



## Many major problems are mainly unaddressed by today's Christian movement even at its best.

Ralph D. Winter



### Dear Reader,

Each issue of *Mission Frontiers* is in some key ways a "continued story."

This time two mission leaders talk about a fundamental transformation that is essential for the U. S. church. Lay people are being offered a superficial religious way of life, they say, but are still restless and, in any truly meaningful way, unemployed. How does this relate to our continued story?

Patt says the DNA of the U.S. church is what ends up on the mission field. And that is all too true – the weaknesses of the church here are often the weaknesses of the church there. We are offering (or achieving) little more than a part-time religion, whether here or there, that barely addresses either major earthly problems or the Kingdom meaning of daily work.

Really, many major problems are mainly unaddressed by today's Christian movement even at its best.

Why? Because we are still chewing on the toughest and most difficult question of all: "What does God want me to do?"

A traditional answer is not enough, as John Eldredge puts it in his neat little book, *The Epic*:

*Not the Christianity of proper church attendance and good manners. Not the Christianity of holier-than-thou self-righteousness and dogmatism (p. 14).*

What is needed is for millions of Christians to move beyond *part-time* Christianity. What churches call people to do for and through the church *after hours* is



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good but not good enough. Our whole lives, including our 40-hour workweek, need to make sense in the global battle for the glory of God in all nations.

Whoever you are, dear reader, if you have chosen to fully follow Jesus as Lord of your life, you no doubt hope and pray and seek for "your utmost to be His highest." You should certainly hope that the main hours of your week would significantly lead to His glorification.

### Your money or your life!

We all know that the money we earn, whatever our work, can be used to glorify God – if we do not use it all up on ourselves.

If you do not feel called to be a missionary, would you be willing nevertheless to adopt the income level of a missionary and set aside the rest of your income for strategic investment in His Cause?

In that case you can call up your favorite mission society and discover the financial level of a missionary in your situation and region. You can then deliberately limit your personal expenses, and adjust your lifestyle, to that arbitrary level. You may have little left over, or you may have a great deal.

Almost immediately will arise the perplexing question of how you should use the extra money accumulated – how to use it in a way that will be of maximum value to the Kingdom. This will take homework and time to figure out.

But an even more significant question is "How do I maximize the impact of the very work I do in my 40-hour week?" Sermons don't address this issue very often.

You could switch jobs to become a missionary yourself – and let others' excess income support you. That is a well-understood option. Obviously not all believers can do that! From where would their support come?

Right now missionaries are about one out of every 800 Christians in this country. That means Christians give a theoretical average of 1/8 of one percent of their income to missions.

### We do need missionaries, but...

But becoming a missionary (although we desperately need more!) nevertheless does not help answer the question of *what might be the Kingdom significance of the daily work of lay believers*, the 799 who are not missionaries. I am not speaking of the many nice things which believers can do "after hours." I'm speaking of their 40-hour week.

Here is the dilemma: millions of believers are caught in a job that may seem humdrum, meaningless, or oppressive, or all three. They can't easily get a different job, and in any case they are not at all clear about what other job would be a greater contribution to the Kingdom.

Young people, however, might be urged to seek out a strategic job – not one that would pay the best, or please the most – but *one which will mean the most to the Kingdom*. How about microbiology? I say this because in all the world the greatest threat to life, liberty and happiness is the colossal giant of disease. To care for the sick is important. To conquer the disease germs themselves is much more strategic.

*TIME* (May 29) says that the health-care industry in the USA soaks up *two thousand billion* dollars a year (\$2 trillion). Yet, within this mammoth *healing* operation, only a very small percentage is devoted to *disease sources*, either for sickness in this country or for diseases more common abroad.

Why so little? Because sick people

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provide the \$2 trillion. They are not paying for eradication of disease pathogens but simply for healing.

Now, this concern for eradication of pathogens must seem like a very indirect form of mission. However, one of the most stubborn obstacles to evangelism of educated people in our world today is the mis-impression that our faith credits God with *creating disease*. Listen again to my often-quoted statement from a Harvard professor, "If the God of the Intelligent Design people exists, He must be a divine sadist who creates parasites that blind millions of people."

Thus, if Christian institutions and Christian missions do not become involved in recognizing "evil design" and in fighting against disease pathogens in the Name of Christ, that lapse

will continue to *allow God to be misrepresented*. It also allows millions of precious believers around the world – mothers, fathers, children, infants – to continue to be subjected to avoidable yet dreadful suffering due to conquerable diseases!

Is our \$2 trillion annual commitment to healing the sick blinding us to the need to eradicate causal pathogens? At a Christian college graduation I attended last week, out of 420 graduates there were only 24 in biology, chemistry or biochemistry, and none specifically in microbiology.

My point: it is not irrelevant *how* we earn a living. What we get paid is in exchange for what we do, but what we do is as important as what we get paid. Jobs are not all the same in this respect. Making a good living by manufacturing Beanie Babies is not as crucial as

exterminating Hepatitis B and C. In a 1636 sermon entitled "The Christian's Calling," John Cotton said,

*The Christian would no sooner have his sins forgiven than to have his life established in a warrantable calling.*

It seems certain that the "new shape of the church" must include,

*Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds ... not giving up meeting together (Heb. 10:24-25).*

Note: we must understand an expanded definition of "good deeds," meaning *the most strategic causes within our grasp affecting the glory of God*. If we meet regularly with other believers to seek better ways of "love and good deeds", could this take the advance of the Kingdom more seriously? f

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# What DNA Are We (Really) Reproducing?

Fran Patt



For the past 25 years I have ministered within church and mission in North America. I have served as a staff person of a church, as an elder, and (with my wife) as part of church-planting teams. Most everything we have attempted for many years has been connected to recruiting, training and fielding the most effective missionaries possible. We have specialized in providing exposure to ethnic communities, cross-cultural training, and missionary care. Our hope has been that as believers are immersed in redemptive relationships with unreached people groups and as they understand the cultures of these peoples, the Holy

Spirit will call them into lifelong commitments to bring the hope and blessing of Jesus Christ to these peoples.

**We were launched into a new phase of ministry when we received a shocking letter from a close friend.**

We were launched into a new phase of ministry about 15 years ago when we received a shocking letter from a close friend, whom we had helped to

recruit, train and deploy to an Asian field among Muslims. This missionary family had been in place for two terms of service. They were fluent in the indigenous language, had found their niche in social structures as well as the economic system, and were making a significant contribution to the indigenous community. Yet our friend's letter said this about his team:

1. We are a successful team.
2. We are seeing people become followers of Christ.
3. We come from large, upper-middle-class churches with multiple staff, large budgets, and large buildings.
4. None of us was ever involved in a church plant prior to coming to this Asian field.

5. None of the churches we come from has ever planted a church (intentionally).
6. To be effective in the next phase of ministry, we will need to understand how to establish the Church in home-sized fellowships.
7. We have no experience or training that prepared us for this, and our home church culture is of no help.
8. Our primary mission here is to establish the Body of Christ in a way that will be culturally relevant and able to survive and thrive after we leave, but we are really not certain we know how to do this, given the limitations we have communicated.

Soon after we received this letter, we debriefed with a highly-trusted veteran missionary with over 35 years of service. His analysis included another shock to us: in his estimation, two-thirds of all the missionaries he had worked with (though, fortunately, not our friends in Asia) should have been sent home because they were ineffective and largely a detriment rather than a help. Part of his analysis was that these missionaries had very few ministry skills, no professional skills, and virtually no clue on how to work effectively with nationals.

## Three Major Conclusions

In the aftermath of this letter and debriefing we arrived at three conclusions. First, we needed to change our emphasis in training, adding components we had never imagined would be necessary. Specifically, this set of new training modules needed to be about what "church" is and isn't,



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helping mission candidates and other Christian workers learn how to unpack or deconstruct their understanding of “church.” Without this, anything we did would inevitably be more about our culture and making people “Christians” instead of followers of Jesus.

Second, as a routine part of preparation, we needed to begin to evaluate the ecclesiological and cultural DNA in which our candidates developed. It seemed clear that DNA is an accurate analogy for the issues we were facing. If the missionary candidate had come from a large church, we would have no empirical data to suggest that this person would be able to conceive of church beyond the limits of his or her experience. Fig trees produce figs, and olive trees produce olives. If a person’s sole experience has been in a social, cultural, and economic system that produces mega-churches, we should not expect him or her to be adequately prepared to go to any other part of the world or culture and establish a system of Church that needs to thrive in something the size of a garage.

Third, we realized we needed to find a way to involve our candidates in the process of actually planting a church and observing them as they worked. Since virtually all the missionary candidates we had worked with were from churches that had never planted a church, there was no way to make church-planting a natural pre-field part of their learning experience unless we added it.

So we embarked on what we expected would be a wild and intense learning experience. We worked with a church-planting team made up of some of our missionary candidates and other committed Christians. We sought to learn each other’s giftedness and to honor these gifts. We catalogued what we were trying to change about the DNA of this new church plant (as distinguished from the older church culture we were coming from).

Because we were primarily entering into church-planting from a missiological perspective, we began to more thoroughly evaluate our own culture and assess which of its components were helpful and which a detriment to missionaries trying to make cross-cultural church-planting their primary ministry. The next few years brought some significant surprises, prompting us to change our entire ministry schematic, for again we found ourselves facing unexpected problems.

### Three Critical Issues

Our most significant education came not in the process of working with our missionary candidates,

but in the issues that surfaced in every church-plant relating to the essential fabric of the “Christian.” It may be that this is specific to the Evangelical Christian of North America, but it has been so pervasive that it has completely changed our training objectives. We confronted three critical issues.

The first issue is related to evangelical expectations of “church”. We discovered that even when there are mutually agreed-upon outward goals for the “church plant,” evangelicals have such a dominant consumer orientation to “church” that they quickly default to a focus on their needs and their family’s needs before the church does anything else. So, through three successive church plants, where the stated intentions were to focus on reaching the non-Christian community, all three were hijacked to meet the needs of the Christians involved, while very little was invested in reaching the non-believing community in the first two years of these plants.

The second issue is related to the first. It is all about spiritual DNA: who does the American evangelical look like? Does he or she resemble Jesus in his focus, values, and mission? Our analysis has concluded that Jesus is not the spiritual father of our Evangelical culture. Our Evangelical world is more about our peculiar cultural values and what we like and dislike rather than a reflection of Jesus. If we take a hard, objective look at the Gospels, we will see a great deal of similarity between our Evangelical values and the values of the Pharisees rather than the values of Jesus.

The third issue is the logical outcome of the first two: we have a very bad case of culture blindness. I don’t mean that we cannot distinguish cultural differences, but that we are blind to the differences between what we are as cultural Christians and what the Bible clearly articulates we should be. Our blindness will make it very easy for us to go from culture to culture in our world, planting churches that we think are representative of Paul’s apostolic ministry in the New Testament, when in reality our church-planting principles are a manifestation of our own culture and are not gospel to anyone but us.

**Our analysis has concluded that Jesus is not the spiritual father of our Evangelical culture.**

### Dealing With Problems at Their Root

Fifteen years ago, when we responded to our missionary friend’s letter from Asia, we had no idea where this process would lead us. As we began to address the problems, we naively believed the

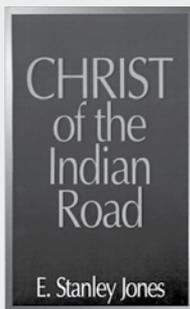
answer was better training. We had no idea that the process of following the leading of the Holy Spirit would take us to the very root of who we are as a Christian people. *Let me be clear: the problem is not the institution of the church, but instead who we have become as American Evangelical Christians.* Yes, another problem is that some churches foster or permit sub-biblical and un-Christlike behavior, but our experience has been that most churches and church plants with the best of intentions will end up wrecked on the rocks of our self-centered cultural expectations and inclinations.

It is obvious that missiological problems of church and culture need to be addressed to adequately prepare men and women for cross-cultural service, but it seems even more important to address and

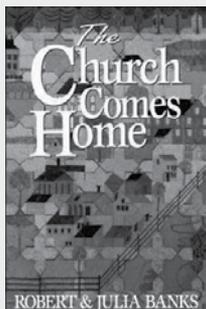
correct the sources of these problems here in North America. We will never be free of the problems that cultural Christianity breeds unless we deal with these problems at their root. *If we are content to maintain and promote a mission strategy that accepts the status quo in North American Christian culture, we can assume the strong likelihood of either failure or recidivism in our training of missionaries.* It is likely that North American Evangelicalism will need to reinvest or reinvent itself as a new people and a new culture for these problems to be completely eradicated. Until that glorious day, you will find us looking for a few teachable men and women willing to walk along side very fallible but increasingly wiser teachers as we invest our lives in bringing a supra-cultural Jesus to the nations. 🌐

# recommended reading

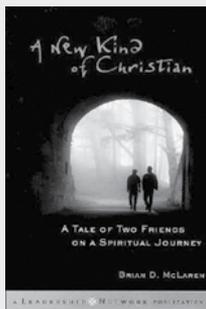
## Recommended Reading on Church and Culture



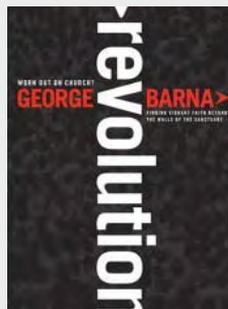
E. Stanley Jones,  
*The Christ of the Indian Road*



Robert Banks,  
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Brian McLaren,  
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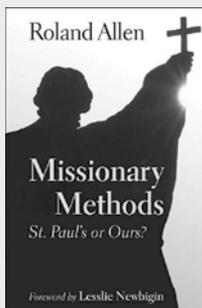
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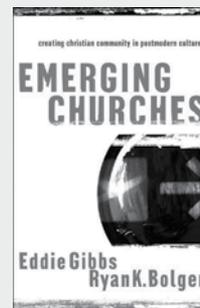
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*The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*



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*Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*



# Nurturing a New Generation of “Pauline” and “Petrine” Apostles

Dick Scoggins

**M**y early thinking on apostleship was shaped by Watchman Nee, who made a distinction between the Church and the Work – two distinct entities with distinct spheres. The Church is called to subdue the land, bringing the full weight of the gospel to bear on every segment and aspect of society. The “Work” is the apostolic work – taking the Kingdom of God to where the Church does not yet exist. The work of the apostolic community has always been to establish the Church where it does not exist and in such a way that the Church will reproduce locally and subdue the land.

Perhaps the best recent definition of an apostle I have read is by Jack Deere in his book *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*. Deere states that apostleship is a calling, not a gift nor an especially gifted or powerful person. I strongly agree. I do not think that an apostle is such a person, or someone who gives oversight to large churches or groups of churches. (The latter more closely resemble “bishops,” such as those of the 2nd and 3rd centuries.)

The primary meaning of apostle is “an authorized sent one” or “messenger”. Apostles are mobile, dynamic groups of emissaries of the Kingdom. They are called to minister as bands or groups – at the very least in twos, as Jesus taught (cf. Acts 13:3,4; 14:4,14; 15:39-41), and sometimes with helpers (cf. Acts 13:5). Apostles have functioned in communities or networks of communities (for example, Paul’s networks of teams on his second and third journeys as well as during his imprisonment).

The key mark of apostleship is not a big personality, but rather big suffering (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9-13). When Paul is forced to defend his apostleship, he first cites his suffering (2 Cor. 12:7-10) before his signs and wonders (vs. 11,12). He wears his suffering as the badge of his apostleship and only acknowledges his signs and wonders when forced to do so.

## Pauline Apostleship

Pauline apostleship is exercised by pioneering, mobile communities which start local communities of the Kingdom where they do not exist. They are dynamic, mobile communities, not solo personalities nor bishops who remain “over” churches. It seems there were many apostles (some true, some false) wandering around in the first century – so many that Paul bumped into a lot of them and took care to go to Spain to ensure that he was building on new ground.

**The key mark of apostleship is not a big personality, but rather big suffering.**

## Petrine Apostleship

A second form of apostleship – what I would call Petrine apostleship – is also portrayed in the New Testament. Until recently my work and thinking have focused primarily on Pauline apostles who usually cross cultures to proclaim and reveal the Kingdom of God. My work with Frontiers has been exclusively in this realm. But I personally have also been engaged in starting house churches in the West, specifically in Rhode Island (USA) and England, and I have also started a number of church-planting teams which have been effective at starting networks of house churches in the West. If I had been pressed as to whether these Western teams were apostolic, until recently I would have replied in the negative or at least been uncertain.



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But recently I was coaching a team in Switzerland which pressed me on whether there exists a Peter-type apostle. I replied that we do not see much of Peter in the New Testament, so I could not comment on whether or not the model exists or not. But I was unhappy with my own reply, and so I went back to search the Scriptures.

What I realized was that the Petrine model is much more prevalent than I had imagined. If we

## **What is needed today is an explosion of apostolic ministry.**

read Galatians 2:8-10 as portraying two types of apostleship, then we see some compelling ramifications. In this passage Paul states that Peter recognized his (and Barnabas') calling as apostles to the Gentiles, while Paul and Barnabas recognized Peter's (and James' and John's) apostleship to the circumcised (Jews).

So we see that there is an apostolic ministry to the unreached (the Pauline), but there is also an apostolic ministry to the existing people of God (the Petrine). For me the clincher was that Jesus is, of course, the forerunner of both (our high priest and apostle, Hebrews 3:1), but the bulk of His apostleship was to Israel. This means that much of the New Testament is about Petrine apostleship. So what does Petrine apostleship look like, and why is it important today?

### **Needed Today – New Apostles and New Ways of Doing Church**

Jesus declared that the Kingdom of God was to be torn from the nation of Israel and given to another people who would bear its fruit (Mt. 21:43). Within a generation the Temple would be destroyed, and the nation of Israel would cease to exist. But God is patient and compassionate: He desired to retain a remnant from Israel who would glorify His name. So God sent Jesus to call out that remnant who would follow Him in new forms of community that would follow the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Jesus appointed (Pauline) apostles to the Gentiles and (Petrine) apostles to the Jews that a remnant might bring glory to His name. The Kingdom of God would need new forms and traditions within the era that was to come.

I believe we are seeing a similar pattern today. Western Christendom is in a key transition, perhaps undergoing as large a cultural shift as occurred during the Reformation (when I think that last great era of Petrine apostles brought the Church out of medieval forms and into modern forms). The world is changing, and the Western

forms of church, birthed very much according to modernity, are not keeping up. I believe that the world has changed so much that simply adapting existing church structures will not enable appropriate expressions of the Kingdom to come forth for new generations.

What is needed is a whole new way of doing "church" (and I think we actually need to drop the word, but that is for a different article). New types of communities of the Kingdom need to be envisioned and created to be Good News in a new era. I believe that apostles are the creative agents sent by God to bring about radical, creative forms of the Kingdom. Pauline apostles will seek forms appropriate and indigenous to the new cultures to which they are bringing the Kingdom, not merely exporting Western church culture, as has often been the case.

But apostolic ministry is now needed in the West as well. If the Western church is not going to die out, then we will require new expressions of Kingdom communities. I think this will require a recovery of Petrine apostles – creative pioneers who will explore Kingdom communities appropriate to our post-modern world. These apostolic families will blaze the trail to new kinds of communities and structures suitable to high-powered, mobile, and technological society, as well as communities for the poor and disenfranchised who will largely miss out on the very things that power the new world.

These pioneers are not called to make further adaptations to faltering models, but rather, like Jesus, Peter, James and John, call God's people to move on from old formulations in a journey to the new. Such a journey will be every bit as radical and terrifying as it must have been for those early Jewish believers who watched the destruction of their nation and traditions. Today's Petrine apostles will bear the same primary mark of apostleship – persecution, for their ministry is bound to be misunderstood (at best) by existing churches.

What is needed today is an explosion of apostolic ministry. God is calling Pauline apostles to bring the Kingdom to nations without an indigenous, cultural expression of the Kingdom of God in local communities. God is calling a new generation of Petrine apostles to forge new communities in the West (and where Western churches have become the normative expression of the Kingdom in other cultures). It is my hope that these Petrine apostles can bring the Western church into a new era of fruitfulness where Kingdom communities reflect the glory of the Living God and impart faith, hope and love to those in darkness. 🌐

# Vision 2025 Rapidly Accelerating the Pace of Bible Translation

An Interview with Bob Creson, Wycliffe Bible Translators



*Bob Creson is president of Wycliffe Bible Translators USA. He was interviewed by Darrell Dorr, managing editor of Mission Frontiers, during a May 18 visit to the U.S. Center for World Mission.*

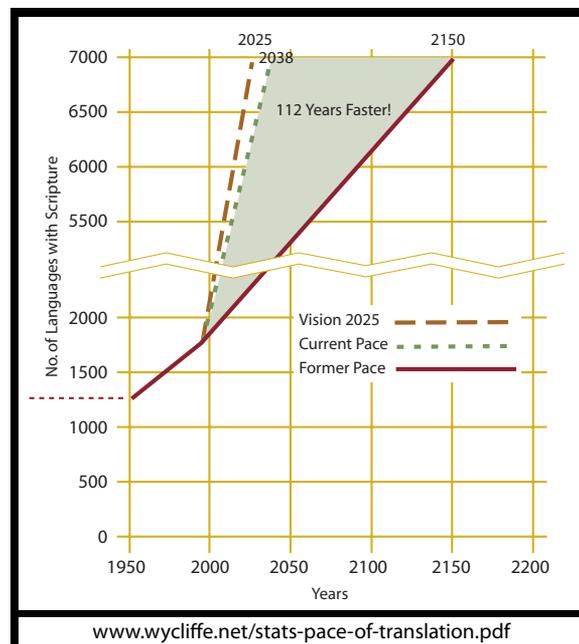
**MF:** Let's talk first about Vision 2025, Wycliffe's plan to see Bible translation begun by 2025 in every language community that needs it. How's this progressing? What are your metrics, and how do you monitor where you are?

**Creson:** We knew when we set this goal that we didn't have the systems in place or capacity to accomplish the vision, so we've been building our capacity to accomplish the vision and building the systems to help us measure progress. Our major partner, SIL International (formerly known as the Summer Institute of Linguistics), has developed a Language Program Database to gather information from our field entities and partner organizations. That information is transmitted to Dallas periodically, and once a year our International Administration compiles and evaluates it, looking for particular markers we've developed. Before we adopted Vision 2025 in 1999, the pace of Bible translation was on a trajectory of the year 2150 by which to begin Bible translation in each language still needing it, but we're now on a 2038 pace – a dramatic change.

**MF:** As you and other Wycliffe leaders have stepped back and looked at Vision 2025, have you

identified existing or likely bottlenecks? Where are the most vulnerable areas you need to shore up?

**Creson:** One major question is how we're going to be able to finance colleagues from local language communities and workers in Wycliffe Organizations in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. That's huge for us right now. We're putting a lot of effort in trying to figure that one out. That's



part of a larger business plan Wycliffe and SIL have developed. We've looked at the world and identified three basic types of language programs to fund. First, there's the classic program, the one-on-one approach, one team with one language. The second: larger number of languages will be tackled in a cluster approach, where a group of languages is brought together – sometimes they're related, and sometimes they're not. The third approach is where, at least at first, instead of a full

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New Testament we seek to provide what we call "limited scope" translation. So we've assigned a price tag to these three basic approaches, and total estimates range upwards of

several billion dollars worldwide.

**MF:** So in terms of bottlenecks, financing of national workers would be the first to note within this business plan.

**Creson:** Consultants will also be a bottleneck for us.

**MF:** Identifying them and training them?

**Creson:** Yes.

**MF:** Let's talk about your workforce of North American missionaries. Where are your new workers coming from, and what kinds of issues are they dealing with? What, if anything, are you doing differently in missionary recruitment?

**Creson:** One of the things we've rediscovered recently is that it's in the one-on-one recruitment, with the personal touch, where people really are motivated to mission. Many people in Wycliffe can identify a person that they talked to somewhere along the way as the primary person God used to motivate them to get in contact with Wycliffe. So we're spending time in re-engineering our personnel systems to re-emphasize one-on-one recruitment and processing of personnel, and we no longer have one team recruiting people and another team processing those recruits. The old system was creating a fair amount of confusion for them.

**MF:** You're talking about Wycliffe USA.

**Creson:** Yes, this is just USA. Two years ago we had the best year we've ever had in 12 years in terms of recruitment. It looks as if this year we're on target to equal that or maybe better it. Another issue we're re-evaluating is how we qualify people. Some of the things we're doing are very helpful,

and while we're not going to lower our standards, we've got to look at other things and ask if these are really inhibiting or preventing people from being part of Wycliffe.

**MF:** For example?

**Creson:** Well, college debt – we've had very restrictive guidelines for how much debt you can have, but we've been discovering that if we're too restrictive we eliminate a lot of people that could potentially join us. So we liberalized our standards for school debt, designing ways for a reasonable amount to be reduced through our normal support systems.

**MF:** So what are your ceilings for student debt at this point?

**Creson:** We allow a maximum of \$24,000 for singles and \$36,000 for couples. Another thing we've had to take a look at is our retirement policy, partially because these days we're approached by more and more mid- or late-career people

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who want to join Wycliffe. However, they might not have an adequate retirement program according to our previous standards. We're also seeking to increase our ethnic diversity by removing barriers that inhibit participation in Wycliffe by Latino, African-American, and Asian communities. We're not doing this because this is the politically correct thing to do, but because we believe God wants as many people from as many communities involved in what He's doing around the world as possible. We don't want to be a hindrance to that.

**MF:** So where *are* your new people now coming from?

**Creson:** Second-career people are a big emphasis for us now. We're trying to attract people who have the financial resources to be able to leave a job, be self-supporting and make a contribution in a new career in Wycliffe. One of the reasons we relocated our U.S. headquarters from southern California to Orlando was so we could tap into the retirees who move down to Florida from the cold states during the winters.

**MF:** Have your expectations been fulfilled on that front?

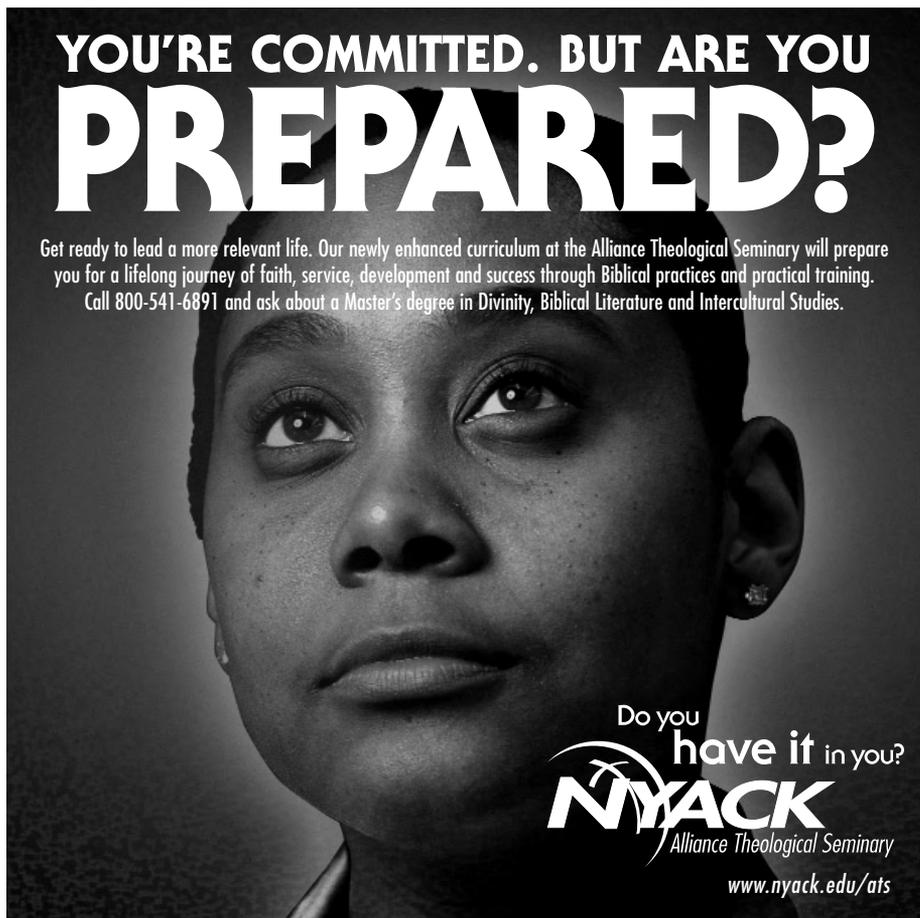
**Creson:** Yes, it's been huge, and we work closely with Wycliffe Associates to "mobilize" this group and maximize their contribution.

**MF:** If you were to identify 3-4 world regions where Wycliffe has either had special difficulties or for which you'd especially like to deploy new workers and energies, what would these be? Which cultural blocs or geographical regions would make it to the top of your list?

**Creson:** Three areas of the world encompass 80% of the remaining Bible translation needs. First, Central Africa – primarily Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic – there are probably about 800 languages in this area. The second region is from northern India to southern China – probably another 800 languages there. Then

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there's the band of islands in Asia, from Sumatra clear across to Papua New Guinea – there are 1000 languages there.

**MF:** These regions are tops in terms of numerical need?

**Creson:** Yes, but they also present special challenges for access and long-term presence and educating children. We've had major strategy sessions to look at how we've traditionally lived and worked and to consider new options for the future. Now what does God want us to do? Can we work remotely, can we work and train offshore, can we find different ways of tackling Bible translation – workshop programs, temporary presence, coming and going? All this costs more money; Vision 2025 has a high price tag attached to it. But you know God is going to accomplish what He says He is going to accomplish if you're committed to Revelation 7:9 – a vision of every tongue, tribe, and people group worshipping before His throne. 🌐

**Three areas of the world encompass 80% of the remaining Bible translation needs.**



✍ Much has been written on the **Back to Jerusalem Movement**, the ambition of some leaders of the church in China to evangelize westward through Asia all the way back to Jerusalem. A March 2006 consultation brought together mainland Chinese, overseas Chinese, and others to further explore many of the practicalities of Chinese churches sending effective workers cross-culturally, including recruitment and mobilization, training, sending, and midway stations. To obtain one of the excellent resource documents distributed at that consultation, the spring 2006 edition of *China-Source Journal*, take a look at the ChinaSource Website at [www.chinasource.org/Journal.htm](http://www.chinasource.org/Journal.htm).

✍ The campus community at the USCWM will soon review and critique *Darwin's Nightmare*, a recent documentary film given a variety of awards. The film portrays the effects of globalization on the peoples of northern Tanzania and other fishing communities along the shores of Lake Victoria. *Darwin's Nightmare* evokes sympathy for the poor and disenfranchised, but does it tell the whole story fairly, including what mission agencies and other non-governmental organizations are doing to holistically alleviate suffering and combat its causes? See what you think when you look at [www.darwinsnightmare.com](http://www.darwinsnightmare.com) and once (later this year) you can obtain video copies from retail outlets. *Darwin's Nightmare* provides mission agencies with a good opportunity to explain how their work relates to the multi-faceted challenges of international development.

✍ During September 28-30 the USCWM will host "**Selecting, Sending, and Caring**," a training seminar for churches and agencies co-sponsored by Member Care International and Frontiers. A variety of tools will be offered to help churches and agencies to upgrade in missionary selection, sending, and nurture. To obtain further information and to

register, contact Jerry Reddix at [ssc9.28.07@gmail.com](mailto:ssc9.28.07@gmail.com)

✍ Since January 2006 **Joshua Project** has been a ministry of the USCWM. We're pleased to welcome this Colorado Springs-based ministry to our family. Note recent changes to the Joshua Project Website ([www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net)), including the addition of a PrayerTools icon and links throughout the site that point readers to the *Global Prayer Digest*, the Ethne movement, and other resources.

✍ More mission agencies are giving increasing attention to modes of communication suitable to oral learners. The **International Orality Network** is a prominent example of the momentum in this area, featuring collaborative efforts by Campus Crusade for Christ, Epic Partners, Faith Comes By Hearing, The God's Story Project, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, The Jesus Film Project, Progressive Vision, The Seed Company, Trans World Radio, Scriptures in Use (SIU), Vernacular Media Services, and Wycliffe Bible Translators. This network's next consultation is slated for November 14-16, 2006 in Colorado Springs. For further information and to register, see [www.oralbible.com](http://www.oralbible.com).

✍ Our plan is that later this year *Mission Frontiers* will present a special issue with a survey of frontier mission needs and opportunities among **Cushitic peoples and the Horn of Africa**. My colleague Rick Wood (point man for this special issue) is looking for researchers, writers, and editors with specialist knowledge of this bloc of unreached peoples. If you have suggestions for Rick, write him at [Rick.Wood@uscwm.org](mailto:Rick.Wood@uscwm.org).

#### Darrell Dorr

Darrell Dorr ([darrell.dorr@uscwm.org](mailto:darrell.dorr@uscwm.org)) is the Managing Editor of *Mission Frontiers*.

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# Churches and Agencies— Learning Together

Greg H. Parsons



Years ago my friend and fellow USCWM staff member Fran Patt (whose article appears on pages 8-10 of this issue of *Mission Frontiers*) presented a paper at a regional gathering of the Evangelical Missiological Society. In his paper Fran addressed problems in our present model of sending missionaries. In his leadership of the USCWM's regional office in eastern Pennsylvania and his service as an elder in a large church, he had seen the sending of many workers from that region. Yet many of these workers struggled with the task of planting the church in other cultures.

Fran began to ask himself why that might be. One reason was simple and clear: these young missionaries had never seen a church planted. In many cases they had lots of training and preparation, but they hadn't been part of churches that multiplied churches. They might have seen churches grow in various ways, but they had not seen churches started – the very task they were now expected to tackle. Fran's article on pages 8-10 elaborates this theme. Both he and I would be glad to know what *you* think.



The other day I had a conversation that may be similar to conversations you've had. The person with whom I was talking said to me, "We've got this sharp, young missionary from our church who has already been out there in (country X), and now our church wants to send him. We will even support him 100%. Do you know an agency that will channel our support and deal with the issues in sending him the money but without imposing too much control or constraint on him?"

I told this person of an agency like that and hung up the phone. But what I really wanted to do was ask him a few questions:

1. Why are you so impressed by him that you are willing to let him do what he thinks is best? How do you know this missionary is really effective – or more importantly, strategic – without any field supervision or oversight?
2. How do you keep him accountable in his work and walk?
3. What is it about agencies that make you reluctant to use them in this situation? Is it their policies and procedures that seem onerous in some way?
4. Do you support other missionaries through standard sending agencies? Has that worked well in some cases?

In effect, this church is setting up its own agency, but doesn't want to deal with issues like fund transfers and currency exchange. Many other churches have done this, even if they didn't call their new creations "agencies." Over time some of these churches may develop the experience to effectively guide the work they start, recognizing that such work is very different than ministry in their own culture. Yet many now wish, with the benefit of hindsight, that they had worked closer with others experienced in that type of work or part of the world. Agencies offer such experience.

As I think about these things, I also have a few questions for agencies to consider:

1. Have you thought of ways to engage mission candidates with field training (here or out there) early?
2. How large is your field policy manual? How long does it take to orient new missionaries to your way of doing things – before they leave and when they get to the field? Do some of these policies and procedures stifle effective efforts or introduce unnecessary complications?
3. How many decisions or policies in your manual were decided without much field input? Did those policies rise from problems that don't exist now? Would they be appropriate if you were to open work in new parts of the world with missionaries with different gift-mixes? What about those with business skills – do you have a way to enfold them in your work?
4. How much of the decision-making is done on the field? Do your workers have the freedom to reasonably experiment?

Missionaries can be effective without agencies, and they can be ineffective in agencies. Yet agencies deserve a closer look and an invitation to conversations.

I encourage you to talk with people in a mission structure that differs from yours. Dialogue and seek to better understand their perspective. And I invite you to tell me, too ([Greg.Parsons@uscwm.org](mailto:Greg.Parsons@uscwm.org)) what you're thinking and learning on these issues. 



Rev. Greg Parsons is General Director of the U.S. Center for World Mission. He's been on staff at the USCWM for 22 years.