Wycliffe courses

became – an institute of linguistics held in the summer months. The same organization also conducted the field work.

It took another eight years before there was any formal organization in the U.S. that did the fundraising and recruitment of personnel for SIL.

As mentioned in chapter 1, in 1942 Wycliffe Bible Translators Inc. was formed with its headquarters in the small garage apartment in Southern California belonging to Townsend's friend, Bill Nyman. Nyman was a businessman and served as a volunteer for Wycliffe. The funds that came into this little office were sent directly to the SIL field locations, although the Wycliffe office took five percent of the funds to pay for a secretary's salary and office supplies.

When Nyman and Townsend discussed names for the new organization they considered ones such as 'Pioneer Translation Agency' and 'Bible Translation Movement' but settled on Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) instead (Svelmoe 2008:295).

Townsend often had to explain the organizational and theological differences between the two organizations. For example, in a message to SIL staff in 1977 he said:

We started WBT not because we hadn't been getting along all right, because in 1941 when there were only forty-six of us as the Summer Institute of Linguistics, we didn't need much of a support organization. But in 1942 God sent us fifty-one recruits in one year. And it seemed that having WBT would facilitate the [public's] understanding of our burden for souls, our burden of getting the Word of God to every tribe in its own tongue....

(Hibberd 2007:68)

Various interpretations of this era impacted how the Christian public, the non-Christian world and those involved with either organization understood the unique relationship between the two organizations. Townsend was candid about how to explain this relationship to his supporters. He was adamant that despite any confusion both organizations had unique roles to fill and were interdependent with each other even though, at least in his mind, Wycliffe only existed to serve SIL and therefore the later was the primary organization.

Nevertheless, as both Wycliffe and SIL grew, their dual nature caused much confusion especially to its constituencies but also to the general public. Townsend remained committed to the need for Wycliffe because its role was to “present the challenge of giving God’s Word to those who have never received it so that people at home could really get behind [the vision]” (Hibberd 2007:65).

Townsend wrote a position paper to clarify the distinctive of Wycliffe and said: “Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc. is not a mission [agency but rather a] fellowship of scientific pioneers” (Steven 1999:169) committed to the Great Commission. It was non-sectarian and non-denominational. Through its relationship with SIL, it served the language communities of the world and their national governments with its linguistic knowledge and service in literacy. These were essential services for the agency’s theological concern of seeing these language groups have access to the Bible in their own language.

Townsend regularly needed to clarify to those within and outside of SIL and Wycliffe the dual nature of these two organizations. They were often referred to with two names for the same organization even written as ‘Wycliffe/SIL’ or ‘SIL/WBT’. SIL was according to Townsend, a scientific linguistic organization that served in research among minority linguistic groups in many countries and that those carrying out this task were motivated Christians who wanted to see the Christian Scriptures available in these languages. SIL also conducted academic courses initially in the summer at universities originally in the U.S. Wycliffe according to Townsend represented the needs (people, prayer and finances) of this vision to the Christian public.

With the increase of personnel going to the field to work with SIL, the Wycliffe office eventually moved into larger facilities at Huntington Beach, California. By then Wycliffe was not only meeting the needs of teams serving under SIL in Latin America, but it was also actively promoting the needs and work of Bible translation in the U.S.

In 1944 Elvira Townsend died after a long illness. While greatly saddened, Townsend continued his quest to serve the Indian groups of Latin America. Two years later he met and married a Wycliffe member, Elaine Mielke. A few weeks after their honeymoon they led a group of 20 new recruits into the eastern rain forests of Peru where there were at least 40 indigenous groups that had unwritten languages.

## **5 BRANCHING OUT – 1945-1970s**

In 1944 SIL linguists accepted an invitation to run an SIL training school in Canada with 40 students. This began a trend that continued for the next decade with further introductory linguistics training courses conducted in other countries. In the early 1950s the Interdenominational Missionary Fellowship of Victoria, Australia sponsored the Wycliffe School for Linguistics for Missionaries with Kenneth Pike from SIL as its first Principal. Subsequent courses were held in Australia and England throughout the following years. While the courses served mission organizations that wanted SIL's expertise in linguistics and language learning, they also created interest among prospective missionaries who were attracted to Bible translation as a new form of cross-cultural ministry.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, this increased interest saw the formation of WBT in Canada, Australia and the U.K. Each organization was incorporated within its own country but they were also given formal recognition as subsidiaries of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, U.S. and internally they were referred to as 'Divisions' of the U.S. office.

The vision for Bible translation in the languages of minority peoples spread elsewhere: New Zealand in 1965 and throughout Europe in the 1970s. European churches began sending out a new workforce through Wycliffe divisions in Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, France and Finland.

## **6 NATIONAL BIBLE TRANSLATION ORGANIZATIONS – 1973-1980s**

In the early 1970s to the late 1980s, a significant shift occurred that tested the organizational boundaries of SIL and Wycliffe. The 1973 international conference of the two organizations opened the way for new types of organizations to be formed. At the time these were called 'National Bible Translation Organizations' (Steven 2004:227). Each of these organizations supposedly developed under the guidance and assistance of SIL and Wycliffe. However, it was SIL that supported their formation because these organizations also sponsored linguistics, literacy and Bible translation work in their own countries. The agencies also engaged with the church in their countries, serving as promoters for mother-tongue Scripture use and recruiting personnel and prayer support for Bible translation work. In this manner they carried out Wycliffe-type functions in their own countries. Most of their translators, usually trained by SIL, were 'mother-tongue' translators meaning that they served in their own language communities.

These national organizations emerged during the missiological shifts of the growth of the church in the global South and East. They were also part of the spread of

nationalism particularly in Africa where independence movements impacted the church, missions and other not for profit agencies. Increasingly there was the call for nationals to take greater authority over the affairs of their nations. Over a period of 15 years there emerged national translation organizations in Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Kenya, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Brazil. They had unique names such as Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT) and the Bible Translation Association of Papua New Guinean (BTA).

These organizations created a shift in what had been the simplistic perspective that Wycliffe organizations raised the resources for SIL to do its fieldwork. Now there were new players essentially spawned by SIL which shared a vision for their own countries. A threshold had been crossed in the relationship between SIL and Wycliffe because there were now others who shared the vision of Bible translation and had functions relating to both organizations.

This direction confirms a concern of how Bible translation “tends to take the perspective of the missionary, who sees him- or herself as bringing the gospel from one place to another” (Kim 2009:47). This new direction within the relationship between Wycliffe and SIL; whether either organization was aware of it or not, was an acknowledgement that the Holy Spirit is already active in each language and culture “and so the Christian faith is not imported but emerges out of local experiences” (Kim 2009:47).

Within the relationship between Wycliffe and SIL, there was a greater call from Wycliffe upon SIL to invest its technical expertise into these national translation organizations, most of which lacked the financial and human resources that SIL enjoyed. But these organizations did grow and mature and they still exist today.

It is unclear whether Townsend actually supported the emergence of these new national organizations. As they developed he was no longer in active leadership although as founder he still exerted great influence and respect in both SIL and Wycliffe. In a speech in March 1977 to his staff Townsend encouraged the use of ‘tribesmen’ to do the translating. However, he stated: “Now of course, those [tribesmen] will not become members of Wycliffe Bible Translators, at least not in the foreseeable future” (Hibberd 2007:50). Instead he said they should be employed by SIL members to do the translating. He did not believe that national translators should eliminate the need to recruit foreigners as the main workers and leaders for Bible translation and other tasks of SIL.

It appears that as long as Townsend was alive, he resisted the idea of having national Christians do the translating and run their own translation organizations, even if affiliated with SIL and Wycliffe. He believed that the West (mainly the U.S.) would then be neglecting its responsibilities. Biographer Hugh Stevens states that Townsend “struggled to incorporate this new paradigm [the national Bible translation organizations] into his thinking” (2004:228). Townsend wrote a prayer about this expressing his fear that the Lord would not look with favour and would think that he had decided to “pass the buck [and] let the nationals do it” (Steven 2004:228). There is some speculation that Townsend held this view until he died in April 1982.

## **7 PREPARING FOR WYCLIFFE INTERNATIONAL – 1980s-1990**

In the late 1970s, the vision for Bible translation began touching Christians in Asia, starting with Japan, then in the 1980s Singapore and South Korea. Eventually over the next 25 years it also flowed to Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan the Philippines and India.

Gradually Wycliffe was becoming international. Until 1980, the Wycliffe organizations were subsidiaries of Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc. Darryl Kernick, a long-time leader in Wycliffe explains it this way: “Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc. served not only as the representative organization for the U.S. public but also as the umbrella organization for the worldwide family of ‘divisions’. Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc. was the early face of Wycliffe [Bible Translators] International” (2008:2).

It was appropriate and inevitable for a body called Wycliffe Bible Translators International (WBTI) to be formed. It was incorporated in California in March 1980 as a separate organization to Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc. All the Wycliffe organizations formed to date, including the U.S. were placed under this new corporation. Consequently, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc. which in time became known as Wycliffe U.S. focussed on relating to the U.S. Christian public to recruit personnel, find prayer supporters and raise financial resources for Bible translation.

Within ten years after the incorporation of the international body, Wycliffe organizations outside of the U.S. became unsettled about their subsidiary relationship with Wycliffe in the U.S. and with the international body. This was particularly the case amongst the organizations in Europe. Local and national laws required these organizations to show their own control over finances and personnel from their countries. There were uncertain trends and rising threats of legal liability if all such organizations were interconnected with a U.S. organization. Therefore they requested that the structure be changed.

## 8 WYCLIFFE INTERNATIONAL IS RESTRUCTURED – 1991-1992

In 1991, WBTI was restructured to be an ‘organization of organizations’. The only constituents of WBTI were the member organizations themselves, not individuals and from this point on they were no longer divisions or subsidiaries of the Wycliffe U.S. organization. Rather, each was autonomous within an international body.

The Wycliffe organizations decided that WBTI would be governed by its member organizations, meaning that each voting member organization was entitled to vote on matters pertaining to WBTI, irrespective of size or experience, provided each met specific membership criteria set out by the Board of WBTI.

WBTI’s role to its member organizations was one of facilitation, providing standards and guidelines for organizational conduct, making recommendations to their strategy or operations, giving general direction and providing or coordinating practical support. WBTI’s mission statement was “to glorify God in obedience to the Great Commission by forwarding scripture translation through the unique strategy that integrates translation, scholarship and service so that all people will have access to God’s word in their own language” (Larsen 1990:5).

The individual Wycliffe organizations were now responsible to lead and shape their organizations through developing policies according to their cultural and national concerns. Their mandate was to develop resources for Bible translation by recruiting people from their nations to serve in Bible translation, enlisting people to pray for the work, and raising funds to support the work. The field work of Bible translation, linguistics, anthropology, Bible translation, and training of local citizens in the task remained the responsibility of SIL.

That was until 1991 when the status of the National Bible Translation Organizations changed again. They became formally a part of WBTI and were given the title of ‘Wycliffe Affiliate Organizations’ since they did not fit the organizational model of the Wycliffe organizations. These changes were necessary for these organizations as they grew in number and maturity and because SIL had difficulty fitting them or their personnel into its structure. Some of these organizations thought they were second-class citizens because of a lack of clarity about where they belonged. It followed that it was within WBTI that these organizations would find a home and full acceptance. A decade later they were called ‘Wycliffe Member Organizations with Language Programs’, distinguishing them from the other ‘Wycliffe Member Organizations’ that did not carry out language programs.

In 1990, WBTI's affiliation to SIL began to shift with both organizations becoming somewhat separate in identity but at the same time they were still interdependent with each other. This was demonstrated by how WBTI moved its incorporation from California to Texas (which was where SIL International was also incorporated).

Overall, however, the changes for WBTI adopted in 1990-91 were enormous. Many leaders of the day (whether serving in SIL International, WBTI or Wycliffe organizations) did not fully understand the implications of these decisions. While the relationship between SIL International and WBTI remained integrated, the two organizations would never be the same again.

Meanwhile in the 1990s with the collapse of the Soviet empire and as the church in former communist lands began to look outward, Wycliffe organizations emerged in Central and Eastern Europe including Poland, Hungary, Russia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine and later Romania.

## **9 WYCLIFFE INTERNATIONAL'S ROLE IN THE WORLD – 1992-2005**

Starting in 1992, WBTI began a journey to form its own identity, a process that had been in stages of development for more than a decade. Whereas the two organizations once gathered for a single international conference, there were now two events: SIL had its International Conference with delegates representing all of its fields. Wycliffe had its International Convention with its delegates being the Executive Directors/CEOs and Board Chairpersons of each of its Member Organizations. Motions passed in one meeting or international board were not automatically the legislation or policy for both corporations. The two organizations began to develop policies according to their respective nature, identities and roles.

This difference in perspectives and purpose of the International Conference and the International Convention became more obvious in 1999 when Vision 2025 was adopted (chapter 1). As this vision was presented and debated, the Wycliffe delegation in their Convention was ready to adopt it very quickly. They were excited by the vision because the Wycliffe organizations had always focused on providing the translated Scriptures for any group that needed them. Vision 2025 provided Wycliffe leaders with a renewed motivation to see translations begun at a quicker pace. However, the SIL delegates in their Conference took longer to adopt the vision because many within SIL had seen themselves as primarily responsible for starting the majority of the remaining translation programs. Therefore, they were concerned about the implications of the vision upon their own priorities and responsibilities.



As a result of Vision 2025 many new missionary movements in Latin America responded by adopting it as their own. The vision was being shared at the same time that Latin America was becoming a missionary sending continent. It was a natural marriage of Vision 2025 to the missiological shifts occurring throughout the Latin American mission movement.

This created a new challenge because this missionary movement did not have any formal relationship with WBTI (or SIL International for that matter). Rather than attempt to set up local Wycliffe offices or organizations across Latin America, the WBTI Board created a new category of affiliation called 'Associated Partner Organizations'. This decision not to set up Wycliffe offices was based on discussions between WBTI leadership and that of COMIBAM (Cooperación Misionera Iberoamericana) which represented the Latin American missionary movement. Setting up Wycliffe offices/organizations across the region would not be sustainable nor was it necessary due to the widespread movement in Latin America that was ready to engage with organizations like WBTI.

Almost immediately, two Latin American partners were given the new status in WBTI – FEDEMEC (Federación Evangélica Misionera Costarricense) of Costa Rica and LETRA (Latinoamericanos en Traducción y Alfabetización) of Argentina. Other organizations in Latin America, Africa and Europe sought and were granted this affiliated status. In time many of the organizations given this status included church denominations that were involved in Bible translation within their own nations.

Meanwhile, at the administrative level agreements (or memorandums of understanding) were signed between WBTI and new partner organizations that wanted a formal relationship with WBTI but did not qualify to be Associated Partner Organizations. Again, most were in Latin America. An outcome was that there were gateways for people from partner organizations to get involved in Bible translation through SIL, Wycliffe organizations or their own organizations.

In 2004, during a meeting of the WBTI Board, an ad hoc committee was set up to study the feasibility of WBTI having its own Executive Director/CEO separate from SIL International. Even though the two corporations were legally separate they were still being led by the same CEO and international leadership team. The committee concluded that it was definitely time for WBTI to have its own Executive Director/CEO along with a completely separate Board of Directors that had no overlap with SIL International's Board. This would enable WBTI to have its own leadership that would focus on taking the organization forward. The committee also

recommended that the historic role of the Wycliffe President be discontinued. This role had been confusing since it was essentially the position of the Chairman of the Board with some public relations responsibilities and was filled by a full-time person who had no executive duties.

The Board of WBTI accepted the recommendation from the committee and brought it to the 2005 Wycliffe International Convention. The Convention enthusiastically adopted the changes and set in motion a process for identifying and appointing its own Executive Director/CEO. This started in 2006 with its new leader in place on 1 January 2008.

The changes adopted by the Convention were not received well by some in SIL leadership and its Board. Many leaders at various levels of SIL feared that their organization would be abandoned by WBTI. Their Board's greatest concern was how the two organizations would maintain their unity (or as some called it, their cohesion). Few however, could deny that SIL International and WBTI had indeed become different organizations with distinct challenges and opportunities.

This created a turbulent time in the relationship between the two organizations. It seemed that this unique relationship that started in 1942 was about to be torn apart. In reality, the two organizations had started separating in significant ways in 1990-92. At that time Wycliffe organizations discovered they had many options for placing their personnel in Bible translation programs and many choices for how to use their funds beyond those supplied to SIL. SIL was not necessarily any longer the primary organization through which personnel coming from Wycliffe organizations would serve. Instead, SIL had become one of several possible pathways for involvement in Bible translation and related ministries.

SIL's leaders realized that they could not live without the partnership with WBTI. All the personnel and virtually all the funding for SIL came from Wycliffe organizations that could now choose how to invest their resources. It seemed that SIL leaders had come to take Wycliffe resources for granted. If there were not enough people the Wycliffe organizations would be asked to put more effort into vision sharing and recruitment. If there were insufficient funds the Wycliffe organizations were asked to raise more money. In this way it was difficult for many in SIL to treat Wycliffe as a true partner. However, in time attitudes began to change and SIL leaders realized they could no longer assume that Wycliffe organizations would always provide the resources that SIL needed. It followed that the SIL leaders became more appreciative and more sensitive to the needs and perspectives of the Wycliffe

organizations. It was actually a matter of necessity – without cooperation with WBTI there would be no future for SIL.

Following this realization, SIL began to transform itself into a Christian research, training and development organization. It would facilitate the work of other organizations rather than trying to carrying out the task on its own.

Meanwhile the vision of the Wycliffe organizations expanded and their work became well-rounded by providing resources as well as carrying out projects including Bible translation related ministries. From SIL's perspective there was concern that WBTI and its organizations might not share the same vision for academic engagement that SIL had become known. However, Wycliffe leaders did come to appreciate the need for a solid academic foundation for Bible translation if it was to be of good quality.

## **10 FINDING WYCLIFFE'S MISSIOLOGICAL VOICE – 2006-2008**

Meanwhile, in 2005 the WBTI Board formalized the organization's intention of engaging with the church of the global South and East. This was in anticipation that an increasing proportion of language programs was being led from and would continue to come from this missiological development.

In 2006, WBTI sponsored its first missiological consultation which was the launch of its 'missiological consultative process'. The meeting was hosted by Wycliffe U.S. at its Orlando headquarters. The purpose was to "provide a framework for our leaders to identify missiological issues that affect the church's involvement in Bible translation in their various contexts" (Franklin 2007:32). Leaders associated with WBTI realized that in order to see Vision 2025 fulfilled, there needed to be a considerable increase in the number of people of all nations involved. The dozen leaders who gathered for the first consultation recognized, "Bible translation is only one facet of the overarching mission of God [thus] the gathering of resources for Bible translation takes place in a rapidly changing social, cultural, economic, political and religious environment in each nation and at the global level" (Franklin 2007:32).

A discovery from the consultation was that WBTI lacked a foundational ecclesiology. This led to searching the archives of WBTI's founder, Townsend, to see what he stated about relating to the church. The investigation returned no results, meaning that the church, and relating to it, was not part of Townsend's focus. This discovery deeply concerned WBTI's leaders because, as Patrick Johnstone points out, "[p]ossibly the most defective partnership is that between mission agencies and local churches.... The centrality of the local church in missions needs to be emphasized,

and agencies must be more accountable to their supporting churches for their ministries and use of workers. However, both are vital components of the church and must work together” (Johnstone 2012:234).

The third missiological consultation in Johannesburg in 2008, addressed this concern where the focus was developing WBTI’s missiological and ecclesiological understanding of its relationship to the church.

The benefits of holding an annual missiological consultation became more evident in the second gathering in 2007 in Singapore. That consultation called for WBTI to develop a group of “reflective practitioners.” It stated that “building on what was covered at the consultation it is essential that our leaders understand and articulate the theological and missiological underpinnings of Bible translation” (Franklin 2008:31).

This missiological consultative process deeply impacted leaders of WBTI and some leaders of Wycliffe organizations. It created a new recognition that a mission agency that had been very active in a task – that of Bible translation – also needed to balance this approach as it considered its place in the *missio Dei*. This new realization was articulated in this way: “If we have an action and task oriented mindset towards mission it can mean we have little room for contemplation. The reflective practitioner is a concept that has not been widely embraced. And yet, reflection is important” (Franklin 2009a:14). This new way of thinking was introduced by William Taylor of the World Evangelical Alliance who facilitated the first consultation. Taylor defines reflective practitioners as people “of both action and reflection, committed to God’s truth; obedient in the power of God’s Spirit to the Great Commission in all its fullness” (2000:5).

This reflective attitude influenced by the missiological journey of leaders associated with WBTI is in harmony with sentiments expressed in the Lausanne Commitment that affirms the importance of the message of the Bible and how God is guiding his mission in the world. The Commitment urges Christians to “make the Bible known by all means possible, for its message is for all people on earth” (Birdsall & Brown 2011:13). There is the urgency of “the ongoing task of translating, disseminating and teaching the scriptures in every culture and language, including those that are predominantly oral or non-literary” (Birdsall & Brown 2011:13). Reflective practitioners within WBTI agree with the sentiment behind the Commitment and will no doubt use it to guide their leadership in the Bible translation movement.

## **11 A NEW STRUCTURE FOR A RENEWED VISION – 2008-2012**

On 1 January 2008, WBTI began a new journey. It now had a new Board of Directors completely separate from the SIL Board, its own Executive Director/CEO completely separate from the SIL function, and its own administration called the Global Leadership Team. Within a year it set up its operational headquarters in Singapore, moving it from Dallas, Texas.

WBTI also adopted a new vision statement: “In communion with God and the worldwide church, we contribute to the holistic transformation of all peoples through Bible translation and compassionate services” (WBTI 2008:12). There was also a new mission statement: “Individuals, communities and nations transformed through God’s love and Word expressed in their languages and cultures” (WBTI 2008:12). These two statements better reflected what WBTI and its organizations had become and the direction they were going to take.

In preparation for the start of the new administration, outgoing Associate Executive Director, Darryl Kernick, wrote an article to reassure all of the SIL and Wycliffe personnel that while this was a new day for WBTI, certain core values were not changing. For example, Kernick stated, “the bottom line remains that WBTI is a Bible translation organization” (2007:4). He pointed out that WBTI was focusing on partners and service which meant a different mindset that “thinks inclusively not exclusively; thinks movement not institution; thinks interdependence not independence; thinks partnership not individualism; thinks others not ourselves” (Kernick 2007:4). This summary encapsulated how the new leadership team would be shaping WBTI in its next stage of development.

In February 2011, WBTI changed its ‘doing business as’ name to the Wycliffe Global Alliance (WGA). The name change was intended to reflect how the organization was repositioning itself in the global context of the *missio Dei*. WGA was growing and when the name was changed it had already become an alliance of over 110 organizations. Figure 1 below, shows the historic growth of what now is WGA. The circles, with the United Nations two-letter nation code, represent a Wycliffe Member Organizations (WMO) in each given country with the corresponding year it was formed and therefore became part of what now is WGA. The diamonds, with the abbreviations of organization names, represents when each Wycliffe Partner Organizations (WPO) was given status with what now is WGA. The diagram also plots the growth of the WPOs after Vision 2025 was adopted. The majority are located in the global South and East.

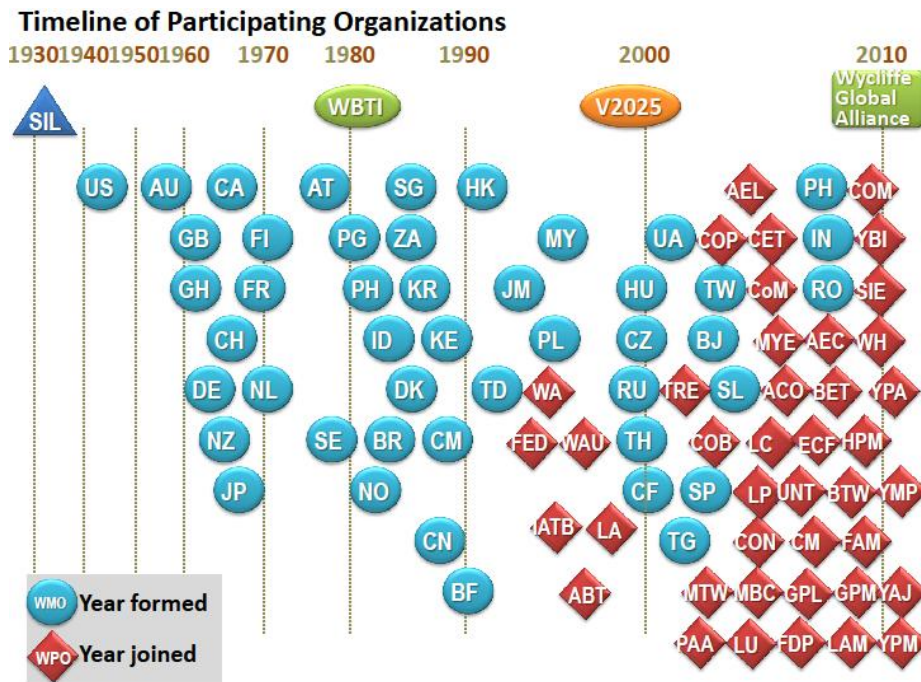


Figure 1: Timeline of growth

WGA currently has 45 Wycliffe Member Organizations (WMOs) and over 70 Wycliffe Partner Organizations (WPOs) (space prevents all of the WPOs being shown in figure 1). Collectively these are now referred to as 'Participating Organizations' in WGA. Figure 2 below, shows how the new structure of WGA incorporates the two types of organizations.



Figure 2: The two types of organizations in WGA

The original organizations (WMOs) have two characteristics: 1) they each have the Wycliffe 'DNA' in their identity and function; and 2) they were created by Wycliffe to fulfill the vision. The newer category (WPOs) also has two characteristics: 1) they do

not have the original Wycliffe ‘DNA’ since they were not created by Wycliffe and have a diversity of identities; and 2) they are committed to Wycliffe’s vision including Vision 2025 and this commitment is formalized in an agreement between each WPO and WGA. Both types of organizations are bound together by agreeing to WGA’s core values and strategies, and they agree to work together in complementary partnerships in the context of the vision.

The role of each Participating Organization in fulfilling Vision 2025 and being involved in Bible translation movements is clarified and strengthened through seven ‘Participation Streams’: Church Engagement, Prayer, Fundraising, Recruiting and Sending People, Specialty Services, Technical Training and Language Programs. Each Participating Organization identifies the Streams in which they are committed. WGA agrees to help strengthen the capacity of each Participating Organization to fulfill the Stream in a meaningful and sustainable way.

## 12 CONCLUSION

This chapter began by outlining the humble beginnings of SIL International in 1934 through a man of faith, William Cameron Townsend. Eight years later Wycliffe Bible Translators was formed mainly out of necessity to support the work of SIL. It seemed like more of an afterthought than a leading strategy. Fifty years later the world had drastically changed and the church was finding new homes in the global South and East. As the resources from the West decreased, WBTI began a journey of redefining its place in the global context, as well as its intertwined relationship with SIL.

Nearly seven decades after Wycliffe was formed it renewed itself by forming a new kind of organization with a new type of structure. The purpose was to enable it to better engage with the church worldwide as it shared Vision 2025. Internally WBTI and its leaders weathered much upheaval and change as it redefined itself in missiological terms.

Since 2008, this renewed organization is giving greater leadership to the global Bible translation movement as it has transitioned into the WGA. This has also enabled it to collaborate with mission movements and organizations particularly in the global South and East that want to partner together within the structure of WGA.

As WGA continues its transition, it realizes that the Christian faith must constantly be translated in order to be “faithful to the Word [that] is to be faithful to the Word that speaks to people *where* and *when* they are” (Balía & Kim 2010: 255). This is critical

because the global church is changing demographically. Consequently, “Bible translation today takes place in a world where difference and diversity are increasingly recognised and encouraged... where the predominance of one culture over others is no longer accepted, and where cultural polycentrism is a fact of our time” (Balia & Kim 2010: 255) – sentiments from the Edinburgh 2010 Conference.



## CHAPTER 3 – THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

### 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the important theological issues that are associated with Bible translation. Of particular interest is contextualization (sometimes referred to as inculturation) which is concerned with the relationship between the Christian faith and various cultures. Because it is an essential principle of how God reveals himself in history and through the Scriptures, the topic is as old as Christianity itself. However, it became integrated in a formal sense with missiology during the modern missionary movement by people such as Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) and Henry Venn (1796-1873).

Bible translation is an indispensable process in the communication of the Bible, although due to the complexities of contextualization, it turns out to be one of the most difficult aspects of communication. This is because different languages and cultures are involved, each with their own rules and subtleties. The translator must know these and then attempt to express the same message represented in the original Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek texts of the Bible without additions, subtractions or changes in essential content. In addition, the translator must not show any bias towards their own doctrinal position.

The shift of the centre of gravity of the church to the global South and East presents new theological challenges for the Bible translation effort. These are now explored and their implications for the WGA are noted.

### 2 CONTEXTUALIZATION ISSUES IN BIBLE TRANSLATION

#### 2.1 Theological contextualization and translation

The principle of contextualization is well known in theological circles because of how the gospel is encountered within a particular cultural setting. During the colonial era “‘Christianization’ was virtually synonymous with ‘civilization’” (Kim 2009:42). This meant missionaries saw no value in the local culture of indigenous people and consequently viewed their own role as that of uplifting such people from their culture and transplanting them into an imported one that could be a mix of the missionaries ‘Christian’ culture and that of the colonial power’s. Consequently recognition of “local feeling were referred to as ‘accommodation’ or ‘adaptation’ in Catholic circles, or ‘indigenization’ among Protestants” (Kim 2009:43).

Timothy Tennent expands this concept stating that “both accommodation and inculturation can be cited as examples of indigenization, the former through missionary initiative, the latter through the initiative of Christians in the target culture” (2011:346). However, all these terms have limitations. Tennent explains: “Inculturation focused on indigenous Christians but seemed to be regarded by Western Christians as a process limited to the mission field” (2011:347). There is a similar problem with indigenization. These restrictions opened the way for a new term (contextualization) to be more broadly used. The adoption of contextualization is a more useful term because it is “as readily used by emergent and missional churches in the West as it is by missionaries working among people groups who are receiving the gospel for the very first time” (Tennent 2011:347).

The concept of contextualization gained greater importance in the early 1970s. Voices from the newer regions of the church began deconstructing traditional theological contextualization from the West and reconstructing it to suit contexts in the global South and East. For example, over the past three decades perspectives have come from theologians associated with liberation theology, social justice, a continuing dialogue with world religion leaders, recognizing the socio-political involvement of Christians, and attempting to identify holistic models of mission. As a result, although contextualization is a theological concept that is important to mission, it has gained some disrepute as being ‘dangerous’ because of its variety of interpretations, definitions and applications.

A definition of contextualization is important for the underpinning of this chapter. David Hesslegrave says it is “the attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, Word, and will of God in a way that is faithful to God’s revelation, especially as it is put forth in the teachings of Holy Scripture, and that it is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts” (1995:115). Tennent exegetes this further: “The historic deposit of the gospel is unchanging, but contextualization acknowledges the need to ‘translate’ the message into forms that are meaningful and applicable to people in their separate cultural settings in such a way that the original message and impact of the gospel is communicated” (2011:347).

Not contextualizing creates difficulty because a lack of understanding of its importance has led some to claim “that cultural reflection and contextualization are at best distractions, at worst sinful” (Tchividjian 2009:106). People who hold this view might argue that one only needs to focus on the Bible and let it speak in each

situation. However, learning how to contextualize is critical to the communication of the biblical message in each context.

Sung-wook Hong examined the majority of definitions of theological contextualization and concludes that it “aims at finding the meaning of the gospel in a new context and at making the Christian faith relevant in a given context so that the gospel may address the needs of the context” (2008:14).

It is the new contexts that Hong refers to that should be a primary concern of Bible translators. Accordingly, there are three features of languages and cultures that influence contextualization: 1) the original biblical texts; 2) the recipient audience; and 3) how the Bible and the faith were transmitted to the translator (Smalley 1995:61).

As a result of contextualization the gospel has been “clothed in multiple languages and has also been coloured by those languages and by the cultures of which they are a part” (Smalley 1995:62). When one translates the Bible into another language and culture, they face unique theological challenges since it was originally authored in the language and cultural contexts of the Hebrew, Greeks and Romans.

Bible translators assume that the sacred text was never meant to be restricted to any one language and culture. They accept the principle that Jesus spoke Hebrew and Aramaic (and possibly Greek) but he did not restrict his teaching to these languages. Texts such as Matthew 28:18-20, Revelation 5:7 and 7:9 provide the mandate that Jesus’ words will be communicated through his followers to people of every language, nation and ethnic group.

This means the Bible translator’s role is complex: 1) to determine what the source text says; 2) to analyze what the source text means; 3) and then to discover how best to express that meaning in the target language. In order to do this well, Bible translators need to discover how best to communicate God’s message using cultural, linguistic and theological bridges.

This complex responsibility is why Andrew Walls calls it “the art of the impossible” (1992:24) and it is obviously not for the fainthearted. Although the gospel is an absolute truth to be effectively understood in any context, it has to be planted firmly in the appropriate ‘cultural soil’.

Translating the correct meaning from one linguistic medium to another requires care because the words of the receptor language are embedded with meanings that do

not always draw a parallel with the source language. It follows that the task of translation requires some degree of flexibility because, although the biblical text must be accurately followed as close as possible, there are instances when it is necessary to have “cultural deviations” (Tucker 1983:351). The meaning of the original text is not changed but certain parallel linguistic and cultural features of the receptor text often have to be made clear.

## 2.2 Examples of challenging Bible translation issues

Paul Pierson suggests that when Bible translators are working in a language that has not been translated before, in their search for a term for God, they have at least three choices: 1) “use an indigenous term, which may have so many pagan connotations that it cannot be transferred”; 2) Introduce a “foreign term” from elsewhere (such as from a predominant language); or 3) “borrow a term from a neighboring [sic] language... but which does not hold the problematic connotations of an indigenous term” (2008:171).

Kwame Bediako states that in the context of West Africa most Bible translators discovered that the god who had been revered in indigenous languages “was found to be the God of the Bible in a way that none of the major European gods, whether Zeus, Jupiter or Odin, could be” (2001:4). For example, when the creator was ‘Ngai’, who had been known for generations in African pre-Christian tradition and was equivalent to the Christians’ God, the result was support for a vernacular indigenous Christian theology adapted for the local situation (Bediako 2001:4). Lamin Sanneh notes in Nigeria how the use of ‘Olorun’, the Yoruba high god, was successfully introduced as the Christian God (2003:11).

Recognizing the contribution of African theologians to African Bible translation is overdue and is now taking place due to the growth of the African church. Up until recently most translations done in Africa were influenced by Westerners. This raises the question about who are the legitimate ‘gatekeepers’ of Biblical texts. The Western church commonly assumes this is their right to do so which motivates it to speak ‘above’ Christians from other regions. This makes the Western voice intimidating to the rest of the world. However, space must be created for the African voice in matters of African Bible translation. As Stephen Coertze states, “African theologian[s] will bring a new set of hermeneutical principles and theology to the Bible translation table” (2008:13). Accordingly the impact of African theologians and the African church on Bible translation will help determine that the Western church is “no longer controlling or dictating what it perceives catholic truth to be. It will no

longer determine the standards of the Bible translation process or the quality of the final product” (Coertze 2008:14).

Throughout the history of vernacular versions of the Bible, translators have adopted local idioms and concepts for the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. This is often a very critical and difficult issue. Note what happened in Korea: Prior to any serious evangelistic effort, missionaries worked on the translation of the Bible for the ‘hermit kingdom’ (a self-reference, due to its preference to be isolated). As a Bible translator, John Ross (1842-1915) made the critical decision to use the Korean term ‘*Hananim*’ for God (which meant ‘ruler of heaven’). Ross wanted wherever possible to use Korean terms rather than borrowed or imported ones. Consequently the Korean Bible was quickly accepted and became “one of the most important contributions to Korean Protestantism” (Hong 2008:79). Pierson elaborates that many Korean theologians believe “that one reason for the success of Protestant churches in Korea is that they chose the right name for God” (2008:170).

Sanneh believes that because of decisions like Ross’s, Bible translators who have used indigenous names for God have consistently “opened the way for indigenous innovation and motivation in the religious life” (2003:11). In this way Bible translation has contributed significantly to the “historic shift in Christianity’s theological center [sic] of gravity by pioneering strategic alliance with local conceptions of religion” (Sanneh 2003:11).

Each culture must be studied carefully before deciding on key biblical concepts and terms. For example, in the Thai Buddhist context the biblical concept of a strong God is difficult to portray. This is because the word for God is weak in Thai, because deity is portrayed as being weak in Buddhism. Working in this context, William Smalley states that one “cannot translate into Thai without Buddhist terminology, which then gives the Christian message a Buddhist cast different from the Jewish and Greco-Roman cast of the original” (1995:62). Therefore, even though the Bible is “coloured by the Buddhist medium, it also challenges the medium because the Bible reverberates with the story of a strong God, and if that story is translated powerfully, it partially changes the colouring for those who hear” (Smalley 1995:62). However, the biblical teaching of God being love is acceptable to the Thai Buddhist. The biblical text describes God as dynamic because he saves, protects and loves people. His son Jesus died for people and identified with their difficulties and suffering. Smalley describes this as “new fruit grafted on Buddhist cultural roots” (1995:12).

There are many other considerations in translating the Bible so that it is acceptable and meaningful in another culture. For example, in some languages there is a

marked difference between individuals based on their class or social ranking system. These distinctions exist in Spanish, Thai, Burmese and other languages. Originally the Burmese language possessed three registers of language: royal, priestly and common. Today, there are only two, as royalty is no longer part of the society. The Burmese Bible translated by Adoniram Judson in 1835 used the priestly language and consequently Jesus was portrayed as a person of royalty and his humanity was disguised. One outcome was that those who were not of royalty and wanted to follow Jesus thought they were prevented from doing so because of the language that was used (Ogden 2002:315). This was an unfortunate outcome and had to be corrected later.

A problematic issue for Bible translation for Muslim audiences has been whether to use *Allah* as the term for God. Even though Arab Christians used the Arabic *Allah* before Mohammed did in the *Koran*, it has become a missiological issue of concern to some and is without a straightforward answer. Pierson elaborates:

Where did the Greek New Testament get its word for God? Right out of Greek paganism! *Theos*. It is not a specifically Christian term. Where did the Old Testament get its names for God? *Elohim*. *Yahweh* probably was new with the Hebrews, but *Elohim* and *Adonai* were not. They were used in the surrounding religions. My point is that in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as throughout history, the People of God have adopted the names for God used in the surrounding cultures, but then poured new meaning into them. Whatever name we use for God, we believe that God has ultimately defined himself for us in the Incarnation, in Jesus Christ.

(2008:170)

Related to this matter of an accurate name for God, is an issue receiving attention in 2012 on the internet (and elsewhere) concerning the translation of divine familial terms such as 'God the Father' and the 'Son of God'. The Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) makes the claim that "not all Bible translations faithfully present the Triune God: *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*" (PCA 2012:9). They outline why this concerns them:

Our sonship, whether of our human fathers or our Heavenly Father, derives its meaning from the rich dimensions of the Sonship of the Son of God himself. While Jesus' eternal begotten-ness and incarnate Sonship lack the sexual connotations of human sonship, nevertheless

Scripture employs common biological sonship terms to convey important truths about Jesus' nature, function, and vocation. Readers lose this information when biological kinship terms are substituted either with a 'social son' term (e.g., 'Unique Beloved One' or 'Representative') or with a less comprehensive term like 'Messiah'.

(PCA 2012:9)

PCA's position is that key theological terms should be kept in the main text of Bible translations and "additional explanations and connections reserved for the paratext [i.e. footnotes], study guides and, especially, the teaching and preaching of the Word" (PCA 2012:9). Recommendations from their 'Study Group' on this issue requests their churches to "lovingly correct translation workers engaged in Bible projects that lack faithfulness" (PCA 2012:81) to the PCA's requirements about translation of divine familial terms. If this fails the PCA churches should "redirect missions resources away from projects which deviate from the translation principles articulated. [Furthermore, churches] should regularly evaluate their contributions to Bible translation efforts to ensure that the work incorporates adequate attention to the theological dimensions of Bible translation" (PCA 2012:81).

In attempts to assure denominations such as the PCA, Bible translation agencies have stated their position that "Scripture translation should promote understanding of the 'Son of God' in all its richness, including the familial relationship with the Father, while avoiding any possible implication of sexual activity by God" (SIL 2011:np). And in defense of these agencies Steve Taylor elaborates:

[I]n many Muslim contexts, the Qur'an's very specific and explicit anathemas against the mere utterance of the phrase "son of God" represent an almost insuperable barrier to Muslim readers of the New Testament. Upon encountering the first occurrence of that phrase in the sacred text itself, e.g., in Matthew 2 or 3, Mark 1, Luke 1 or John 1 – as their first and singular exposure to the Christian faith – these Muslim readers fling the scriptures down in disgust, concluding that Christians are plotting their damnation rather than seeking their salvation.

(WRF 2012:np)

Bible translation agencies like WGA have made it clear that the Bible should not be translated in a way that will remove any message of Scripture that could cause

offense and become an “inaccurate, unclear translation that would mislead and result in needless offense or erroneous conclusions” (WGA 2012a:np).

This particular debate is a good example of the interplay between two perspectives: 1) well-meaning Western theologians and their church denominations who have not actually done Bible translation in vernacular languages; and 2) those who are engaged in Bible translation in non-Western contexts and have translation experience that employs expertise in linguistics and anthropology. Navigating between these two perspectives can be filled with tension and misunderstanding.

### 2.3 Effects of Bible translation on an audience’s understanding of the text

A major challenge for Bible translations prepared for minority language groups is encountered when the audience accepts only a pre-existing translation in the major language. For example, in Vietnam a translation in a minority language that did not literally match the accepted Vietnamese translation lacked credibility with its audience. The translators had wanted to use all features embedded in the minority language to ensure understanding but were stymied by the expectations of their readers. They had been influenced by the much larger, more widely spoken, and prestigious Vietnamese language Bible translation (Smalley 1995:62).

These examples show how an older, more antiquated or very formal translation will unduly influence attempts at newer or more modernized translations. Translators who attempt to produce an updated or contemporary translation may find that the previous translation has created a limit on what the audience will accept with any new translation. This often means it will get rejected or not be endorsed by church hierarchy. One only has to look at modern twenty-first century English translations that have not been accepted due to the status of the Elizabethan English of the King James Bible.

Modern Bible translations generally fall into two categories. The first is known as a ‘literal translation’. The emphasis is on faithfulness to the “sentence structure, verbal nuances, and idioms of the original languages in order to assure accuracy in emphasis and style” (Wegner 1999:400). This is sometimes called a ‘word-for-word’ translation and has been claimed as the standard for English translations such as the King James Bible (KJB), New American Standard Bible (NASB), Revised Standard Version (RSV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and the English Standard Version (ESV).



The second category is called the ‘dynamic’ or ‘functional equivalence’ Bible translation. Here the focus is on “the style, structure and idioms of the new language” (Wegner 1999:400) and the translated text often uses idioms to most closely represent the original meaning of the Hebrew or Greek. This category is also sometimes called an ‘idiomatic’ translation and is represented in English translations such as the New International Version (NIV), Good News Bible (GNB), New Living Translation (NLT), Contemporary English Version (CEV) as well as paraphrases like The Message (MSG).

It was Eugene Nida of the United Bible Societies in the 1950s, who made the dynamic equivalence method the standard one used by the Bible Societies and other Bible translation agencies, including SIL International and WGA (all of which are part of the Forum of Bible Agencies International). This was partially because Nida noted that “more of the problems [in Bible translation] involve cultural anthropology than they do problems of theology” (Neff 2002:49).

According to Smalley (1995:64-5) there are a number of assumptions underlying the dynamic equivalence model: 1) the translator has a well-informed (by using the best biblical and translation resources available) understanding of the meaning of the text; 2) the meaning will always be expressed “in clear natural equivalents”; 3) the translated text will be understood and accessible to people at all levels of society; 4) despite variations in the source text structure it will none the less be communicated so that it will be understood as a whole; 5) cultural behaviour described in the Bible is subject to some degree of misinterpretation because it expresses a different meaning to the recipient audience; and 6) the meaning is more important than the form, which is a necessary principle in order to avoid literalism.

## 2.4 Models of theological contextualization

Models of contextualization have been created that assist in exploring the connection between gospel and culture. The helpfulness of such models is a starting point from how faith is practiced within a given culture (Kim 2009:44). Stephen Bevans provides six models that assist those who engage in the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel and therefore are relevant to WGA:

### 2.4.1 The translation model

This is the most commonly used model. It can also be viewed as the oldest method of contextualization that it is found in the Bible. For example in the Apostle Paul’s speech to at Lystra, he pleads with the people to turn from their ways of offering

sacrifices to Zeus or Hermes and turn to “the living God” (Ac 14:16) and claims that God “has not left himself without testimony” (Ac 14:17) such as with the rain which helps their crops grow. Later at Athens, the Apostle refers to the altar of the unknown god to point out that this is the God “who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands” (Ac 17:24). Paul uses these cultural circumstances to translate the gospel into a local situation in which he finds himself.

Most models of contextual theology use translation because “there is always a content to be adapted or accommodated to a particular culture” (Bevans 2002:37). However, what makes this translation model unique is its belief that the gospel’s message does not change no matter what the context.

The translation model must utilize an idiomatic form of communication rather than a literal word-for-word style since communication is the central aim of contextualization. The model therefore avoids “mere literalness for its own sake (or out of reverence for words regarded as too sacred to change)” (Kraft 1979:271). It must therefore be “functional or dynamic equivalence [because it must] elicit the same reaction in contemporary hearers or readers as in the original hearers or readers” (Bevans 2002:39). The assumption is that the biblical authors expected to be understood and not be “transmitted in unintelligible or misleading forms” (Kraft 1979:271).

Sanneh refers to this model as the Bible’s ‘translatability’. He believes it is why Christianity has spread across the globe and is “equally at home in all languages and cultures, and among all races and conditions of people” (1989:51). Christians reject any thought that God speaks in a special, sacred language in the Scriptures; instead, God speaks in any vernacular. That is the ‘gospel core’ or “kernel of the gospel which is surrounded in a disposable, nonessential cultural husk” (Bevans 2002:40). Consequently the gospel is able to transcend the cultural biases of the translator so that it takes root in any recipient language and culture (Sanneh 1989:53). Samuel Escobar says, “this universal message finds expression in local and contextual forms of life, testimony, service to human need, and worship that are relevant to their respective contexts” (2006:78).

As good as the model of contextualization is there are some problems with it. Hong identifies three: 1) distinguishing the gospel from its cultural forms because it is very difficult to understand the gospel without some human factor; 2) treating every culture as similar so that consequently “cultural analysis is done not on the terms of the culture investigated, but only to find parallels with patterns in previously

contextualized Christianity” (2008:25); and 3) how it is “impossible to separate the form from the meaning in cultural symbols” (Hong 2008:25) because this model does not allow much consideration for the function of cultural symbols. However, cultural symbols must always be carefully considered in Bible translation.

Kirsteen Kim also sees difficulty with how the model “tends to take the perspective of the missionary, who sees him- or herself as bringing the gospel from one place to another” (2009:47). However, acknowledging that the Holy Spirit is already active in each context, “the Christian faith is not imported but emerges out of local experience” because the Holy Spirit is already bringing “local interpretation” (Kim 2009:48) into each context.

#### 2.4.2 The anthropological model

At the opposite extreme from the translation model is a concern for the “preservation of cultural identity” (Bevans 2002:55). The anthropology model assumes “the value and goodness [of] the human person” and believes that “God’s hidden presence can be manifested in the ordinary structures of the situation” (Bevans 2002:55). As a result there is a more valid “encounter with the modern socio-cultural context in the theologizing process” (Hong 2008:26) by maintaining the significance of the message of the sacred text. At the same time, proponents of the model are aware of the important role culture plays in theology and setting theological agendas.

Bevans suggests this model can also be called ‘indigenization’ because “it is concerned with what is indigenous or proper to a people and their culture” (2002:55). Those who use the model try to “listen to a particular context in order to hear within its structure (especially within the complex structure of culture) the very Word of God, hidden there like a dormant seed since the beginning of time ready for sprouting and full growth” (Bevans 2002:58).

Criticisms of this model are: 1) “it easily falls prey to a cultural romanticism” (Bevans 2002:60), in other words seeing only the good in a culture; 2) it is difficult to actually perform since “discovering the gospel emerging from a particular situation... is never the real situation” (Bevans 2002:61); 3) it can lead to syncretism; or 4) it does not take into proper consideration political and socio-economic contexts.

#### 2.4.3 The praxis model

This model is also known as dialectical, liberation or ‘doing theology’ and derives from “a method or model of thinking in general, and a method or model of theology in

particular” (Bevans 2002:70). Practitioners of this model are primarily interested in the social context derived from present realities and how these contribute to social change. They view this as a dynamic process where one not only hears the word but acts on it (Ja 1:22). The model relies on the “never-ending process that gets its considerable power from the recognition that God manifests God’s presence not only... in the fabric of culture, but also and perhaps principally in the fabric of history” (Bevans 2002:70).

A criticism of liberation theology is that it relies on Marxism and “is based on conflict theories” (Hong 2008:31). Its weakness is that it is prone to lose the delicate balance between text and context. As Bevans relates, it has “selectivity and even naïveté in terms of reading the Bible” (2002:78). When applied to Bible translation principles, it “gives absolute status to the analysis of the socio-cultural context rather than to the biblical text” (Hong 2008: 31).

#### 2.4.4 The synthetic model

The aim of this model is to balance the importance of the gospel message and the “heritage of traditional doctrinal formulations [with] the vital role that context has played... in theology” (Bevans 2002:89). The model holds that everyone in every context can learn from each other and from the past. It is also called the ‘dialectical’ model because it encourages openness in interaction in additional contexts and theological expressions for both method and content, perhaps suggesting that “anything goes” (Bevans 2002:93).

Weaknesses with this model include: 1) it can be manipulated by a dominant culture; or 2) it can become too weak or “wishy-washy” and end up as a theology “that is not a true synthesis... but a mere juxtaposition of ideas that really do not enhance one another” (Bevans 2002:95).

#### 2.4.5 The transcendental model

This model starts with one’s own religious and personal experience. Contextualization is not done in isolation but is performed with one’s own community and their experience. Experience is what makes it ‘transcendental’. The model assumes that God’s revelation “is within human experience, as a human person is open to the words of scripture as read or proclaimed” (Bevans 2002:105). It follows that Christians who are genuine in their theologizing of their beliefs are involved in legitimate contextual theology.

Concerns with this model include: 1) it is too difficult to understand; 2) too theoretical; 3) too influenced by “male-dominated cultural forms” or Western culture (Bevans 2002:108); 4) it presents too great a variety of understanding instead of one common way; or 5) it is too idealistic and thus too difficult to actually perform.

#### 2.4.6 The countercultural model

This model (also called encounter or engagement) takes context seriously and simultaneously treats context with suspicion because if the gospel is to really make its impact, “it needs to challenge and purify that context” (Bevans 2002:117). Lesslie Newbigin says that when the gospel is truly revealed it requires “a U-turn of the mind” (1986:6) which is only possible through God’s revelation. Contextualization must be in the language of the audience and yet it must be astutely aware of the human tendency to “resist and undercut” God (Bevans 2002:119). The model assumes the primacy of the gospel with its power to break into and address every culture with “faithfulness and relevance” (Bevans 2002:120).

Weaknesses of the model include: 1) its tendency towards being anti-cultural rather than countercultural; 2) it can feed sectarianism in the church or encourage the church to withdraw from its context; 3) its proponents have primarily been white Western middle class people who use it to critique their own culture; and 4) it can lead to “Christian exclusivism over against other religious ways [as] it reduces religious faith to mere opinion or taste” (Bevans 2002:126).

#### 2.4.7 The preferred model

When considering which of these six models is most useful in theological contextualization, Bevans encourages all of them to be explored since each has their strengths and weaknesses, often depending on the situation. He therefore encourages “a healthy pluralism” (Bevans 2002:139) in the usage of the models.

However, that being said, the ‘transcendental model’ could have the most relevance for WGA. The model assumes that God’s revelation can be experienced by people when they are open to the words of scripture (Bevans 2002:105). Consequently Christians who are genuine in their theologizing of their beliefs are involved in legitimate contextual theology. As Hong points out, the model “allows the possibility of transcending culture to discover deeper knowledge of the divine” (2008:59) or, as David Bosch states, “God has turned toward the world” (1991:426). The result may well be experimental theologies of dialogue between text and context.

Perhaps some modification of the model could include what Hong calls the 'holistic model'. It offers a balance between the sacred text and culture in order to give faithfulness to both text and context. Christ is understood as the one who transforms cultures and communities. The goal of this model therefore is transformation of the person through an encounter with the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit (Hong 2008:33). Hong further elaborates: "Through its focus on the incarnation and the Kingdom of God, [the model] considers both the cultural and the socio-economic and political aspects at the same time" (2008:35-6).

This holistic model complements WGA's holistic intent, whose mission is to contribute "to the holistic transformation of all peoples through Bible translation and compassionate services" (WBTI 2011:5). One way to achieve this is by "advocating scripture translation, access, and use as vital to the integral mission of God and His church" (WBTI 2011:6). WGA focuses on the holistic transformation of people by making the gospel available in the vernacular in a medium that suits them best.

Using this blended model of holistic-transcendental could also help counter the tendency towards theology from the West, which has seen itself as "supracultural and universally valid" (Bosch 1991:448) and as a consequence has granted itself superior status over theologies from the non-West. As the demographic growth of the church settles in the soil of the global South and East, all involved in contextualizing the gospel in these climates should be encouraging the emergence of new theologies. It is clear that the West has not been given any divine right to be the custodian of theology for the global South and East.

Furthermore, contextual theology must deal with all aspects of culture – economic, political, social, etc. These are areas where Western theology has not always been successful. However, the danger could then become that theologies from the global South and East consider themselves superior to the ones they replace. Thus there is a need for the church to be a body that "transcends all boundaries, cultures, and languages [and become] ambassadors sent from one church to another, a living embodiment of mutual solidarity and partnership" (Bosch 1991:456). In other words, this needs to be done in a unity of partnership and communion.

In summary, contextualization issues associated with the theological activity and impact of Bible translation is an essential and often misunderstood topic. Contextualization helps Bible translators discover ways to express the meaning of the gospel in each new context where a translation is taking place. Consequently the gospel becomes appropriate to the recipient audience.

### 3 THE USE OF TRANSLATED SCRIPTURE ENABLES THEOLOGIZING

Throughout history missionary activity has included the use of the vernacular. The particular language was not a means to an end but, as Sanneh points out, was “endowed with divine significance, so that [it] may substitute completely for the language of revelation” (1993:142).

The Christian scriptures have been translated into over 2,400 languages spoken in the world today. Christian missionary activity has been “the impulse behind the creation of more dictionaries and grammars of the world’s languages than any other force in history” (Sanneh 2003:69). This activity has aided cultural preservation because it recognizes and accepts the significance of indigenous cultures and the worth of their languages. Sanneh points out that “mission seems to press to its logical conclusion the premise of the admissibility of all cultures in the general sweep of God’s ‘plan of salvation’” (1993:141).

#### 3.1 Regional issues of contextualization and translation

The process of contextualization is important in the global South and East because their traditional and world religions influence cultural value systems. Missionary activity needs to respond to such systems by providing contextually relevant meanings of the gospel so that its message may be clearly understood. In Asia for example, the belief in demons, astrology, spirits, and local deities is part of the majority of traditional Asian worldviews. In such societies language and culture are intimately intertwined. In countries like Papua New Guinea and parts of Africa, translators also need to understand and interpret sorcery and witchcraft according to cultural beliefs.

Indigenous discovery of Christianity through Bible translation has provided an essential ingredient for the birthing of grass roots theology. Even so, Smalley admits that it is hard to “objectively determine what spiritual difference it does make for people to own and use the book translated into their own language” (1991:218).

The theological impact of Bible translation has had far reaching consequences in the development of African theologies in the last one hundred years. Bediako notes how this creates “a substratum of vital Christian consciousness and a sufficiently deep apprehension of Jesus Christ at the level of religious experience” (2004:58). African theology seriously “treats African mother-tongues as a fundamental medium in its theological discourse” (Bediako 2004:58). This is a testament to how the Bible and the Christian faith have impacted African life. Sanneh calls this an “indigenous

discovery [that] places the emphasis on unintended local consequences, leaving the way open for indigenous agency and leadership” (2003:55). This can be observed in the African Initiated Churches (AIC) as well as the house churches in China. These are new forms of contextual expressions that the church has taken.

It is worth pausing to be reminded that the church existed before any of the New Testament was written. There are accounts of churches that functioned for a long time without the written Bible because people did not have the literacy skills that would give them access to the translated text. There have also been Christians who for various reasons could not own their any portion of translated scriptures. These situations serve as a reminder that “the Holy Spirit is not limited to situations where everyone has their own copy of the translated book” (Smalley 1991:217).

There is a well documented situation of the post New Testament era North African church. It was a Latin language church amidst predominantly Berber languages. During the Muslim conquest of the seventh century, Christianity was wiped out amongst the Berber people. One reason this happened was because they were “without scriptures or significant biblical teaching in any of the North African vernaculars” (Smalley 1991:220). There was a lack of inculturation of the Christian faith amongst the Berber and thus they “lost all recollection of their Christian heritage” (Johnstone 2006:32). Bible translation was only started amongst the Berbers in the latter part of the twentieth century.

However, the situation was different in Egypt and Ethiopia where the Bible was translated early on. Although the church was significantly weakened by the spread of Islam, it did not disappear because it had vernacular scriptures. Eventually many of the languages were outdated and with the growth of Arabic as the major language of the region the church began providing literature and scriptures in Arabic (Smalley 1991:220).

Bible translation contributes to the transformation of local cultures. An example is among the Dega people of Ghana where vernacular scriptures increased their “appallingly low level of self-respect” (Hill 2006:86) and literacy efforts helped open new doors of opportunity by encouraging people to engage with scripture. This is an example of how Christ impacts culture because “without a theology that is grounded in local realities, the church remains foreign and fragile” (Hill 2006:86).

The growth of the church in the global South and East has happened for a number of reasons. A particular example is how, during times of persecution of the church and heresy within the church, those who have access to the vernacular Bible and



understand it are better equipped to remain resilient in their Christian faith. However, churches without scripture in local languages “even those at centres of Christianity like Alexandria, have disappeared from the map” (Hill 2006:82). Earlier in Europe there was an emphasis on mother-tongue scriptures in the Protestant Reformation and the church grew. But when the mother-tongue scriptures were neglected during the early Middle Ages it was a time of spiritual decline for the church.

#### **4 ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE VERNACULAR BIBLE**

The beginning of Wycliffe Bible Translators might be described as a ‘turning point’ of Christianity moving from the West to the global South and East. Mark Noll wonders if Townsend’s founding of Wycliffe “may stand symbolically for one of the great Christian events of the age” (2004:310) because of the organization’s high profile promotion of Bible translation. He states that Bible translation therefore “may be the most enduringly significant feature of the global expansion of Christianity that has been taking place since the start of the nineteenth century” (Noll 2004:308).

Church historians acknowledge the contribution of Bible translation to the spread of the church. It started with Jerome’s Latin Vulgate, was strengthened through various European translations, impacted English culture through the King James Bible, and spread to other vernaculars in countries of the Pacific, Asia, Africa and South America.

##### **4.1 How the Bible gets used**

The use of the translated Bible can be portrayed in a number of ways. The applications vary and include some dangerous pitfalls and abuse, while others lead to positive transformation. Smalley suggests these eight possibilities:

1. A cultural artefact of a foreign religion: The Scriptures may be used out of inquisitiveness to discover more about Jesus or Christianity. This can have a positive impact when the discovery leads to a commitment to follow Christ.

2. A fetish book: The Bible can be used for magic or as a good luck charm for personal protection. In such cases the book is believed to be sacred in and of itself without reference to its contents. The “physical book itself performs its work by its presence” (Smalley 1991:225).

3. A law book: This occurs when the laws of the Old Testament are used literally. Christians have of course attempted to follow the Ten Commandments. However,

more significantly are attempts to literally adhere to Old Testament laws about the Sabbath, clothing, tithing and prohibitions about veneration of ancestors, polygamy, etc. (Smalley 1991:226).

4. A textbook: The Bible functions as a textbook often when school education is not available. It provides the primary source of information on items outside of one's own experience and culture and gives "glimpses of other cultures, times and places" (Smalley 1991:227). For example, the Bible has also been a source book for finding names for children.

5. A reference book: The addition of chapter and verse markings has enabled people to look up details of Bible narratives and teachings when they forget certain details, or want to share a story or passage with someone else.

6. A behavioural manual: The Bible is used as a guidebook on individual morals, or on how to act in the church and worship God. "It may be used in a legalistic way (the Bible as law book), or more sensitively and contextually, by trying to understand from the Bible what present life and worship should be like in present-day circumstance" (Smalley 1991:228).

7. A devotional-worship book: It is also a practice to use the Bible for individual devotional life, read or sung so that "people meditate on what they find in it, and use it as a stimulus to prayer, and to thank God" (Smalley 1991:230).

8. As an oracle: The translated Bible is believed to be the actual eternal words of God. In such cases God is literally speaking Kewa, Korean or KiSwahili. It is also when people use the translated book "as a mirror in which they see themselves as they read" (Smalley 1991:231-2).

In considering each of these uses, we should remember that God does not place restrictions on how people interact with the Bible. There are a variety of practices although some are really abuses. On the other hand some uses have led to renewal and the transformation of individuals and their communities.

When engaging with contemporary culture the important factor, according to Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk (2006:181) is, "learning to communicate the biblical stories that connect with the underlying cultural narratives that dominate" most people's lives. This provides a discovery in "how to indwell the Scriptures... with the narrative presence of God, who invites us into a story that reads and shapes us" (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:34).

## 4.2 How the Bible has affected decolonization

The Scriptures in the vernacular enables people to understand spiritual truths about God and his will for them. Through access to the sacred text, individuals and the Christian community can take responsibility for their growth and nurture. They are “no longer bound by what others say, they can develop their own theology and apply it to daily living” (Moreau 2000:125).

Because the Bible has been translated into languages of the global South and East, it has equipped the translators in these contexts to challenge interpretations of Christianity brought to them from Western missionaries. Initially missionary translators have produced “vernacular alphabets, grammars, dictionaries and vocabularies of the language, supplementing these with compilations of proverbs, idioms, axioms, ethnographic materials and accounts of local religions, customary practice and law, history and political institutions” (Sanneh 1993:140).

This exhaustive service for the vernacular, according to Sanneh, “triggered unimaginable consequences in wider society, resulting almost everywhere in arousing deep loyalties towards the indigenous cause” (1993:140). This often stimulated nationalism as people from these previously illiterate cultures encountered Western people. This was fuelled no doubt by how many missionaries during the colonial era “set out with the noble intention of ‘civilizing’ the people they went to serve by teaching them Western culture and languages” (Hill 2006:84) because the local vernacular was “perceived to imprison people in their ‘barbaric’ past” (Hill 2006:84).

When colonialism ended the door was opened for the expansion of the Christian faith to people and places that were not yet Christian. Sanneh reflects on what happened in Africa:

With vernacular translation went cultural renewal, and that encouraged Africans to view Christianity with favourable light. [Furthermore] Africans stepped forward to lead expansion without the disadvantage of foreign compromise. Young people, especially women, were given a role in the church.... Christian expansion was virtually limited to those societies whose people had preserved the indigenous name for God.... Africans best responded to Christianity where the indigenous religions were the strongest, not weakest, suggesting a degree of

indigenous compatibility with the gospel, and an implicit conflict with colonial powers.

(Sanneh 2003:18)

The development of mother tongues as the means of receiving the gospel also caused a structural shift in world Christianity. Theology was decolonized resulting in World Christianity being “weaned of the political habits of Christendom” (Sanneh 2003:24). Is this not similar to how the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 acted with those who gathered in Jerusalem and could understand the gospel in their own language? The Bible in the vernacular means “salvation is no longer an offering from an alien culture but an offering from within the culture” (Noll 2004:310).

#### 4.3 How the Bible is read in the global South and East

Differences between the church in the West and that of the global South and East means a preference by wealthier Western countries to favour “a liberal interpretation of Scripture” (Jenkins 2006a:67) while those located in poorer parts of the South and East maintain “a more conservative Christianity and traditional view of Scripture” (Jenkins 2006a:68).

Conservative themes in Christianity, particularly regarding attitudes to the sacred Scriptures, are more likely to be found amongst Africa, Asian and Pacific Islands Christians. Jenkins observes that this includes a

greater respect for the authority of Scripture, especially in matters of morality; a willingness to accept the Bible as an inspired text and a tendency to literalism; a special interest in supernatural elements of Scripture, such as miracles, visions, and healings; a belief in the continuing power of prophecy; and a veneration for the Old Testament, which is treated as equally authoritative as the New.

(2006a:68)

The Bible is also read in a radically different manner in the global South and East because it “speaks to everyday real-world issues of poverty and debt, famine and urban crisis, racial and gender oppression, and state brutality and persecution” (Jenkins 2006a:68). Their context is that of traditional as well as world religions, and they are affected by social injustice, violence and corruption.

In this way the ‘Southern’ Bible as Jenkins calls it, “carries a freshness and authenticity that adds vastly to its credibility as an authoritative source and as a guide for daily living” (2006a:68). Such cultures more easily identify with the Bible as being just for them. In some African contexts, Christians have been enthusiastic about “the obvious cultural parallels that exist between their own societies and those of the Hebrew Bible, especially in the world of the patriarchs” (Jenkins 2006a:68). Even though people in more modern African society may not have “direct experience of nomadism or polygamy” they are able to identify with “the kind of society in which such practices were commonplace” (Jenkins 2006a:68).

On the other hand, Christians in the West face the challenge of secularism, consumerism and the relativism of postmodernity. It follows that theologians in such climates must address faith in a time of doubt. Their challenge is great since people in a secular context view the Bible as being written for a society which no longer exists and exhibits moral laws that do not seem relevant to the postmodern world.

#### 4.4 Changes in how translations are done

The methodology of Bible translation has changed dramatically over the past 200 years. The pioneer missionaries took the gospel to an isolated people group. They learned the local language in order to simply communicate and Bible translation was only one of their many responsibilities. Although they had no training in linguistics, anthropology, or translation, they were the first to develop writing systems, compile dictionaries, and publish literature in the language. While native speakers played important roles, it was the “missionaries [who] normally instigated and directed the translation” (Smalley 1991:31). There were some exceptions, such as Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who translated the Bible into his own Yoruba language of Nigeria.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century changes were under way. Preparing for Bible translation became specialized, requiring many years of training in linguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropology, literacy and translation. Specialist organizations such as the Bible Societies, SIL International, WBT and others were set up to focus on Bible translation and provide the resources that translators needed. Computer software that imported a translation from a related language to use as a first draft was developed, and non-Roman scripts were developed to allow publishing in these scripts.

Most of the translators were still from the West because in the global South and East native speakers usually lacked formal education in theology, including biblical languages. As a result there were situations where “missionary control of the

translation process usually lasted longer and was more pervasive than necessary” (Smalley 1991:32).

By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century education levels had continued to rise in the global South and East, meaning that more and more native speakers were able to get theological training. Some became biblical and translation scholars. Smalley suggests that the symbolic date for this transfer from West to global South and East started in 1970 – the “era of non-missionary translation” (1991:32). The apparent advantage native speakers have over expatriate Bible translators is substantial, but this does not remove the need for an appropriate and reasoned theory of translation that has come from the West (Smalley 1995:69).

Some translators from the global South and East have set up their own Bible translation organizations (many are part of the WGA). They may work as mother-tongue translators or cross-culturally in related or completely different languages. The translations might incorporate extra-textual helps because the audience needs some background information. A specialist translation consultant checks their work. The translated Scriptures may be in printed form, or appear on iPods, iPads, DVDs, mobile phone platforms, or be memorised and told in person (Hill 2006:82-83).

Control of a Bible translation project has been shifting from being in the hands of the foreign missionary to being under the control or supervision of the local churches in partnership with the Bible translation agency. The foreigner may still have a role, but it is usually as an advisor, mentor or advocate.

#### 4.5 A theology of language and culture

Bosch observes how Western science, philosophy and theology have been “designed to serve the interests of the West, more particularly to legitimize “the world that... now exists” (1991:424). The rest of the world views this Western agenda suspiciously. After all, how can the West offer solutions to the rest of the world when it operates from this mindset? This is true in particular if Western Christianity has viewed its theology as being ‘from above’ in terms of its interaction with Scripture, Christian tradition and philosophy.

On the other hand, theology ‘from below’ also relies on Scripture and tradition but incorporates the social sciences and takes a particular focus on the “poor or culturally marginalized” (Bosch 1991:423). This kind of theologizing claims to be contextual because it focuses on human needs. It gains credibility because it strives to make Scripture meet those special needs.

Theology 'from below' may be more helpful in defining a theology of language and culture because it relates to people groups who speak languages that are in a minority in their political or geographic context. Such a theology helps to clarify God's intentions in the areas of communication, language, and accessibility to his word. Such a theological position is based on the incarnation – how the word became flesh and dwelt among all humankind. Incorporated in this theology is the premise that God wants to communicate with people in a manner that each person can understand in a personal way.

This position rightly affirms that “no language is better than another to communicate with God” (Hill 2006:86). In order for the gospel to take root in a person's worldview and lead to personal and community transformation, it is best done in the mother tongue because “the gospel transforms and redeems cultures” (Hill 2006:86).

Finding a unifying relationship between 'theology from above' and 'theology from below' is important in Bible translation. The contribution of the former focuses on God and his purpose, plans and ways of helping people know his will. The latter applies the Scriptures in ways that appropriately meets the unique needs of the marginalized people groups.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

Theological contextualization raises complex issues regarding the transmission of the message of the Bible into any language and culture. It follows that it is essential to understand the context of other cultures, including their worldview, social-economic structures, and other factors. When handled carefully, theological contextualization provides keys for enabling a receptor culture to understand the message of the Bible without excessive foreign influences or doctrinal biases. Although this is difficult to achieve, there are examples of where it has been done well. There are also examples of where it has not been achieved at all. Even when handled well, there is no assurance that the Bible will be used in the manner God intended. In fact, the Bible gets used in a variety of ways including those that are not helpful, such as a fetish, cultural artefact of a foreign religion, or a law book.

A significant challenge for Bible translation organizations is the shift of the centre of gravity of the church, including who controls a Bible translation project and therefore makes theological decisions associated with translation. At one point in history this was the foreign missionary, but increasingly it is the indigenous translators operating under the authority of their local churches and these churches are in the global

South and East because that is where the remaining Bible translation needs are found.



## CHAPTER 4 – MISSIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to outline missiological foundations that influence WGA. These are based upon mission history including the history of Bible translation. They explore more current understandings of the *missio Dei* from cross sections of the church. Many of these fundamentals have influenced the practices of mission agencies including WGA. They are based upon biblical interpretations of the *missio Dei* influenced by Jesus' teaching and practice and that of the Apostle Paul. Concluding statements in the chapter ascertain how these fundamentals affect WGA, demonstrating that it does not operate in a vacuum but is influenced by many factors that have missiological significance.

### 2 MISSION ACCORDING TO JESUS

#### 2.1 Theological influences on WGA

Historically, the greatest theological influence upon Wycliffe has been its roots in the U.S. evangelical soil. This has shaped how its U.S. Christian supporters have viewed the concept of the *missio Dei* and in turn how this shaped the organization's understanding (or lack of understanding) of the *missio Dei*. Timothy Tennent is helpful in interpreting what this means. He points out this perspective sees mission as "almost exclusively [about the] various tasks the *church* is doing" (2010:54). However, this is not the classical view of the *missio Dei* which is "about God and *His* redemptive initiative" (Tennent 2010:54).

Due to the conservative evangelical heritage of Wycliffe, the theological influence upon its formation and operation over the past 70 years has been an interpretation of the 'Great Commission' texts, in particular Matthew 28:18-20. Tennent points out that the Great Commission is "frequently treated as an isolated pericope, separated from the rest of the gospel as well as the larger biblical context of the *missio Dei*" (2010:127).

The Matthew text is often cited by evangelical missions in the U.S. as *the* Great Commission and has been the motivational basis for them particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Even earlier, William Carey (1761-1834), often referred to as the 'father of the modern missionary movement', indirectly referenced Matthew 28:18-20 as the basis for his understanding of evangelism. He developed his view in his

booklet, 'Enquiry into the obligation of Christians to use means for the conversion of heathens' (1792). His thesis was to determine whether "the commission given by our Lord to His disciples [is] still binding on us; [to] consider the practicability of doing something more than is done; and [to] discuss the duty of Christians in general on this matter" (Hunt 2010:83).

While Carey himself never used the term 'Great Commission', just 'commission', his conclusion was that Christians needed to work together to take the gospel to unevangelized people (or today what might be called 'unreached people groups'). At the time, Carey's booklet was a catalyst that motivated Christians in the U.S.A. and U.K. to become vigorous in their obedience to fulfil the Great Commission (Peskest & Ramachandra 2003).

At the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, the Great Commission was positioned "not so much [as] an exterior law that sits in judgment of the missionary activities of the church, but an inner principle of church faith and life allowing for freedom in the way churches and missions interpret and carry it out" (Moreau 2000:413).

Over the years, Christians in the U.S. and other parts of the Western world have used Matthew 24:14 as a stimulus to serve in mission. Many evangelicals distinguish themselves as primarily responsible for completing the Great Commission (Gailey & Culbertson 2007:14). Still others portray their involvement as "affirming God's call to an accelerated harvest in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe that reflects the fruit of those who went in previous generations" (Terry, Smith & Anderson 1998:30).

William Cameron Townsend, Wycliffe's founder, grew up in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when many Bible institutes and faith mission organizations in the U.S. were simultaneously being formed. It was a happy 'marriage' because "the Bible institutes nurtured a unique spiritual vision, and the faith missions provided the outlet for putting that vision to the test" (Svelmoe 2008:18). Their devotion and zeal for evangelism followed the principles they observed in the Great Commission and this greatly influenced Townsend. For example, when articulating his burden for the urgency of Bible translation he told his colleagues of his "real concern of hastening the return of our Lord and the coming of that Great Day when we can look out on the throng of the redeemed from every tribe and nation and language" (Hibberd 2007:68).

The Bible institutes and mission organizations believed that the missionary personified "a near legendary role" in the evangelical movement's positive vision of

itself and “all that was best in the movement” (Svelmoe 2008:18). At the heart of this positive belief was the concept of ‘manifest destiny’ which reached its zenith in 1880-1920. It went beyond the scope of the Great Commission with its Old Testament understanding of a ‘chosen people’. David Bosch elaborates that as a result,

at one point or another in recent history, virtually every white nation regarded itself as being chosen for a particular destiny and as having a unique charisma.... It was only to be expected that the nationalistic spirit would, in due time, be absorbed into missionary ideology, and Christians of a specific nation would develop the conviction that they had an exceptional role to play in the advancement of the kingdom of God through the missionary enterprise.

(1991:299)

This vision of what God could do through a nation and an individual devoted to further the Great Commission greatly influenced Townsend as he left the comforts of the U.S. and headed by steamer to Guatemala to sell Spanish Bibles. His response turned out to be just a stepping stone to gaining a greater vision of Bible translation for what much later became known as ‘unreached people groups’.

## 2.2 Five statements of Jesus

I return now to the five statements Jesus made that provide an overview of the scope he had in mind for the *missio Dei*. Tennent suggests these five texts “can appropriately be called commissions or Great Commissions, in the plural” (2010:128). Therefore, the singular reference of ‘commission’ is more accurately a reference to the collection of these texts.

In Mark 16:15-20 Jesus focuses on preaching the good news across the world. This is significant because it is the only text “carrying the technical terminology of ‘preaching the gospel’... to the widest possible horizon, ‘all creation’” (Balía & Kim 2010:28). Furthermore, it refers to supernatural work of the Holy Spirit through ‘signs and wonders’ (Balía & Kim 2010:28). If the text is used in an evaluative sense, quantitative questions could be asked about how many people (or ethnic groups) still need to have the gospel preached to them; or to how many have had an opportunity to hear the gospel in a given context.

In Luke 24:46-48, the author links together the cross, the resurrection and the worldwide proclamation of the gospel to show how the gospel will impact people.

Luke presents it as a fact (the death and resurrection of Jesus) and a promise (it will be accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit) (Bosch 1991:91). A quantitative question could be to determine how many people (groups) still need to be ‘reached’ with the gospel.

Matthew’s version (28:18-20) focuses on how disciples are to be made of all people (groups). He portrays it as a matter of response (going) and, as one goes, disciples are ‘made’ through baptizing and teaching. This task “means to bring people into pupilage to Jesus Christ, to enroll them in his school; it implies radical, long-term commitment [thus this text has] resounded perhaps more than any others in the international history of the Christian church and mission” (Peskest & Ramachandra 2003:174). The commission itself rests upon Jesus’ presence and his divine authority. As Tennent (2010:137) states, “Jesus’ being precedes the church’s doing”. This text could be used to make a quantitative measurement of how many people have gone through a discipleship process or it can provoke a qualitative question about what kind of disciples of Jesus Christ have resulted.

Turning to John 20:19-23, one notes that mission is clearly Trinitarian: “the Father is the sender. Jesus, as the sent one, sends the church. The Holy Spirit is imparted to the disciples for His presence, guidance, and empowerment of the mission” (Tennent 2010:156). An evaluative question using the text could be to determine how obedient are Christians participating in God’s mission.

Finally, Luke’s account in Acts 1:8 is often read as a geographical spread of the gospel. Tennent says a more accurate reading is how the “ethnic [and] cross-cultural progression... is fundamentally about peoples, not places” (2010:152). Luke uses “Jesus’ own words to outline how his compact account of church history will unfold” (Gailey & Culbertson 2007:33). Luke refers to barriers of faith, community, language, culture and worldview when he uses the place names of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, etc. The barriers and boundaries to mission are also implied, such as language, culture, religion and worldview. The quantitative question of the text can be to determine where people live who still do not have a gospel witness.

### 2.3 Implications of Jesus’ statements

Some mission strategists suggest that these accounts of Jesus’ words enable the church to determine where world evangelization is still needed (Terry, Smith & Anderson 1998:668). Others suggest it is unwise to reduce these statements to simple mandates of mission or even tools for evaluating mission effectiveness. A further note of concern is how Christians have studied the Great Commission texts

removed from their wider Scriptural contexts and “thus unwittingly denuded them of some of their power” (Klauber & Manetsch 2009:177). Chris Wright states that every generation, whether Christianized or not, needs to be disciple oriented because “the Great Commission is an expanding and self-replicating task, not a ticking clock for the end times” (2006:35).

Indeed each Great Commission account taken in its broader context should bring greater reflection in mission practice. In John’s record for example, Jesus appears to the disciples and twice gives them the greeting of “peace be with you!” (20:19, 21). Although this was a common greeting and blessing (Hebrew: *shalom*), it carries with it much greater significance, as Samuel Ngewa indicates:

The world in general and the African continent in particular, needs to hear Jesus’ words “peace be with you”. Year after year, Africa remains a bleeding continent.... Yet when Jesus spoke these words to the disciples, he was focusing on peace of mind and heart. May that peace, too, be our experience in Africa as we wait for the peace in the external realm.... Much of the self-inflicted lack of peace in Africa has been born of animosity and differences – whether ideological, ethnic or religious.... We are all called to live in peace.... Those who have been widowed and orphaned by war, AIDS, famine or some other cause need to hear the voice of Jesus’ followers (the church) echoing our master’s words, ‘peace be with you’. If the church of Christ lived up to its master’s example, people’s needs for food, clothing, counseling, encouragement or a sense of belonging would be met.

(Adeyemo 2006:1294)

Old Testament prophets longed for the day when “God’s Kingdom comes among them to end exile and usher in a new era” (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:20). They assumed the Messiah would come as a king of peace who brings “peace to the nations” (Zch 9:10). Thus when Jesus came he established his sovereign rule over the whole world. His reign was and is an orderly one with an absence of turmoil. N.T. Wright observes that Jesus “intends to bring that order to the world through the work, the thought, the planning, and the wisdom of human beings” (2011:223). Consequently, Jesus calls those in authority, whether they are aware of it or not, to be faithful in bringing about that order (Wright 2011:223).

Christ spoke to the frightened disciples and showed them his hands and his feet as evidence of his resurrection (Jn 20:20). He stated that he was sending them out as

his witnesses. The sight of “his nail-marked hands must have impressed upon them that his mission entailed suffering, and therefore so must theirs” (Burnett 1996:134). The cross of Christ is a costly one, and it is “uniquely the badge of distinction of the Christian faith” (Bosch 1991:513).

When Jesus declared “as the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (Jn 20:21), he explicitly stated that God the Father is at the centre of the *missio Dei*. The sending nature of God is an integral part of his saving and his speaking. The model given is the Father sends Jesus and Jesus sends the Church, empowered by the Spirit. Forty-four times in the Gospel of John Jesus mentioned his being sent by the Father. Jesus was sent out in the power of the Spirit and he sends his followers out in the same way. The implication is that “the mission of God’s people must include providing a reservoir of those whom God can send in support of that overarching objective” (Wright 2010:209).

It was the Holy Spirit who identified the first missionaries at the church of Antioch, sent them on their way and guided them. This event along with the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost “thrust the early church outward into [an] ‘explosion of joy’” (Tennent 2010:99). Thus 2,000 years later one can conclude that mission which is not Holy Spirit breathed struggles for effectiveness.

The John account is linked with the sending dimension of the Spirit originating with God the Father. However, the emphasis in the Matthew account is placed on individuals being called to go and make disciples. But this is against the foundation of the presence of Jesus and his authority – his being preceding his doing, “a point too easily forgotten by a task-oriented church” (Tennent 2010:137). An important distinction in interpreting the Great Commission as being up to humans to achieve as a task on one hand, and the *missio Dei* on the other, has “shifted the ownership of mission from the church to God” (Kim 2009:28).

Bosch elaborates by stating that the *missio Dei* is “God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God’s involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate” (1991:10). Thus mission was at the heart of the Trinitarian God and the church “was also seen to be missionary by its very nature and its mission was seen as a participation in the greater mission of God” (Kim 2009:29).

In summary, while mission does involve people in planning and action, it is primarily not about them or their activity or initiative. Rather, as Wright states, “mission from the point of view of our human endeavour means the committed participation of

God's people in the purposes of God for the redemption of the whole creation. The mission is God's. The marvel is that God invites us to join in" (Wright 2006:67).

### **3 MISSION TO THE SAMARITANS AS A MOTIF**

#### **3.1 How the Jews viewed the Samaritans**

In Acts 1:8, Jesus singles out the proclamation of the gospel to Samaria with good reason. There was ongoing tension between the Jews and Samaritans because the "Samaritans were at the bottom of the ladder of social stratification" (Kraybill 1978:202). Anything that a Samaritan touched was considered by a Jew to be unclean. Worse still, an entire Jewish community was declared tainted if a Samaritan woman stayed there. It would have been an obvious choice for the early Jewish believers to ignore their responsibility to proclaim the good news to these neighbours. Fortunately they did not, even though the divisional feud between the Jews and Samaritans was 450 years old and the Jews thought the Samaritans were religious and racial 'half castes' (2 Ki 17:24-28).

When Jews moved between the two Jewish areas of Galilee and Judea they usually detoured around Samaria so they would not get attacked by the Samaritans. However, Jesus ignored this tradition when he took a shortcut right through Samaritan country (Jn 4).

#### **3.2 Jesus' view of the Samaritans**

Jesus' concern for the Samaritans was demonstrated by his visit with the woman of Samaria (Jn 4). Arthur Glasser observes, "[i]n true Kingdom fashion he ignored the racial and religious issues that kept Jews and Samaritans apart and built a bridge of love and understanding to her" (2003:207). What Jesus did was consistent with what happened throughout Scripture as "God's future comes from the bottom up to the most unlikely people and places" (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006:21).

Furthermore, Jesus' conversation with the woman of Samaria modelled for his disciples how the gospel will overcome barriers. In this case, Jesus violated four Jewish traditions: 1) speaking to a woman (men were not to even look at a married woman in public let alone talk to them); 2) relating to a promiscuous person (rabbis and holy men fled from such people); 3) being with a Samaritan (Jews were forbidden to speak with Samaritans), and 4) accepting a drink from an 'unclean' person (due to her menstruation anything a woman touched was considered to be

unclean and her handing Jesus a container of water would make Jesus unclean in accepting it).

Jesus' acceptance of the woman from Samaria resulted in her pursuing her spiritual thirst. She is the only person in the Gospels who receives the honour of hearing the Messiah identify himself in the first person, "I who speak to you am he" (Jn 4:26). Jesus' treatment of her was typical of how he viewed all people – he elevated them to authentic personhood and showed that they were worthy of respect and God's love.

This was not Jesus' only encounter with Samaritans. When James and John faced opposition from the Samaritans, Jesus refused to comply with the disciples' wish to destroy the Samaritan villages (Lk 9:51-55). When he sent out the 12 disciples Jesus told them not to enter Samaria because their attitude (Lk 9:52-56) indicated to him that were not ready to minister to the Samaritans (Mt 10:5-6). In Jesus' parable in Luke (10:30-37) the man beaten by robbers was ignored by a priest and a Levite. Surprisingly, it was a Samaritan who took pity on the man and used his own resources to look after him. In this story Jesus chose this stigmatized enemy to demonstrate the nature of love as expressed in the kingdom of God.

There are three accounts of how Samaritans responded to Jesus and the gospel: 1) the woman of Samaria (Jn 4) informed her community about her life-changing encounter with Jesus; 2) a Samaritan was the only one of ten lepers to give thanks after Jesus healed them and subsequently he was the only one who received Jesus' blessing (Lk 17:11-17); and 3) after the early believers were dispersed because of the growing persecution against the church in Jerusalem, Philip went to Samaria to preach the gospel (Ac 8:5-8). The crowds listened to him, people were set free from demonic possession, and others were healed. As Luke records, "there was much joy in the city" (Ac 8:8) because God had entered into their situation and set some free.

### 3.3 Jesus and the marginalized

The prominent teaching of Jesus was the announcement of the arrival of the kingdom of God, or the reign of God, through his miracles and his bold teaching. The kingdom of God "represents the dynamic activity of God and the sphere in which his rule is experienced" (Glasser 2003:226). Jesus pronounced his reign as good news for the poor. It was not just the Samaritans that Jesus expressed an interest in. He also had a focus on the poor around him. In the context of Jesus' focus, the poor are "the materially deprived or the spiritually humble" (Glasser 2003:215). They are prone to be more open to the gospel compared to other sectors of the population.



This focus of Jesus should not come as a surprise since “God is always turning up in the most forsaken of places” (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:21). Jesus’ coming is the fulfilment of the messianic prediction of Isaiah 61. The inauguration of God’s kingdom through the incarnation provides an indication of God’s attitude towards poverty and injustice. Arthur Glasser notes “poverty is an evil and therefore it is incompatible with the Kingdom of God” (2003:216).

## **4 THE DAY OF PENTECOST**

In the account of the day of Pentecost (Ac 2), Jews had gathered in Jerusalem from all over the world (15 regions and countries). The Holy Spirit settled on the disciples and miraculously empowered them to speak the languages of all who were represented. This happened to such an extent that many who were there acknowledged “we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” (Ac 2:11). The event was God’s initiative and it “implied the reversal of the course of Babel” (Gn 11:1-9) because Babel symbolized “the global rebellion against God” (Tennent 2010:412). This reversal therefore helped give birth to the church.

### **4.1 The importance of language**

The event in Acts 2 demonstrates God’s acceptance of everyone’s language and how he uses each to bring glory to himself. As Tennent states, “at Pentecost... a small group of Jewish followers of Jesus are baptized into the reality of the infinite translatability of the gospel for every language and culture” (2010:412). Lesslie Newbigin adds, “Pentecost is our biblical warrant for saying that God accepts language” (1989:185). Furthermore there is a looking forward to an eschatological fulfilment when God gathers people from every tribe, language and nation before his throne (Rv 5:9). Thus the Pentecost event establishes the translatability of the gospel and the importance God places on the vernacular language as a primary means of communication of the truths of God.

The account of the day of Pentecost also reinforces how God’s mission is dependent upon the Holy Spirit, regardless of any cultural, social, economic, political and linguistic barriers that exist. This is not a passive action of the Spirit but instead he empowers the people of God for an outward movement to the nations; and as they do so they establish the church wherever they gather.

## **5 THE APOSTLE PAUL’S MISSION STRATEGY**

The Apostle Paul's heritage was unique. His father while being Jewish had the "highly prized privilege [of] Roman citizenship" (Latourette 1975:68). Paul was born and raised in Tarsus, a Hellenistic (Greek) city in Asia Minor and was therefore of Diaspora origin. He knew Greek proficiently and was steeped in the Septuagint (LXX).

The Apostle's three missionary journeys seemed to follow strategies that he developed. However, Eckhard Schnabel observes, "Paul did not follow a 'defined and regular plan' which might guarantee the success of missionary preaching" (2008:37). Nevertheless Paul adhered to "certain methodological principles... largely because of his understanding of the non-negotiable nature of the gospel of the Kingdom he proclaimed" (Glasser 2003:294).

Perhaps a key aspect of Paul's mission was prayer. All of his letters to the new churches made references to prayer (for example 1 Th 2:13, Rm 1:8, 1 Cor 1:4, Phlp 1:3 and 1 Tm 1:2). He thanked the Lord "continually whenever people responded to the gospel and received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour" (Glasser 2003:295).

### 5.1 An entry point – the Jewish synagogue

In ten locations (out of 48) Paul and his missionary bands made the local synagogue their first or at least early contact point when they entered a new community (e.g. Ac 13:5, 14, 46, etc). This made strategic sense since the synagogue was where the Jewish community "gathered for instruction and worship [where] the services included prayers, the reading of Scripture, and, usually a sermon explaining the Scripture" (Elwell 1996:753). But it was also where the Gentiles would gather and the synagogue placed Judaism on display. It was the place of worship and had a missionary role in attracting the proselytes (Gentiles who adopted Jewish beliefs and practices, including circumcision). It also attracted 'God-fearers' (Gentiles who accepted Judaism's ethics, some of its culture, but refused circumcision) and other Gentile sympathizers (Schnabel 2008:293). It was therefore the natural place for the Apostle to go to as a doorway into a community.

Only after trouble arose in the synagogues from the Jews did Paul and his missionary bands move to the Gentiles and leave the Jewish communities entirely. This was consistent with Jesus' warnings that "the synagogues will be places of persecution" (Elwell 1996:753)

### 5.2 Using the Septuagint scriptures

The Apostle used the Septuagint, commonly known as the LXX (Roman numerals for 70 since tradition suggests it was produced by 70 (plus two) Jewish leaders from Alexandria). The version the Apostle used was most likely the Jewish Pentateuch translated into Greek in the third century BCE. Fernandez Marcos suggests this “was an event without precedence in the ancient world” (2000:18) because it implied that the Greek language was widely accepted and used by the Jewish Diaspora in the Hellenistic world.

Greek was the language of the Jewish Diaspora synagogues that Paul visited. In the synagogue the Septuagint was read and taught. Paul knew Greek proficiently and was well educated in the LXX and therefore read from these Scriptures to the synagogue audience (Ac 13:14). He reasoned with his audience about the message of the Scriptures (Ac 17:1) and preached from the Scriptures (Ac 13:5, 15; 14:6, 25, 18:1). To a group of Jewish leaders in Rome, Paul “tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. Some were moved by the argument, but not all” (Kaiser 2000:77).

### 5.3 First contact – the Jewish Diaspora

Paul associated as much as possible with the Jewish Diaspora, although they often rejected him. Paul believed the proclamation of the gospel was intended for the Jew first, even to those who lived outside their homeland. He also knew what it was to be a Diaspora Jew, having been born and lived in Tarsus, and speaking Greek as well as Aramaic and Hebrew. He felt at home in Tarsus as much as Jerusalem, in Antioch in Syria, as much as in Corinth (Ecknabel 2008:391). Paul freely became “a Jew to the Jews and a Gentile to the Gentiles, adapting himself and his verbalization of the gospel so it would come as the good news to one and all, clothed in the cultural forms that were most meaningful and appropriate” (Glasser 2003:297).

Early Jewish converts to the gospel were Hellenists (Jewish Christians). They followed Judaism in matters of faith, though “with varying degrees of strictness [and] adopted the Greek language and customs” (Wilson 1989:44). Thus they were known to be more open to change.

Often the Diaspora audience rejected Paul who would then shift his focus to the second contact point, the Gentiles. The Apostle had a specific calling to take the gospel to them (Ac 18:6). Due to the success of Paul’s mission to the Gentiles, Christian belief and practice quickly ceased from becoming simply a Jewish sect since it was embraced by the Gentiles.

## 5.4 Centres of influence

Paul and his missionary bands did most of their work in urban areas. These were also Jewish Diaspora centres that provided Paul and his missionary band with synagogues where they could meet with people, but also “marketplaces, lecture halls, workshops and private houses” (Ecknabel 2008:288). The trade routes that intersected at the urban centres meant that Paul’s teaching could easily be taken to local people in surrounding areas.

Some of the important centres Paul visited were: 1) Antioch of Syria (Ac 13:1; 14:26), the third largest city in the Roman Empire and an important centre of early Christianity. The church there sent out Paul and Barnabas and Paul reported back to it; 2) Jerusalem (Ac 21:17), the place of the birth of Christianity was an important centre for both Judaism and the New Testament church. It was here that the ‘mother’ church was located; 3) Athens (Ac 17:16), the most important cultural centre (arts, learning and philosophy) of that time. Its cultural and political achievements impacted the rest of the region; 4) Corinth (Ac 18:1), the commercial centre for trade between west and east, a place known for its great temple dedicated to the goddess Aphrodite. Paul visited the city three times and lived there for a total of two years; 5) Ephesus (Ac 18:18; 19:1), a city known for its affluence, with a large harbour, an important commercial centre and its famed Temple of Artemis; and 6) Rome (Ac 28:14), the capital of the expansive Roman Empire and influential on many fronts including politics, economics, art and science.

## 5.5 Appointing new leaders

There was a diverse group of companions that assisted Paul. Consequently he was considered to be “a team worker whose letters abound with references to the togetherness he shared with his co-workers in evangelism and church planting” (Glasser 2003:296).

Paul and his team appointed leaders (or elders) in every church, committing them to the Lord with prayer and fasting. This ensured that there was no leadership vacuum when Paul and his team left. Many of the new converts were ‘God-fearers’ who knew much about the Scriptures and when they learned about Jesus, the final pieces fell into place for them. It made them ideal leaders for the church.

## 5.6 Reliance on the guiding Holy Spirit

From the outset of Paul and Barnabas' appointment (Ac 13:2), the Holy Spirit was actively guiding Paul and his missionary band. The Apostle does not appear to have set out with a rigid plan in place to evangelize the region. Rather, it was evident that the Holy Spirit was leading him (Ac 16:6). When the Lord prevented Paul from entering Bithynia, the Holy Spirit led Paul to Macedonia instead. Luke stresses that the Holy Spirit guided the mission activity of Paul (Ac 1:8, 13:9, 15:8, 28, 16:6, 7, 20:28, 28:25).

## 5.7 Engaging with the whole gospel

The Apostle proclaimed the 'whole gospel' from the perspective that his primary methodology was preaching, teaching, debating, reasoning, and the strengthening of new believers, etc. (i.e. a word based ministry). However, he also demonstrated the gospel: power encounters, such as healing and working miracles (cripple healed (Ac 14:6); a demon cast out of slave girl (Ac 16:13); extraordinary miracles (Ac 19:11); restoring Eutychus from his fatal fall (Ac 20:6) being bitten by the viper with no ill effect (Ac 28:1); and the healing of Publius' father and others at Malta (Ac 28:1).

God prepared an entrance to the Gentile mission through a number of bridging streams including the Jewish Diaspora, use of their synagogues and the use of the Scriptures in the heart language (the LXX). All of this was by means of the messenger the Apostle Paul and his missionary bands.

## 6 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON BIBLE TRANSLATION IN MISSION

The translatability of the gospel is the key to appreciate why the translation of the Bible into the languages of the world is important in the *missio Dei*. It illustrates the act of the incarnation because "God chose translation as his mode of action for the salvation of humanity" (Walls 1996:26). As the Word became flesh (Jn 1:14), "the translatability of the Bible rests on [this] prior act of translation" (Walls 1996:26). This concept of translatability is "the ability of the gospel to be articulated, received, appropriated, and reproduced into a potentially infinite number of cultural contexts" (Tennent 2010:325).

### 6.1 The essential foundation for God's mission

It is a fact that throughout the history of the church, Christians have viewed the translation of the Bible into the languages of the world as an indispensable foundation for the sustainable mission of God. However, Andrew Walls warns that

“translation is the art of the impossible” due to the risky complexity of transmitting meaning from “one linguistic medium to another” (1996:26).

Tennent (2010:327) provides three possibilities regarding the communication of the gospel across linguistic and cultural boundaries: 1) the assumption that new enquirers of Jesus Christ must “discover the significance of Jesus within a certain source culture and linguistic framework.” Jesus Christ was initially significant just to the Jews and in order for Gentiles to accept Jesus Christ, they had to understand Jesus by embracing first-century Jewish perspectives about him; 2) the gospel is “untranslatable” and thus may only be understood through the monocultural “doorway of Judaism” (through the Jewish language, culture and history); and 3) communicators of the gospel need to “enter into the cultural, linguistic and social framework of the target group and explain the gospel through whatever terms and concepts were already present in, and understood by, the target group.” In other words it is “mission by translation.”

Applying these three possibilities to the *missio Dei* means that if the gospel had only been passed along from the first century Christians to us today through the grids that were unique to them, the Christian faith would have been robbed of the insights of various Christians since then, such as Europeans, Asians, Africans or Latin Americans. As Tennent states, “we have gained more and more insights into the beauty and reality of Jesus Christ” (2010:336) for the very reason that Christians by and large have followed the ‘mission by translation’ option with all of the pitfalls and dangers of mistranslations in mind.

## 6.2 Why Bible translation has been important to the church

### 6.2.1 The Old Testament

The activity of translating the Bible, or at least portions of it, started with the Septuagint, the ancient translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into *Koine* Greek. The work is thought to have commenced prior to 285 BCE. Eventually it was the Jews of the Diaspora living in Alexandria who “had abandoned the language of their fathers [and thought] that the only way to preserve the religious legacy of their ancestors was to translate it into the foreign language that they use” (Marcos 2000:19). These Jews were bilingual and their translation was to address the liturgical and educational needs of the Jews living in “the Greek world with a high proportion of Greek-speaking Jews who did not know the original language of the scriptures” (Marcos 2000:20).

Once the Bible was translated, it was copied over and over by scribes, and distributed widely around the Mediterranean area. It should be pointed out that the LXX was actually “a collection of translations depending on the book [resulting in] a whole gamut of translation techniques which run from literal translation (including transliteration) to paraphrase” (Marcos 2000:23). It was from the Septuagint that Jesus himself quoted in the gospel accounts.

Those following traditional Judaism eventually abandoned the Septuagint and stated that the Torah could not be adapted into Greek. By then the Septuagint was largely in the hands of Hellenistic Gentile believers and these Scriptures enjoyed a new function “as they became an authoritative sourcebook for Greek Christians seeking to build a coherent world view” (Walls 1996:33).

Since the modern missionary movement of the past 200 years, a monumental effort has been made in translation so that currently there are over 2300 languages that have at least one book of the Bible.

### 6.2.2 The New Testament

The accounts about the life and teachings of Jesus were circulated orally from person to person. During 50-60 CE the Apostle Paul’s letters were either written in *Koine* Greek or dictated to scribes who transcribed them (Wegner 1999:207). These letters were read in the meetings of the early church. Scribes recopied them by hand, making them more readily available.

In the early church the Bible was considered to be the book for every Christian. The church fathers emphasized Bible reading which in turn encouraged people to become literate. For those who were not literate the Bible was read publicly because it was considered to be central for deepening of the spiritual life of the individual Christian and the church.

### 6.2.3 Early translations

Jerome translated the Bible into Latin during 366-384 CE. His translation was “based on the Hebrew text rather than the more acceptable Greek Septuagint [making it] controversial and divisive at the time” (Sanneh 2008:47). This was because the Septuagint was seen to be “inspired and thus authoritative” (Wegner 1999:254). Many Old Latin texts of the Old Testament were in circulation prior to this. However, it was Jerome’s scholarly work in the Vulgate (meaning ‘common’) that elevated this

translation as the official one of the Western church. The Vulgate went through various revisions and became the official version of the Roman Catholic Church.

A Coptic translation was produced for Egyptians in the middle of the third century CE. Other translations in the region were done for the Sahidic and Bohairic languages also in Egypt. Ulifas, the 'Apostle to the Goths' used the Septuagint to produce the Gothic translation in the late fourth century. Mesrop Mashtotz assembled various manuscripts translated by scholars in the Armenian language and is credited with translating the Bible into Armenian in the early fifth century. Methodius and Cyril worked on a translation for the Slavonic language in the late ninth century.

#### 6.2.4 Early English language translations

In the English language, no Bible translations were available for some time although Caedmon (670 CE), who attended to cattle, put the Bible message into poems and songs and sang these to the people; Aldheim (709 CE) also sang the stories of the Bible to people and after becoming a bishop in the church he translated the Psalms; Bede (735 CE), an abbot, translated John's gospel for his monks on his deathbed. However, no copies of these early English translations remain.

As the centuries went by in the church of the West (Rome), the Bible was restricted in its use to the clergy and in the monasteries. Church leaders were reluctant to allow it to be translated into English because such an act threatened the church and they thought they "would lose power over and revenue from the common people; and that commoners would misunderstand and corrupt the teachings of the Bible" (Wegner 1999:273).

The Oxford academic John Wycliffe (or Wyclif/Wickliffe) inspired, instigated and supervised the translation of the Bible into English from the Vulgate. He was motivated by his concern about the corruption of the church and its leadership. He realized the leadership had an interest in denying the laity access to the Bible for fear of the discovery of "a massive discrepancy between the lifestyles of the bishops and clergy and those commended – and practiced – by Christ and the apostles" (McGrath 2001:19).

Wycliffe sought to call people back to a biblical Christianity because he "believed that the people needed the Bible in their own language for a revival to take place" (Wegner 1999:282). An additional challenge to him was that the Czech wife of Richard II of England had Scripture in her heart language, but the King did not. The



work was completed after Wycliffe's death in 1384. It was in common English because Wycliffe "fervently believed that the Bible needed no special interpretation even for laymen to understand" (Connolly 1996:77). However, it was not readily accessible because the printing press had not yet been invented.

In the 1450s there was a technological breakthrough with the invention of the printing press with moveable metal type that could be reused. While the Chinese had pioneered the technology six hundred years earlier using carved wood block images, with later refinements that included moveable print, their process did not gain widespread use because of the volume of characters in the Chinese alphabet (Wegner 1999:263).

It was the German Johannes Gutenberg who developed metal movable type and the printing press to go with it. The first book that came off his press was the Vulgate Bible, a colossal achievement consisting of "46,000 wood blocks to set the manuscript" (Wegner 1999:263). Gutenberg, with money lent to him by Johann Fust, printed 150 copies for the first edition (including 30 on parchment). In a short time this revolutionized the availability and affordability of the Bible because up until now only the wealthy could afford to hire a scribe to hand copy a Bible.

Over 150 years later, William Tyndale wanted the King of England to understand how important it was for the poor and uneducated people to be able to read the Bible in their own language. However, authorities prevented him from doing any translation in England so he found refuge in Germany. Inspired by Martin Luther, who had done the German translation of the New Testament and Pentateuch, Germany seemed a logical place for Tyndale to carry out his work. In fact some scholars suggest that because Tyndale translated the same books in a short period of time, his vocabulary and style were likely influenced by Luther's German (McGrath 2001:70).

Tyndale used the original languages of Greek and Hebrew and printed his work on Guttenberg's press. Consequently he was called "the father of the English Bible" (Connolly 1996:140). Eventually the printed copies of Tyndale's Bible had to be smuggled back into England because the church hierarchy prohibited the translation of the Bible into English. Because of his persistence in printing and shipping English Bibles into England, Tyndale was eventually tracked down and burned to death in 1536 by orders of the Bishop of London.

Through Tyndale's dedicated efforts "floodgates [were opened] that could no longer be closed" (McGrath 2001:88) and it was only a matter of time before English translations were printed and distributed in England without the dangers that Tyndale

had suffered. Shortly after Tyndale's death, Miles Coverdale completed an English Bible translation in 1535. He relied on Tyndale's work, the Vulgate and Luther's translation and thus created "an amalgam of existing translations according to his own personal preference" (McGrath 2001:90). In spite of this weakness, his was the first complete and published Bible in English.

Due to the changing political-religious climate in England it became acceptable for a Bible translation to be endorsed by King Henry VIII. At first it looked like Coverdale's Bible would gain this status, but this was not to be. Richard Grafton and John Rogers then attempted a re-translation of Coverdale and Tyndale's work. Their translation was called Matthew's Bible to protect their identities (McGrath 2001:91).

Nevertheless, due to their heavy use of margin notes there was some degree of suspicion and Thomas Cromwell commissioned Coverdale to do a revision of Matthew's Bible and eliminate the margin notes. It was called the Great Bible and included the canonical and apocryphal books (McGrath 2001:94).

The Geneva Bible was the next English version and was attributed primarily to William Whittingham. This was the creation "of private enterprise and religious enthusiasm on the part of a small group of English Protestant exiles in the city of Geneva" (McGrath 2001:98). It set new standards in publishing with its beautiful illustrations, marginal comments and, consequently, the standard of the translation itself.

It was the marginal notes of the Geneva Bible that caught King James IV's attention. While he was still king of Scotland he was made aware that these notes "offered political comments on the text, which could easily be applied to the political situation under [him. He] cordially detested what he found in those notes" (McGrath 2001:141). The king's view was that the notes challenged "the doctrine of 'divine right of kings'" (McGrath 2001:141) – meaning that the king was endowed to divinely rule on earth as God's agent.

At the Hampton Court Conference of 1603 King James I mediated a growing rift between the Puritans and the Church of England. As a result when a suggestion was made for a new English translation the king seized on it as a means of keeping the situation under control. He cunningly knew that a new translation would take many years to complete and this would buy him time during the delicate negotiations. Consequently, the king decreed that the most learned men from Oxford and Cambridge should work on the new translation. Furthermore, the Hampton Court Conference stipulated that marginal notes should not be used in order to avoid the difficulties created by the Geneva Bible (McGrath 2001:164).

Richard Bancroft was placed in charge of the new translation and had unilateral control over the selection of the translators. He mandated 15 rules for the translators to follow including the use of previous English translations. King James hoped that this “new translation of the Bible would be a powerful factor in creating a cohesive English national identity especially over and against Roman Catholicism which was enjoying a newfound strength and stability on the European mainland” (McGrath 2001:171). The officials of the new translation believed that it represented “the best possible distillation of the wisdom, grace, and beauty of existing translations, corrected where necessary against the original biblical documents in their original languages” (McGrath 2001:189).

While it was the King of England who authorized the translation, he had no intention of paying for the significant undertaking. That fell to private enterprise and it is likely that the completed Bible never received “final written authorization from the bishops, Privy Council, or the King” (McGrath 2001:206). Yet by its release in 1611, it did not need such support because within a fairly short period of time it received acceptance from the English world and remained the translation of choice for over 300 years.

#### 6.2.5 Other language translations after the Protestant Reformation

In 1516 Erasmus a Dutch Renaissance scholar living in France, published in a “single volume the first printed Greek New Testament and a new Latin translation, based directly on the original Greek, which avoided the errors that had crept into the Vulgate” (McGrath 2001:57).

Six years later Martin Luther completed the translation of the New Testament into German. He believed the work was too important to be left to someone else because the majority of the laity could not read the language of learning – Latin. Luther had resolved to put the Bible into a form of German so natural and so forceful that it would speak to the hearts of all Germans. He wanted the scriptures to be translated accurately into the language they used in their everyday lives. Consequently, the lay person’s access to the Bible was as much about power as it was developing personal spirituality (McGrath 2001:53). Ten years later the Old Testament was completed.

Luther’s work advanced the Protestant Reformation and can be summarized with a two-fold focus: 1) how the established church lost its understanding of the New Testament concept of salvation as a gift of grace from God; and 2) the means of

bringing reform and renewal to the church was to place the Bible in the hands of the laity (McGrath 2001:55).

### 6.3 Early Bible translators beyond Europe

In the 1600's Bartholomew Ziegenbalg went to South East India to work among the Tamil people. Ziegenbalg believed the vernacular Scriptures needed to be available at the earliest possible stage of mission. His was a broad strategy because he believed Bible translation had to go hand-in-hand with Christian education. The new Christians and their children should be able to read the Bible for themselves. He also believed that the diligent study of the philosophy and culture of the people group was foundational to evangelism and church growth. Accordingly, he carried out medical work and pursued the formation of an indigenous church. He insisted on the use of Tamil lyrics in worship and was totally committed to the personal conversion of the Tamil people. Ziegenbalg was considered ahead of his time in his holistic approach (Neill 1986:196).

In Serampore, India in the early 1800's, William Carey (also known as the 'father of modern missions') used his base of operations for Bible translation and other ministries that spanned 34 years. He translated the Bible in Bengali and Sanskrit, along with the New Testament into Marathi, Punjabi and other lesser known languages and dialects (Tucker 2004:127). However, accuracy was not Carey's strength so his work required much revision and reworking. He followed a five-fold strategy: 1) understanding the language, culture, and thought processes of the non-Christian peoples; 2) preaching of the Gospel by every means possible; 3) translating the Bible into the languages where it was needed; 4) planting a church at the earliest possible point; and 5) training local Christians to be leaders in ministry (Neill 1986:224-5).

Other notable missionaries involved in Bible translation were Hans Egede ('the apostle to Greenland', 1686-1758), Adoniram Judson (Burmese, 1788-1850), Henry Martyn (several languages in India, 1781-1812) and Robert Morrison (Chinese, 1782-1834). Morrison was also known for his dictionary of Chinese which gave the language wider recognition (Neill 1986:238). Many of these early missionaries demonstrated a holistic approach and were also involved in evangelism, Christian education, medical work and theological education. They showed how Bible translation was complimentary to each of these areas.

Rolland Allen, missionary to China in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, was asked what needed to be done if the gospel was to be truly communicated. His response included an

assumption of Bible translation: “There must be a congregation furnished with the Bible, the sacraments, and the apostolic ministry. When these conditions are fulfilled, the missionary has done [their] job; the young church is free to learn... how to embody the gospel in its own culture” (Newbigin 1989:147).

#### 6.4 Bible translation in the 20th and 21st century

A primary issue of Bible translation concerns the language of the heart. This is the language that most effectively communicates on personal and deep spiritual matters to the majority of people in a given ethno-linguistic group. Kwame Bediako states, “whenever Western missionaries... made the Scriptures available to an African people in that people’s own language, they weakened any Western bias in their presentation of the Gospel.” The consequence being that African Christians “could truly claim they were hearing God speak to them in their own language. It amounts to the awareness that *God speaks our language too*” (2004:58).

The late Eugene Nida (1914-2011) worked with other scholars and Bible translators to improve the theory and practice of Bible translation. Nida is given credit for professionalizing the discipline of Bible translation and became known as the “intellectual leader” and consultant to the United Bible Societies (Stine 2012:38).

Nida was noted for changing how Bible translations were done. Prior to his influence, “Bible translations were primarily produced by missionaries, whose approach was generally to produce a formally equivalent translation, sometimes based on the original languages, but often based on translations available in European languages” (Stine 2012:38). These translations then were often sent away for checking by consultants resident in their Western countries.

The shift needed was for readers and listeners to understand the Bible in a more natural way. Nida believed translations should be wherever possible produced by native speakers and checked onsite with the translators.

In time, Nida borrowed concepts from the fields of linguistics, cultural studies, communication sciences, and psychology to develop “a practical approach to translation that he called dynamic equivalence or functional equivalence, the goal of which was to make the translation clear and understandable as well as accurate” (Stine 2012:38). Nida’s influence has been seen in most popular Bible translations in major as well as lesser known languages.

#### 6.5 Literacy

The twin to Bible translation is literacy which is built upon the foundation of linguistics. These related fields have been greatly influenced by missionaries. Sanneh notes that during the centuries of upheaval and expansion of the church, missionaries “became pioneers of linguistic development... [and] the resulting literacy, however limited, produced social and cultural transformation” (2003:99).

Not all societies are comfortable with reading and writing because they have oral traditions. Therefore oral strategies of introducing the themes and stories of the Bible have been important for such societies. When this is the lead strategy, Philip Jenkins notes, “learning to read the text is a later, and not inevitable, phase of Christian development” (2006b:31) that may lead to new ways of learning the stories of the Bible.

One of the challenges for speakers of smaller languages is how literacy campaigns by governments and other institutions are conducted especially using the national or regional languages. For example, when a campaign is run using the slogan ‘Literacy is Freedom’, David Harrison points out that this implies “non-literacy is a kind of slavery or prison” (2007:148). However, Harrison warns, “many small languages will vanish without ever having literate speakers [because] small languages are seldom included in national literacy campaigns” (2007:148). The consequence is that literacy in larger and/or national languages often results in the abandonment of the smaller languages.

An example of how literacy is linked to evangelism is through the witness of Christian literacy teachers to non-Christians. New believers who are literate also benefit because they become stronger spiritually and are less likely return to their former ways than illiterate Christians. Literacy also provides practical assistance because literacy skills lessen the likelihood of getting cheated in business transactions. It can also provide economic advancement because being able to read and write increases one’s ability for personal and economic achievement. Literacy provides self esteem, where using the vernacular promotes personal and community respect, and achievement (Dye 1985:221).

## 6.6 The mandate of Bible translation continues

Bediako notes that “Christianity among all religions, is the most culturally translatable, hence the most truly universal, being able to be at home in every cultural context without injury to its essential character” (2004:32). This is because the gospel is the basis for what became ‘the Christian movement’. As Sanneh points

out, the gospel is in fact “a translated version of the message of Jesus, and that means Christianity is a translated religion without a revealed language” (2003:97).

The positive effect of Bible translation in the vernaculars of Africa is attributed to how the Christian message is so readily translatable. This is because of its “refusal of a ‘sacred’ language [and It] developed a ‘vernacular’ faith” (Bediako 2004:32). This is with the exception with the “dominant role of Latin... in some sectors of Roman Catholicism” (Bediako 2004:32). Sanneh observes that “without translation there would be no Christianity or Christians. Translation is the church’s birthmark as well as its missionary benchmark: the church would be unrecognizable or unsustainable without it” (2003:97).

The availability of vernacular Scriptures has been the groundwork for effective cross-cultural mission since “the complicated task of translating the Bible... has sometimes been an outgrowth of mission activity [and] sometimes the entering wedge” (Smalley 1991:21). The spiritual understanding gained from the vernacular Scriptures encourages harmony within the emerging Christian communities. Through reading and understanding the translated Scripture, people are made aware of God and his desire to have a relationship with them. They can become equipped to do theology in their context and apply this to daily life.

As a result of the extraordinary efforts of Christian linguists and translators, “more people pray and worship in more languages in Christianity than in any other religion” (Sanneh 2003:69). A related benefit is that Christians have produced more grammars and dictionaries of the world’s languages than any other cause (Sanneh 2003:69).

## **7 INFLUENCES UPON CONTEMPORARY MISSION**

Church history provides a connection between first century Jewish Christians, Greek believers at Antioch and the spread of the Christian faith across the Roman Empire. From there the Gospel took root in Ireland and then proceeded into Europe. From Europe, by means of missionaries who accompanied the colonial conquests, the Christian faith was spread to Africa, America and parts of Asia and the Pacific Islands.

### **7.1 Shifts during the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century had a promising start with the famous Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, a time when Western mission was a formidable force. The

Conference was noteworthy because it “represented the all-time high-water mark in Western missionary enthusiasm, the zenith of the optimistic and pragmatist approach to mission” (Bosch 1991:338). The positive tone of the participants assumed that Russia and Western Europe would remain as “*the* centers [sic] of the Christian faith” (Bevans & Schroeder 2004:242). The language of world conquest echoed through the corridors with the mood being that God’s mission was a sign of world conquest with references, strategies and plans that used military metaphors, such as crusade, conquest, advance, etc. (Bosch 1991:338).

This optimism was quickly subdued because of World War I (1914-1918), the clash between the Allies and the Central Powers that swept Europe and involved the U.S. and other parts of the Western world. This was followed by the Great Depression, triggered by the stock market crash of October 29, 1929 which spread quickly to other Western countries over the next decade. Meanwhile Marxist Communism increased rapidly following the Russian Revolution in 1917 and later the Cultural Revolution in China in 1966. World War II (1939-1945) involved all the great powers aligned in two opposing military groupings – the Allies and the Axis. At its peak there were more than 100 million people serving in military units. The maps of the world were re-drawn, at least temporarily, as new territories were conquered by the likes of Germany, Japan, Russia and the U.S.

The Great British Empire peaked in 1922 when it claimed about one-fifth of the world’s population. Due to its expansion across the globe, the phrase “the sun never sets on the British Empire” appropriately described it. However, after World War II Great Britain was left virtually bankrupt. It could not sustain its empire and all of its former colonies had gained independence by the 1960s.

The U.S. emerged from World War II as the leading world power, although the U.S.S.R. soon proved to be a strong rival and a threat to world peace until its collapse in 1990. Further clashes with communism took place on the Korean peninsula in the 1950s and in Europe and Vietnam in the 1960s. Yet by the late 1980s only a few countries retained their communist political structure.

The four decades of the Cold War between the U.S. with its allies and the Soviet Union saw a global interest in ‘Third World’ nations and territories. These “successor states became more rather than less strategically relevant” to the world powers (Mahbubani 2009:57).

In the late 1980s the entire world entered a stage of uneven economic growth, coupled with dangerous global threats. With the resulting restructuring of the world’s



economy, now called globalization, the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) emerged as new economic players. There are predictions that China will be the world's largest economy by the year 2025 (Moyo 2011:182). However, this is not a new place for China since historians indicate both China and India "were as rich as the West right up until the 1800's" (Zakaria 2009:52). China has been shaped by the teaching of Confucius who "set out rules for acquiring knowledge, behaving ethically, maintaining social stability, and creating well-ordered civilization" (Zakaria 2009:109). Thus the 'success' of China has not been influenced by believing in "a Creator who laid down a set of abstract moral laws that must be followed" (Zakaria 2009:109) such as the influence of the Christian God upon the West.

In respect to the events that strained the Western world, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the vast majority of Christians lived outside of the West. Jenkins notes "the era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetime, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning" (2002:3).

## 7.2 Influences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century progresses, some suggest that this will be the 'Asian Century' just as the past two centuries were influenced by the West and modernization. Kishore Mahbubani suggests the transformation of Asia will "be good for the world" (2008:1). This is because millions of people will be saved from poverty in China and India, the world will become more stable as Asian countries become more responsible, and Islam will be moderated through interaction with its modernized neighbours such as Pakistan. This optimism is tempered with the reality that the democratic Western nations with only twelve percent of the world's population control global decision making and keep intact the "undemocratic world order" (Mahbubani 2008:104).

Missions researcher Patrick Johnstone notes that by the year 2000 there were 3,000 cross-cultural mission agencies and the ten largest interdenominational and international agencies had between them 50,000+ missionaries (2011:64). Yet all of these larger agencies are from the West at least in their origins or locations of their headquarters. The point is that Western missions have been the primary influence upon cross-cultural mission methodology – at least in terms of number of participants.

In summary, 100 years after the Edinburgh 1910 Missions Conference, the world is very different to what it was then. The participants of the Conference had the "expectation that other world religions would wither and die in the face of the

triumphant worldwide spread of Christianity” (Johnson & Ross 2010:12). A century later while there is ample evidence that Christianity is a worldwide religion, “other world religions have not only survived but have undergone significant growth and renewal” (Johnson & Ross 2010:12).

### 7.2.1 Modalities and sodalities

Ralph Winter introduced the concept and terminology of modality and sodality. WGA can be viewed as a sodality because of its specific focus on Bible translation and associated ministries of specialized natures that extend beyond the capability of the church. The church is a modality because as Tennent explains, “it is the most basic organization to which all Christians belong” (2010:442). Tennent suggests “the church, as a modality, has the broad responsibility of making sure that the Bible is translated into every language on earth” (2010:442). However, the church lacks the expertise to carry this out and therefore it must rely on the sodalities, such as WGA. On the other hand, WGA, due to its specialized role, cannot be expected to carry out the functions of the church – the modality – such as administering the sacraments.

The relationship between WGA (the sodality) and the church (the modality) may have worked well in the past. However, as WBTI has evolved into WGA, its new structure enables churches to become formally identified with WGA as ‘Wycliffe Partner Organizations’ (see chapter 2). Therefore denominations such as the Episcopal Church of Sudan (Translation Department), Mekane Yesus church of Ethiopia and the Convencion Bautista de Mexico (Baptist Convention of Mexico’s mission department) are now formally part of WGA. Each of these denominations agrees with the mission, vision, values and doctrinal position of WGA. This new relationship blurs the distinction between sodalities and modalities, at least when applied to WGA.

If one holds to the modality-sodality relationship as relevant to WGA, then it is worth noting Tennent’s call for greater accountability between the sodalities and the modalities. This is due to the inherent autonomy of the sodalities, especially if they are non-denominational like WGA. To bring about greater accountability, Tennent suggests: 1) a sodality should be governed by a Board made up of godly and respected Christians who in turn are accountable to their churches; 2) the sodality needs to be committed to serve the modality; and 3) all who seek to serve through the sodality should have the approval to do so by their church/modality (2010:456).

In the case of WGA, all three recommendations for greater accountability are followed: 1) WGA’s independent board of governors (currently ten people from

around the world) are Christians who adhere to the WGA's doctrinal position and are required to be in good standing with their local church; 2) the mission of WGA echoes a commitment of serving the church: "In communion with God and with the worldwide church, we contribute to the holistic transformation of all peoples through Bible translation and compassionate services" (WBTI 2008:13). One of WGA's core values states "the church [is] central in God's mission" (WBTI 2008:13); and 3) the process of new personnel joining a Wycliffe organization requires them to have the approval and endorsement of the leadership of their local church.

### 7.2.2 Mission strategy

The growth of the church in the global South and East has had many influences, but two noteworthy ones are the African Initiated Churches and Pentecostalism in Latin America. In both cases they trace their roots to the end of the modern missionary movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Bevans & Schroeder 2004:283).

The shift of the centre of influence of the church to the Global South and East has many implications. David Barrett, Todd Johnson, and Peter Crossing state the shift affects mission strategy in these ways:

(1) global plans are increasingly initiated and led by Christians of the Global South; (2) the worldview of these Christians is often more in line with that of the unevangelized; (3) the perception of Christianity as a Western religion is disintegrating, and (4) new forms of Christianity, particularly insider movements (e.g. Muslims following Christ in their own cultural context), are emerging.

(2008:28)

The shift of who influences mission strategy has great implications for Western mission agencies. In chapter 1, I mentioned James Engel and William Dryness's outline of three trends agencies should consider: 1) the degree to which they are captive to their home culture realities, including Western political and economic pragmatism; 2) the initiatives for mission change as they shift to younger churches; and 3) how the loss of the theological roots of mission has become more apparent (2000:18).

Another challenge the church of the global South and East experiences as it interacts with its Western counterparts is the fact that the latter finds it difficult to listen well to the rest of the world. It still believes it is at the centre of scholarship and

theological reflection. One reason is due to the use of English as the main language for theological scholarship. The consequence is that “Christian scholarship and theology are not yet endeavours in which scholars and theologians from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Pacific Islands participate fully” (Ott & Netland, 2006:45)

### 7.3 Globalization and mission

Much has been written about the topic of globalization in recent years because its effects, both positive and negative, are being felt with great impact on every corner of the planet. Richard Tiplady (2003:2) defines globalization as an “increasing interconnectedness, so that events and developments in one part of the world are affected by, have to take account of, and also influence, in turn, other parts of the world.” David Smith (2003:93) states that the heart of globalization is “the spread of the economic culture throughout the world and the attempt to secure dominance among all peoples everywhere.” Richard Gaillardetz says “global unification” is the agenda of globalization due to technological, communications and transportation advances “furthered by the unfettered expansion of neoliberal capitalism which has brought the ethos of the free market world and certain icons of Western culture to the world” (2006:158).

Anthony Giddens has also written much on the topic of globalization and states that it “not only pulls upwards, but also pushes downwards, creating new pressures for local autonomy” (2003:13). As a result “local nationalisms spring up as a response to globalising tendencies, as the hold of older nation-states weakens” (Giddens 2003:13). This is a factor behind the renewal of cultures and their traditions in various countries. Giddens comments on the dark side of globalization that is “destroying of local cultures, widening world inequalities and worsening the lot of the impoverished.” This creates an environment of “winners and losers” where a few quickly prosper but the majority are “condemned to a life of misery and despair” (2003:15).

Many people champion the economic benefits of globalization but the issue is very complex. For some it characterizes the success of free-market capitalism over communism. Meanwhile for others “it represents conflict, unbridled greed, deregulated corporate power, and an utter disregard for humanity” (Aaronica & Ramdoo 2006:17).

Globalization is not creating an equal world where long held inequalities and differences are given attention. Instead it is producing “new forms of social and economic division on a worldwide scale” (Smith 2003:94). Globalization brings social upheaval because of cultural and religious differences that defy integration. It

spawns “deep pluralism that often seems unbridgeable” and creates “violent tribalism” along with religious fundamentalism (Gaillardetz 2006:158).

While fundamentalism has existed in the Christian world all along, today all world religions have ‘fundamentalists’ reacting to globalization in some way or another. Giddens defines fundamentalism as “a return to basic scriptures or texts, supposed to be read in a literal manner [with] the doctrines derived from such a reading be applied to social, economic or political life” (2003:48). This is in the hands of those who guard tradition and believe they alone how to defend and protect the beliefs. Giddens concludes that fundamentalism is dangerous to society and should not be tolerated (2003:48).

The challenges from globalization require a thoughtful response from the church. Bulus Galadima suggests three ways: 1) reject all aspects of globalization and view them as secular trends; 2) embrace globalization’s “relativism and pluralism” which leads to a “fundamental transformation of religious beliefs”; or 3) wisely engage with the challenges presented by globalization yet be informed by biblical truths which “requires tact, creativity, and especially the enablement of the Holy Spirit” (Tiplady 2003:201).

Steve Moon and David Lee believe there is an “interplay between the kingdom of God, world evangelisation and globalization” and see this coming together and portrayed in the Apostle John’s eschatological vision (Rv 5:9-10; 7:9-10) (Tiplady 2003:255).

Mission agencies would do well to understand globalization’s value system and its effects on the worldview of Christians. With this in mind mission leaders need to be committed to “a biblical worldview that places Christ and his church above world trends, whether economic, political, cultural or religious” (Taylor 2000:68). This is reasonable advice given the likelihood that globalization is here to stay at least in the medium term. Nevertheless the *missio Dei* will not be deterred by globalization and may actually be served by it.

#### 7.4 Influences upon the Roman Catholic Church

The Second Vatican Council (1962) sought to clarify the theological positions of the church. In *Lumen Gentium* chapter 1 (LG 1), the church’s participation in the *missio Dei* was given prominence. Richard Gaillardetz (2006:42) makes these observations about the Council’s statements: Namely, it “participates in God’s saving work on behalf of humankind” and through the Triune God, “believers are invited to participate in the divine life of God through their participation in the life of the church

(LG 2).” The Council acknowledged there were parts of the body of Christ outside of the Church’s structures (LG 8). This was a major shift from earlier positions of the Church, believing that it alone held the pathway to salvation. Gaillardetz elaborates on this shift: “there were degrees of incorporation into the body of Christ such that even if one were not a member of the Roman Catholic Church one could, in some sense, belong to the body of Christ” (Gaillardetz 2006:71). Therefore, LG15 and *Unitatis Redintegratio 3* make mention of non-Catholic churches.

The Council’s shift of focus to understanding the church as being missionary by its very nature as well as an acknowledging Christians of other traditions opened “the floodgates of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue in the decades following the council” (Gaillardetz 2006:72).

Looking back forty years to the Second Vatican Council, Gaillardetz believes that one of its most significant outcomes was the new understanding of “the missiological character of the whole church” (2006:149). The Trinitarian origins of the church’s mission “are inextricably linked to Jesus’ gathering a community of followers who, after his death and resurrection, were empowered by his Spirit to continue in his mission to serve, proclaim, and realize the coming reign of God” (Gaillardetz 2006:149).

It is apparent that the Second Vatican Council viewed the church as participating in the “dynamic of God’s triune life” (Bevans & Schroeder 2004:286). The church was a “sacrament of salvation, a sign and instrument of God’s saving presence toward and within all of creation” (Bevans & Schroeder 2004:286). This marked a significant shift from how the Roman Catholic Church had traditionally concerned itself with external and internal matters. Instead, the church was now “caught up in the *missio Dei*” and saw itself to be “missionary by its very nature” as the “result of the overflowing love of God, expressed in the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit” (Bevans & Schroeder 2004:288).

## 7.5 Influences upon the World Council of Churches

There is some basis to suggest that the Edinburgh Missionary Conference 1910 laid the foundation for the modern ecumenical movement and the cooperation in mission that followed. It at least advanced “‘co-operation and unity’ in the study and practice of mission” (Kerr & Ross 2009:3). Later, the International Missionary Council ran a succession of world mission conferences up until 1961 when it merged with the World Council of Churches (WCC) to form the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). The focus of study papers and discussions that resulted have

brought about new cooperation and unity and paved the way for the ecumenical agenda.

In 1982, the WCC emphasized the role of the church as being “sent into the world to call people and nations to repentance, to announce forgiveness of sin and a new beginning in relations with God and with neighbours through Jesus Christ” (Vandervelde 1997:50). This has been emphasized in a number of ways: 1) bringing the promise of the kingdom to the poor of the earth, most of whom do not know Christ; 2) announcing God’s kingdom to those the marginalized; 3) offering hope for those trapped in hopelessness; 4) challenging the affluent to live as disciples and servants of Christ; and 5) calling nominal Christians back to a fervent commitment to Christ (Vandervelde 1997:50).

The centenary celebration of the Edinburgh Conference 1910 by the WCC was a primary purpose of the Edinburgh Conference 2010. It resulted in over 30 published papers and books. In ‘Witnessing to Christ Today’, a book written by the Conference participants, three models of mission were described that have arisen during the last forty years. These “serve to strengthen and deepen a relevant Christian witness in the twenty-first century” (Balía & Kim 2010:35). They are relevant to this chapter and can be summarized as follows:

1) Mission as liberation: this focuses on the abolition of injustice and the building of a renewed society because Jesus redeems people from ‘structural evils’. The nature of Jesus’ mission was to defend the poor and confront *mammon*, which led to his clash with the religious powers and ultimately his death. As the church participates in mission as liberation, “all will be judged according to whether they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, or visited the prisoner (Matt 25:15-16). In short, those who inherit God’s kingdom are those who give life to others, especially the poor and marginalized” (Balía & Kim 2010:35).

2) Mission as dialogue, with two aspects: 1) within the church worldwide as various branches of the church discuss God’s mission (a discussion they were reluctant to have in the past). By doing so, mission is enriched as each arm of the church collaborates and shares their insights and unique understanding of God’s mission; and 2) in respect to Christians who live in contexts of majority religions, dialogue is to reveal God’s love and demonstrate the qualities of God’s kingdom, instead of expanding the institutional church. The goal is still conversion “but it is primarily (although not exclusively) conversion to the service of God’s kingdom” (Balía & Kim 2010:36).

3) Mission as reconciliation: this is important because the world is increasingly a conflicted and fractured reality. It is within the scope of God's mission to call for "transformed relationships in all domains: between humans and God; between humans as individuals, communities and cultures; and between humans and the whole of creation" (Balia & Kim 2010:37). This applies to reconciliation as "international peacemaking, reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, reconciliation between Christians and reconciliation with the whole of creation" (Balia & Kim 2010:37).

The ecumenical movement is greatly served by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). Its affirmation on mission and evangelism was released in 2012 and contains statements that influence global mission, including these:

1) In the 21<sup>st</sup> century all relationships at all levels of society are "undergoing profound and unprecedented crisis.... This demands a renewed appreciation of the life-giving Spirit of God [and the thus a call for] authentic evangelism [that] inspires the building of interpersonal and community relationships" (CWME 2012:17).

2) Spirituality in mission "is always transformative in the context of global imperialism especially in the form of the hegemonic power of economic globalization" (CWME 2012:8). This creates a "challenge to both the victims and perpetrators of systemic violence and injustice" (CWME 2012:8). Evangelism has a prophetic element because it speaks "truth to power in hope and in love" with a transformational agenda to create "just and inclusive communities" (CWME 2012:8). Moving beyond simple strategies for mission, there needs to be "an authentic Christian witness not only in what we do in mission but how we live out our mission" (CWME 2012:9).

3) Mission must address the issue of power. As it stands, the ideas and concerns of the churches in the global South and East "have not yet been fully recognized within the structures of international mission and ecumenical cooperation" (CWME 2012:24). Means must be found to enable modalities and sodalities to enjoy closer relationships that will promote greater unity and accountability.

Of special mention is the committee's acknowledgement of its "growing intensity of collaboration with Evangelicals" (CWME 2012:26) namely the Lausanne Movement. Both have a similar focus on evangelism and consequently that the "whole church should witness to the whole gospel in the whole world" (CWME 2012:26). This last phrase has been a catch cry for the Lausanne Movement for some time as we are about to discover.



## 7.6 Influences on evangelicals

The first Lausanne Congress for World Evangelization in 1974 created the Lausanne Covenant that defined evangelization as “the whole Church taking the whole gospel to the whole world.” The Congress gained an awareness of ‘unreached people groups’ and it debated the holistic nature of God’s mission. The second Congress in 1989 saw the formation of several hundred strategic partnerships in world evangelization and created the Manila Manifesto calling for a renewal of commitment to world evangelization.

After the 1989 Congress and its emphasis on the primacy of proclaiming of the gospel and strengthening social action, further work was done to define the parameters of ‘holistic mission’. As a result, the Great Commission was understood to emphasise a “social as well as evangelistic responsibility” that saw an “integration of the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of mission” (Campbell 2005:13). It followed that holistic mission was “oriented towards the satisfaction of basic human needs, including the need of God, but also the need of food, love, housing, clothes, physical and mental health and a sense of human dignity” (Campbell 2005:16).

At the third Lausanne Congress in 2010, the resulting Lausanne Commitment issued a clarion call for evangelicals “to *be* the whole Church, to *believe, obey, and share* the whole gospel, and to *go* to the whole world to make disciples of all nations” (Birdsall & Brown 2011:6).

While the Commitment touched on many themes important to world evangelization, its renewed focus on ‘unreached people groups’ is of particular interest. The Commitment redefined the term as people with “no known believers and no churches among them” with the additional element of also being “*unengaged*” (Birdsall & Brown 2011:36). This means there are: 1) no known churches or mission agencies trying to share the gospel with them; 2) only a small percentage of the church’s human and material resources are being directed to them; and 3) they will not request a gospel witness because they are unaware about what that even is (Birdsall & Brown 2011:36).

It is also important to note the Commitment’s affirmation to “to engage deeply” with the unreached people groups’ language and culture in order to “eradicate Bible poverty” (Birdsall & Brown 2010:37). Therefore to serve the purpose of evangelism, they issued a call to “hasten the translation of the Bible into the languages of peoples who do not yet have any portion of [it]” (Birdsall & Brown 2010:37). Furthermore, in a complimentary sense due to the high rate of orality by these people groups, every

effort needs to be made to “make the message of the Bible widely available by oral means” (Birdsall & Brown 2010:37).

### 7.7 Mission today is urgent, modest and exciting

The *missio Dei* today is influenced by three factors: urgency, modesty and excitement. Steven Bevans and Roger Schroeder elaborate:

It is much more modest because we realize that ‘the mission is not ours, but God’s’; it is much more exciting because it is about God’s gracious invitation to humanity to share in the dynamic communion that is at the same time God’s self-giving missionary life; it is more urgent because in a world of globalized poverty, religious violence and new appreciation of local culture and subaltern traditions, the vision and praxis of Jesus of Nazareth can bring new healing and new light.

(2003:285)

Modesty in mission is an acknowledgement that God invites us into his mission through the example of Christ’s “humble service, solidarity, love and compassion” (CWME 2012:22). Christ’s example is his self-emptying and death. This provides a “humble understanding of mission [that] does not merely shape our methods, but is the very nature and essence of our faith in Christ” (CWME 2012:22). Thus any hint of human triumphalism or success in mission is countered by Christ’s example of humility.

## 8 INFLUENCING FACTORS ON THE WYCLIFFE GLOBAL ALLIANCE

WGA does not operate in a vacuum. It is positively or adversely affected by trends in the church, the world, through influences of globalization, and other factors. For example, earlier I explored the theme of marginalization in terms of Jesus’ ministry to the Samaritans. An effect of marginalization within the church is how the English Bible exists in over 400 versions/editions/translations (a best guess) for 500 million people and yet over 2,000 of the world’s languages still do not have one verse. This is because resources (people, prayer and finances) have not been released by the church to engage in this aspect of the *missio Dei*.

Furthermore, missionaries in general and WGA ones in particular, are familiar with the marginalized because they minister amongst some of the poorest and most

neglected people groups on the face of the earth. WGA personnel are well aware of the sense of inadequacy when faced with such human need.

### 8.3 Influences on Vision 2025

WGA's aim to see a Bible translated for each language group in the world that needs it, with a vision to see all the remaining languages have Bible translation started by 2025 (chapter 1). Most of the people who speak these languages are by definition marginalized because their languages are usually a minority within a majority context.

The ecumenical movement has spoken to the issue of marginalization in its 'Affirmation of Mission and Evangelism' document. It acknowledges that mission has gone from the privileged to the marginalized. It understands how past methods "have failed to recognize that mission derives from an understanding of God as the One who is aligned with those consistently pushed to the margins" (CWME 2012:10). Therefore, mission from the margins "seeks to be a countercultural missional movement against missionary approaches and activities which contribute to the oppression, marginalization and the denial of dignity of those on the margins" (CWME 2012:11). This perspective is helpful to WGA because it affirms that marginalized people groups are significant in the *missio Dei* and must be addressed.

As WGA continues its commitment to Vision 2025, it must also bear in mind the various influences (already outlined in this chapter) affecting its vision and ensure that an understanding of its vision includes a solid missiological foundation. The resolution itself has at least nine missiological implications: 1) an awareness of the 'pressing need' that still exists for Bible translation; 2) the adoption of a date as a means of motivating action; 3) a realization that working harder is not what is required; 4) an acceptance that different attitudes and approaches are needed; 5) a focus on building capacity and sustainability is essential; 6) a greater emphasis on partnering internally and externally is needed; 7) an openness to new ways of working; 8) a recommitment to accomplishing the task; and 9) an intentional desire to be led by the Holy Spirit (WBTI 1999:5).

#### 8.3.1 Evangelical influences regarding the Great Commission

At this point it is wise to return to what was outlined earlier regarding the theological influences on the formation of Wycliffe, in particular its roots in U.S. evangelical soil. Concomitant with this is the focus on Matthew 28:18-20 as the primary text of the Great Commission (with some influence from Matthew 24:14 and Mark 16:15).

Evangelical fervor in the era of Wycliffe’s formation meant Christians saw themselves as responsible for bringing the Great Commission to completion, or at least doing their part to accelerate the mission mandate. Evangelicals believed they played a critical role in what God wanted to do. This led to the thinking of a ‘manifest destiny’ – how God had entrusted to North Americans the responsibility of fulfilling the Great Commission.

At this writing, it is 13 years since the inception of Vision 2025 and over 70 years since the formation of WBT. As WGA has become more global in its focus and composition, its leaders have increasingly realized that this North American interpretation and implementation of the Great Commission is not accurately helpful. For example, the Vision 2025 resolution acknowledges that working harder (in the sense of a Western Protestant work ethic) or “doing more of what we are now doing” (WBTI 1999:5) will not accomplish the Vision.

The sense of urgency depicted in the resolution with the specific reference to the year 2025 does have a hint of Mark 16:15 (“the gospel will be preached to the nations and then the end will come”). This is especially true if people use the year 2025 as an eschatological reference point to Jesus’ return and the ushering in of the end of the age as we know it now. However, to make this connection is a serious misreading of the Great Commission texts as well as a trivialization of the complexity of Bible translation into the world’s vernaculars.

Nevertheless, the focus of a particular year against the backdrop of the Great Commission texts does provide a needed sense of urgency since the texts themselves clearly imply that urgency. In fact they these texts provide a biblical basis for this opening statement of the resolution, “motivated by the pressing need...” (WBTI 1999:5).

### 8.3.2 Lingering effects of ‘manifest destiny’

As has already been pointed out, Wycliffe’s founder Townsend, grew up in era of the rapid growth of Bible institutes and faith mission organizations. This was also the zenith of ‘manifest destiny’ and therefore it is worth exploring to see if this continues to affect WGA.

In chapter 2, I noted Townsend’s struggle of accepting non-Westerners into Wycliffe’s ministry. He seemed to believe that if he allowed this proliferation of nationalities, the U.S. church would ignore its responsibility for involvement in Bible translation. This makes perfect sense, given Bosch’s observation: “virtually every

white nation regarded itself as being chosen for a particular destiny” (Bosch 1991:299).

Another factor was the optimism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as expressed through the Edinburgh Missionary Conference 1910. The lesson for us is that whenever the church (and mission agencies) sounds exuberant or triumphant about the progress of the evangelization of the world, this should serve as a warning. We will be wise to look back in history and be reminded of periods of expansion of the gospel followed by periods of recession. Andrew Walls is especially notable in his analysis of church history being a serial progression, rather than one of conquering and holding new territory.

Consequently some degree of caution is needed in analysing the progress WGA has seen in Bible translation (in terms of languages entered, works started, New Testament or full Bibles translated, number of new literates, etc.). Progress is encouraging to the participants, the funders and those who pray for the ministry, but history shows that progress is always uncertain and at times it is an illusion.

## 9 THE *MISSIO DEI* AND VISION 2025

The Vision 2025 resolution uses language that calls for action by using the words, “we embrace... we acknowledge... we urge... we commit ourselves... our desire is...” (WBTI 1999:5). This is the language of intentionality and responsibility by the people within WGA and the global church.

The concluding statement says: “seeking God’s guidance and obeying Him in whatever new directions He may lead” (WBTI 1999:5). I suggest that this is at least a minimal acknowledgement of the *missio Dei*. When the vision was announced there was not a clear reference to the *missio Dei* in discussions leading up to the adoption of the resolution. Missiological reinterpretation of the vision has come more recently, partly through the missiological consultative process starting in 2006 (chapter 2) and even then it has not been clearly articulated within WGA.

In order to correct this oversight, I return to the John 20 text of the Great Commission where the Father sends Jesus and Jesus sends the church, empowered by the Spirit. The passage implies that any involvement in the *missio Dei* that is not Spirit breathed will struggle for effectiveness. While humans are involved in planning and action, it is primarily not about us, our activity or our initiative. Rather it is God’s invitation to his people to participate in his mission. Thus the onus of

accomplishing Vision 2025 (or any vision related to the *missio Dei*) actually belongs to God.

### 9.1 Vision 2025 and influences from the global church

The opening statement of the resolution acknowledges that it is “our trust in God to accomplish the impossible”, which is at least a partial acknowledgement of the *missio Dei*. However, given the pragmatic history of Wycliffe and SIL it is likely that the emphasis was intended or at least interpreted to be more about human involvement and responsibility of the Great Commission than on the sending nature of the Triune God in mission, who invites us to join him. It is worth noting the changing understanding of the *missio Dei* within various parts of the church and how this might influence a missiological reinterpretation of Vision 2025.

Take for example, WCC’s understanding of the *missio Dei* as “God’s sending forth” which has been expanded “to include the participation of the church in the divine mission” (Balta & Kim 2010:23). Consequently mission is reframed from being church-centric to becoming theo-centric. This position is echoed in the opening of the Edinburgh 2010 Common Call where the church is described as a sign and symbol of the reign of God that is called “to witness to Christ today by sharing in God’s mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit” (Edinburgh 2010:np). The report of study group 1 states: “the central foundation for mission is the nature of the triune God, and how God works in the world” (Kim & Anderson 2011:119).

The Lausanne Commitment states that “the mission of God’s people flows from our love for God and for all that God loves” (Birdsall & Brown 2011:6).

Similarly, WCC’s ‘Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism’ states that the Triune God is bound together in love which flows on to all of his creation. Accordingly, “the missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God’s people (Jn 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope” (CWME 2012:2).

This brief overview shows how different parts of the church have been reviewing their interpretation of the *missio Dei*. It follows that this should impact how WGA interprets the accomplishment of Vision 2025 within the context of the *missio Dei*. It is not and cannot be based on human endeavor as the primary factor. Rather it is God through his *missio Dei* inviting our participation that will achieve the vision.

### 9.2 Vision 2025 and the marginalized

Earlier I covered Jesus' concern for the people of Samaria and how they are a motif for marginalized people in general. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom of God was intended to break through barriers of class, religion, gender and reputation. He demonstrated this when he spoke to the woman of Samaria (Jn 4). Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God was often directed at the injustices brought about by poverty and corruption.

The Acts 2 account mentioned earlier in this chapter is a fitting reminder of how the Holy Spirit operates regardless of cultural, social, economic, political and or linguistic barriers.

Newbigin (1989:185) gives a biblical justification for language and therefore Bible translation. The action of Christians throughout church history demonstrates that Bible translation has made a significant difference to the acceptance of the gospel, the growth of the church and the discipling of people. A contemporary development has been the reshaping of Bible translation theory by Nida, which paved the way for translations that have been easier to read and understand. This is a key factor for people who have limited educational backgrounds.

Bediako's description of Christianity being the culturally translatable religion that is "at home in every cultural context" (2004:32) is an important theological-missiological justification for Bible translation. This started with the incarnation because when God became man, "divinity was translated into humanity, as though humanity was the receptor language" (Walls 1996:27). This 'translation' enabled Christ to be a person in first century Jewish Palestine. Through the challenge of the Great Commission, people from all nations are to be made Christ's disciples. Each geographic and cultural context needs to be considered because "the first divine act of translation into humanity... gives rise to a constant succession of new translations" (Walls 1996:27).

Sanneh explores the effects of Bible translation and the spread of the gospel over the past 200 years in Africa and notes that all African languages "may confidently be adopted for God's word, a step that allows missionaries and local agents to collaborate, if sometimes unevenly, in the *missio Dei*" (1989:209). The translatability of the Bible empowers people and societies to be better equipped through their vernaculars to deal with changes brought upon them by outside influences and adapt to their changing contexts. This is possible because "translatability acquired a life of its own, which translators could not control" (Sanneh 1989:206).

Each of these cases justifies a missiological premise to the statement in the Vision 2025 resolution: “a Bible translation project will be in progress for every people group that needs it” (WBTI 1999:5). This caveat “that needs it” is subject to the marginalization and poverty that effects access to other major languages, higher levels of education, and so on. Furthermore, the Triune God places no prohibitions on making his Scriptures available beyond the original languages in which they were recorded. Therefore Christians have the responsibility of ensuring that effective Bible translations (of the kind Nida had in mind) are made available to every people group that still needs them.

### 9.3 Vision 2025 and mission strategy

The earlier overview on the Apostle Paul and his missionary strategies has provided some missiological foundations for mission approaches today, including Vision 2025. One should not claim that Paul’s work was normative in mission strategy although he did follow some methodological principles.

The Vision 2025 resolution does mention strategy: changing the way Wycliffe works; building capacity for sustainable Bible translation programs and Scripture-use activities; giving priority to strengthening present partnerships; forming additional strategic partnerships; and collaborating on creative strategies for each context (WBTI 1999:5).

It seems obvious therefore that some of the Apostle Paul’s methodology can give missiological foundations for strategies for Vision 2025. In fact, some of WGA’s methodologies may compare favorably with some of the Apostle’s methods. For example, WGA’s desire to serve the local church (if one exists) when it is invited into a new language community is similar to the Apostle’s desire to work through the local Jewish synagogue.

Additionally, WGA’s desire to use the Scriptures in the vernacular is similar to Paul’s method of using the Scriptures of the *lingua franca* of the day (the Greek Old Testament). When WGA is invited into a new language community, it identifies with the centre(s) of influence of that community to engage with those who will positively influence its ministry in the future. This is similar to Paul’s engagement with the leaders at centres and cities of influence.

The Apostle Paul also appointed new leaders to continue the ministry after he left. Many aspects of WGA’s work are temporary in nature since it does not seek a presence for an extended time in a community, beyond the goals of the language



program. In some instances WGA personnel do remain in contact with the communities they serve and provide ongoing assistance in educational and Bible training programs. In such cases it is important to train local leaders to manage and lead the Bible translation movement in a language group or country.

The Apostle relied on the Holy Spirit to direct him, resulting sometimes in a change of his plans. WGA and its personnel need to be reminded of the Holy Spirit's role in the *missio Dei* and learn to listen to the direction of God. Paul's methods were holistic from the perspective that the whole person was his focus, not just their spiritual condition, though that was of paramount importance to him. Likewise, WGA's broader aims of literacy, language development, community development, hygiene and health are an example of holistic mission and form important support for effective Bible translation programs.

#### 9.4 Influences from the 21<sup>st</sup> century upon Vision 2025

Earlier reference was made to mission researchers' prediction of how the shift in global Christianity will affect mission strategy. This is also significant in Vision 2025 as global plans for mission are increasingly initiated and led by Christians of the global South and East. When one looks back to the composition of WBTI in 1999 (when Vision 2025 was adopted), it was still a Western mission agency with a smaller component of non-Western nations contributing their resources to Bible translation. In 2012 this has changed significantly, to the extent that 70% of the 110 organizations that make up WGA are from the global South and East.

The question is whether the leaders from organizations from the global South and East within the WGA have influence on the strategy and direction of WGA. Strategy and direction is the responsibility of the board of directors who govern WGA and who hold the leadership team accountable for the implementation of the vision and direction. At present, the board of directors is comprised of ten people, with six coming from the global South and East – or 60%. On the Global Leadership Team of sixteen people, eight come from the global South and East or 50% of the total. Similarly, key roles such as one of the three Associate Directors and three out of the four Area Directors are from the global South and East.

Does this composition on the Board of Directors and leadership team of WGA ensure that it will have strategies that are influenced by Christians from the global South and East? One hopes so. However, it is a challenge that the leaders face and need to address in due course. It will be particularly important to give more leaders

from the global South and East higher-level leadership roles. They will also need to reflect upon the Vision 2025 resolution and interpret it into their leadership contexts.

In chapter 1, I made reference to Engel and Dryness' statement about how U.S. (and perhaps other Western) mission agencies are bound by their home cultures and, in particular, Western pragmatism. The significance of their statement refers to the kind of role the U.S. church will continue to play in developing strategies associated with Vision 2025. Balance will be required, with dialogue from the global South and East, so that their perspectives will have a continuing role in realizing the vision.

## 9.5 Globalization and Vision 2025

In chapter 1, I referred to Escobar's view that mission has become global and requires a paradigm shift on how it is studied today. This change calls for a re-examination of mission theory and practice in light of today's global context.

In my examination of Wycliffe's mission theory I noted the influences of globalization on mission. There are both positive and negative aspects of globalization as the world tries to operate as a single global unit. But most of the world is not exactly 'flat' or interconnected and the consequence has been that those on the linguistic margins of society have become even more marginalized. A more positive view of globalization is possible if viewed as it intersects with the kingdom of God and world evangelization in such a way that it creates a foretaste of an eschatological vision of those appearing before God's throne coming from all ethnic groups, languages and nations.

A noticeable effect of globalization for WGA is reflected by the popular slogan from the Lausanne Movement that mission is from "everyone to everywhere." This describes the Bible translation movement today, exemplified by the composition of WGA, which has over 110 organizations from Europe, the Americas, the Pacific, Asia and Africa.

In the last four years there has been a shift in structure of WBTI that reflects globalization, so that in February 2011, it became the Wycliffe Global Alliance. This new emphasis is necessary because WGA has recognised the importance and influence of the *missio Dei* in WGA's global perspective.

Mission structure and strategies must continue to change to allow and encourage ongoing development, multiple partners and diverse contexts. Traditional planning models were designed to 'build' structures for stalwart, concrete, 'controlled' organizations. However, the metaphor of planning 'for a journey' is more appropriate

for today's mission agencies if they wish to be versatile, flexible and able to facilitate new or complementary movements.

In the context of WGA the term 'Global Alliance' signifies a desire to bring various and multiple partners to the table for creative, collaborative thinking, working and problem solving. WGA was not created to prescribe issues and strategies for others. Nor is it a primarily Western organization wishing to expand its territory worldwide. It is an alliance of like-minded, yet extremely diverse organizations and movements around the world thinking and working under God's direction.

When Vision 2025 was adopted, those who led the discussions and those commissioned with its immediate implementation did not necessarily have a clear vision for WBTI. However, due to commitment to the vision, it became apparent that structural changes were needed. Consequently, in the last five years significant structural changes have been implemented so that the WGA now has a healthier structure with which to engage the global church.

#### 9.6 Influences on Vision 2025 from various streams of the church

The Second Vatican Council opened up the opportunity for greater collaboration and partnership between the Roman Catholic Church and other streams of the worldwide church. There was a new understanding of the origins of the church which "are inextricably linked to Jesus' gathering a community of followers who... were empowered by his Spirit to continue in his mission to serve, proclaim, and realize the coming reign of God" (Gaillardetz 2006:149). The Church acknowledged that there were parts of the body of Christ outside of the Church's structures (LG 8).

This wider collaboration beyond the structures of the Church has included Bible agencies. There are various organizations within WGA that serve Roman Catholic communities. This is an encouraging trend, although it may still be met with some suspicion by those who make up WGA. However, returning to Wycliffe's roots, one is reminded that Townsend's audience in Guatemala was predominantly Roman Catholic. He held the view that his two organizations placed their emphasis on the Bible "rather than on the various interpretations of it" and the members of his organizations "did not represent any of the established ecclesiastical organizations" (Hibberd 2007:6). Even in the early years of Townsend's work in Mexico a representative of the National University in a public address summed up the attitude of Townsend's colleagues: "These young people have brought a message that is far above Catholicism and far above Protestantism. It is a gospel of love and service" (Hibberd 2007:6).

The World Council of Churches through its sponsorship of the Edinburgh Conference 2010 articulated mission as a response to the “abolition of injustice and building of a renewed society” (Balala & Kim 2010:35). This bodes well for the people groups in focus by Vision 2025 because many live in situations of marginalization where even basic human rights are exploited or neglected. A Christian response to such evil is needed and encouraged.

The Lausanne Commitment’s mention of engaging with unreached people groups through a focus on language, culture and Bible translation is also noteworthy. The provision of the translated Scriptures in the form(s) that suit them best is important to the wider evangelical world’s affirmation and participation in Vision 2025.

Finally, Bevans and Schroeder state that mission is modest, exciting and urgent. When Vision 2025 is reinterpreted through this perspective, it should be modest because it is an awareness that it originates from the *missio Dei* – it belongs to God; it is exciting because more people have the opportunity to learn about God’s grace extended to them in a language they can understand and respond to; and finally, it is urgent because human needs are extensive, particularly in people groups that still do not have access to the Bible in a language and medium that suits them best.

## 10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have established missiological foundations that influence and guide the future of WGA. These are essential to WGA because it refuses to operate in a vacuum outside or separate to the churches that participate in the movement.

The sources of these foundations are multifaceted. From a biblical perspective they have come from: 1) the teachings of Jesus, in particular the Great Commission texts that focus on his ministry to the marginalized Samaritans, and 2) the mission methodology of the Apostle Paul, including gleanings from some of his reoccurring strategies that he used during the course of his three missionary journeys.

From a theological perspective these foundations have come from: 1) influences in church history regarding the importance of language, the translatability of the gospel message, and Bible translation; 2) missional reflection coming from various places; and 3) implications of globalization for the church and mission agencies.

An outcome of the Edinburgh Conference 2010 is an understanding of the “collaborative nature of the being and life of God in Trinity [who takes] the risky

course of partnership” with his followers (who come from very different theological and social backgrounds) and to them he “eventually entrusts the task of global mission” (Balía & Kim 2010:136).

The application of these foundations has been important to the examination of Vision 2025. This examination has also affirmed the direction outlined in the resolution which remains crucial for WGA. At the same time it has highlighted areas that need further reflection additional development in light of the *missio Dei*. In the following chapter I turn to some of the implications for future leadership and WGA.

## CHAPTER 5 – LEADERSHIP FOUNDATIONS

### 1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I outline leadership principles, including cultural influences that affect how organizations like WGA are led. I explore fundamentals from theories of leadership and management that prove helpful in formulating a leadership foundation that undergirds an organization like WGA. I survey other international mission agencies to find out what influences their organizational structure. And I look at recent events that have shaped leadership and organizational development within WGA. From this input, I make conclusions to guide WGA's leaders and how it develops a global leadership model for the future.

### 2 THE CHANGING NATURE OF LEADERSHIP

#### 2.1 The role of leaders

Many leadership development programs assume that leadership is “the single most critical factor in the success or failure of institutions” (Vecchio 1997:12). There is also a broader impact and that is in the context of nations. Micah Amukoble states that in his country of Kenya, “misuse of power, impunity, and corruption by the ruling class at the expense of the population are the order of the day” (2012:3).

In determining how to have effective leaders in a local, national and global context, a starting point is to define the term ‘leadership’. However, this is not straightforward since there are a plethora of definitions, perspectives and assumptions on the topic.

The diversity of opinion enables one to look at the term quite broadly. For example, Bernard Bass notes how in the Old Testament God, as supreme leader of the Israelites, “clarified, instructed, and directed what was to be done through the words of the Prophets and arranged for rewards for compliance and punishment for disobedience to the laws and rules he handed down to Moses” (Vecchio 1997:8).

Some definitions of leadership are quite grand in their perspective. Roger Parrott sees the role of the leader as “stretching boundaries and securing territory [as they] envision, probe, and then explore new opportunities” (2009:171).

Other definitions focus on issues like influence and social impact. Amukoble, for example, views an effective leader as one who uses their “ability to influence others

without resorting to threats” (2012:7). Robert Kelly sees leadership as “the process of influencing an organized group toward accomplishing its goals” (Wren 1995:43). On the other hand, J. Oswald Sanders (1967:19) claims a leader is the one who influences someone else. A similar view is that a leader is someone who can exert social influence on others and thereby accomplish a common goal (van Vugt & Ahuja 2010:14).

Leaders must involve their followers and this is done best by gaining their trust through persuasion or by the good example of the leader (Dickson 2011:40). Max De Pree says the mark of a great leader is found in their followers: “Are they reaching their potential? Are they learning? Serving? Do they achieve the required results? Do they change with grace? Manage conflict?” (1989:10). Leaders who communicate to followers their worth and potential will subsequently enable their followers to achieve their full potential (Covey 2004:98).

Another perspective views leadership as “inspiring others to contribute their best efforts toward a goal” (Dickson 2011:24) or stated differently, it “involves influencing other people to accomplish certain tasks or goals” (REC 2005:24). John Dickson sees leadership as more of an art than a science because it “tends to be flexible, depending on the goals of the organization, and intuitive, depending on the personalities involved” (2011:24).

Some researchers distinguish between ‘natural leadership’ and ‘spiritual leadership’. While the two share much in common, the latter exhibits unique characteristics because the spiritual leader’s influence is not by the power of their personality alone, but by that personality as it empowered by the Holy Spirit (Sanders 1967:20). Furthermore, spiritual leadership or “faith-based leadership is more about who we are [in Christ] than what we do” (Robinson 2008:4).

Some who explore how leaders lead in the context of the *missio Dei* suggest that such leaders must be “fervent disciples of Jesus Christ, gifted by the Holy Spirit, with a passion to bring glory to God” (Plueddemann 2009:15). Their gift of leadership is demonstrated as they focus, harmonize and develop the gifts of others for the glory of God and his kingdom.

A question to consider is whether the business world offers help to leaders in God’s mission. Eddie Gibbs notes a shift is taking place in leadership in the business world towards “humility, a servant attitude, spirituality and consistently upheld values” (2005:22). These, he says, are consistent with biblical themes on the subject and therefore leaders in the church and mission agency context should thoughtfully

consider leadership definitions from the business world since these are “symbiotic... rather than a class of opposites” with their Christian counterparts (2005:22).

Another question is whether leadership is the same as management? Harvard Business School professor John Kotter says “leadership and management are two distinctive and complimentary systems of action [and] both are necessary for the success in an increasingly complex and volatile business environment” (Vecchio 1997:24). Management focuses on bringing order to complexity and involves flexibility and adaptation to the changing environment (Chemers 1997:3).

A further question is whether leaders are made or born? Some think that leadership is learned because it is more about “character, the soft skills, interpersonal relationships and communication, community building, visioning, and empowering others” (REC 2005:50). Researchers note how successful leaders almost always began leading during their twenties and thirties. They learned to take risks and in particular they learned from their successes and failures (Vecchio 1997:32).

Placing new leaders is an important strategy for the health of any organization. Current leaders must therefore identify and develop future leaders (De Pree 1989:12). On the job learning is a critical way to develop a broad range of leadership skills. It also helps people realize how difficult it is for leaders to produce change within a given context (Vecchio 1997:32). As an organization develops new leaders it should do so based on the emerging leader’s aptitude to “enhance an organization’s performance” (Vecchio 1997:60). The success of any leader is critical for an organization because when leadership fails at any time and any stage it robs the organization of its vitality (Robinson 2008:4).

One more factor is a leader’s personality and context. Gibbs warns that it is unwise to “simply transpose one style of leadership from one particular time, location and cultural setting and apply it to another” (2005:30). Caution should be followed in assuming a leader, such as in the Bible or in history, uses a leadership style that is immediately applicable to a contemporary situation.

## 2.2 Contemporary challenges for leaders

In order for leaders to be effective they should focus on three dynamics: 1) projecting an image of competence, especially trustworthiness by virtue of their values and behaviour; 2) developing a relationship with their followers such that they enable them to make meaningful contributions to the goals of the organization; and 3)



rallying resources of everyone in their organization to fulfil the organization's needs (Chemers 1997:173).

A vital factor affecting an organization's survival and adaptability is in its ability to lead and manage change in national, regional and global environments. Change demands the highest levels of leadership must deal with complex choices about the organization's strategy (Vecchio 1997:48). Leaders must overcome complacency because people can be fearful of the consequences of change. This calls for a sense of urgency which is an ambitious determination to push beyond obstacles and create an emotional response to change. As Kotter says, "a true sense of urgency is a set of feelings: a compulsive determination to *move [forward] now*" (2008:45).

Leaders with vision enjoy the challenge of big ideas in order to protect the organization from failing and create a safe place for the best ideas to flourish. A leader with vision must create "a rational case directed toward the mind into an experience that is very much aimed at the heart" (Kotter 2008:47).

A critical skill for a leader to master is problem solving. Determining how a leader responds to challenging circumstances is a good indicator of how the person is doing in this area. Consequently, if a leader habitually reacts negatively to a situation by seeing it as a threat rather than an opportunity, it is a good sign that the person should no longer be in that leadership position (Gibbs 2005:138).

In Western contexts, leaders are raised in a world that prizes instant results. This affects the church environment, too, because it may believe that immediate results trump lasting change. However, genuine transformation is gained by taking the longer path and not relying upon short-term solutions. Jesus exhibited the ultimate example of "longview [sic] leadership" (Parrott 2009:12) because his focus was set on eternity while he was on earth. He evaded simple solutions and solved problems in ways that would have a long-term impact on his disciples as they developed into leaders.

### 2.3 Leadership traits

Leadership can be influenced by many factors, including but not limited to, the personality of the leader. An effective leader always has "some observable ability that commands respect from the team" (Dickson 2011:29). The leader can shape the behaviour of the group through various forms of persuasion and by exerting power to achieve goals (Vecchio 1997:17).

A question is whether there is a common set of traits in determining success in leaders? The answer is complex. Starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the ‘great man theory’ said that great leaders possess some special trait that propels them to positions of prominence regardless of the circumstances. In other words, there was something inherent in a person who was a leader that “provided the unique qualifications for that person’s ascendancy” (Chemers 1997:19).

A trait common to successful leaders is a stable, personal disposition (Chemers 1997:26). This trait is deployed by: 1) projecting an image that is consistent with what observers’ expect; 2) successfully creating and sustaining motivated and competent followers; and 3) the capacity for using personnel for the success of the mission (Chemers 1997:27).

Other research has identified these traits: 1) drive or demonstrating motivation and leading with ambition and energy; 2) portraying a desire to influence and lead others; 3) honesty, that is the correspondence between words and actions; 4) self-confidence in both decision-making and gaining the trust of others; 5) demonstrating cognitive ability by gathering, integrating, and interpreting large amounts of information; and 6) making the most of one’s knowledge of the company or the organization (Wren 1995:134-140).

Some suggest that leadership is “fundamentally about forming character and living a life shaped by virtue” (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:118). Others add that humility is essential because it “enhances persuasiveness” (Dickson 2011:41). Other desired traits include charisma, creativity and flexibility (Wren 1995:141).

Not all leadership theorists agree that there are universal traits, noting that some leaders are effective in some situations but not others. Sometimes failure in one situation produces strength in a different situation. The reason being, effective leadership is “dependent on a subtle set of interpersonal relationships rooted in a particular context of task and authority” (Chemers 1997:32).

## 2.4 Leadership typology

There is a diverse range of types of leadership. Internal and external influences cause leaders to act or operate in certain ways. In “high control” situations the leader exhibits moderate to high levels of authority to achieve the task at hand with the group who are cooperative or supportive. In such situations a “task-oriented” leader feels more at ease because goals are more likely to be met. Meanwhile the “task-motivated” leader keeps the group moving and emphasises performance and goal

attainment. In contrast the “relationship-motivated” leader is more concerned with maintaining harmony within the group and less interested in the task at hand (Chemers 1997:37).

The “moderate control” leader may be part of a supportive group in an unstructured task. Conversely, the task may be well organized but have interpersonal relational issues to deal with. While the “relationship-oriented” leader may be prone to react to ambiguity, the “task-motivated” leader may be less effective because of their focus on success. The “goal-directed” leader may choose the first solution that seems feasible. If the “task-oriented” leader has a well-structured and clear task but an unenthusiastic group, the leader is inclined to push ahead ignoring interpersonal relations, or attempts to control the group with directives or threats (Chemers 1997:38).

The “low control” situation occurs when the leader does not understand the task well and in addition has to work with a hostile and uncooperative group. The “task-motivated” leader must provide at least a minimal amount of organization to get the group moving. “Relationship-motivated” leaders may end up without much progress because they wish to satisfy the whole group. On the other hand, the “task-motivated” leader may get the job done but not necessarily with good engagement from the group (Chemers 1997:38).

Another type is the “transactional” leader who relies on a “social exchange” with the group (Chemers 1997:65). The leader provides the vision for the task and gives rewards to the group for their performance. These include recognition (such as pay increases) and advancement to those who perform well. In return the group becomes more responsive to the leader allowing the leader to use appropriate influence. In summary, this type of leadership is an exchange of give-and-take in which the leader’s aptitude to persuade is based upon an authority extended by the group (Chemers 1997:66).

A type that Robert Vecchio says is relevant today is the “SuperLeader [sic]” (1997:412). This should not be confused with the ‘strong-man’ leader (who is autocratic and relies on their exceptional strengths). Such leaders are ‘super’ because they have the ability and wisdom of many people through ably harnessing the abilities of the group. Not only is that power distributed more appropriately between the leader and the group, but the group also develops skills that are necessary for their work. The goal is for the group to learn to lead themselves and therefore make a more meaningful contribution to the organization as a whole.

Another pertinent type is the “transformational” leader (which is virtually the opposite of the ‘boss at the top’ type) who broadens and challenges Individuals in the group to move beyond their self-interests to what is best for the whole group (Vecchio 1997:320). The leader relies on some charisma, proves they are trustworthy and capably leads the group to achieve the vision (Chemers 1997:86). The leader intellectually stimulates the group to raise questions about the status quo and to think interdependently and creatively to find new solutions (Chemers 1997:65). Consequently the group becomes more highly motivated and performs beyond expectations of themselves or their leader (Wren 1995:104).

Robert Greenleaf revolutionized leadership theory with the introduction of the type called “servant leader.” Greenleaf believed that a culture of servant leadership within an organization would enable it to thrive (Vecchio 1997:431). This type does seem to be a contradiction because a servant is associated with being obedient and submissive. In reality, the “servant attitude of the leader is essential in inspiring a following and giving followers a sense of belonging” (Amukoble 2012:11). This is because a group wants to follow a leader who serves first, rather than the opposite, the person “who is leader first” and depends on a constant need for power (Vecchio 1997:434).

Christian leaders adapt the servant leader model to make it based upon Jesus as the ultimate role model for a leader. This is because “a servant’s heart grows out of time spent with Jesus and his teachings, and from doing what he said to do” (REC 2005:38). Intimacy with Christ should counteract self-interests rising from a leader’s ego.

Another type is the “shepherd leader.” Tim Laniak says this is “one of the primary metaphors by which biblical authors conceptualized leadership” (2006:21). In Far Eastern animal husbandry the role of the shepherd is to protect, provide, and guide. It follows that the role of pastor is based on being a “shepherd of God’s flock” (1 Pe5:2). Like a shepherd, the leader has a variety of responsibilities with some that are constantly negotiated. This style is a compassionate use of authority through its “diverse and changing ‘role set’” because the responsibilities are constantly reassessed by the changing needs of the group the leader’s care (Laniak 2006:247).

A type for the church and mission agency alike is the “missional leader” who finds their direction and agenda from the Triune God and “receives their mission by grace” (REC 2005:69). This is fundamentally the opposite to the heroic type of leader and their charismatic personality who assumes “success through the power of personality or strategic skill” (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:27). Instead the missional leader has

“the capacity to cultivate an environment that releases the missional imagination of the people of God” (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:21).

## 2.5 The use of power

The use of power is a fundamental assumption of the effectiveness of leaders. Without some degree of power a leader finds it difficult to manage the group. However, the notion of power is somewhat intangible and needs close scrutiny. A positive way to define it is the “ability to change the behaviour of others; [or] the ability to cause others to perform actions that they might not otherwise perform” (Vecchio 1997:71). Influence is similar to power but it is more subtle and it can be weaker and less reliable than power.

Leadership theorists have defined positive and negative uses of power: 1) “rewarding power” gives results by rewarding the group when it achieves positive objectives; 2) “coercive power” produces fear in the group with the risk of retribution if objectives are not met; 3) “legitimate power” occurs when the group accepts their leader’s authority and direction; 4) “referent power” is when the group follows the leader because of the leader’s charm, charisma and success; and 5) “expert power” happens when the leader uses their expertise, knowledge or talent in a given area and the group responds accordingly (Vecchio 1997:74-5).

## 3. LEADERSHIP IN THE CHANGING GLOBAL CONTEXT

The leadership theories, traits and styles explored so far have a Western association about them. This is to be expected because of the plethora of researchers located in the West where leadership and management theories have been constructed for decades. However, as noted by Martin Chemers, “organizational theories developed in the West, primarily in the United States, are not always applicable to other cultures” (1997:119).

### 3.1 Leading global organizations

Researchers have identified four types of organizations: 1) “ethnocentric corporations” that are “home country oriented.” They have a monocultural philosophy and find it difficult to communicate in different languages or in accepting cultural differences in the group; 2) “polycentric corporations” have quasi-independent subsidiaries in various locations in the home country and in various host countries. The host-country governments often influence how the organization must operate; 3) “regio-centric corporations” share common functions where the regional

headquarters manages the regional plan, local research and development, public relations, and other matters. The world headquarters manages strategy, financing, selection of top-level management and defines the corporate culture; and 4) “geocentric corporations” create an integrated system worldwide while allowing for each part of the organization to make its own unique contribution (Harris, Moran & Moran 2004:26).

Globalization places increasing pressure on organizations to be more effective in leadership and management of human and other resources. There is also a need for groups to “draw their talent quickly from different functions, locations and organizations” (Duart & Snyder 2001:3). The virtual world of interconnectivity creates greater collaboration across more diverse contexts with groups of people. They must understand how to bring out the best in the group which is spread “across functional areas and national cultures.” They need to know how to harness technology as their “primary means of communicating and collaborating” (Duart & Snyder 2001:4).

In order to be successful in the globally networked environment, leaders need to adjust their skills or acquire new skills and they must: 1) remain focused on the mission not the organization while forgoing areas “such as control over program implementation, funding, and recognition”; 2) exhibit trust within the network rather than trying to control it. They share the same values and do not have to “try to manage for every contingency”; and 3) lead their organizations “within a constellation of equal, interconnected partners, rather than as hubs at the center [sic] of their nonprofit universes.” This enables them to “develop more holistic, coordinated, and realistic solutions to social issues than traditional nonprofit hubs” (Wei-Skillern & Marciano 2008:40-41).

Leading in the global context requires specific competencies. Some researchers identify these as being critical: 1) a respect of cultural diversity and the ability to manage changes and differences by learning from a variety of people and situations that are quite different to the leader’s own culture; 2) an understanding of the impact of cultural factors in cross-cultural communication, including both verbal and non-verbal aspects; 3) a willingness to apply cultural awareness in helpful relationships within the group between people of different cultures; 4) an awareness that management approaches are “deeply rooted in culture” and therefore are not easily transferred from one culture to another; and 5) a realization that “cultural synergy” occurs when “similarities and common concerns” from different cultures are integrated into a comprehensive whole to attain a mutual goal (Harris, Moran & Moran 2004:26).

Leading a multi-cultural organization requires flexibility as leaders shift their approach according to the context. Groups within such organizations must be more flexible since they are increasingly multi-cultural themselves and work under leaders who may have different cultural expectations of the group (Plueddemann 2009:152). Leaders, too, have to adjust since groups are also “increasingly self-managed” (Vecchio 1997:412). Consequently in a complex globalized multi-cultural context, the leader needs to connect “the dots between isolated pieces of information” (Gibbs 2005:43) by collaborating with people who have the collective resources to deal with the challenge. The leader needs to learn how to “think in a lateral rather than linear mode [to] work across disciplines” (Gibbs 2005:43). Leaders also need to experiment with structures that are flat and decentralized so they can respond quickly to new opportunities and challenges.

### 3.2 The effects of culture on leadership styles

Geert Hofstede, well known for his research on how culture affects management theories, defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group or category of people from another” (Vecchio 1997:477). Culture affects leadership on a number of levels. On one hand is the “high-context” culture where people pay particular attention to the world around them and they view their physical setting as particularly significant. Therefore harmonious relationships are very important. They value the group more than the individual and “cooperation is preferred over competition” (Plueddemann 2009:79). Such cultures can be found in Asia, the Pacific, Middle East and Latin America.

On the other hand, in a “low-context” culture people are most concerned about explicit communication and ideas. The context of the ideas is not as important as particular concepts, principles, abstractions and theories. Within such cultures “individuality and competition are valued, and change is usually seen as a good thing” (Plueddemann 2009:79). This is the characteristic of most Western cultures.

The difference between high-context and low-context cultures may arise through hidden messages. For example, low-context communication can seem cold and uncaring to people from high-context cultures. Conversely, high-context communication can seem baffling or even dishonest to low-context people. The low-context culture deals with a conflict through direct communication because it tends to speak the truth directly rather trying to be sensitive to relationships (Plueddemann 2009:81). On the other hand, in a high-context culture such directness brings shame because truth is communicated in subtle forms since the ultimate aim is to safeguard relationships (Plueddemann 2009:81).

How power is used in various cultures is important and includes how people view power in leadership and what forms are legitimate and desired. According to Hofstede there are four dimensions that affect the use of power in a culture:

1) “Power distance” is the degree to which power in an organization is unequally distributed with the objective that everyone in the group has their rightful place. Societies with high power-distance assume that the leader has more authority, respect and status symbols. The leader is assumed to make unilateral decisions that are obeyed without question. This value is common in the Far Eastern, Near Eastern, Arabian, and Latin American contexts. In a low power-distance culture people “prefer a consultative, participative or democratic decision-making style” (Plueddemann 2009:95). This is found in most Western cultures because equality is a positive value. However, in reality “all societies are unequal [and] some are more unequal than others” (Vecchio 1997:477).

2) “Uncertainty avoidance” is the extent to which a group prefers structured over unstructured situations. It is the degree to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations. In a structured society there are clear rules for behaviour. In a less structured society where uncertainty avoidance is strong, what is different is considered dangerous. In societies with weak uncertainty avoidance, what is different is interesting or worth exploring (Vecchio 1997:478).

3) “Individualism versus collectivism”: The former is a loosely knit social framework in which people take care of themselves and their families. Individualistic cultures include the U.S., U.K., Nordic and Germanic regions, view one’s identity in the individual and their achievements. Accordingly every person has the right to develop their own initiative and independence. On the other hand with collectivism there is a close knit social context where people distinguish between in-groups and out-groups. They assume their in-group (i.e. relatives or clan) will look after them and in exchange they owe absolute loyalty to their group. Collectivistic societies value harmony and are especially found in the Latin American and the Far East (Vecchio 1997:478).

4) “Masculinity versus Femininity”: The former refers to values in society that are stereotypically roles for men (Chemers 1997:118). Such societies prize assertiveness, money and material things and are less motivated to care for others. These are be found in Japan and Anglo, Germanic, Latin America contexts because “ambition and achievement are desirable; and big and fast is good” (Chemers 1997:118). Femininity is associated with women’s roles and gentle values like



“quality of life, maintaining warm personal relationships, service, care for the weak, and solidarity” (Vecchio 1997:478). High femininity societies include the Nordic region and Thailand where service to others is emphasized and the small and slow is valued (Chemers (1997:118).

### 3.3 Leading in cross-cultural contexts

Most leadership principles are culturally bound and become obstacles when applied cross-culturally. The prevalence of Western leadership models makes it problematic to define how leadership should work in a cross-cultural context. Nevertheless, theorists have sought to identify characteristics that enable leaders to be more effective in cross-cultural situations.

A crucial element is learning to build trust, although this is admittedly complex when cultural views clash. Sherwood Lingenfelter (2008:21) says that leading in cross-cultural situations requires the leader to inspire and build trust amongst people of different cultures so they willingly and joyfully serve together. This view turns on its head any notion of leadership being concerned simply about achieving a task, including attaining a particular vision, meeting goals and being productive.

Leading cross-culturally is not achieved through structures or social processes alone, but is influenced by how a leader lives, respects people, accepts differences, and engages people in ways that inspire trust. This is especially significant for multicultural teams who come from different cultures and nationalities, common to the global context. However, even when individuals from various cultural contexts may be in the same place at the same time, “this does not mean that anyone is actually sharing their ‘world’.” It could be just “a peaceful co-existence [with] minimal cooperation” for the sake of something quite basic (such as using public transportation in a city) (Bevans & Schroeder 2011:72).

The goal of leading across cultures is to achieve a “mutually enriching and challenging relationship of understanding, acceptance, and care” (Bevans & Schroeder 2011:72) which leads to deeper relationship with people from different cultures. This is “a mutual multidirectional movement between cultures” (Bevans & Schroeder 2011:72) which is indeed what intercultural implies.

Cross-cultural leadership should also integrate intercultural thinking. This is similar to but also different from multicultural thinking. Multicultural interaction recognizes and respects the differences and uniqueness of each culture and adjusts accordingly. Intercultural thinking involves interdependency, supporting one another, and seeking

unity through inclusion. Although it respects cultural differences it appreciates common values by negotiating through a fusion of ideas. There must also be a willingness to adjust certain beliefs, customs and habits in the light of wiser and more fitting alternatives. Leaders in this type of context know how to draw out unspoken feelings and anxieties which act as “a powerful, dominating control mechanism” (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:98). When someone is enabled to speak about an experience or a feeling this can lead to deeper relationships and transformation of the individual and community.

### 3.4 The specific context of Korean leadership

Leadership in the South Korean context is of interest because within a relatively short amount of time the country has become the second largest missionary sending nation, passing the U.K. This missionary movement is similar in its zeal to the U.S. evangelical mission movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, South Korea has produced an abundance of mission leaders who have a “strong spiritual dynamic” (Bonk 2011:14).

Korean culture is influenced by paying proper respect (called *chongyong*). It is a high power-distance context without roots from Western culture, but rather it is influenced by traditional Confucian principles that continue to subconsciously shape every relationship. Koreans “show exceptional respect toward their parents, teachers and superiors who have legitimate authority over them” (De Mente 2012:67). Leaders therefore assume they will always be esteemed by their followers who are to bow “at all appropriate times” and address their leaders with their titles and other language of honour (De Mente 2012:67).

This cultural respect of elders and those in authority also affects Christian Korean organizations and it is common for these to be led by ordained ministers. This is significant because “ordained ministers are ascribed absolute spiritual authority over their congregation or organization” (Bonk 2011:189). However, this can lead to an environment that lacks accountability to any kind of governing body.

### 3.5 The leader as a reflective practitioner

Leaders in a globalized context of the *missio Dei* must serve in a rapidly changing world – in social, cultural, economic, political and religious environments, and at local, national and global levels. Christian leaders serve under God’s purposes and character which should flow out of their intimate relationship with the Triune God and

his word. One could call this 'leading at a higher level'. Consequently, leaders must take time to reflect on the contexts in which they lead.

Leaders in the *missio Dei* according to William Taylor should learn to be reflective practitioners which he defines as, "women and men of both action and study; rooted in the Word of God and the church of Christ; passionately obedient to the fullness of the Great Commandment and Great Commission; globalized in their perspective; yet faithful citizens of their own cultures" (2000:1).

The reflective practitioner's goal is to demonstrate an integrated nature – action and study that is local and global, yet Christ-centred and biblical. A biblical example is Apostle Paul who functioned as "evangelist, missionary, church planter, team leader, strategist, missiologist, theologian, and author" (Taylor 2000:520). The Apostle demonstrates a combination of action and reflection, as well as study and strategy.

Leading at a higher level by being a reflective practitioner requires more than just understanding the big issues facing one's context. Such leaders have to be rooted in the permanent, intimate relationship with the incarnate word, Jesus, who affirmed the place of contemplative prayer and reflection. Henri Nouwen states that "Christian leaders have to learn to listen again and again to the voice of love and to find there the wisdom and courage to address whatever issue presents itself to them" (1989:45). Courage is critical for a leader because it enables them to overcome adversity by standing firm for what they believe, admitting their mistakes and successfully battling inner turmoil or external opposition (Gibbs 2005:136).

John Dewey popularized the concept of reflective practitioners in the educational field. He believed that reflective thinking should be active and persistent, considering carefully any assumptions about knowledge to make sure there were grounds to support it. The reflective practitioner critically analyses practice as they respond to every day practices through "a reflective lens" and therefore they need to "create time to enable reflectivity to take place and for new ideas to emerge" (Van Wynen 2008:3).

Leaders who are reflective practitioners are also lifelong learners who are continually studying global and local contexts in order to identify opportunities and challenges. They are continually growing in "self-knowledge and awareness" (REC 2005:37) while developing their leadership capacities. They are growing in their awareness of cultural and social factors that are affecting their context. This requires two kinds of interconnected skills: 1) learning to ask new kinds of questions in order to "see beneath the surface... to deeper levels of meaning"; and 2) empowering people by

letting the biblical narratives “ask their own questions” of the context (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:176).

### 3.6 Leading change in the global context

The global context requires greater understanding of how to lead change. Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk describe two kinds of change – discontinuous and continuous. Discontinuous change is “disruptive and unanticipated; it creates situations that challenge our assumptions [and it] is dominant in periods of history that *transform* the culture forever, tipping it into something new” (2006:7). In such situations “leaders suddenly find that the skills and capacities in which they were trained are of little use in addressing new circumstances (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:8). Therefore working harder with the same skills will not make a difference because, in reality, new skills are required.

In contrast, continuous change assumes a situation is more predictable and that change is an outcome of what has gone before and can be “expected, anticipated and managed” (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:7). Contexts of discontinuous change can assume that the greatest obstacle facing mature leaders might not be in “learning new insights and skills but in unlearning what they consider to be tried and true” (Gibbs 2005:25).

The challenge for a leader is not necessarily just between what is discontinuous and continuous, but with the speed or rate of change which is occurring. The reality is a constant adjustment of every system with new changes happening, new adjustments and then rebalancing the situation. These last, however, for shorter and shorter periods. The widespread use of the internet and social media has introduced discontinuous realities in many aspects of life and work. However, parts of society are learning to rapidly absorb the changes to the extent that they are the new continuous change. Therefore discontinuous change becomes the new base line and society adjusts its methods to integrate it. This calls for diligent pursuit of identifying and holding on to core items that never change. It also means it is important to decide what is not changing or what is not discontinuous, but rather what is undesirable.

In general, leading change requires new ways of thinking and acting from what has been done in the past. This calls for a mindset that is receptive to recognizing the need for ongoing change. This makes it easier to also recognize the need for, or appearance of, disruptive or discontinuous change. Otherwise leaders may get caught in “a false sense of security” (Gibbs 2005:35).

## 4 LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS OF INTERNATIONAL MISSION AGENCIES

Missions' researcher Patrick Johnstone identifies the ten largest interdenominational and international agencies as, "AIM, Campus Crusade, Gospel for Asia, Navigators, New Tribes Mission, OM, SIM, WEC, Wycliffe Bible Translators and YWAM" (2011: 64). I used this list for a survey about international mission leadership and organizational structure, with the exception of Gospel for Asia because it does not send out cross-cultural workers. Instead, I added three other large international mission agencies to the list to survey – Interserve, OMF International and Pioneers International.

The survey was conducted using information available on the public website of each agency. The reason was to identify what each agency said about itself to the general public. The data tabulated about each agency includes the date each was founded, who its founders were and their country of origin, the number of their personnel and where their international headquarters is located. It is worth noting that most agencies, while stating they were international, did not reveal publically the location of their international headquarters. In these cases they provided the address of their largest sending organization which usually was their U.S. office.

1) Africa Inland Mission (AIM) was started through Peter Cameron Scott (1867-1896), a Scottish-American missionary who spent two years in the Congo before returning to Scotland in 1892 due to serious illness. Once he was well, he recruited eight people from the Pennsylvania Bible Institute to return to Africa with him. They arrived in Kenya in August 1895. Eventually the work expanded to other parts of eastern Africa. In addition to evangelization they ran clinics, hospitals, leprosariums, schools, publishing operations, radio programs, a school for missionary children (called Rift Valley Academy), as well as an aviation arm (called AIM Air). Currently, AIM claims to be the largest interdenominational mission that works exclusively with Africans and people of the nearby Indian Ocean islands. It has more than 1,000 missionaries serving in 22 African countries and the nearby islands. The mission does not give details about its international office, but through personal communication with its leader I found that they have an international office in Bristol, U.K. ([www.aimint.org](http://www.aimint.org)).

2) Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCC, known as CRU or Cru within the U.S.) was founded as a campus ministry in 1951 at the University of California (Los Angeles) by Americans Bill and Vonette Bright. It has since developed into one of the largest international Christian missions in the world. Its focus is to minister not only to

students, but to serve inner cities, the military, athletes, political and business leaders, the entertainment industry, and families. It currently has more than 27,000 staff, 225,000 volunteers and it works in 190 countries. Its international headquarters is co-located with its U.S. office in Orlando, Florida ([www.cru.org](http://www.cru.org)).

3) Interserve International was founded in 1852 by a group of British women. They had seen the needs of women in India who had no access to education, medical care, or the message of Christ. The scope of Interserve today is the integration of word and deed in the contexts where it serves. Its personnel have professional skills, such as in medicine, theological and general education and business. The mission began with the name Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship (BMMF) but changed in 1987 to Interserve when it moved its International Office to Cyprus. Currently Interserve has over 800 missionaries from many nations and works in more than 30 countries. It does not list its international office on its website but through personal communication with its leader I was informed that its international office is located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia ([www.interserve.org](http://www.interserve.org)).

4) The Navigators was started in 1933 by the American Dawson Trotman. His aim was to help Christians mature spiritually and to help others 'navigate' through life. Those who serve with the ministry have an evangelistic passion to see those who do not know Jesus deepen their relationship with him. They also have a commitment to train followers to continue to mature as disciples of Christ. Today, the ministry has 4,600 staff from 70 nationalities. Its world headquarters and U.S. offices are co-located at Colorado Springs, Colorado ([www.navigators.org](http://www.navigators.org)).

5) New Tribes Mission (NTM) was founded in 1942 by Paul Fleming and five others with the goal of reaching people who had no access to the Gospel. This is still their vision as they seek to "plant churches where there are none." Currently more than 1,500 missionaries serve around the world in over 16 countries and there are training programs in more than a dozen countries to prepare missionaries for service. The mission does not give details of an international office but states that its U.S. office is located in Sanford (near Orlando), Florida ([www.usa.ntm.org](http://www.usa.ntm.org)).

6) Operation Mobilisation (OM) traces its roots to a story from the 1950s when American Dorothea Clapp gave the Gospel of John to a student she was praying for and who later became a Christian at a Billy Graham crusade. The young man was George Verwer who founded Operation Mobilisation. During college Verwer and three friends were concerned about the spiritual needs of Mexico and in 1957, during their summer break, they went to distribute Gospels and other Christian literature. In 1960 Verwer and his friends went to Spain to share the gospel and distribute

Christian literature. Their goal was to evangelize Europe and they shared their vision with churches, resulting in hundreds of Christians responding and the creation of Operation Mobilisation. Currently over 5500 people serve with OM and they work in over 110 countries. The mission does not provide details of its international office. However, through personal communication with its leader I learned that their international office is in Carlisle, U.K. ([www.om.org](http://www.om.org)).

7) OMF International (OMF) started in 1865 as the China Inland Mission through the vision and leadership of James Hudson Taylor of the U.K. When all foreign missionaries were expelled from China in the early 1950s, the mission redirected its ministry to the millions of people of East Asia. The name was officially changed to Overseas Missionary Fellowship in 1964 and later to OMF International. Today the mission helps to place Christians with professional skills in China and other Asian countries. Their goal is to see indigenous, biblical church movements in East Asia where indigenous people become missionaries to other groups. The mission currently has 1,300 workers from 30 nationalities, with its headquarters in Singapore ([www.omf.org](http://www.omf.org)).

8) Pioneers International was founded in 1976 by America Ted Fletcher. It has 2,400 missionaries serving in 95 countries who are part of 200 teams planting churches amongst 130 people groups. The mission's goal is to see God glorified amongst people who are physically and spiritually isolated. Several missions have merged into Pioneers over the past decade, including Asia Pacific Christian Mission, the South Seas Evangelical Mission, Action Partners and Arab World Ministries. Pioneers does not provide details of an international office, rather it only gives contact details for its U.S. office which is in Orlando, Florida ([www.pioneers.org](http://www.pioneers.org)).

9) SIM International (SIM) was founded in 1893 by Canadians Walter Gowans and Roland Bingham and American Thomas Kent. Their vision was to evangelize the 60 million unreached people of sub-Saharan Africa. In time the mission expanded its work beyond Sudan and Africa but it kept the acronym SIM as its official name. Since 2000 it has used the trade name "Serving In Mission". SIM is an amalgamation of many other mission agencies over the past 100 years and its ministry has grown from Africa into Asia and South America. SIM has 1,800 missionaries from 37 countries working in 43 countries. The mission does not provide details of its international office. However, through personal communication with its leader I learned that their international office is in Fort Mills, South Carolina nearby to their U.S. office in Charlotte, North Carolina ([www.sim.org](http://www.sim.org)).

10) WEC International (WEC): Charles Thomas (C.T.) Studd was a pioneer missionary who wanted to evangelise the heart of Africa. He believed it to be the neediest part of the unevangelized world at that time and in 1913 he founded the Heart of Africa Mission. Later his vision included other parts of the world and the mission became known as the Worldwide Evangelism Crusade, later changed to WEC International. The mission still focuses on people and places it considers are not being reached by evangelical churches or agencies. The mission has 1,800 missionaries from or working in 50 countries. The mission does not provide details of its international office. However, through personal communication with its leadership I learned that their international office was co-located with their U.K. office near London until 2011 when it was moved to Singapore ([www.wec-int.org](http://www.wec-int.org)).

11) Wycliffe Global Alliance: Details of the Alliance are given in chapters 1 and 2. Public information about WGA, which includes mention of its global headquarters in Singapore, is available at [www.wycliffe.net](http://www.wycliffe.net).

12) Youth With A Mission (YWAM) was founded by Loren Cunningham of the U.S. in 1960 with the aim of giving young people opportunities to demonstrate the love of Jesus. The ministry now includes 16,000 people from 150 countries operating in over 1,000 locations in 180 nations. It trains over 25,000 short term missionaries every year. It has a decentralized structure to encourage vision and creative approaches through training and other avenues. The mission indicates that it does not have an international headquarters and its international leadership are spread around the world ([www.ywam.org](http://www.ywam.org)).

#### 4.1 International mission agency overview

Name	Date Founded	Name & Origin of Founder	Number of Personnel and Countries	Location of Headquarters
Africa Inland Mission (AIM)	1895	Peter Cameron Scott, Scotland and U.S.	1,000 working in 22 countries	[Bristol, U.K.]
Campus Crusade for Christ (CCCC)	1951	Bill & Vonette Bright, U.S.	27,000 working in 190 countries	Orlando, U.S.
Interserve International	1852	Two U.K. women (wife of a merchant, wife of a banker and M.P., Mary Kinnaid)	800 working in 30 countries	[Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia]
Navigators	1933	Dawson	4,600 from 69	Colorado



Name	Date Founded	Name & Origin of Founder	Number of Personnel and Countries	Location of Headquarters
		Trotman, U.S.	countries working in 103 countries	Springs, U.S.
New Tribes Mission	1942	Paul Fleming, U.S.	1,500 from 13 countries working in 16 countries	[Sanford, U.S.]
OM (Operation Mobilisation)	1957	George Verwer, U.S.	5,500 from or working in 110 countries	[Carlisle, U.K.]
OMF International	1865	Hudson Taylor, U.K.	1,300 from 30 countries	Singapore
Pioneers International	1976	Ted Fletcher, U.S.	2,400 from or working in 94 countries	[Orlando, U.S.]
SIM (Serving in Mission)	1893 as the Soudan Interior Mission	Walter Gowans and Roland Bingham, Canada and Thomas Kent U.S.	1,800 from 37 countries working in 43 countries	[Fort Mills, U.S.]
WEC International	1913	Charles Thomas (C.T.) Studd, U.K.	1,800 from or working in 50 countries	[Singapore]
Wycliffe Global Alliance	1942	William Cameron Townsend, U.S.	8,800 from or working in 65 countries	Singapore
YWAM (Youth With a Mission)	1960	Loren Cunningham, U.S.	18,000 from or working in 180 countries	Highly decentralised structure with no international headquarters

#### 4.2 Observations and conclusions about international mission agencies

The year of establishment of the agencies: of the twelve international interdenominational missions surveyed, five (42%) were founded during 1850-1900; three (25%) during 1901-1950; and four (33%) during 1951-1976.

The nationality of the founder(s) of the agencies: eight (66%) by Americans, three (25%) by British and one by both. One mission was founded by Americans and a Canadian.

The number of personnel: four (33%) agencies have between 800-1,500 personnel; three (25%) have between 1,501-2,500 personnel; one (8%) have between 2,501-5,000 personnel; two (17%) have between 5,001-10,000 personnel and two (17%) have more than 10,001 people.

The location of the international office: five (42%) agencies are located in the U.S. with three of these in the Orlando, Florida area; two (17%) are located in the U.K.; four (33%) are in Asia – three (25%) in Singapore and one (8%) nearby in Malaysia. One (8%) agency stated that it operates without an international office/headquarters. Of the eleven agencies that have an international office, seven (58%) of these do not provide information about their location to the general public.

The agencies have a common aim to evangelize parts of the world that have not heard the gospel. All of them were founded by passionate Christians from the West and most were founded during the expansion of the faith mission movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. One came along much later (Pioneers in 1976) and has done considerably well in terms of its number of workers. Several of the agencies (such as Interserve, SIM and Pioneers) have merged with or amalgamated with other mission agencies.

All twelve of the agencies consider themselves to be 'international' in terms of having a workforce beyond their country of origin. The most diversity of nationalities among their personnel is found in YWAM and OM.

While the majority of agencies have kept their head office in the Western countries where they were founded (the U.S. and the U.K.), four have located in Asia. Three have done this in the past six years (Interserve, WGA and WEC). Only one agency (YWAM) claims to not need an international office. WGA has a minimal one (in terms of number of full time personnel) and details of the remaining missions are not clear because often the international office or function is part of, or heavily dependent upon the home country office where it is located.

#### 4.3 Funding international mission agencies

All of the agencies are dependent on Western resources, particularly funding from North America. Stanley Skreslet identifies these five influences on funding of Western missions over the past 200 years: 1) "powerful philanthropists" who passionately fund the expenses of missions (some have used their wealth to influence the focus of mission to suit their own agenda); 2) funding from "legions of small givers" who faithfully give of their resources in a systematic way over long

periods of time; 3) entrepreneurial initiatives that include profits from businesses used to support missions, agriculture and farming to produce profits for missions, 'tentmaking' with the intention of providing self-support to a missionary, or bi-vocational service where many people with employable skills are able to gain access to countries that normally prevent foreign missionaries; 4) business as mission where lay missionaries create employment opportunities through "innovative business strategies" and the profits are used to fund missions; and 5) "relying on the power of prayer" to meet the needs of missionaries (i.e. faith missions) (2012:160-4).

## **5 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE WYCLIFFE GLOBAL ALLIANCE**

WGA's structure is more similar to a global organization of organizations than it is to a singular Western international body. This means that WGA has distinct leadership development requirements that are unlike the majority of mission agencies surveyed in this chapter. It also means WGA's organizational development requirements are unique.

What follows is a recent organization and leadership development overview of WGA that highlights key issues:

### **5.1 WBTI Global Leaders Meeting, 2006**

Approximately 75 leaders attended this meeting at Chiang Mai, Thailand, came from Wycliffe Member Organizations and the international administration. In table groups, they were asked to give input about the future of WBTI. Their responses are grouped around three questions (WBTI 2006:1-6):

Question 1: "What should be the primary role of the future WBTI Administration?" A summary of responses are: 1) experiment with 'affinity groupings' of organizations within WBTI around common opportunities, challenges and strategic partnerships; 2) create an ethos that gives greater attention to partnering with the global church; 3) take greater risks in organizational development to create a structure that is truly global; 4) help the organizations within WBTI develop a global mindset; and 5) provide resources for strategic initiatives rather than for maintaining an administrative infrastructure.

Question 2: "What are considerations concerning the future structure of WBTI?" Key ideas are: 1) leaders should think more radically because WBTI is moving from a monolithic structure to a movement rather than the reverse; 2) the structure needs to flow out of and be consistent with WBTI's historical and foundational characteristics;

3) the structure should change from an organization of organizations to an alliance of organizations; 4) various organizational structures can be considered such as a decentralized structure grouped according to language/linguistic family, or around similar interests or affinities; 5) WBTI can be structured around functions (research, personnel, partnership, administration, strategy) rather than geography; and 6) whatever the structure, keep it flat and minimalistic so that the Wycliffe organizations have greater freedom to partner with each other rather than be controlled by regional leadership that might restrict collaboration within a region.

Question 3: “What are considerations about having the future WBTI headquarters outside of the US?” Responses favoured moving it to a location in Asia to demonstrate that WBTI was changing from being perceived as North American.

## 5.2 Leadership survey at the Wycliffe International Convention, 2008

During the WBTI quadrennial meeting at Chiang Mai, Thailand, leaders from Wycliffe organizations and partners from 50 countries were asked to identify their leadership development needs. They listed 59 individual topics that articulated their needs and these are grouped as: 1) mentoring/coaching/ ongoing training in leadership; 2) practical skill development (particularly in management areas); 3) gaining specific orientation to Wycliffe; 4) personal growth; 5) accountability to their governing Boards; 6) preparing for and managing leadership transition; and 7) learning to reflect on their contexts (Franklin 2009b:414).

This last topic (which tallied less than 7% of the total of 59 topics) refers to the reflective practitioner concept of leadership. Because of its minimal mention, this could mean that the majority of leaders identified their needs in practical areas and ongoing leadership development.

## 5.3 Leaders Moving Forward events, 2009-2010

Five ‘Leaders Moving Forward’ events were held by WGA in San Jose, Costa Rica (2009), Bangkok, Thailand (2009), Burbach, Germany (2010), Lima, Peru (2010) and Nairobi, Kenya (2010). The purpose of each event was to help younger and newer leaders to “move forward as they lead effective and sustainable organizations that make their best contribution to Vision 2025 within their contexts” (Franklin 2009c:1).

Each event was a ‘round-table’ experience of participants and facilitators engaging in discussions for four days about fundamentals that WGA leadership had identified as necessary for emerging leaders: 1) spiritual (prayer, worship and devotional studies

about shepherd leadership ; 2) theological (the *missio Dei*, the Kingdom of God, and the mission of the church); 3) missiological (exploring the history, importance and impact of Bible translation, and the use of power in mission); 4) leadership (examining visionary leadership and its cross-cultural implications); 5) partnering (the value of strategic partnerships in the Bible translation movement); and 6) orientation to WGA.

During the Lima event, 25 participants from the Andes region of Latin America met. Their evaluations of the event generally indicated that the ‘shepherd leadership’ model was a new one for them and quite counter-cultural, but they wanted to explore it further in their contexts. They also gained a greater understanding about what it means to be a leader in the *missio Dei* (LMF 2010:1-6).

At the Bangkok event, evaluations from the 30 participants from Asia-Pacific highly ranked the positive impact of these missiological topics: 1) developing missiological reflection; 2) the role of the church; 3) the use of power in mission (particularly the use of the ‘sailing boat’ metaphor); and 4) the theme of urgency related to Vision 2025 (the vision is urgent, not because of time, but because of God’s ‘passion’ for his creation) (LMF 2009:1-8).

Feedback from all of the events indicated that the topic of use (or misuse) of power in mission was a revelation to most. The metaphor is based upon a ‘powerboat’ compared to a ‘sailboat’ as two models of power in mission. Proponents of the powerboat model operate in a high-control, self-reliant manner that is dependent upon management methods and technology. This mindset influences most Christian ministry in some form or another, “from strategic planning and management – to evangelism and church planting – to donor relations and fund-raising” (Araujo & Mischke 2009:2).

Introducing the paradigm of the sailboat with its shared-control brought new insights into the use of power in mission. The model relies on the ‘wind of the Spirit’ who works in the affairs of God’s kingdom. This is the ‘force’ that enables and guides mission. It is external and not controlled by people, “like the wind that moves a sailboat and is not controlled by the sailor” (Araujo & Mischke 2009:2). Leaders from the global South and East in particular identified with the sailboat metaphor as they believed it was more appropriate to their contexts as they all had encounters (often unpleasant) with the powerboat model.

#### 5.4 Leadership Development Roundtable, 2011

A delegation of 27 people gathered for WGA's Leadership Development Roundtable in Manila, Philippines. Also in attendance were experienced leaders from Interserve International, OMF International, SIM International and OM International. The purpose of the Roundtable was to discuss leadership development needs and trends within each agency and to find ways of collaborating together.

A situational analysis was given in advance with each participant asked, "What are the most critical needs and issues our organizations are facing in developing leaders, and how are we addressing them?" The responses were: 1) re-inspiring a positive leadership vision and culture within our agencies that is vibrant and inspirational enough to attract existing and emerging leaders to serve the group and to sustain them as leaders; 2) identifying and recruiting a continuing, sufficient supply of the right kind of leaders; 3) preparing leaders from diverse cultural backgrounds to facilitate the involvement of an exponentially growing number of majority-world workers, to lead teams of such workers wisely, and to navigate the complexities of the increasingly inter-cultural organizations and the contexts where they serve; and 4) equipping leaders in specific areas with a missiological foundation for their service (LDR 2011:6-10).

Todd Poulter, a facilitator of the Roundtable, summarized this input into the main issue that the participants identified as "*creating a positive leadership vision and culture in our agencies... that encourages leaders to emerge, and sustains them as they serve*" (LDR2011:2).

In exploring this issue further at the Roundtable, the participants observed that a wide range of existing leadership development concepts already exist, although most are based on individualistic, consumer-based, and mono-cultural business models. They noted that development models utilized by their mission agencies relied on the same kind of materials.

Finding a biblical foundation for leadership development that acts as a balancing influence was presented at the Roundtable. The conclusion was there are overarching principles to consider: 1) Scripture is recorded with salvation history in focus but no specific leadership 'style' is mandated by Scripture; 2) leadership models found in scripture are diverse and context specific and not necessarily intended for current contexts, although they provide many lessons; 3) epochal events call for different kinds of leadership – as evident in the leadership of Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and others – such that each leader filled their role in accord with their epoch, suggesting the need to discern the times to know the style of leadership needed; 4) contexts change and so should leadership styles, so leaders must stay

alert to changing contexts; and 5) specific leadership characteristics and values are found in the Bible that call leaders to demonstrate godliness (WGA 2011:3-4).

Applying the biblical principles to current contexts requires some missiological considerations: 1) being aware that current events and contexts differ from those of biblical times; 2) there are many missiological themes (e.g. globalization, contextualization, indigenization, enculturation, interculturalism and partnerships) that influence leadership development; 3) knowing how mission history has impacted leaders is important; 4) recognizing the diverse range of leadership models that can be used in the global context; 5) developing leadership within the holistic transformation of communities, rather than just focussing upon the development of the leader; and 6) developing leaders takes place within the praxis of the leadership role, rather than simply providing awareness of cross-cultural and contextual issues (WGA 2011:3-4).

Another outcome of the Roundtable that was specific to WGA showed how leadership development should take place as illustrated in diagram 1 below. For God’s kingdom purposes to be fulfilled, the attention of WGA should focus on three priorities: 1) building ‘kingdom leaders’ at the global level (i.e. WGA), regional level (i.e. WGA Area structures), national level (i.e. the organizations within WGA) and local level (i.e. individual Bible translation projects or programs); 2) building sustainable leadership capacity that focuses on development of the Boards that govern each organization within WGA, including how to purposefully select and orientate new leaders at all levels; and 3) creating healthy organizational structures – a priority that cuts across, overlaps with and supports the other two (WGAa 2011:2).

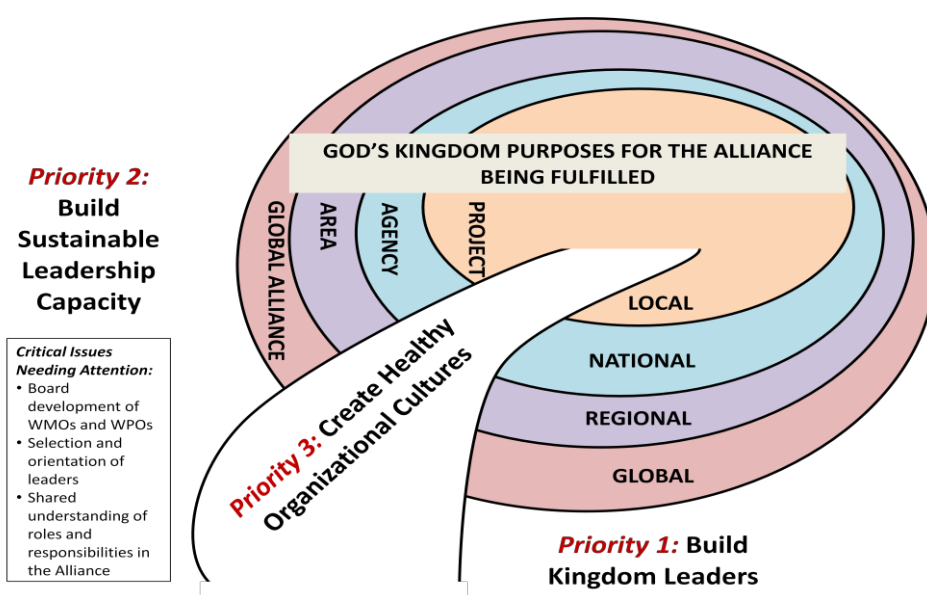


Diagram 1: WGA Organizational Development Priorities

This global perspective was fine-tuned as illustrated in diagram 2 below. Using the idea of an arrow, the development of a leader has three basic characteristics and each is developed by different methods: 1) the foundation of ‘character’ is the strength that makes a leader sustainable and it is formed through coaching and mentoring; 2) the foundation of ‘skills and capacity’ is developed through specific courses, workshops, and seminars (formal and non-formal) that provide new skills to increase a leader’s capacity in specific areas; and 3) the foundation of ‘identity and direction’ needs the greatest attention because it is about shaping leaders missiologically through their ability to think and act missionally. Leadership development programs that WGA has used such as ‘Leaders Moving Forward’ and ‘Boards Moving Forward’ were mentioned positively in this respect (WGAa 2011:2).

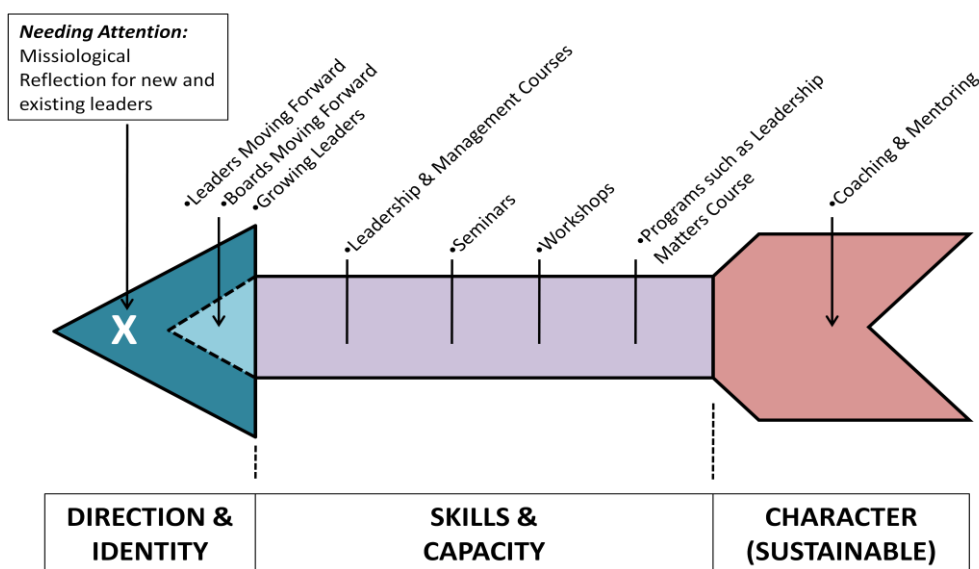


Diagram 2: WGA Organizational Development Process

### 5.5 Preparing for Leadership Development Roundtable 2, 2012

In preparation for a second Roundtable, 15 leaders from WGA were asked about the most important issues associated with developing new leaders. The following responses are summarized according to the level of the leaders:

1) Senior executive level: Their concern is helping new and current leaders to lead from a missiological foundation. They see the need to integrate holistic missiological practices that are essential and practical. They want to help new and current leaders lead from a spiritually balanced lifestyle. These issues combine together as people are identified, developed and mentored in multicultural and virtual contexts (WGA 2012:1-4).



2) Global consultant level: Their interest is assisting leaders to integrate missiological thinking into their leadership context. They also desire leadership that is not success oriented but instead portrays humility, courage and vulnerability. They want to develop leaders in the wider context of organizational development as well as encouraging their influence to shape strategies and structures (WGA 2012:1-4).

3) Regional leader level: They want to facilitate missiological learning communities for current and new leaders that provide an atmosphere to sharpen missiological skills principles. They want to identify core competencies for younger leaders. They also want an organisational culture where leadership development thrives (WGA 2012:1-4).

This summary resonates with other themes discussed so far: 1) the importance of grounding leaders with a missiological foundation; 2) helping leaders in complex cross-cultural, multi-cultural and inter-cultural paradigms; 3) intentionally developing the next generation of leaders; and 4) taking a holistic view of leadership development to ensure the whole person is being nurtured.

## 5.6 What has changed since 2006?

Since the input from the WBTI Global Leaders Meeting of 2006 (section 5.1) much has changed based on the organizational and leadership development input given. For example: 1) In January 2008, the Global Leadership Team of the organization was initiated with a team of 13 people working from ten locations using a flat-decentralized structure; 2) in 2009 an office was rented in Singapore which has become the operational headquarters for the organization, moving it from Dallas, Texas. A small core team of Singaporeans and a few expatriates work from this office; 3) a review of the regional structure was conducted in 2010 with special attention given to developing Africa. Subsequently since January 2011, Africans from East and Central Africa are in strategic leadership roles; 4) in February 2011, WBTI's 'doing business as' name was changed to the Wycliffe Global Alliance, reflecting an alliance of over 110 Wycliffe Member Organizations and newer Wycliffe Partner Organizations; and 5) the move from being an international body increasingly a global movement means that WGA leadership is focusing on promoting clarity of vision and building unity of commitment within WGA.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The chapter began with a lengthy overview of leadership principles, traits and types that demonstrate the complexity of the topic. It is fair to conclude that successful

leaders must embrace a wide variety of qualities, skills and capabilities. Today's leaders need to understand how to lead change by moving beyond reacting to change as it occurs. Instead they need to be "predicting and redirecting change" before it happens (Wren 1995:459).

Popular leadership theories explored in this chapter have a Western orientation. However, globalization requires leaders to be equipped to respond to greater cultural diversity. Since most leadership principles are culturally bound this creates obstacles in cross-cultural situations, but a successful multicultural organization learns to focus on both worldwide and local objectives. The global mission context requires a leadership model that places a priority on people from different cultures participating together in a community of trust.

There are several leadership types that are pertinent to mission in the global context that include: 1) the transformational leader who encourages creative ideas and intellectual stimulation; 2) the servant leader who develops trust and leads by example; 3) the shepherd leader who uses diverse skills and techniques according to the needs of the context; and 4) the missional leader who understands their part in the *missio Dei*. All of these types can be blended together to give dynamic mission leadership.

The survey of international mission agencies indicates they have much in common (e.g. heritage, origins, location of their headquarters, etc). They have Western-style organizational structures and are dependent, for the most part, on Western resources, particularly funding. For WGA, this creates challenges as it moves from its Western roots to engaging with the global church.

Outlined in this chapter are some of WGA's leadership and organizational development discussions over the past six years. An obvious impact of these has been the growing missiological understanding of what it means to be a WGA leader in the *missio Dei*.

WGA operates in an environment of discontinuous change (due to the unanticipated disruptions caused by global context in which it serves). This requires new skills for its leaders, and to some degree this is being addressed by encouraging its leaders to be reflective practitioners who learn the ability to reflect, understand, question and explore missional issues – all within the context of a multicultural and intercultural world. This allows multiple perspectives because any culture-specific model, whether Western or non-Western, is inadequate by itself. It must be informed by other cultural perspectives, as well as the Bible.

## CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The goals of my research rephrased here from chapter 1 are to: 1) create a broad understanding of the changing context of the church around the world, especially in the global South and East; 2) offer an analysis of how this influences WGA; and as a result, 3) provide recommendations to WGA's leadership on: a) how to respond to its vision; b) how to implement its strategy and structure to achieve that vision; and c) how to keep in step with the changing global context while being informed and formed by its understanding of the *missio Dei*.

This research has been immensely rewarding for me and, in due course, I believe it will be invaluable for WGA. It has broadened my understanding and perspective, allowing and challenging me to explore the intertwining history of Bible translation, the *missio Dei* and WGA. I have seen how the shifting missiological and geographical contexts of the church is influencing and will continue to influence how the Bible is made available and used in the global South and East.

### 2 CONCLUDING IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 2.1 Mission history assists in interpreting the future

An important premise of this research has been to explore the intertwining history of Bible translation and WGA in the context of the missiological and geographical shifts of the church. An historical approach to my research is critical because it explores the past in conjunction with that which is in front of WGA. As Andrew Walls states (chapter 1), “we can see that stretched out before us, the most recent plainly, the more distant shading away to the horizon” (2002:1).

I have sought to consider how the church understands the *missio Dei* and how this in turn affects its involvement with WGA and the Bible translation movement. I have sought to follow Walls' advice and survey Wycliffe's past to “see what it suggests of the way that we have come and perhaps read in outline... the place to which we have been brought now” (2002:1). This exploration has proved to be very valuable in interpreting not only WGA's history, but also that of Bible translation in general, including its use in the areas of the world where the church is currently growing.

In chapters 1 and 2, I outlined the strategic and structural shifts that Wycliffe has encountered since its inception as Wycliffe Bible Translators (U.S.) in 1942 to Wycliffe Bible Translators International in 1980, followed by a significant restructuring in 1990-91, to a completely distinct and independent organization from SIL International in 2008, culminating as the Wycliffe Global Alliance in 2011. I also noted various missiological implications that created these shifts or how these shifts have new missiological implications for WGA.

I conclude that the past eight decades of change within Wycliffe provide a learning environment for any international mission agency regarding how it can adapt to new and global challenges and opportunities as they emerge.

In the context of WGA, these changes have created a move away from the perspective that Wycliffe's only role was to raise resources for SIL International to do its fieldwork. I conclude that now a threshold has definitely been crossed in the relationship between SIL and WGA. This is apparent because of the 110 organizations within the WGA who share the vision of Bible translation such that the ownership of the ministry extends beyond any organizational boundary that existed in the past. Furthermore 70% of these organizations are from the global South and East indicating that the new centre of gravity of the church is directly involved in the Bible translation movement.

## 2.2 Shifting from international to global

Samuel Escobar (chapter 1) said, "in the twenty-first century, Christian mission has become truly international" (2003:19). I rephrase this by stating that only a decade after he wrote this, Christian mission has in fact become 'global'.

I conclude that in relation to mission agencies and their ministry performance, the distinction between 'international' and 'global' is more important than it may seem. This is because my understanding of the term 'international' is semantically tied to a Western concept of territorial expansion. Mission agencies (such as the ones surveyed in chapter 5) use the word 'international' in their name, but the location of their headquarters and the nationalities of their leadership teams indicates that 'international' still reflects that the agency is Western based (usually in the U.S. or U.K.), although it may have affiliate offices in other countries. In very few cases are the agencies truly international in geographical scope in terms of the origin of their resources, and even in such instances the countries are primarily Western (Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand), along with South Korea, Singapore and Brazil.

I conclude that defining the term international is difficult missiologically because it often means the mission agency is not actually global at all. It is still controlled and resourced (at least in governance, executive level leadership and financially) by the West, mainly from North America.

I also conclude (expanded upon in chapter 5) that 'global' is the preferred term to 'international' and that this is the direction mission agencies need to take as they study the changing dynamics of the church. The 21<sup>st</sup> century church, while having its Western roots, has definitely gone global. Mission agencies such as WGA are still catching up with the implications of this fact.

Escobar also states (chapter 1) that in order for this “phenomenon” of the growth of the church to be truly global, “we need a paradigm change in our way of studying it that corresponds to the change in the way mission is now taking place” (2003:19).

I suggest that those who are serious about studying where the church is growing should be mindful that those who have held power and influence in international mission agencies today may feel threatened by the growing influence of the church of the South and East. This church may have different priorities concerning Bible translation than its Western counterparts. For example, it may see Bible translation as integral to the transformation of communities and not as a stand-alone 'product' for the church to use at its convenience. I believe this is an important paradigm shift that is actually long overdue and that WGA needs to stay abreast of this move and keep its Western organizations apprised of current conditions and changes.

At the same time I am aware that it is difficult to envision an integrated world where leaders in mission from the global South and East contribute as equal partners in a meaningful way if the majority of financial resources needed to implement changes come from the West. Until funding for mission is a global reality, mission agencies may not function globally in their leadership and operations. This, too, is a missiological concern because it implies that mission is not in fact global at all. Many parts of the world where the church is growing do not appear to be committed to funding mission in their contexts or beyond their borders. It may be necessary for mission leaders from the West to pass on their learning from various models of financing mission.

My conclusion is that more research is needed to create a missiological foundation for funding of mission that is truly global in perspective. The goal should be for all geographical regions of the church to provide financial (and other resources) for

mission, not just for their locality but beyond. This should be motivated by their new understanding of how their involvement is needed and how this should be viewed as integral to the *missio Dei*.

### 2.3 WGA develops a missiological understanding of itself

As a result of the review of Wycliffe's history (chapter 2) I conclude that the greatest influencing factor in how WGA understands itself since 2006 has been a missiological awareness by its leaders of the paradigm shift to the global church. While this is slowly happening at the higher levels of leadership, it must permeate to all levels and to all of the organizations in WGA. They must become missiologically informed so they might adequately respond to global issues. Furthermore, such a missiological foundation provides a better position to understand WGA's Vision 2025 (chapter 4). The assumption is that Vision 2025 must have a greater missiological and theological perspective of the vision now than when it was first adopted in 1999.

Vision 2025 was adopted in a time when Western influence in mission leadership and strategy were at their peak. But today the vision takes place in contexts where "the predominance of one culture over others is no longer accepted, and where cultural polycentrism is a fact of our time" (Balala & Kim 2010: 255). Despite this shift, I conclude that implications of global ownership and leadership of Vision 2025 have not been adequately developed or understood in WGA.

In chapter 4, I noted that the greatest theological influence upon Wycliffe has been its roots in the U.S. evangelical soil, with its interpretation of the Great Commission and how this affected its understanding of the *missio Dei*. Historically, the focus was on the task itself, rather than on being about "about God and *His* redemptive initiative" (Tennent 2010: 54).

It is natural that Western influence in mission has given solid focus to the involvement of people in planning and action. However, I conclude this is often done in ignorance to the *missio Dei* being about God and his initiative and activity. As Chris Wright helpfully explains: "mission is God's... the marvel is that [he] invites us to join in" (2006:67).

The pragmatic nature of Western mission requires a word of caution in light of this research. The sense of urgency in Vision 2025, with its specific reference to the year 2025, has a hint of Mark 16:15 and thus for some it is interpreted with an eschatological reference point to Jesus' second coming. Those viewing it in this way somehow assume the success of the Vision will enable Christ to return sooner.

However, if the Vision is somehow related to expediting Christ's return, then it is misplaced and a serious misreading of the Great Commission texts as well as a trivialization of the complexity of Bible translation. I believe we should reject this conclusion and not associate it with Vision 2025.

Based on what organizations in the WGA have found over the past 13 years, there have been many Christians and churches in the West, and especially the global South and East, who when made aware of Vision 2025, became challenged by it. If this has created an understanding of the urgent nature of the kingdom of God arriving and transforming people and communities through greater emphasis on addressing the Bible translation needs in the world, then it is well placed.

As the church worldwide increases its understanding of the *missio Dei* it should impact how WGA interprets the accomplishment of Vision 2025. It should not be assumed that human endeavour is the primary factor, but rather it should be based on the conviction that it is the Triune God through his dynamic of the *missio Dei* who will achieve the vision.

#### 2.4 Theological influences have global-local impact

In chapters 3 and 4, I explored how the Christian faith is unique among all religions for the reason that Kwame Bediako states, it is "the most culturally translatable [and therefore] at home in every cultural context" (2004:32). Lamin Sanneh expands this concept: "without [Bible] translation there would be no Christianity or Christians...: the church would be unrecognizable or unsustainable without it" (2003:97). Furthermore, the translatability of the Bible "provides people and societies "with the reason for change and the language with which to effect it" (Sanneh 1989: 207). Such people and societies are better equipped through their vernaculars to deal with changes brought upon them by outside influences. I conclude that such statements provide a critical theological imperative for the WGA to continue its commitment to Bible translation in the *missio Dei*. I also conclude that such statements need to be made more widely known within the church to educate it on the theological imperative of providing the Bible in the languages of the world.

It follows that theological issues in contextualization will continue to affect the Bible translation movement in general, including the specific involvement of WGA. This is because contextualization raises complex issues regarding the transmission of the message of the Bible into a language and culture.

In chapter 3, I reviewed Stephen Bevan's six models of theological contextualization. All are valid and each has its strength and its weakness. I believe that it will be increasingly necessary to ensure that the voices of the global church are involved in determining how these models are used in a given situation. Also in chapter 3, I suggested that the 'transcendental model' could be the most relevant for organizations associated with the WGA. I also proposed that a modification of the model should emphasize its holistic nature. This would be more appropriate because it offers a balance between the sacred text and culture and gives faithfulness to both text and context. Christ is understood as the one who transforms cultures and communities.

This view is important to many parts of the church of the global South and East because of the rising concern about the transformation of people and their communities. Sung-wook Hong states that the goal of a holistic model "is to achieve a transformation through the encounter of the gospel with contexts within the power of the Holy Spirit" (2008:33). The goal of the model is seeing the Kingdom of God transform "the socio-economic and political aspects at the same time" (Hong 2008:36). It complements WGA's contribution to holistic transformation of people groups.

My study also shows that further exploration is needed if the 'transcendental' and/or 'holistic model' is deemed useful in WGA (and the Bible translation movement). Additional work from within the theological community of the global South and East is needed in dialogue with the Western church. For example, how much influence should the Western church expect on contextualization issues that affect the global South and East if it is far removed from the actual context? This seems like an important topic to consider since the West has not been given any divine right to be the custodian of theology for the global South and East.

It appears obvious that the church of the global South and East will have different priorities and expectations concerning Bible translation than its Western counterparts. For example, Bible translation may be viewed as an integral part of transformation of communities and not simply a stand-alone 'product' for the church to use at its convenience. But how will Western partners accept this? This needs further investigation to provide helpful recommendations to the global church and to agencies like WGA who are involved in the Bible translation movement.

## 2.5 Understanding the *missio Dei* in light of contemporary mission



Due to the growth of the church worldwide over the past 200 years, mission researchers (chapter 4) believe that the church of the global South and East will initiate and give greater leadership to new global plans for integral mission (the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel). I conclude that this will be a challenge because the Western church still has difficulty listening well to the rest of the world, believing that it is still the centre of scholarship and theological reflection. Furthermore Western missions are too closely tied to their culture. They are noted for their political and economic pragmatism while at the same time experiencing a sense of loss of their theological roots of mission.

When considering WGA's aim to see a Bible translated for each language group in the world that needs one, it is noteworthy that most of the people who speak such languages are by definition marginalized because their languages are usually a minority within a majority context. The issue of marginalization of people groups has received recognition from the ecumenical movement who has spoken to this issue. For example, as stated in chapter 4, the World Council of Church's (WCC) 'Affirmation of Mission and Evangelism' sees mission from the margins as "a countercultural missional movement against missionary approaches and activities which contribute to the oppression, marginalization and the denial of dignity of those on the margins" (CWME 2012: 11).

This focus is integral to a contemporary understanding of the *missio Dei* as it applies to a broader spectrum of the church (chapter 4). This perspective affirms that God's purpose through Christ is to renew the whole of creation. Therefore, God's mission flows from his love through his transforming power of the Holy Spirit. He calls his church to participate in his mission as a sign and symbol of the reign of God and the church responds to this invitation in love and service.

I see evidence that this broader interpretation of the *missio Dei* is evolving across the church (the Lausanne Movement, the WCC and ecumenical movement, and the Roman Catholic Church). I conclude that this interpretation will benefit from further study. Various statements have been made by these spectrums of the church and they contain many similarities. Each has done its own theological work. Therefore a collaborative effort is needed that results in a succinct articulation of the similarities and differences in interpretation of the *missio Dei* that is particularly suited for busy mission agency executives. Otherwise I fear the nuances and importance of such theological reflection will not directly impact mission praxis in the foreseeable future.

## 2.6 Developing a new paradigm of leadership for global mission

Kwame Bediako states (chapter 3), “Christianity has become a non-Western religion; meaning not that Western Christianity has become irrelevant, but rather that Christianity may now be seen for what it truly is, a universal religion” (2004:3). This creates a missiological paradigm that will influence the directions of global mission agencies such as WGA. I conclude this will not happen unless there are wider pools of missiologically informed leaders who understand how to lead in the *missio Dei* in a global context.

The focus of chapter 5 was the changing nature of leadership. My lengthy overview of principles and traits indicated the complexity of this topic and how difficult it is to succinctly create a formula for successful mission leadership. In fact, my conclusion is that this is neither possible, nor wise, to do.

Also in chapter 5, I note that most leadership theories have a Western orientation, with the majority of researchers still located the West, safely in the haven where they have constructed their leadership and management theories for decades. I believe this is a serious concern for WGA. It follows that those current leadership theories and practices may not work well for WGA because of the multi-cultural, inter-cultural, and global-local contexts in which it operates.

I also conclude that today’s contexts require leaders who are equipped and can respond to greater cultural diversity, while still leading change and learning in the process. In the situation of leading change, I also conclude that mission leaders in today’s context primarily lead in a discontinuous situation rather than a continuous one. Furthermore, the global context represents ‘high-context’ and ‘low-context’ cultures with less demarcation between the two. This requires cultural intelligence to navigate between them. In addition, mission leaders must place greater priority on creating a ‘community of trust’ that will empower people from different cultures to serve together in God’s mission.

In chapter 5, I note the distinction between the role of leadership and that of management. Management brings order to complexity whereas leadership casts vision and enables participants to move towards the vision. In my investigation of WGA’s history, it is apparent it has benefited from its visionary leaders (chapters 1 and 2). Nevertheless, I conclude that if WGA is not careful, it may become more efficiently managed but less effectively led. This is due to the perceived organizational complexities of its ministry as it has become an alliance with so many like-minded but structurally different organizations.

Globalization is placing greater pressure on mission agencies like WGA in their use of human resources, including using management techniques that involve flatter organization structures. Such practices have led to the “inherent dilemma of trying to provide strong leadership for workers who are being encouraged and allowed to become increasingly self-managed” (Vecchio 1997:412).

WGA must place greater effort on developing leaders who are reflective practitioners (chapter 5). Such leaders must develop their skills in conjunction with their leadership teams and as they mentor the next generation of leaders. This is critical to the global context of WGA because such leaders will understand and operate with a balance between action and study. Their perspective will be founded upon the Bible and the church, their perspective will be global while at the same time being faithful citizens in their local context, and they will be obedient in their submission to the *missio Dei*.

I conclude that in order for WGA to stay relevant to the *missio Dei*, it must place more effort in defining a transformational leadership model. This model should incorporate these attributes: 1) leaders who know how to contextualize Jesus’ example of evading simple solutions in order to solve problems in ways that have a beneficial and long term impact; 2) leaders who are prepared to take a longer path and avoid short-term ‘quick fixes’; 3) leaders who motivate, broaden and elevate the interests of their followers so that they look beyond their own needs and self-interests; 4) leaders who continuously reinterpret servant-shepherd-missional leadership concepts into global-local contexts where discontinuous change is the norm; and 5) leaders who encourage their followers to raise questions about the past and to think creatively and interdependently.

I also conclude that further work is needed to identify if there are essential traits, qualities, and/or characteristics that are needed for leaders in global mission. Research is needed to determine if these can be passed on through mentoring or coaching, or may be learned in formal or informal settings.

Some implications of how WGA’s structure needs to continue to evolve to truly be a global alliance of organizations rather than a singular and Western international body now follow: 1) it must consistently demonstrate transformational leadership through positive role models (especially in situations that have been conditioned by hierarchical leadership models); 2) it must appreciate and support courageous leadership that leads change and builds consensus in complex cross-cultural, multi-cultural and inter-cultural paradigms; 3) it must place greater priority and more resources in developing younger and new leaders across the globe; and 4) it must

provide a growing understanding of spiritual, biblical and missiological fundamentals that will positively impact the leaders and their followers.

An area requiring further work, based on globalization issues, is the development of appropriate organizational structures for mission. Models need to be developed that enable leadership from the global South and East to give a balancing influence on mission strategy for organizations like WGA. While WGA has made some progress in this area, it is only in the early stages of understanding the implications of the global church.

In closing, my overall conclusion is that the results of this research can inform and guide WGA into the next decade of its ministry. Furthermore it can provide valuable historical, theological, missiological and leadership foundations that can inform WGA about how to more effectively participate in the *missio Dei*. In particular it can enable the WGA leadership to have a theologically informed basis for how it participates in Vision 2025 in the realities of the global church.

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