

Editorial: Reaching the Non-Literate Peoples of the World

These are very exciting days as we see our Lord building His Church and drawing to Himself people from every people, tribe, tongue and nation. Yet despite great progress, there are still formidable barriers that need to be overcome. Among these are the literacy (illiteracy) and language barriers. Not only do we need to be aware of these barriers, but also to take note of the tools that God has put into our hands to penetrate them.

Thanks to the tireless work done by Bible translators, nearly 2,000 language groups now have either a Scripture portion, a New Testament or the complete Bible in their language. These are vital “tools” if the church in the various people groups is to mature and become viable. However, research shows that slightly about half of the world’s adult population is non-literate. Statistics compiled in 1992 by David Barrett (Editor of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*) place the count of non-literates worldwide at very close to two billion. In spite of the many on-going efforts by governments and agencies to teach literacy, this figure could rise to 2.4 billion by AD 2000.

The United Nations entitled the 1980s “The Lost Decade” because illiteracy increased significantly during that period. Contributing factors for this increase are:

- * The 35 poorest nations of the world decreased their education budget by 25%.

- * In Zaire (even before the civil war) 20% of the teachers were fired.

- * In Ghana, (official report of 36% literacy), many unqualified teachers teach for only one or two hours a day.

- * In Benin schools have been closed for several years because a corrupt government has misappropriated monies designated for education.

We need to consider the fact that

multitudes of non-readers are usually the least reached with the Gospel. It’s becoming increasingly obvious that the only way they will be reached is through some form of Gospel audio-communication strategy. Like the Blackfoot Indians of North America, who prefer audio-Scriptures, and have little or no interest in learning to read, including their own language. In some cultures this changes, but usually only after they become Christian. However, even at that, examples abound where Scripture translations have been completed for 10 or 15 years, yet today only one or two percent of the people can read them, and even less actually read them on a regular basis. As a result, many Bible translators have considered supplementing their written translations by putting Scriptures on cassettes.

Organizations such as Gospel Recordings, United Bible Societies, Hosanna Ministries and Audio Scripture International have taken the lead, and for some years now have put Gospel messages on tape to communicate God’s Word to thousands of non-literate people. Even so, millions still have not had the opportunity of hearing the Gospel in a language they speak and can understand. Currently thousands of tribes and unreached people groups have no real access *nor opportunity* to hear the message of God’s love in a way that can touch them. They truly are without the Word of God, and do not have the ability to call on the Lord and be saved.

The goal of Christian mission efforts in general, and frontier missions in particular, must be to give every language group in the world the message of the Gospel in a simple yet culturally relevant way. The recorded messages must clearly explain the way of salvation centered in Christ and His perfect finished work, as well as lay the basis of

a proper understanding of salvation. All the non-literate unreached peoples of the world must be reached with the message of Christ!

This special edition of the Journal focuses on that awesome challenge. What will it take for the Gospel to be available to all the peoples of the earth—including the thousands of non-reading peoples? Certainly it will take prayer and intercession, coupled with a new perspective of the task at hand and new ways to communicate the Word. It will also require renewed and greater commitment on our part, top notch research, use of the best tools to pull it off—with adequate finances to support the whole effort!

As you read, we trust you will be challenged anew by each article and every author as they focus on a particular aspect or complexity of the task—basic Gospel communication to lost people clustered in ethnolinguistic groups who *cannot read*. They are lost because the Gospel still hasn’t been brought to them *in their own languages*, nor has it seriously been presented to them *in terms of their own cultural situations and values*. We must see it for what it is: The burden of responsibility (and often the lack of fruit) lies with us, the communicators of the Word! May we see and learn so that for God’s glory the two billion plus non-literate people of the world, clustered in thousands of people groups, may clearly hear the Good News. May it be soon, even by AD 2000!

*Dr. Hans M. Weerstra, editor IJFM, and Ross Lange, of Gospel Recordings. June 1995
El Paso, Texas*

Dependence on Literacy Strategy: Taking a Hard Second Look

If we are serious about reaching the unreached peoples of the world, we cannot afford to rely on a strategy that half the world does not use or understand!

by Herbert Klem

“Half the world has no Bible.” So read the banner at our mission conference. It is thrilling to see the growing focus on reaching the remaining unreached people groups of the world. We now recognize that identifying with the local language and customs can be extremely helpful. The very idea of “people group strategy” is that evangelism is more productive when outreach to people takes place using their own familiar methods of communication rather than using those foreign to them. Even so, have we considered rethinking our approach to our most basic communication tool—the Bible? How can you communicate the message of “The Book” without using the printed page?

One thing is clear, most Bible characters in their day, used books and literature far less than we do in ours. So are Bible songs, and Bible story-telling as well as Bibles on cassettes a radical shift away from being biblical? Perhaps it’s more like going back to the basics. Would we do anything differently if we discovered that Jesus and David did not write any of their teachings in books, but rather used oral tradition, including poetry, to keep their teachings alive?

Literacy in a Non-Literate World

If we trace the roots of the modern Evangelical mission movement back to William Carey’s great efforts to reach the world of his day, modern missions is about 200 years old. Most of us involved in this movement have always thought of the Bible as the main book for communication. We have believed and taught that a person has to learn to read the Bible for him/herself

in order to become spiritually mature. Many of us believe that as long as people do not read, they will remain spiritually immature, and certainly cannot become leaders in their churches.

In the time of Jesus, some people did believe this, but Jesus did not. Although He could read, He did not write any of His teachings, but taught His disciples to recite from memory. In the early days of the Church, Christ’s message was preserved orally and came into writing 15 to 30 years later. The extent to which we use books to teach the Bible is a cultural choice, not a biblical requirement. David sang the Psalms, he probably did not write at all. Others later gathered the Psalms from singers and wrote them down to preserve them. Some parts of the Bible were clearly developed through writing, and others are the product of an oral tradition that was spiritually mature, but probably not highly literate.

Literacy and Spiritual Growth

Most of the modern mission movement has worked on the assumption that literacy is essential to evangelism, spiritual maturity and church growth. Theodore Tucker summarizes the general strategy of missions in regard to the vision of reaching a community to establish a church. It has been a characteristic Protestant method of evangelism and education to seek to teach everyone to read in order that they may find for themselves in the Bible, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the Word God has given to them.

J. F. Ajayi and E. A. Ayandele have both written extensively on how they interpret the impact of this policy on their

country. Both are Nigerian historians and agree that the introduction of literacy to West Africa, along with the other pressures of modernization, such as industrialization and commercial relations with the wider world economy, have led the forces that have transformed all of West Africa, and Nigeria in particular, into modernity. They are thankful for the mission contribution to the development of education in the region, but are also profoundly troubled by these events for several reasons. Pastors and missionaries have encountered similar serious problems, and question how much these are the result of our use of literacy in settings where most people do not appreciate reading. What follows in this article are results of using literacy in non-literate areas, together with some of my observations and suggestions.

Division and Conflicts

The major impact of missions in Nigeria was the introduction of literacy and schools, with the result of dividing their homogeneous communities into a two or three class system separated into literates and non-literates consisting of upwardly mobile educated groups, and the non-reading more traditional segments. These historians see benefits from the development of churches and hospitals, but note the creation of a new elite as an unintended, yet much more important result. Parsons makes a similar point for Ghana, and missionaries from around the world have lamented this development in similar ways, although from different perspectives.

Both Ajayi and Ayandele complain

that the primary effect of mission literacy and educational policy was not the advancement of evangelism, but the division of society. There were already too many ethnic and tribal divisions to allow smooth development of an economic region. With the growth of schools and “education” inside each village and community new divisions came about as well. Communities were now divided into “haves” and “have-nots.” The difference in wealth was not the biggest problem, but the fact that the two groups within the community did not know the same things, nor did they think the same way even when they had the same information. Each developed very different value systems. The “educated” youth, including some of the High School students I taught, did not even know how to communicate with their parents who had sacrificed to send them to school, due to the limited education their parents had. The gap between how they thought and how their parents thought was just too wide, and the longer they went to school the worse the gap became.

In East Africa the highly educated poet Okot p'Bitek, in his *Song of Lawino*, laments the division of his people by the education system charging that the mission had “crushed the manhood of his people with books.” Indeed most of Africa’s leaders of the independence movement in Africa from the 1950’s onward, were trained in mission schools. However, many were not particularly thankful, partly because they experienced pain in a certain separation from their own culture and roots by the very education that offered them the hope of progress.

Ayandele is particularly upset with the narrowness of mission motives for introducing literacy. He documents that the goal of many was the introduction of sufficient training and literacy to enable teachers and pastors to interpret the Bible correctly. However, he points out that if the mission

truly cared about the people and the need to develop a viable and competitive economy, they would have sought to introduce the same levels of education considered necessary for Europeans. He feels education was restricted as an approach to holding power.

On the other hand, the missionaries became frustrated also. The primary missionary goal in supplying education was the preparation of more pastors and teachers to spread the Gospel movement. To their frustration, students were eager for education, but much more to advance their careers and personal wealth than to spread the Gospel. It bothered some missionaries that only a minority of the population cared to become literate. There are large segments of all societies that do not care much for schooling, literacy and Western forms of Christianity, nor care much for any development geared to book learning. After over 100 years of literacy oriented missions, more than 75% of Africa does not read well enough to manage basic Bible passages, and many more who can read, simply do not enjoy the process.

Failing to Reach Half the World

I believe it is correct that nearly half the world has no real access to the Bible because they do not read. More than a billion people do not read at all. Another billion can read, but are not fully literate. That is, they can read familiar and elementary things, but they cannot read a short, simple piece of new information with any real understanding. Then there are others who can read, but find it uncomfortable, or feel so different from others that they do not read as a matter of habit. It becomes a matter of lifestyle, identity, and social preference which works against messages and communications in print.

It is possible that the literacy based approach applied in non-reading communities reaches best those who most want to escape from the traditional

culture into the modern world of wealth and technology, but it may not be successful in reaching the majority of the people and the poor in many regions. It is clear that one of the great tragedies in much of the world today is the division of communities into rich and poor. Literacy based mission policy has assisted the establishment of this emerging middle class in the developing world, which has become socially distanced from the larger uneducated community. Some of the very people missions had hoped to reach and help are the least interested. Others are very interested in education, but are more drawn to advanced technological and economic progress than to church work of pastors, teachers or evangelists.

Mission School Problems

Mission schools helped many to become leaders, but also stirred resentment. Ayandele and Ajayi tell of the frustration of Nigeria’s emerging leaders who wanted advanced education to help them attain positions of leadership in the land. Mission policy focused on training only up to the level of pastors and school teachers, dissuading mission school graduates from going off into other careers. Some missionaries and pastors noticed that evangelism often prospered best among those with the least education, and some of the most educated were the least interested in the sacrificial life-style of pastors and evangelists. At one time, the vast majority of Africa’s independence movement leaders were graduates of mission schools. Most were troubled by conflicts experienced in mission schools, even though others have been deeply thankful.

Missionaries have commented to me, even as Donald McGavran has argued, that evangelism spreads most rapidly among poorer folk and less educated people. Those with more education and wealth are less interested in spiritual things in general, and the financial

and social sacrifices necessary to live out a Christian life-style in a traditional or secular society do not appeal to them. Several missionaries have complained to me that many of their brightest seminary students were in school for personal advancement and education, and often left the ministry with the first promising opportunity. These educators are asking how to best limit education so that this will not happen.

Frequently it is best if the mission strategy adjusts, by supplying the best seminary education possible in confidence that it will be a blessing in the lives of those who attend. Some of those who attended a school where I taught in Nigeria have gone on to become senators, professors and teachers, and entered other careers. They have done these things for the good of their people and to lift their struggling families from painful poverty. When we congratulate and affirm them it helps to keep them in the ministry—in both their professional involvements and in pastoral activities that many continue to perform. Some very capable Nigerian pastors I know who serve both humble and growing city congregations do this as a free service to the church, and also earn a “secular” income which the church would never be able to pay. When we have tried to limit this career development, we have seen some very angry people push on to higher education but with markedly different attitudes toward the mission that gave them their start in school.

Cultural Resistance

The late Dr. Allan Tippett has written concerning the transmission of cultural innovations such as literacy, conversion to Christianity, and technology among traditional societies. He has devel-

oped a concept called “ethnic cohesion.” According to Tippett, community leaders tend to accept or reject innovations based on whether they perceive the proposed changes as contributing to the general unity and well being of the community. The unity and self-esteem of a community—its

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sense of being a group—is a major factor in determining the acceptance or rejection of any change. In contemporary language, “Is this us? Does it fit our case?” If innovation threatens this sense of group identity and unity, then they will tend to reject those innovations. It is similar to the attitudes that surrounded the congressional “Un-American Activities Committee.” Reflecting on the significance of the name itself, it is obvious that there was an effort to weed out and reject from America ideas that were seen to be destructive to the morale, values and identity of our national society. Certain innovations were seen as threatening the core values upon which the community economy were formed.

In many traditional communities, that which sustains this sense of identity and cohesion is the language and the oral literature of songs, proverbs, wise sayings, stories, epics and rituals. In instances where the mission agency is

seen as preserving the language and being supportive of these oral traditions, it is possible for the Bible in written form to be a key force in unifying the people and standardizing the language in a wider area. Luther's German Bible is given credit for this as only one of many examples. However, in cases where literacy is perceived as competing with the traditional culture, literature, wisdom and/or leaders, then those prominent in the traditional segments of the society can actually be opposed to literacy and modern education.

It is clear that in traditional farming communities in Asia, Latin America and Africa, literacy and schooling can be the leading edge of modernization which divides the community socially, economically and often culturally.

Jack Goody and Francis Hsu, among others, have suggested that the introduction of literacy into a traditional society is the most fundamental cultural change possible to establish. This is because it changes not only *what* people think, but also changes *how* they think.

Jack Goody's theory is that most traditional non-reading societies are much more right brained, holistic, communally oriented, and are less supportive of individual critical thinking. However, literacy is the strongest conditioner for linear, left brained, critical thinking. He credits literacy with the beginning of the scientific revolution in critical thought, and with the capability to regularly question authority and the traditions of the community. Hence he feels literacy not only shapes the mind, but also changes the value system, particularly for younger people. Reading ability creates different values and attitudes. This sounds great if you come from a literate, technological society that thrives on open debate and rapidly

changing leadership. But if you come from a stable, traditional society, both the questioning of authority and the introduction of a new power group of critical thinkers can be very threatening to the traditional values of the community or society.

While there are large numbers of people around the world bent on self advancement, there are also many traditional societies and groups of people who do not compete very well in the modern world nor want to. After a century and a half of literacy based evangelism, there are still large numbers of people who cannot read, and perhaps more, who can but do not read. It is possible, therefore, that we are actually not dealing with an inability to read, *so much as a resistance to literacy and education out of loyalty to the group* to a set of traditions, which are seen to be in conflict with books and book learning. It is not just the content of the books, but the values and assumptions that go with a reading culture and literate society.

Traditional leaders who sense that literacy can divide their communities, while introducing many new values, (eventually requiring new leaders with new skills and other loyalties), may have some real justification in being slow to embrace literacy and religious changes that support it.

In his lectures Charles Kraft has suggested that there are at least two ways to deal with traditional leaders who resist literacy and change. Plan A is to appreciate the positive values these leaders may be protecting by resisting change, then work with them to preserve these values by adjusting the way literacy is introduced. Plan B is to overpower the traditional leaders with technology and modernization, developing new leaders through schooling who will displace them. In some cases, when the traditional culture cannot regulate or explain modern innovations, modernization breaks down the tradi-

tional culture with its values and opens the door for people to accept Christ. Plan B often seems to work, but it breaks the soul and backbone of the traditional culture turning the new generation loose with new technology, but without the constraints of either the traditional community or of Western Christianity. The resulting dislocation and pain can be considerable.

In these situations pastoral leadership prepared in Christian theology and appreciative of the traditional cultural values, the cultural dynamics of Western thought and Christian values, can be of great assistance in helping their people to adjust to the problems of modernization. Frequently both seminaries and literacy agencies are aware of the power of the written page, but less aware of the cultural implications and their link to the acids of modernity as they work together. There are many social groups around the globe that, in spite of their simplicity, sense that sending their children off to school, is to risk sending them off into another world—a different world which is guided by different values, perhaps not completely good, even if the pastor or the missionary means them good.

Alienating Adult Leaders

Those of us who have worked in communities where there are significant numbers of mature non-readers have been delighted to see adult leaders accept Christ, and as part of that growth become interested in Bible study. Sometimes it is very satisfying to hear them work their way painfully through a simple passage, but gain the satisfaction of being able to read the Bible for themselves. We rejoice even more when young children of these same elders go to school. It is not long before these young children are reading smoothly and quickly through these same passages. We notice that people who learn to read earlier in life develop a certain skill and facility for

excellence that later converts to reading do not attain. Some of those who have studied the traditional oral communications systems based on memorization and pungent imagery, compared to the more linear logic of the written system, agree that most people seem to excel in one or the other, but few people can manage to be skilled in both. So it is no wonder that when we hear of a person who has memorized the Gospel of Mark or the whole New Testament, it is probably a non-reader or a new reader who has the enthusiasm and the skills to do such a thing. It is likely a combination of both skill and culture that directs people's energies.

While doing house to house evangelistic visits in a village in Nigeria, I was struck many times by the politeness and attention given me by the older leaders in some of the homes as they listened to what I said. Even so, at the end of our conversation many would gently counter that they were quite willing to allow their children to go to school and become Christians, but that they themselves were too old. I could not believe that they thought they were too old to become Christians! Some actually said that it was because they were too old to learn to read. They had identified becoming a Christian with learning to read, and they wanted to do what they did well. They did not want to enter a group as mature leaders if young people were likely to easily outperform them in key leadership skills. To say, "I am too old to become a good Christian" is very sad and makes little real sense. Of course, to say, "I am too old to become a good reader," makes a great deal of sense.

In 30 years of mission experience, I have frequently observed that when people are selected for leadership training programs, the younger people with better academic and reading skills are the ones chosen. This tends to exclude the more mature leaders who may have superior evangelistic or moral

qualities. Although the community recognizes the abilities of these young people, they may not recognize them as leaders until they have greater age or have demonstrated other more traditional leadership skills, such as the ability to resolve community conflicts, practice generosity, display moral superiority or form relationship ties with other existing community leaders. This preference for the young and the literate may be so basic to our Western mission policies that we have perhaps avoided the very best leaders who could have given the churches the best stability and greatest growth and integrity.

Many times I have visited pastors and missionaries who have told me that the best evangelists in their area were non-literates, both men and women, old and young. In some cases some of the preachers could not read. They either recited from memory or had other people read the text they would expound upon. These people were respected for their abilities and gifts. They were rarely given training and preparation for further development of leadership gifts they possessed. I have heard of a few cases where such people were accepted in a school, allowed to listen in class, take oral exams, and return to ministry with greater ability. I have not heard of such a person graduating though. There are a variety of denominations in which they can serve as pastors, prophets and evangelists. They usually function in rural and traditional societies and where the churches are growing rapidly. It is my opinion that this is most likely one of the teaching strategies that Jesus and David actually used, including some of the apostles Jesus trained.

All of this leads to suggest that there is a role for audio-Scriptures and other literature on tape, as well as in other art forms, for the communication of

new ideas to existing adult leaders in largely non-literate communities. It allows the adults to participate, to lead and regulate wisely for a healthy transition into literacy and other modern innovations.

There are alternatives to literacy

I am convinced that the Bible on tape is one of the great tools of our time. If we can learn to use it wisely, we can reach all the people of the world with a solid understanding of the Word of God, which is our primary goal.

based evangelism, discipleship and leadership development. There is a growing use of memorization, oral literature, narrative teaching, story-telling, (sometimes called storying), recorded Scripture portions, taped Scripture songs, and programs for listening by tape to the whole Bible.

A Personal Experience

The following is part of my own experience in West Africa that occurred a few years ago. This incident happened after several villagers had told me they were too old to become Christians. Others had suggested that Christianity was a “white man’s religion” that did not belong in Africa. Then there were those that said that Christianity did not suit their people as well as other religions. While there were many Christians in these towns, there were also others who clearly had “attitude problems.” Years before, one of my teachers had told me that when adult students don’t want to learn or change,

the teacher must change first—then the change in the students would be surprising.

So with the help of some of my students we prepared a special translation of the book of Hebrews, using only very short sentences, similar to the structure of the local traditional poetry. We then found a choir master who arranged the wording and phrasing of the lines so that they were poetic enough to sing. We ran it back to the translation committee to check for accuracy and worked out the changes to keep the original thoughts. Then we recorded some choirs singing the first six chapters of Hebrews. We were doing Bible study test groups with church members to see how much people learned from a more “oral” approach, mixing readers and non-readers.

One evening I came to a study which was crowded out with visitors. I could tell many of the visitors were Muslim elders from the very community where I was told so often that people felt too old to become Christians. I did not want all those visitors spoiling the structure of my test group, so I politely asked the visitors to leave these Christian test lessons. The wise old elder had a twinkle in his eye as he gently and politely suggested that they were having a wonderful time hearing God speak to them, and that perhaps I should be the one to leave. I did not know what to do. I was thrilled to have a Muslim man in a Bible study, and he was an elder leader, but I did not want to spoil the structure of my test. When I asked him politely to leave a second time, he grinned and challenged me to a true test of ownership of the singing Bible tapes. The one who could sing the least of the tape from memory would leave, and the one who could sing the most could stay. That was the indigenous method of proving cultural ownership.

Because of the tonal intricacies of singing oral art in that language, he knew he had me beat cold—no contest! The group cheered and proclaimed him the owner of the tape. He boasted that only a wise Yoruba man could compose and sing this kind of poetry; insiders loved it and outsiders could admire from a small distance.

The elder had been warmly attracted to the text because it had been identified with his culture, employing art forms that marked it as his cultural property, even though it was played on a tape recorder supplied by a meddling foreigner. He was pleased with the form of the message, but he was also bonding with God's Word from the book of Hebrews. He was no longer telling me this was "foreign religion" but was defending his right to hear the Scripture. Best of all, the whole group loved the entire event.

Conclusion

We can choose to make Christian teaching and Christian maturity dependent upon literacy by the forms of worship and communication we use, even if it is foreign to half of the community we are trying to reach. We can predict certain sections or certain percentages of non-reading communities will be put off by our media choice well before they even know what the message is about. However we must understand, that it is not the Gospel that is turning these people away. They are issues not related to the cross of Christ, namely, our love and preference for the power of literacy. The latter is turning whole communities off to the Gospel.

If we enter each community respect-

fully, arriving with a variety of approaches based on local communication methods, using styles people can trust and identify with, we will find ways to gain a hearing for the message. We may also find ways to help them maintain the greater group unity, encountering the modern world with the

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least disruption of leadership and community structure. It will also yield a stronger, healthier church. It most likely will facilitate a smoother transition into full literacy, and a greater use of the written page in general.

I am convinced that the Bible on tape is one of the great tools of our time. If we can learn to use it wisely, we can reach all the people of the world with a solid understanding of the Word of God, which is our primary goal. After over 150 years of literacy based mission strategy, we will still miss half the world if we continue believing that people must read in order to receive the Word. Great Bible leaders such as David the singer of songs, Moses the composer of songs, (Deut. 31:9-13 and chapter 33), and our Lord who worked through unlettered fishermen as well as with scribes, were not tied to literacy as the only way reach the world with the Gospel.

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The Crucial Role of Oral-Scripture: Focus Africa

Nothing is more important than making the Gospel available to all peoples clustered in thousands of people groups. This article shows the crucial place of audio-Scriptures for this all important challenge.

by Gilbert Ansre

A fundamental assumption of con temporary agencies involved in translating, producing, and promoting Scripture is that the printed Word is the ultimate objective. For diverse reasons, it has become necessary to re-examine this presupposition. This is even more urgent in places like Africa, where illiteracy is preponderant and the many efforts to increase literacy through the years have not been spectacularly successful. In some areas the annual population growth is higher than the annual increase in literacy. Moreover, even in the developed and hitherto 'highly literate' societies today, there is a shift from printed books to an audio-video orientation.

Audio-media makes it possible to reach many non-literate Scripture-hungry peoples, and is a promising alternative for the millions of non-readers in Africa and elsewhere. Evidence of this has begun to appear in significant pilot projects.

Orality and Graphology

Human linguistic behavior can be viewed in terms of *reception* and *transmission* of the speech act. In verbal communication, a person either "receives" language or "transmits" it.

We have two common *speech media*: 'Orality' and 'Graphology.' Orality entails the use of the organs of speech and hearing in communicating, while graphology is the use of a writing system. These also can be understood as *listening* and *speaking*; *reading* and *writing*.

Virtually all normal human beings can hear and speak, but very few people in comparison can read and even less actually write. This state of affairs deserves serious attention.

In fact, a glance at the development of Scripture use, in both the Christian and the pre-Christian Hebrew periods, shows that more attention has been given to graphology than to orality. Muhammed's term "the People of the Book" has bestowed on the great faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam special privileges which have been maintained. 'The Holy Scripture' has been held in special honor. As early as the time of the Hebrew prophets, God's salvation message was expected to be preserved in writing. The period when literacy was not widespread has been called 'The Dark Ages,' and today, a society or nation with high illiteracy is regarded as backward, literacy being an important index of underdevelopment. Thus, graphology has attained a high status throughout the whole world. Orality, however, the natural and most frequently used communication system, has not been emphasized enough.

The invention of printing, which ushered in 'The Gutenberg Era', further enhanced graphology, producing vast amounts of printed matter. Alongside other literature, the Bible has been translated into many languages, and printed and distributed in colossal quantities. Although other faiths have also benefited from the graphology explosion, the Christian faith has been its foremost exploiter. The extremely slow and laborious process of manuscript copying vanished with the arrival of the printing press, and Gutenberg's 42-line Bible became the pace-setter. The invention of the typewriter and the stencil did not affect the primacy of printing, nor have personal computers and laser printing replaced mass production of written material on the printing press.

Advantages of the Printed Page

Print-media does have many advantages, a few of which will be mentioned as related to translation, Scripture distribution and other literature use.

First, graphology ensures high textual faithfulness to the form and content of the message. This cannot be said for orally transmitted text. Even with the interesting array of deviations that appear over time, and the new flavor added when translating the text to another language, there is much less variation than with oral transmission or translation. Graphology has ensured a relatively stable text and a more faithful biblical and canonical certainty.¹

Secondly written Scripture has reached many more people in more places than oral transmission. Coupled with what Lamin Sanneh has called "the translatability"² of the Christian faith and Scripture across cultures, graphology has been an extremely efficient tool for evangelism and teaching.

A third indisputable benefit of written Scripture is its durability. Books live longer than spoken words, and they certainly outlive their writers, rekindling the best ideas of the authors generations after their death. Written material has an advantage of potential longevity and resuscitability.³ Therefore, written Scripture has immensely enhanced the spread of the salvation message, and even in non-literate areas of the world, the written Word has assisted significantly in evangelization.

Can They Really Read?

A study of the *actual use* of print raises very serious questions. For example, there are a lot of people in many parts of the world today who cannot

The Crucial Role of Oral-Scripture in Africa

read. How can they be systematically reached by the Good News? Secondly, there is a surprising number of people who can read but really do not. How can they be helped? Fortunately, the Church has never been under the illusion that literacy should precede receiving the Gospel message—not even in the case of the obviously literate Ethiopian eunuch. Literacy, while desirable and useful, has not been a criterion for receiving the Gospel. However, the model that evolved during the Gutenberg Era is that the ideal Christian should be able to read and diligently study the Scriptures by reading regularly. As demonstrated below, the chance of attaining this ideal simply does not exist for millions who are non-literate, who yet are people extremely rich in biblical interest. Despite the Church's noble efforts to enable people to read and write, an effective Christian readership is extremely scarce in many parts of the world.

However, the ever increasing demand to make Scriptures available to the innumerable non-literates or the 'literate but non-reader' needs to be met. This challenge, while not limited to it, seems to be most evident in the African continent. See center column for percentage literacy figures for 45, mostly Sub-Saharan, African countries.⁴

The percentage figures have been obtained from official records. Even though these statistics tend to be on the inflated side, such uncertain data can be still used for the present study.

To arrive at a realistic estimate of actual and effective Scripture users, it is necessary to examine these statistics and make some projections from them. Our position may be expressed in a series of five related statements:

1. Not all people who claim they can read actually can do so.
2. Not all who can read actually do read.
3. Not all who actually read do read well.

4. Not all who read well do actually read Scripture.
5. Not all who read the Scripture do so regularly.

| Official Percentage of Literate Population—Africa. ⁵ | |
|---|------------|
| Country | % Literacy |
| 1. Angola | 28.0 |
| 2. Benin | 23.4 |
| 3. Botswana | 73.6 |
| 4. Burkina Faso | 13.2 |
| 5. Burundi | 50.6 |
| 6. Cameroon | 54.1 |
| 7. Central African Rep. | 37.7 |
| 8. Congo | 56.6 |
| 9. Cote d'Ivoire | 53.8 |
| 10. Djibouti | 33.7 |
| 11. Equatorial Guinea | 62.2 |
| 12. Ethiopia | 75.0 |
| 13. Gambia | 27.2 |
| 14. Gabon | 60.7 |
| 15. Ghana | 53.2 |
| 16. Guinea | 24.0 |
| 17. Guinea-Bissau | 36.5 |
| 18. Kenya | 54.3 |
| 19. Lesotho | 73.6 |
| 20. Liberia | 39.5 |
| 21. Madagascar | 40.0 |
| 22. Malawi | 41.2 |
| 23. Mali | 13.2 |
| 24. Mauritania | 34.0 |
| 25. Mauritius | 81.8 |
| 26. Mozambique | 20.0 |
| 27. Namibia | 72.5 |
| 28. Niger | 28.4 |
| 29. Nigeria | 50.7 |
| 30. Reunion | 82.6 |
| 31. Rwanda | 50.2 |
| 32. Senegal | 28.6 |
| 33. Saychellies | 84.8 |
| 34. Sierra Leone | 20.7 |
| 35. Somalia | 24.1 |
| 36. South Africa | 76.0 |
| 37. Sudan | 27.1 |
| 38. Swaziland | 67.0 |
| 39. Tanzania | 89.6 |
| 40. Tchad | 29.8 |
| 41. Togo | 39.1 |
| 42. Uganda | 57.0 |
| 43. Zaire | 71.8 |
| 44. Zambia | 72.8 |
| 45. Zimbabwe | 76.0 |

For the purpose of this exercise, let us assume that as many as 70% of those who claim that they can read—*actually can read*, that 50-70% of those who can read *actually do read*, and that 70% of those who actually read *can really read well*. In addition, let us assume that 70% of those who can

read well *do actually read the Scriptures*, lastly, let us assume that 50% of those who read the Scriptures do read them regularly.

Based on these estimates, the following projections can be made. For instance, for Tanzania which has the highest claimed literacy percentage, and for Mali, it looks like this:

Claimed official literacy for Tanzania and Mali respectively: 89.6 13.2

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|-----|
| 1. Can actually read (70%) | 62.5 | 9.2 |
| 2. Actually do read (50-70%) | 43.8 | 6.4 |
| 3. Can really read well (70%) | 30.6 | 4.5 |
| 4. Do read Scriptures (70%) | 21.6 | 3.1 |
| 5. Do read Scripture regularly (50%) | 10.7 | 1.5 |

Consequently, the approximate percentage of the Tanzanian population (with 89.6% claimed literacy), who may regularly read Scripture is 10.7%, and that of Mali, with 13.2% claimed literacy, is about 1.5%. Furthermore, these figures completely ignore some serious historical, social and psychological factors such as the many adherents of non-Christian faiths like Islam or traditional religions. The point being that at most, only 11% of the claimed literate population of any African country (and most other countries, for that matter) is actually reading the Bible regularly.

A similar projection undertaken for Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo,⁶ whose average percentage of claimed literacy is 39.7%, suggests that only about 5% read the Scriptures regularly.

Faced with this situation, a group of Bible Society executives who had participated in an audio-seminar in October, 1991 in Ghana, passed a 10-point resolution summed up below in this author's words. Every effort has been made to retain the spirit and import the original resolution. These are:

1. They are grateful that UBS has decided to emphasize audio-Scriptures.
2. They commend the Africa Region for recognizing the great importance of audio-Scriptures.

3. They call upon the Bible Societies in Africa to give high priority to audio-Scripture and recommend that as much as 50% of the Africa Budget be devoted to this project.

4. They request that a full-time Audio-Media Consultant be appointed for the Region with staff in all societies responsible for audio-media.

5. They suggest that up to 30% of the audio production be distributed free to the economically handicapped through the churches.

6. They call on UBS to provide hardware to enable the effective use of the software to be produced.

7. They request the Africa Regional Centre ensure that all National Societies benefit from audio workshops and seminars.

8. They recommend collaboration and partnership with other organizations in view of the vastness of the task.

9. They confess that they have hitherto failed to emphasize Scripture use and call on all concerned to promote it vigorously.

10. Aware of the great potential in audio-media, they prayerfully dedicate themselves to support its promotion.

Since Kokrobite, the Africa Region of the United Bible Societies has taken a number of administrative and operational steps. Various national Bible Societies have initiated or intensified programs for producing and distributing oral-Scripture on a wider scale. One such effort is the Pilot Audio-Project in Ghana that includes the recording of the whole of the N.T., in particular Ghanaian languages on cassette tapes, done through the collaboration of the Bible Society of Ghana and Hosanna, (Scripture in All Languages). These are then made available to local church groups through their organizers. Church leaders are contacted to organize listening parties starting from their local churches, but not limited

to these. The group then gathers together, at least once a week, to listen to the tapes, often beginning with music and prayer. Invariably active discussions follow these sessions of teaching and explanation.

Test Language Groups

The first tapes were in the Akuapim dialect of the Akan language, a good

Oral-Scripture in Africa is the highest potential medium of outreach for the salvation message on the continent... This is because it is capable of reaching both the literate and the teeming millions of non-literate people.

choice because of their close proximity to Accra, the headquarters of the participating Bible agencies. Also, the Akuapim Ridge has a large number of enthusiastic listening congregations.

Some 60 groups were started with average attendance of 100 to 200 people, reaching some 6,000 individuals in all. Reports of the usefulness of the project to both literate and non-literate groups are most encouraging.

The second effort was made in the Dagbani language, which is spoken by one of the highly Muslim ethnic groups of Ghana. It was launched in the regional capital town Tamale in an interdenominational rally. Special mention must be made of the cooperation of the local Summer Institute of Linguistics (GILLBT). Cassettes were dedicated and distributed to 97 listening groups from the Tamale metropolia as well as numerous surrounding farming villages. Reports indicate that the tapes are making significant impact on Christians and non-Christians in the

area. Some church leaders claim that they themselves have improved their reading by listening to the tapes and following the text in Scripture. Others say that they are hearing for the first time previously unknown sections of the N.T.. The groups enjoy the tapes and follow the words attentively. Interested Muslim listeners have gathered near where the tapes are played for some time before going to the mosque to worship. Pastors, itinerant evangelists and young Christian groups are getting a lot of use from the audio-Scripture in Dagbani.

The third language involved in the project in Ghana is Ewe. The newly retranslated N.T. had been recorded earlier by the Bible Society of Togo and Portable Recording Ministries. The distribution system is different from that of the other two languages. The Bible Society has made the tapes available

to a church-planting organization called Christian Outreach Fellowship for use in the Tongu area of Eweland. The Fellowship uses them to introduce the Gospel mainly to the non-literate population. They also play them at church and preach sermons from the text. This is followed by a question period. In a recent seminar, to appraise the value of their methods, leaders spoke highly of the cassettes. The leaders are receiving much and the general listening groups are learning Scripture in ways that would have been impossible without the tapes. One note-worthy development is that many 'walk-man' carrying youths, who did not previously have time for church worship, find the cassettes 'trendy' and gather to listen to them with more interest.

In all, the project is too young to give us concrete results, but one theme is certain: enthusiasm and interest for oral-Scripture is extremely high. The Nzema translation has been put on cassette and is being reproduced for dis-

tribution. Other languages planned for are Ga, the Asante and Fante dialects of Akan, and Dangme. Adequate training for the leaders of listening groups is another aspect of the project receiving attention, as well as the perfection of skills needed to monitor and improve on the programs.

The Post-Literate Age

So far, we have been focusing attention on audio-Scripture for the non-literate millions. However, there is another growing audience for audio-Scripture. At the close of the 20th Century, we are witnessing the coming of a new age, that we could call the "Post-Literacy Age," in which even those who can read and write well are not doing so. The epoch of the audio-visual, termed by some "the Multi-Media Era", has set in. Information on sound and video cassettes are replacing books. The Gutenberg captivation seems to be on the decrease. People receive the day's news by radio or T.V, rather than by reading newspapers. It appears that some highly sophisticated people prefer to hear the day's Scripture passage on their car sound system as they drive to and from work, rather than reading it at home in the printed Bible. That is the direction in which modern man appears to be moving, and little can be done to stop it. What challenges do these trends and developments pose to the Scripture translator, producer, and distributor? We are obliged to face the challenges of faithful and accurate audio-visual Scripture production if we are to keep pace with the hunger for God's Word in the African continent and all over the world.

In Conclusion

To sum up, oral-Scripture in Africa is the highest potential medium of outreach for the salvation message on the continent today and into the 21st century. This is because it is capable of reaching both the literate and the teeming millions of non-literate people.

It is a challenging medium for reaching Africa's (and the world's) "Post-Literacy" population. Oral-Scripture will also reach those who, because of their rushed life-style, do not have the time or inclination to 'sit back and read' but actually listen as they are in transit—in cars, trains or in the air.

It is a great alternative to the 'walk-man' throw-away entertainment syndrome which is so rampant among today's youth, even in Africa.

Lastly, provided the flashy mentality of "entertainment-for-its-own-sake" does not entrap us, audio, and soon, video-Scriptures have potentially the same response-invoking capabilities as their counterparts in modern radio and TV broadcasts.

We who are in the "Bible Cause" have a duty to see this vision clearly and work towards its realization. If oral-Scripture presentation is necessary for other parts of the world, it is even more so for Africa.

End Notes

1. The techniques of literal and textual criticism and exegesis have enhanced our ability to get closer to the earlier texts. In fact, these tools themselves would not have been possible without graphology.
2. Sanneh, Lamin. 1989. *Translating*

the Message, The Missionary Impact on Culture, New York: Orbis pp. 29, 51, 157, 174, etc.

3. It is our hope that technological developments in the storage of oral material on magnetic and electronic tapes and discs will achieve similar results.
4. The data is obtained from the United Bible Societies Bulletin No. 168/169-*World Annual Report*, 1993.
5. The figure for Britrea is not available.
6. These were the countries represented at an audio-Scripture seminar when this topic was first presented by the author.

Dr. Gilbert Ansre is a native of Ghana and a leading linguist in Africa. He served for over 15 years as a Translation Consultant to the United Bible Society. He and his wife reside in Accra, Ghana.

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The Emergence of Audio-Scriptures in Church and Mission

The vision for audio-Scriptures grows and finds its place in world wide evangelism. With this new development the Word of God becomes available so that all the peoples of the world can be reached.

by Viggo Søgaaard

The stories are coming in from everywhere and at an increasing pace. The businessman alone in his car on the freeway is listening to the Bible on his car stereo. Crowds gather around a simple cassette player in a village in India. A housewife listens to Scripture selections in Thailand. The translators who have spent years translating the New Testament are finding that people prefer to listen to it on cassette as they have difficulties in reading. Stories like these are coming in from all corners of the world. At a gathering of some 120 adult church members in a village in Ghana, they were asked how many had read the New Testament. Six responded in the affirmative. They then spent 25 minutes listening to four chapters of John's Gospel. It reminded me of Nehemiah reading the Scriptures to the people: "...they were moved to tears and asking what to do" (Neh 8:9).

It was during my early years as a missionary in Thailand that I became aware of the need to provide the Word in audio form, as few people were reading it. Most Christians came from a Buddhist background without any awareness of the Bible message. At the "Voice of Peace," we started work on programming in 1965-66, and at that time spool tapes, or tape cartridges, were used which could be repeated on a continuous basis. Audio-cassette players became available in 1968-69 and there was an immediate acceptance. Within months cassettes were in use all over the country. The primary content was basic Bible teaching. We also discovered that when good programs were available, people would find ways to get tape players.

In other parts of the world there were

similar developments, Dr. Harvey Hoekstra used tape cartridges in Ethiopia during the late sixties. His primary concern was that the New Testament he had translated could not be read by the people. Other Bible translators were also putting their texts on tape. It was obvious that those concerned about getting God's Word to non-literates were in the forefront of this development.

A Slow but Steady Acceptance

The development of the audio-cassette gave us a fantastic tool for bringing the Scriptures to all people. One would expect that Bible people and mission executives would jump for joy and scramble to be on the front line with audio-Scriptures, but unfortunately, to a large extent, it had to be developed against the wind. Change is difficult, especially when budgetary considerations are involved.

One of the first calls for Scriptures in audio form was given to the United Bible Societies (UBS) at their global meeting in 1972 by people such as Dr. Ted Hope. Consequently, a few attempts at producing audio-Scriptures in Bangladesh and other countries were made. In 1975-76 a special experiment was conducted in Thailand with a programmed format. The results were extremely interesting and proved that it is possible to present Scripture text in a relevant format, enabling the material to be easily understood and applied by the listeners.

At the next global meeting of UBS, which took place in 1980, renewed emphasis was given to the development of audio-Scriptures, but enthusiastic acceptance came from only just a few people. A primary promoter was Dr.

Chan Choi, regional secretary in the Asia Pacific region for the Bible Societies. Even so, the issue was left practically unnoticed, and this in spite of the theme, "God's Word Open for All." A few experimental projects were conducted, and in 1985 the first edition of the Audio-Scriptures Handbook was published. The following global meeting, in 1988 (eight years later), finally gave almost the same importance to audio-Scriptures as that given to printed Scriptures. Now, seven years later, the budgets devoted to audio-Scriptures are still very small, but there is a growing and wide acceptance of the medium, and this will in due time result in the necessary budget allocations. New audio-Scripture products and programs are being developed. The diffusion of innovation, unfortunately, takes time.

The Growing Need

A few years ago a colleague of mine at Fuller Seminary related an incident at a church in the United States, a group fairly well known for its level of Bible knowledge. He had asked an adult Sunday School class to put a number of biblical names in chronological order. The results were nothing to be applauded. They did manage to get Adam first, but there was a discussion as to whether Paul came before David. The level of Bible knowledge in European churches is similarly dismal. Some have called it "biblical illiteracy." People do not know the Scriptures, and as little formal or consecutive teaching takes place, few have a full chronological story. They have bits and pieces of Bible stories, but not in any significant order. Even so, Christian history has a specific beginning and a definite

end, a history of God's redemptive plan for humankind needs to be seen historically.

A further complication is that literacy levels are not increasing in the world, and this is in spite of numerous literacy programs. For some countries literacy is below 20%, and if we speak of functional literacy, we find that some of the largest countries are way below 50%. It is safe to say that less than half of the world's population can be reached by printed Scriptures today. This alone illustrates a tremendous need for Scriptures in media other than print.

The problem is further enlarged today with the decline in reading among those who can read. Fewer are reading books, as video and television viewing is replacing the time that used to be given to reading. Time spent in a car is replacing time on the train. Reading was possible on the train. Youth are playing video-games rather than reading books and magazines.

At a recent script-writing workshop in rural Bangladesh, we came across the reference to Joel and David in Acts Chapter 2. What did it mean? They did not have an Old Testament. It is obvious that significant events and people from the Old Testament must be understood if much of the New Testament is to make sense to people with no Christian background. We need at least an essential version of the Old Testament if we are to be effective in mission and world evangelization.

The Living Word

In the Western world, the Word of God has become almost synonymous with a printed book. However, in the Bible, the Word is primarily a reference to life, the "Living Word." There are also a number of references to the spoken word, but very few mentions of the written word. It was the Living Word that became a human being and lived among us.

In the New Testament we find the

Christians primarily communicating through speech. There were no written records of the life and ministry of Jesus, so the stories were told and retold. Some have estimated that only 5% of the members of the New Testament Church were literate. Later the stories were written down and the spoken Word became a book, a medium that in itself is objective and separated from a living being. From something spoken aloud in a group where there was personal interaction, it became an objective text one could read and deliberate upon alone, without reference to the group. Many hundreds of years later when Gutenberg invented the printing press, the Bible began to be mass produced. Now everybody can own one and have it on the shelf.

This does not mean that we do not need printed Scriptures, but the question to the Church and to its leaders does remain. What do we do? Can we be satisfied with our members having the Word in a book, or do we want to have it memorized in their minds and hearts? The challenge today, therefore, is to communicate the Word effectively through sound and images. The audio-cassette provides this possibility.

The Cassette Medium

The possibility became reality with the invention of magnetic recording tape. Now hours of speech could be recorded and reproduced at ease. The advent of the audio-cassette improved practical use even more, and up to this time the audio-cassette is unsurpassed as a medium for audio-Scriptures. There are no tapes to thread, no records to turn, and no sensitive needles to replace. Much of the equipment is portable, and simplicity of operation, low cost, and availability make it extremely versatile.

The medium was used to communicate the Gospel to soldiers who took part in "Desert Storm," where 100,000 copies of a "Maranatha! Music"

produced cassette were distributed. It was also the ideal teaching tool for decentralized development projects in India, Tanzania and other places. Cassettes have been used for teaching Bible to rural churches in numerous places, and they have enlarged the ministry of many evangelists.

We have had to deal with a print-orientation when it comes to audio-Scriptures. The Audio-Video Database developed by the United Bible Societies has presently about 1,100 entries for audio-Scriptures. Looking at the database, we find that by and large the cassettes consist of a direct recording of written text, the print translation being transferred directly to tape without adaptation. The whole issue of text is problematic. A good audio-Scripture program will need a new translation made for the medium.

Visions, Plans and Production

An early pioneer was Dr. Harvey Hoekstra. His primary concern was to see the New Testament he had translated into Anuak made available to the people. His relentless efforts on behalf of those who cannot read have resulted in numerous products. In Africa he worked through Portable Recording Ministries, and in Asia he established studios under the name of "World Cassette Outreach." His latest effort is "Audio Scriptures International," (ASI) which was started in 1989. They now list audio-Scripture material in more than 250 languages. A primary interest has been the complete New Testament, but they also have Scripture selections for specific uses.

Dr. Hoekstra's influence on key decision makers in the Bible Societies has been significant, especially in the early years. During the last few years, ASI has sent more than 7000 cassettes into Russia, and 5000 cassettes in five Indian languages were distributed at a recent conference. A Christian taxi driver in Indonesia received 500 cassettes

for use with his passengers. ASI and related organizations have focused on non-European languages, and their burning vision is to provide the Word of God to those who have not had the opportunity to learn to read. A special concern is therefore expressed for the tribal peoples and the poor of the world. Consequently, they have utilized fairly simple recordings so that those who need audio-Scriptures most will not continue to be deprived of this material due to expensive recording techniques.

Dr. Hoekstra relates a recent experience. He had given a "Portrait of Jesus" cassette in an Arabic language to a man from Lebanon who operates a service station. He said he'd listened to it and also was going to have his son listen to it. One week later, when Hoekstra met him, in conversation he suggested to the man to listen to the tape frequently. Hoekstra said "I've listened to mine forty or fifty times and I am always blessed when I do so." The man then leaned toward me and said with unusual seriousness in a soft voice, "I've listened to mine twenty times already." Hoekstra says, "Needless to say, I went on my way rejoicing!"

Scripture for the Blind

The concern for the blind and visually impaired has been evident in various Christian ministries. Blind people would be the obvious group to receive Scriptures on audio-cassette, so various missions organized for the purpose of reaching and assisting the blind have been on the forefront of Gospel cassette production. One of these is "Bible Alliance, Inc." in Bradenton, Florida, which began supplying audio-Scripture cassettes to the blind in 1983. Bible Alliance, a ministry founded by Anthony T. Rossi, is supplying cassette

albums free of charge, and they focus on three groups: (1) ministries to blind and physically handicapped, (2) prison and rehabilitation ministries, and (3) missionary organizations.

The work of Bible Alliance has grown constantly. Their materials are now distributed in 161 countries of the world, and each month about 3000

Need orientation is very important for audio-Scriptures and with that follows careful research of the intended audience. When the apostle Paul spoke in a synagogue, he could freely quote from the Old Testament, but when he taught the Gentiles in Athens he had to begin with the concept of God.

orders are processed. The organization has recorded the New Testament in 40 languages, and more are being added. The facilities at Bradenton include a studio as well as modern equipment for mass production and duplication of cassettes.

Program Format

Program format is a real challenge for audio-Scriptures. As noted earlier, most have taken the easy route and just recorded the written text. By doing so, they have actually left out many features of the written text such as chapter numbers and headings, paragraphs and verses, maps for references, word studies, and comments. Some Bibles have introductions to books and sections, and many include pictures—all aimed at helping the reader understand the printed text. When such a Bible is put on

cassette, the audio equivalence of these features should be included. All necessary helps must be there. This means that the producer of an audio-Scripture program should develop formats through which maps and geographic concepts can be communicated aurally, together with proper introductions and explanations, so that the text will be readily understood and applied by the listener. There seems to be a need for a "guide" (narrator) that will provide the necessary introductions and explanations.

A multi-track recording may make the text more interesting to listen to, but apart from being more costly it also has the danger of taking the attention away from the text itself. In many parts of the world, it would seem more appropriate to use a storytelling format. This does not require changes to the text, but it must be recited in a storytelling fashion according to their own style.

Music is an important ingredient in any audio program, and much of the Scriptures can be put to music. The Psalms are obvious, but so are many other parts of the Bible. If people can sing the text, it will be much easier to remember. In Bangladesh, 14 texts were selected on Easter to give a complete story. These were then given to a group of Bengali composers, and a cassette tape was produced with 14 songs that communicated the Easter Story from the Scriptures in Bengali tunes.

In Pakistan, a series of Scripture cassettes have been produced with stories from the Old Testament for children. Each cassette comes with a coloring book so that children can follow along and color pictures related to the story. It works well for memorization, and the tapes give hints as to application. It was discovered that on an average at least

10 people listen to each cassette, so a distribution of 3000 tapes effectively communicates Scriptures to at least 30,000 people.

Need orientation is very important for audio-Scriptures and with that follows careful research of the intended audience. When the apostle Paul spoke in a synagogue, he could freely quote from the Old Testament, but when he taught the Gentiles in Athens he had to begin with the concept of God. Similarly, our audio-Scriptures need to be prepared for specific audiences and associated materials need to be made so that the audience can understand.

Distribution Channels

The first thought for many is to distribute audio-Scriptures the same way as printed Scriptures, but new approaches need to be developed. One problem is that those who most need audio-Scriptures are often the poorest, and they normally do not read. For instance, they do not come into bookstores, so we need new systems of distribution: renting or loan systems, etc. Often an effective way is to distribute through church-based loan-systems. There are also reports of distribution at truck-stops and other places where motorists buy their supplies.

We found in Thailand that if the user does not actually own the cassette, but loans it for a shorter period of time, the cassette will be listened to many more times. The user knows that the cassette must be returned and will therefore listen as many times as possible, learning the text by heart.

The Indonesian Bible Society has produced two interesting cassettes. One is for non-Christian househelpers working in Christian families as drivers, cooks, cleaners, and baby-sitters. The tape was produced to be distributed by the families themselves to their servants. This in turn required associated plans for follow-up, training in counseling for the Christian families concerned, and

more material. For women on the opposite end of the social scale, they produced a tape with Scripture material for career women.

Faith Comes by Hearing

A very effective and interesting Scripture use program has been developed by Hosanna. At their facilities in Albuquerque, New Mexico, they are producing around 12 million Scripture cassettes a year. The big contribution of Hosanna has been the development of a new distribution program for Scripture cassettes to churches, called "Faith Comes By Hearing." They were concerned about the very low level of Bible reading by Christians in American churches. The focus of Hosanna has therefore been primarily church members in the United States, but during the last few years extensive advances have been taken internationally. The primary partner for Hosanna outside the United States has been the United Bible Societies.

Hosanna, founded by Jerry Jackson, recorded their first Bible on cassette in 1973, and they have now recorded the complete New Testament in 66 languages, with more to be added.

The first project outside the United States took place in 1985, and during these last 10 years the global vision, relentless drive and enthusiasm of the international director, Morgan Jackson, has helped establish Faith Comes By Hearing programs in some 35 countries around the world.

Faith Comes By Hearing programs work like this: A pastor is called by the representative and asked if he or she wants the congregation to listen to the Bible on cassette. Usually there is a very high response. The pastor has to preach a sermon that focuses on the topic, and a certain number of members must sign up for the program. Each one pledges to listen to at least one cassette a week for three months. During that time they will have gone through the

entire New Testament. The complete Bible can be covered in a year at the rate of one cassette per week.

A special program has been developed for churches in poorer countries. Hosanna will provide a set of cassettes to each church free of charge. In turn, they promise to gather people to listen at least once a week. One of the primary persons spearheading this approach has been Dr. Mae Alice Reggy of the UBS Regional office in Nairobi. She has arranged programs in several African countries with great success.

Partnerships

As we know from printed Scriptures, a variety of skills are needed, including translation, production, and marketing. For audio there are associated skills of research, script-writing, voicing, music, and design. With print, cooperation was needed between the translators, printers, and booksellers. In the audio context translators, producers, studios, and distributors must work together.

One type of partnership has been described above where Bible Societies and Hosanna have cooperated in the setting up of Faith Comes By Hearing programs in various countries. Significant cooperation has also been seen between PRM (Portable Recording Ministries), related organizations and Bible Societies. On a local level, there have been good partnerships between churches, studios and Bible Societies in several countries, but we need to expand such partnership if the need is to be met. Bringing the skills and resources together will ensure strong and effective ministries.

The Challenge for the Future

The future challenge rests on the task given by Christ—to bring His Word to all people. For centuries we have focused on the affluent and western groups that had the privilege of learning

to read. Today we have the possibilities of making the Scriptures available to all, irrespective of their social, cultural or economic background. If this is to happen, then the vision that has characterized the early pioneers in this area will need to continually catch new fire in the hearts of Christian leaders. It is possible today to make God's Word available to all.

1. The first challenge is for church leaders to give practical support for this advance, and that means providing priority budgets, even if that would require decreases in other programs aimed at the literates.

2. We should not continue to just record the printed text made for literate people without adequate adaptations. It is of great urgency that new formats and recording techniques be developed so that the audio-media will not remain subordinated to principles designed for print-media.

3. We need to develop appropriate distribution channels. audio-Scripture cassettes cannot and should not be sold in the same way as books. Creative distribution systems are needed. Associated with this area is a need for financing systems, as many of those who need audio-Scriptures are poor. If we just focus on those who can pay, we will continue to cater to the literate peoples of the world.

4. A real need and challenge is the development of other recordings apart from the New Testament. Most of the organizations mentioned in this article focus on recording the New Testament, with some parts of the Old Testament. In many parts of the world, there is no awareness of the OT, and it is really only possible to fully understand the NT if at least a selection of main OT events and its people are understood. Bible agencies distribute many times more portions and selections

than complete NT and OT. We need to develop audio-Scriptures that are prepared for special groups, and special needs, tailor-made for the audiences we are trying to reach with the Gospel

In His ministry, Jesus selected appropriate texts and applied them. I fully realize that this will take time, energy, and funds, but should not those who do not read—many of whom are the unreached peoples of the world—at least for once have a certain priority and get true access to the Word of God? So may it be!

Dr. Viggo Sogaard is Associate Professor of Communication at Fuller School of World Mission and Media Consultant to the United Bible Societies.

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Audio-Communications and the Progress of the Gospel

Seeing breakthroughs in the history of communication can launch us into the future with greater fervor promising a greater harvest than ever before.

by Allan Starling

The Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, is the most important message we can and must share with mankind. There are many different ways of communicating this message. In this article, I would like to discuss the audio method. However, in order to get off on the right footing, we have to take a moment to define basic concepts. While *oral* pertains to the mouth, and *aural* to the ear, *audio* relates to the technology involved in transmitting the message from the *mouth* to the *ear*. This process is jeopardized when the *foot* is in the mouth! We should always strive to use the most appropriate or effective method of communication, bearing in mind that when the Gospel has been effectively communicated, the final responsibility rests with us. Jesus said “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says.” (Rev. 2:29 NIV)

The definition of “*audio-communications*” includes recordings of Scripture and cross-cultural messages that do not require reading skills in order to be understood. These recordings may be on audio-cassettes, videos, films or other audio related media.

All media have an important part to play in the spreading of the Gospel. Because written communication and radio are closely allied to audio-communication, we will refer to them throughout the article even though they do not strictly fit our definition of audio-communications. Let’s take a brief look at the *past*, *present* and *future* aspects of this field.

Past Developments

The Book of Acts is a description of how the early Church communicated the Good News; first to the

Jews, and then to the Gentiles. This was no easy task. The message was new and strange and in some cases, threatening. Language, cultural, prejudice and geographical barriers had to be overcome before the message could be received. Their challenge was to get people’s attention, and communicate the Gospel to them in a way that they could be understood and to be accepted.

Aural-Communication

In Acts 2:1-11 we hear an amazing account of how God used a few disciples to communicate the “Great things that God has done” to people who were visiting Jerusalem from all over the known world. Luke tells us that “they were all excited, because each one of them heard the believers talking in his own language.” When you are far from home there is something exciting about hearing your own language spoken. God used this situation to get their attention in a way that nothing else could have done.

Often the two methods of communication, written and aural, are used side by side. An interesting example of this interplay is found in Acts 8:30. Philip approached an Ethiopian official who was reading from Isaiah. In answer to the question: “Do you understand what you are reading?” The official answered, “How can I, unless someone explains it to me.”

Acts also introduces us to Paul, who ministered to the Gentiles and wrote letters to the churches. In Paul’s day, very few people could read, but his letters were read aloud to assembled believers, underlining the complementary nature of spoken and written communication.

Communications in History

Down through the centuries, the communications challenge for the Church remained unchanged, but as the population grew and new horizons were opened, the challenge became more difficult, and a new kind of “mass media” was needed. From time to time, the steady growth of the Gospel was accelerated by technological breakthroughs in the realm of communication.

Printing

Fourteen centuries after the birth of Christ, Gutenberg invented a process of printing that used movable type. This, of course, did away with the tedious and painstaking process of hand copying manuscripts, thus making the printed page available to everyone—everyone, that is, who could read. Many societies adopted literacy as an integral part of their communication process. People like John Wycliffe soon realized that this new invention presented them with a way to get the Scriptures into the hands of all who were now learning to read.

Some cultures however, did not adopt literacy, opting instead to retain their system of oral-communication. Many missionaries have concentrated their efforts on the major language groups who were at least partially literate, leaving many minority, non-literate groups without the message.

Audio

In 1887, Thomas Edison invented the “talking machine” or phonograph, thus making it possible to multiply the spoken word. Unlike the invention of printing, the Church took no notice of this invention, except for those who may have considered it a worldly device. It was in 1939 that a sick

missionary, recently returned from the field, came up with the idea of using the phonograph to present the Gospel to non-literate people.

Joy Ridderhof founded a small group called "Spanish Gospel Recordings" to produce recordings of Gospel messages and songs in Spanish, and send them to missionaries and radio stations in Latin America. These records were so well received, that soon they began making recordings in other languages, and the name of the ministry was changed to Gospel Recordings.

The Tape Recorder

In 1947, sixty years after the invention of the phonograph, the first tape recorder was used for recording Gospel messages. Up until then, master disks had to be cut live, leaving no opportunity for editing by those who didn't get it right the first time! Two years later the first battery operated tape recorder was invented by Gospel Recordings staff. This made it easier for recordists to work in remote areas. It took another ten years before a high quality professional tape recorder was available. However, tapes still had to be sent back to central locations for processing into records.

Untiring Production

By 1954, 1,000 languages had been recorded, and by the following year over one million records had been sent around the world. All this by less than 35 staff members. Five years later over 2 million records had been sent out to 150 countries. By the 25th anniversary of the ministry, over 3,000 languages had been recorded, and five million records distributed.

The Compact Audio Cassette

The introduction of the audio cassette in 1970 eliminated the long delays that occurred when records had to be pressed in central locations and then shipped back to the mission field. Now high speed cassette duplicators could reproduce the messages on

location. Even so, it would be many years before records were phased out. In the meantime, the use of cassettes multiplied. In 1977 a special cassette player was field tested. It needed no electricity or batteries, but was operated by a small built-in generator. Now people living in remote areas could listen to cassettes in their heart language without great expense.

Specialization in Communication

Media-ministries have tended to specialize in different types of communication, such as print, audio and radio. Bible translators have methodically and painstakingly reduced many languages to writing and spent years translating the Scriptures into each language. The resultant New Testament or Bible has then been printed and presented to the people. Before this valuable resource could be utilized in written form, it has been necessary for some of the people to learn to read, and others to be trained to explain the contents.

Gospel Recordings, leaving the translation of the Scriptures to linguistic experts, has produced culturally contextualized, biblically based vernacular recordings containing evangelistic and basic Christian teaching. Non-literates and those in oral cultures, have been able to listen to the messages again and again. Missionary radio has done an outstanding job of reaching peoples locked away behind those literacy walls as well as political and religious barriers.

It is interesting to note the differences in priorities between various media-ministries, dictated mainly by the type of technology used. Missionary radio targets *large* languages of over one million speakers. Translation ministries work in *smaller* language groups. Audio-recording ministries are suited for reaching even the *smallest* language groups. In some cases messages have been recorded for less than 50 speakers.

Present Challenges

Learning to cooperate

In more recent years we have seen the various media-ministries firstly recognizing the worth of other types of approaches, and also, recognizing that inevitably we cannot get the job done alone. We can, however, accomplish the work together! A good example is Every Home for Christ, whose purpose has been to systematically distribute tracts with the Gospel message to every home in a given country. Their new aim is to give tracts to those who can read, and audio-cassettes to non-literates.

In Culiacan Mexico, a ministry among indigenous migrant farm workers who speak as many as ninety languages, has been very effective by using a *combination* of mediums:

* *Scriptures and tracts* are made available to those who are literate.

* *Movies and video* (like the "Jesus Film") are shown to those from oral cultures, mainly in the trade language (Spanish).

* *Audio-cassettes* in the vernacular are put into the hands of those who speak indigenous languages. Each year, thousands are converted.

More recently, Bible Translation Ministries have seen the advantage of putting their Scriptures on audio-cassettes. A number of new audio-ministries have been started, some for the purpose of recording and distributing these translations in audio form.

Networking

This goes a step further than cooperating. For example, the Global Recordings Network recently united ministries in twenty countries to produce and distribute vernacular Gospel recordings.

Accomplishments

What has been accomplished so far in the audio-communications field? We can say that:

* *Audio Messages* have been pro-

duced in over 4,600 languages and dialects.

**Audio-Scriptures* are being recorded in a growing number of the approximately 2,000 languages that now have some portion of Scripture in written form.

The Future Goal

To reach the goal of a "Church for every people", audio-communications workers must overcome some major barriers:

1. The Illiteracy Barrier represented by approximately two billion people who either cannot read, or do not have the reading skills to understand spiritual truth from the written page must be overcome. We must also face the fact that many do not see the need for literacy, and therefore have no incentive to learn to read the Bible or any other print.

2. The Language Barrier. This barrier embodies 8,000 to 12,000 languages and dialects. Audio-communications offers the unique opportunity for these peoples to hear the Good News spoken by one of their own people in their own language.

3. The Prejudice Barrier. Missionaries are not welcome in the isolated villages of the Trique Indians in southern Mexico. However, this barrier has been penetrated by Gospel cassettes in their own dialect, carried home by migrant workers.

4. The Geographic Barrier. Tribes tucked away in the mountains of Nepal are not visited very often by missionaries. This barrier is overcome by special hand-wound cassette players and audio tapes that are left with the villagers of Nepal.

5. The Political Barrier. When borders are closed and visas are difficult to obtain, cassettes find easier

access than people in crossing these political restrictions.

6. The Manpower Barrier. Jesus reminded us that the harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Audio-communications negotiate this barrier by multiplying voices.

Their challenge was to get people's attention, and communicate to them in a way that they could be understood and accepted.

Conclusion

* Audio-communications is a tool that all missionaries and Christian workers can use. It provides a pre-church planting strategy. It allows missionaries to reach groups whose language they cannot yet speak. It assists new believers to share the Gospel.

Even so, the challenge to make recordings in every language still looms large. If we continue at the present rate, it could take as long as 50 years to make audio-recordings in all of the languages and dialects of the world. However, the process can be speeded up only as we work hand in hand with the Lord and with each other.

Thanks to the AD2000 Movement we now have the ability to do just that, through the formation of the *Audio-Communications Network*.

The Audio-Communications Network will seek to facilitate communicating the Gospel to every language, tribe, and nation:

* By encouraging a united strategy among audio-communication ministries,

* By promoting the benefits of

using audio-evangelism among non-literates.

* By showcasing all available audio-evangelism tools and providing effective training in their use,

* By mobilizing prayer for those still waiting to hear the Gospel in their own language,

* By recruiting 70 to 100 teams to make audio-recordings in the least reached languages and least reached peoples.

The last goal envisages a *partnership* project designed to cross the remaining language barriers with the Gospel, using audio-communication methods. In order to record the remaining languages by

AD2000, an additional 70 to 100 recording teams (each consisting of two persons), are needed. This can only be accomplished as mission agencies and churches, with God's help, work together.

Gospel Recordings is offering to train men and women in recording techniques. These missionaries will then be assigned by their agency to specific geographic areas in which they will continue working after the recordings have been completed.

As we network together, ministries can enhance each others work, and finish the task through focused prayer, planning, and partnership. May we reach the goal by AD 2000!

Allan Starling is the former International Coordinator of Gospel Recordings International. He is now on the staff of Gospel Recordings USA, and is also helping to establish the Audio-Communications Network under the auspices of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement.

Reaching the Unreached at Our Doorstep

We can now reach many of the unreached people of the world by evangelizing “the stranger within our gates.” We now have a basic tool needed to reach them. May we use it to gather in the harvest!

by Harvey Hoekstra

For many people the first image that comes to mind when they hear the term “unreached peoples” is some obscure group of people in a far away land that missionaries still have not reached with the Gospel. Others, more familiar with the missiological definition of the term which first marched into the forefront of our awareness in Lausanne, know that it is by no means limited to just those forgotten people who live in distant lands.

In this article I want to focus on those people who are unreached but who actually live within easy reach of churches in which Christians worship God and profess faith in Jesus Christ. These “unreached” are people who live our own country, who speak a foreign language, who have little or no knowledge at all about Jesus Christ. These are the people who have left their homelands and now live in our country, or in other Western lands. They live in our cities, may well be our neighbors, and are people with whom we work in our offices and factories. At times they greet us in our service stations, motels and in our grocery stores. They now live in the West—Yes, in America and many other Western countries!

Due to this turn of events, of peoples whose first language is other than English, adds up to some 329 different languages being spoken in the USA. A *USA Today* analysis of the 1990 census figures showed that in California 45 percent of the people with children over five years of age, speak a language other than English in their homes. In New York it was 30.5 percent, in Massachusetts it was 17.9 percent, in Texas 34.1 percent. Even in Kansas, the

heartland of America, some 6.1 percent speak a foreign language at home.

Within Easy Reach

These new neighbors are within easy reach of our existing churches and homes. However, the sad truth is that most of these new neighbors have yet to hear the Gospel in a meaningful way for the first time. There are undoubtedly a variety of reasons as to why this is so. However, in this article I am underscoring one of those reasons—one for which we have a remedy.

If these new neighbors who speak languages other than English in their homes are to hear and understand the Good News of Jesus Christ, God’s appointed Savior, they must hear it in their mother tongue. It is well established that the most effective communication takes place when the listener hears the message in his or her native language.

It is obvious that most of us aren’t going to master a new language enabling us to speak to these new neighbors whose language we don’t know. Furthermore, we should not wait until they learn English so that we can share the saving message about Jesus Christ with them. So is there a practical solution to this dilemma? We believe there is. It lies in the little but powerful tool called the cassette tape.

Audio-Scriptures International

Audio-Scriptures International was organized in 1989 to help overcome this dilemma. I had been working overseas many years as a Bible translator in the Sudan and in Ethiopia in pioneer evangelism among a “hidden peo-

ple.” During our years in Ethiopia, we pioneered in the use of cassettes in evangelism and found them to be extremely effective. Following that, we established regional centers in Africa, India, Bangladesh and Singapore where we trained and equipped nationals to record the translated Scriptures on cassette for people living in those countries who couldn’t read, or who read too poorly.

During those latter years, we would spend five to seven months overseas from our base in California. Each time we returned to our base, we became increasingly aware of the tremendous changes taking place in the USA. We were becoming a mission field full of unreached peoples. We believed that this movement of peoples from their homelands to other lands, including the USA, was no accident, but that the Lord of history was putting peoples, previously difficult to reach, within easy reach of churches and Christians.

Out of the background of my experience in Bible translation, in pioneer evangelism in which cassettes played a major role, and from our experience with recording Scripture on cassette for non-literates, God gave us a vision and burden.

The unreached peoples we were seeing in America spoke the same languages in which we had been recording entire New Testaments overseas. It was important that these recordings, that were made overseas, be made available for the peoples who were now living among us. Audio Scriptures International (ASI) was launched to become a resource center from which the then more than 100 languages in which the

Reaching the Unreached at Our Doorstep

New Testament was translated be made available for ministries, churches and individuals who would reach these peoples for Christ.

As our ministry developed, it soon became apparent that Scripture on cassette was urgently needed in several languages not yet recorded overseas. The phone began to ring with people wanting to know if we had the New Testament in Lao, Hmong, Mien and Vietnamese. We arranged to record these and others right here at home.

One Basic Message

As ASI's ministry grew, we felt a need for a cassette which would communicate, in one hearing, the essential truth about Jesus in the language of the Gospel writers. This should be done in whatever languages were needed. In consultation with leaders from the United Bible Society, we produced a beautiful tape with selections from the Gospels giving an accurate and compelling account of Jesus' life and ministry, his death, resurrection, his ascension, promised return, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. It was just the kind of cassette one would want to use to introduce someone to Jesus who spoke a foreign language. This cassette was entitled, "The Greatest Person Who Ever Lived."

We followed this up with a second cassette of selected passages from the writings of Luke entitled, "God's Powerful Savior." This second cassette is similar to the portrait of Jesus tape, but somewhat shorter, introducing the listener to the final week in the life of Jesus somewhat sooner in the listening process. At this point in time "The Greatest Person Who Ever Lived" cassette is currently available in 54 languages, and the cassette entitled "God's Powerful Savior" is available in 25 languages.

We are thrilled with the response to these special arrangements of Scripture designed specifically to enable any

Christian to cross the linguistic barrier and communicate the essential truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Anyone burdened to share the heart of the message about Jesus can do so using these Scripture cassettes. The opportunities to do so are everywhere. We only need to open our hearts and eyes to see the harvest fields all around us.

The little but powerful cassette is a tool of choice for its intended purpose. It speaks in the languages needed. It will do so at the convenience of the listener. It will repeat its message flawlessly and without change. The cassette is non-threatening and gets a good hearing with no need for defensive arguments. Frequently, the cassette creates the opportunity for further ministry leading to conversion as I personally have witnessed many times.

In Conclusion

We, God's people, worshipping our Lord on Sundays in churches all over this land, need to recognize this historic change which has brought millions of unreached peoples to our country, people whose languages are foreign to us. We need to recognize that this is an opportunity, challenge and responsibility God has thrust upon us.

If the unreached in our neighborhood are to be reached for Christ, someone must tell them the Good News and communicate it effectively. A linguistic barrier must first be surmounted for this task. We commend audio-Scripture tapes and the specially designed cassettes for this purpose. Under the powerful, enlightening, convincing work of the Holy Spirit, many who hear will call upon Him, believe in Him and be saved. God's promise that His Word will not return void needs to be taken to heart.

We also have well over half a million international students studying in our colleges and universities. Nearly every one of them struggles to understand and speak English. This need, along

with others, should motivate Christians and whole churches to reach out and share with them the love of Christ.

No international student should fail to experience the loving concern, help and witness of God's people from our churches during their sojourn among us. We would encourage international student ministries to incorporate the audio-Scripture tools in their ministries. We also encourage families who might entertain foreign students in their homes to conclude the visit by presenting their guests with a cassette containing God's Word. It is a marvelous, practical way to be sure that international guests will be introduced to the essential truth about Jesus Christ so that they may be drawn to Him and be saved. Best of all, many students will return to peoples within their own countries. They can then reach others for Christ. If we are faithful and effective in reaching our new neighbors and international students for Christ, they will be among the most effective in reaching those we personally may never be able to reach for Him.

The new face of America—the stranger within our gates—challenges us to recognize the new opportunities we have to reach the world for Christ, and to respond in new effective ways to reach them with the saving Gospel of Christ. The amazing, but profoundly simple truth is that our closest mission field of unreached peoples is all around us. The tools to gather in the harvest are available. This is harvest time! God has helped us by bringing multitudes for whom Christ died to our neighborhoods. The unreached world is at our doorstep!

Dr. Harvey Hoekstra was a missionary translator in Ethiopia and now is president of Audio Scripture International. He lives in San Diego, CA.

Was Jesus a Zairian?

*Using the heart language on tape makes "Jesus talk" meaningful and receptor oriented.
It is received with positive response and greater receptivity to the Gospel.*

by Paul D. Dyer

“Amazing! Simply amazing!” said my Zairian friend as he listened attentively to the words coming from the small cassette recorder.

I asked him what he found so amazing. He answered, “It’s that Jesus was a Zairian.” I said, “No, not really.” “Well,” he said, “Then He must have been a Tanzanian.” “No, He was not a Tanzanian either.” “A Ugandan or a Kenyan then?”

“Why do you say that He must have been a Zairian, a Tanzanian, a Ugandan, or a Kenyan?” I asked. “Well, if Jesus was not a Zairian, nor a Tanzanian, nor a Ugandan, nor a Kenyan, then why is He speaking Swahili?” My friend was listening to Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount from a cassette in Swahili.

Soon several of the station workers gathered around the tape player to listen to the words of this Swahili-speaking Jesus. I took several pictures of them as they listened, laughed, and talked about what Jesus was saying to them. I thought to myself, “What a fantastic way to communicate the Gospel.” If people who can read still appreciate, enjoy, and avidly listen to the tapes, how much more would the non-readers benefit from this method of communication?

I had been working in the pastoral training programs of our church in Central Africa for over fifteen years. There were more than 800 pastors and catechists (lay pastors) in the church and many of them had completed, were enrolled in, or were hoping to be enrolled in one of the training programs. All of the programs included courses in evangelism but, at that time (1988), all of them were literacy-limited. The

ability to read was a prerequisite for admittance into a training program. However, as I traveled and worked in the rural mountainous areas of eastern Zaire, I became increasingly aware that these literacy-dependent programs were “missing the mark.” Many of the lay pastors and evangelists were non-readers. A century of literacy programs carried out by the government, and religious organizations had not significantly increased the functional literacy rate among the majority of the population.

Literacy Definition

Different agencies and writers have different definitions of literacy. Sometimes literacy is defined as the ability to read government documents or to answer questions about them. Another definition of literacy is based on completion of the third grade of primary school. Obviously, the literacy rate of a given population varies according to the standard of literacy used. However, for the purpose of Christian discipleship, literacy would have to mean the ability to read and comprehend a fairly advanced and complicated book (the Bible). With this qualification in mind and considering the literacy estimates for Zaire, it became evident that “functional literacy” rates were low and that the potential for Christian maturation by literacy-based methods alone was limited. It meant that only one (or at best two) out of every ten Zairians could actually read and comprehend the Bible or other Christian literature.

A second major problem that came to light was that the Bembe people were unable to read their own tribal language. No literature existed in the Bembe

language, so it had remained a spoken rather than a written language. Therefore, even after the entire Bible had finally been translated into the Bembe language and had been made available in printed form, the people had to be taught to read it.

The Political Reality

Also, the politics of Africa in general, and of Zaire in particular, make the future of mission work there very uncertain. A shift in the government’s policies or a change of government could eliminate many literacy-based programs. In other countries where Free Methodist missionaries have worked diligently on Bible translation and literacy projects, (preparing and distributing Christian literature), the possession of a Bible or a piece of religious printed material is now illegal and punishable by death or imprisonment, and the Christians have only the ideas and concepts which they have been able to retain in their hearts and minds to sustain them spiritually (Klem 1982, 34, Dyer, 1994, 26). Therefore, in Zaire, the HEAR (Hosanna Evangelism Aid Research) project, and the other oral communication projects, were conceived and implemented to encourage the use of oral communication methods to transmit and retain the Gospel story.

The first segment of the HEAR project was to be a pilot program involving fifty of the more than five hundred Free Methodist churches in Zaire. We hired a full-time director for the program and worked with the district superintendents to name each district’s directors.

The district directors, superintendents, and the consultant (me), were to

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form the central HEAR distribution and management committee. This committee contacted eligible churches, screened them, and selected churches to include in the program.

Following the selection of a local church, that congregation would form a HEAR committee composed of a chairman (the pastor), a director (to arrange the “hearings”), a manager (responsible for the equipment), and a counselor (an elder of the church). Each local church would have to agree to have at least two “listening sessions” per week and each session would be followed by a discussion time with pre-arranged questions to be answered. Monthly reports were to be made regarding attendance and the proficiency of the answers of the attendees. It was the responsibility of each church to supply the building, the cassette players, and the batteries with which to operate the players. In return, Hosanna would supply each church with the entire Bible on cassettes and ORCOMP, (the Oral Research Communication Methods Program), would pay the general director and take care of the logistics of importing and transporting the general director and the cassettes.

This program was conceived in 1989. However, it didn’t get underway until well into 1990. By that time, both the economy and the political situation in Zaire had deteriorated. The postal system had ceased to function and we had to use either a Kenyan address and charter Missionary Aviation Fellowship to fly the mail in once a week, or use a Burundi or Rwandan address and regularly make expensive and time-consuming mail trips to these countries. Whichever method we chose, we knew we could expect extensive hassles at the borders with the immigration and customs officials.

Therefore, we decided to make a trial run with just ten sets of cassettes. We had the first box sent to Burundi. When I got the notice that the box of cas-

ettes was in the post office in Burundi, I made a trip over to get it. Just to make that one trip cost around \$500 and took three days even though Bujumbura, Burundi is only about eighty miles north of Baraka, Zaire. When I got to the post office in Burundi, I had the misfortune to encounter a customs official who demanded \$125 in customs charges. I left the box of cassettes in the post office for a day or so hoping that maybe another customs official would come in. However, that was not the case, and I ended up paying the \$125. Then, when I got to the Zaire border, the customs official there demanded another \$125 and kept one set of the tapes.

I did finally get the tapes down to Baraka and began to arrange for their distribution. The bishop of our church named the director of one of the drama groups as general director of the HEAR project. However, it was at this time that the Zaire army mutinied in Kinshasa and went on a rioting and looting spree and the missionaries were ordered out of Zaire. We evacuated to Burundi, leaving the program in the hands of the HEAR director and the national church.

Program Logistics

Eventually the nine sets of cassettes were distributed and enthusiastically received. However, the churches had difficulty in maintaining the project because of the high cost of the cassette players and the batteries to run them. Individual pastors are now using the cassettes in their homes to conduct Daily Vacation Bible School programs that allow the children to come in to “listen to Jesus talk.”

Previously, another cassette project had been carried out in cooperation with Gospel Recordings of Canada. Gospel Recordings is dedicated to putting Bible portions and stories into the languages of people groups who are without a Bible translation or who are

mostly non-readers, even though there is a Bible in their language.

Zaire is composed of an estimated two hundred ethnic groups, with many sub-groups, and has five official languages: French, Swahili, Kikongo, Kiluba, and Lingala. A liberal estimation of literacy, as of 1986, is 45% (those with a third grade education). In the whole country there are only twenty complete Bible translations, twelve New Testament translations, and 33 portion translations (Johnstone 1987, 454-57). This means that many groups, (if they are evangelized at all), have heard the Bible being read only in a trade language. Many of the women and those who live in remote areas do not speak the trade languages, though there are fewer of these groups now. However, their “heart” languages are their tribal tongues.

In 1976, I made an evangelistic/TEE trip to Kabambare in the Fizi district with some of our Zairian church leaders. The area is very remote and isolated and had little if any missionary visitation during the preceding eighteen years. Our goal was to visit the Free Methodist churches in the area and to assess the possibilities for subsequent evangelistic and TEE safaris. However, when we arrived in the region I came to the realization that we were in contact with many different language groups, many of whom had never had any biblical resources or other witness, as far as we could tell, in their people group. We became extremely concerned about these people. They lived so close to our mission station (in actual miles) and yet were so far from the Lord. They needed to “hear,” notwithstanding their isolation and apparent illiteracy.

Urgent Needs

On that trip we also became aware of the overwhelming medical needs of the people in that area. Any medical treatment (other than home remedies) was at best extremely limited, and in most

places, completely unavailable. In one of the villages we visited on this trip, I was offered ten dollars for one Aspirin.

On Sunday morning I was sitting in my “hut”, getting ready to preach, when a Bible School graduate came into my room with his little daughter. I knew that when he had attended the Bible school he had three children, so I asked him how the other two were. His head dropped to his chest and he began to weep. He said: “Bwana (Sir), they are dead.”

I asked him what had happened. He said, “Oh, Bwana, they just died of the sickness of this village.” He went on to say: “Oh, Bwana we need a dispensary here for my people.” Just then a young boy hobbled by the door on one leg. His other leg had been bitten by a snake and was now gangrenous, a fatal condition without prompt hospital attention.

I sadly offered a prayer for the young pastor and his now smaller family and went off to the church to preach. I had planned to give a basic sermon on the familiar (to us) John 3:16 passage, “For God so loved the world that He sent...” but when I got up to speak and looked down into the eyes of that young pastor and the young snake-bite victim, I could not preach. I sat down and had to let one of the African pastors who had come with me continue with the service while I buried my head in my hands and wept. The need for the love of God to be shown physically and spiritually to those people was so very great.

As a result of this trip, we began discussing the possibility of helping the people of that area develop some kind of health care system. At that time, the medical community was involved in heated dialogue concerning the village health centers. After considerable discussion and debate (and a great deal of

searching for funds), we were able to send a young African nurse to that village to open a health center. Many trips have been made back into that area to carry out medical, evangelistic, and Christian maturation work.

Bembe and Zoba peoples.

Shortly after that initial trip, I contacted Gospel Recordings to inquire

The story of Christ was told and understood by readers and non-readers alike. It was exciting to watch peoples' faces as they listened to the Gospel being presented to them by this media.

about the possibility of sending a fact-finding delegation to Zaire. Thus, in the late 70's, Valerie Deguchi, a recorder for Gospel Recordings, came to our area, and we started planning recordings in the Bembe and Zoba languages. The Bembe people are the main group we work with in Zaire and the Zoba people are our nearest neighbors, a primarily Muslim tribe. We began at Nundu, our hospital station, where we asked for interested pastors to help with the recordings. All the work was volunteer. Among the Zoba people, there are few converts, and the Zoba recordings were done by the one and only converted Muslim in the Zoba village.

On one of Valerie's next trips, about 1982, we went as far as Kabambare (about 120 miles southwest of Baraka) and did recordings in Bangubangu, Kisonga, Kibuyu, and Kisi-mimbi (at Kayumba). It was there that an illiterate pastor came to us saying that he had received a dream in which someone was bringing a “box that talked” that would help him to tell other people about the “true God.” He had walked for several days to get to Kayumba to find

us. It was also there that we heard about an unevangelized pygmy group, the Mbote, or Twa, but we were unable to contact them on that occasion.

At that time, the Free Methodist work in the area was limited. We stayed in the homes of our church people when possible, or were received by Christians of other communities.

Valerie prepared cassette tapes

after she got home, some with singing in the different languages, and on our next trip we distributed the tapes and hand-wound “Grip” cassette players. We also recorded more tapes in several of the languages that we had already had begun recording before. We stayed with Christians a few miles west of Lulimba.

Twa Pygmies

The first real break-through with the Twa pygmies (called Mbote by their neighbors), came on a trip to the Makungu area when a catechist (church teacher) led us to a small group of pygmies camped within walking distance of the road. This was exciting because most of them had never before heard the Gospel story. An older woman in the group had “heard” the Gospel story on a trip that she had made outside the area. She spoke Swahili and she was able to help us with vocabulary. At the end of the recording session, two of the pygmy translators knelt on the ground and said that they believed in Jesus Christ as Savior. The others, when asked if they would also believe, said, “All children are not born in one day. We will come later.” We never saw the group again and the tapes of that session were somehow lost.

It was sometime after this that one of the Twa who had no previous contact with us walked the day-and-a-half distance from his area to the catechist's house. He said that God had told him in a dream to come to ask the

Was Jesus a Zairian?

catechist for something called a “Kaseti,” which the catechist took to mean a cassette. When the catechist told him about God’s Son dying and bringing salvation to all people, he said, “That is what I came for” and he believed. Soon afterwards, he brought his wife, children and another man and they also believed

On another trip into the Kabambare region, a chief came some seventeen miles to talk to the pastors who were with us. He asked that we send evangelists to his village. The pastors were very solemn after this and later confided that the chief had told them that if they failed to evangelize his tribe, a millstone would be hung around their necks at judgment day. Eventually, tapes of biblical portions were made in over twenty of the languages: Eembe, Kizoba, Bangubangu, Kisonga, Kibuyu, and Kimbote (Twa), among others.

In Conclusion

The Gospel Recordings program represented a good “marriage” between oral methods (tape recordings of the Scripture and Christian songs), and the literature source—the Bible. The recording trips helped to open the whole area of Kabambare and Lulenge to the Gospel message. The cassettes were used to evangelize isolated tribes that otherwise might not have heard. Although the project targeted tribes that did not have the Bible in their language, we also found the cassettes to be effective among the Swahili speaking peoples, both readers as well as non-readers. The children especially seemed always to be fascinated by the recordings and the box that “talked their talk.”

The limitations of the program were mainly due to the isolation of the tribes and the lack of adequate funding for transport. The program’s great weakness was technical as well as economic in that some sort of players

were required to make the tapes usable. We did have hand operated players (Grip players), but they were not very well received as they required a lot of constant work to make them function. We also experimented with solar power players but these tended to break down due to the people’s lack of familiarity with mechanical devices in general and solar technology in particular. Follow-up efforts of the new believers and distribution of the tapes and the players was also problematic because of the extreme isolation of the target tribes.

The oral communication program in Zaire (which emphasized the use of stories, dramas, and songs) did not, therefore, make extensive use of cassette tapes. However, the two cassette tape projects (Gospel Recordings and Hosanna) were significant in the total program and we were able to draw several inferences from this experience.

The conclusion that we reached was that Zairians do respond positively to efforts to use oral-communication methods for evangelism and teaching. In both the cassette projects, there was great receptivity and response to the message. The story of Christ was told and

understood by readers and non-readers alike. It was exciting to watch people’s faces as they listened to the Gospel being presented to them by this media. These projects also demonstrated the effectiveness and great potential that a “mother tongue” cassette ministry has in a mostly non-reading population. The Gospel was consistent and clear and was also protected from syncretism.

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The Goal in Audio-Communication of the Gospel

In order to complete the goal, many of the languages of the world still need to have Gospel messages recorded, while others need to be updated. Recordings are still needed in some 4,000 to 6,000 unrecorded languages and dialects.

Project “Target 4000”

What will it take to finish the task? Some essential ingredients include a great mobilization of prayer plus the combined efforts of many churches and mission agencies. Teams of recordists will have to be recruited and trained for the task. An ongoing research program is seeking to identify which languages need their own separate recordings.

Gospel Recordings has initiated a project, called “TARGET 4000.” It is intended to be a catalyst that will focus attention, stir up interest, and mobilize forces in order to provide an opportunity for at least 4,000 unreached people groups to hear of Christ in their own languages.

They have developed a recording method that allows the message to be clearly communicated across language barriers. For more information on how you can help call or contact:

Gospel Recording USA

122 Glendale Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026

Audio-Scripture Challenges in Africa

Audio-cassettes are meeting felt needs especially when properly contextualized. This approach is opening new doors for the Gospel among non-literate peoples in West Africa.

by Mae Reggy

According to the *Annual Scripture Language Report* published by the United Bible Societies, at least one book of the Bible is now available in 2,092 of the world's estimated 6,000 languages. The complete Bible is available in 341 of these languages, and the New Testament in an additional 822. The same report mentions that at least one book of the Bible is now available in 238 of Africa's estimated 2,000 languages and dialects. The complete Bible is available in 127 of these languages, with the New Testament in an 233 more. This report includes Scriptures that have been translated and published by different organizations, including the United Bible Societies, that have the common aim of making the Scriptures available to everyone.

The challenges confronting such organizations are greater than ever. The world's population is expanding and the number of non-literates in the world can be counted in hundreds of millions. In Africa alone, there are more children in school than ever before, but still illiteracy is on the increase due to high birth rates. There are millions of people who are now adults, but whose education stopped before they could read well and who may feel no real need for becoming literate because they have no prospect of job advancement or higher status to be gained through reading. Additionally, there is nothing to read in their mother tongue apart from the Bible. In such situations, the printed Scripture has limited impact, because most people will depend on skillful oral communication rather than on reading. The Bible Societies are attempting to fulfill their role for such communities by providing Scriptures in the audio-media as well as in print.

Considering that about 65% of Africa's population is non-literate, the Bible Societies in Africa are involved in making Scriptures available, affordable and attractive to the non-literates as well as to those who are literate.

Audio-Scriptures in Togo

The Bible Society in Togo began producing Scripture cassettes in the local languages in 1985. Years before, a large number of Scripture portions had been printed in the local languages, mainly Ewe. Some were distributed in the capital city, Lome, but few were distributed in the rural areas. As an example, it took almost four years to distribute 15,000 copies of a small, attractive booklet on the life of Jesus. The staff was disappointed because of the slow distribution of the printed portions. As a result, the Bible Society in Togo made the decision to begin producing audio-Scripture on cassettes. They had observed that the Togolais people enjoyed listening to cassettes. In Lome, secular cassettes are sold on the street corners and in the open air markets, included in many rural areas.

At first, they attempted to distribute Scripture cassettes imported from France, but they observed that the local people did not seem to like them. So they started producing their own cassettes consisting of Scripture text with local Christian songs. Initially, they produced special cassettes appropriate to the cultural context—cassettes for weddings, births and funerals. These cassettes, contextualized to the intended target audience, were well received.

Funeral Cassettes

Their most popular cassette was

a "funeral cassette" produced in the Ewe language. In most African communities, a funeral is an important occasion—thousands of people come together for a week or so to mourn. Many of the people who attend a funeral will never go inside a church building. So the Bible Society in Togo produced a special cassette designed to help people understand death from a biblical perspective and cope with it. Although "funeral cassettes" are on the commercial market, most consist of secular music without any words. The Bible Society tried to produce one with both Christian songs and Scripture text. The result was that hundreds of people listened to the cassettes. There was no problem with hardware; in the urban areas, many people have their own cassette players. Many people make a business of hiring out their cassette players during a funeral. So even in the rural areas, people have access to cassette players. In a very short time, the "funeral cassettes" became so popular that traders would buy one cassette from the Bible Society book shop and then duplicate and sell them in open air markets, a common problem of cassette piracy. Although African governments are making an effort to enforce copyright laws, they have found this activity difficult to control or stop.

Upon making an investigation, it was found that most of those who listened to the Ewe "funeral cassettes" were women traders who sell in the open air markets. Most were semi-literate, having about four years of schooling. Most could understand French as well as their mother tongue, and were accustomed to listening to cassettes in both languages. The second largest group of listeners were government employees,

both men and women. Finding the right media to fit the intended target audience was only half the job. The other half was finding the right topics.

Fear of Evil Spirits

It was found that many of the market women have a great fear of evil spirits and need to be assured of God's power to protect them. Many faced problems in their marriages and needed consolation. Many of them were church-goers, but they worshipped idols also. Some of those who claimed to be Christians understood that God was their protector, but when death or disaster struck their homes and families, they felt that God had forsaken them or even cursed them. Many of them were sincere church-goers who had not yet grasped the full implications of the Gospel nor responded to it personally and deeply. Some of them wanted to own a Bible, but they could not read it, others used the Bible as "magic"—an object to protect their homes from evil spirits when set in front of the window or above the main door.

Based on investigations, more cassettes were made on topics and themes from the Bible, including a C60 cassette entitled *Power of Jesus Over Evil Spirits*. The whole Ewe New Testament was also recorded in 1988.

Audio-Scriptures in Ghana

In 1989, the Bible Society of Ghana, in cooperation with the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) began to develop audio-Scriptures in the Dagbani language. At that time, the program was still experimental; and a lot of ideas and formats were being tried as well.

For example, a Catholic priest in Northern Ghana produced a version of the "Ten Commandments" done on the talking drums, and this was very well received in his parish. The Dagbani New Testament was printed in 1985, but in four years not more than 1,000 copies had

been sold. The Bible Society was concerned that the translation should be made available to the Dagbani-speaking people, (called Dagomba), with an estimated 448,150 speakers, the majority of whom are illiterate.

They decided to produce special portions for the Muslims who comprise 50% of the Dagomba population. It was found that Christians from the towns tended to be awed by the strength of Islam, but those who actually got into the Dagomba villages found a great opening to the Gospel.

They also decided to record special portions for adherents of the traditional religion who were at that time an estimated 44% of the population. They wanted to produce a "funeral" cassette to help people understand and cope with what is traditionally called "bad death" e.g., death of a young person or death of a woman in childbirth.

Furthermore, they decided to record the whole Dagbani New Testament for the Christian audience, which at that time was an estimated 1% of the Dagomba population. Most of the non-literate Christians are women.

Over the years, these cassettes have opened up Christianity to the people in a whole new way. Audio-portions have opened new doors for witnessing because they are seemingly less threatening to Muslims and adherents of traditional African religions.

Faith Comes by Hearing

Experience taught us that whereas audio-Scripture portions are good for witnessing to non-believers, it is important to make the complete New Testament available for the nurture of new Christians. Thus, the complete New Testament has been narrated and recorded in fifty African languages in cooperation with other organizations, such as Portable Recording Ministries in Nairobi, Kenya.

Hosanna, a US-based cassette ministry, has "licensed" the Bible Socie-

ties worldwide to carry out a program called "Faith Comes By Hearing"—a church-based Bible-use program with great potential to fulfill the Bible Societies' mandate of making God's Word available to everyone. This valuable program works well. Local pastors make a commitment to regular public listening in their churches through the whole New Testament. The people come together, have a worship time, listen to the tapes for 40-50 minutes, then different individuals stand up to ask questions about what was heard or to repeat a portion that was especially memorable. There is wide acclaim for this program to reach both literates and non-literates alike.

Churches have experienced tremendous growth and revival because of people gathering to hear the Word of God. Many individual lives have been changed. In rural churches that had a shortage of leadership due to high illiteracy, the cassettes have allowed the training and discipleship of leaders without literacy being a real obstacles.

Illiteracy Among Women

According to UN statistics, the majority of the illiterates in Africa are women, and in many communities, the majority of church-goers are also women. However, women are often left out when it comes to distribution of printed Scriptures, especially in areas where there are acute shortages of Scriptures, e.g., in remote villages, war-torn areas or refugee camps. As Mrs. Ester Boleyn, a missionary and coordinator of the "Nuer Old Testament Translation Project" commented:

When the books come the men get them. The problem is that there have been no materials in Nuer. The few materials they had before the war have all been destroyed. When any books come, even new copies of the New Testament, there are never enough for the great demand. The pastors and evangelists (all men) have not even had their own copies. In 1993 my husband was told by one evangelist that he shared one copy of

the New Testament with four other evangelists. It follows then, that if there are not enough materials for all the men leaders, their would be none for the women leaders.

Cassettes open up the Word of God to women and allow them the chance to be taught and disciplined. Moreover, because the Faith Comes By Hearing program is being undertaken in full cooperation with the local churches, it opens the door to the Word even wider to women. As one young evangelist explained:

When a man buys a cassette player, it belongs to him. When he is not listening, he keeps it away. When he wants to listen, he goes to places where men gather and he listens with other men. But when the church develops a listening program, men, women and children come to listen together.

Some people say that the oral-traditions are dying out in Africa. If that is true, then they must be revived if the Gospel is to come alive among rural Africans, especially women, even if some well educated Westernized men and women are not comfortable with presenting the Bible in this media.

New Challenges

According to Peter Drucker, well-known management expert, innovation or change involves three major risks. Firstly, that it will make current practices and patterns of operation obsolete. Secondly, that it might fail. Third, that it will succeed—but in succeeding it will produce unforeseen consequences that create new problem.

What are some of these new problems created by the success of audio-Scripture programs in Africa? First of

all, despite the efforts of organizations such as the United Bible Societies, many communities in Africa have suffered from acute shortages of Scriptures. If any major shift in emphasis from print to audio is to be achieved, we must find ways to generate additional financial resources.

Secondly, we must find capable and committed Christians, men and

Audio-portions have opened new doors for witnessing because they are seemingly less threatening to Muslims and adherents of traditional African religions.

women, within the local churches who are willing to organize, monitor and supervise audio-Scripture programs at the grass-roots level. In some areas, we will have to train them to carry out this important ministry.

Lastly, legitimate contacts must be maintained with the appropriate government authorities. Some African governments have waived duties on the importation of printed Scriptures, but when it comes to Scriptures on audio-cassettes, heavy import duties restrict this work.

This is part of a very complex problem. Since the 1960's, many African countries have been ruled by one-party systems of government, having monopoly control over the print and electronic

media. The newspapers, radio and TV stations are government owned and controlled. In the changing circumstances brought on by multi-party democracy in the 1990's, there has been a lot of pressure on African governments to liberalize outdated communication and information policies. In many countries, the public has demanded private ownership of mass media and more access

to media in rural areas where the large majority of the people reside.

Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) guarantees free access to information for all people, existing governments have been resistant to change and continue to view the media with a lot of suspicion. They seemingly fear that media will be used to expose, attack or even disempower them.

Although the aforementioned problems are by no means insurmountable, they nevertheless must be understood, tackled and resolved if the audio-cassette media is to take root in Africa so as to have its full benefit to win the non-readers to the Lord.

Dr. Mae Alice Reggy is an African-American married to a Kenyan. She works as the "New Reader and Media Consultant" at United Bible Societies, Africa Regional Centre in Nairobi, Kenya.

“Is That Really God Speaking?”

In the midst of oral-societies our main objective is to know God and to make Him known. People need to meet God and hear Him speak to their hearts in order to produce Christian character.

by Gene Davis

How many times have I seen a chief or an elder in a village in India, head in hands, furrowed lines on his face, and in deep thought as he listens to the Word of God, look up and sincerely say, “Is that God speaking or is that just what someone is preaching about?” or “Is that just something that somebody thinks God is driving at?”

In a society like the Benjaras, there are millions of people with no script at all in their language, twelve percent literacy in the language of the state they happen to be living in, (like Andhra Pradesh or Karnataka, or one of the Hindu speaking states,) where reading and writing is considered to be the non-productive part of their life.

Twelve percent of the Benjara people can read and write, but only 3.6% of the women have the ability to even write their own names. An interesting thing happened on my last trip to Andhra Pradesh among the Gypsy women. We had just finished a booklet in the Lombadi language, the language of the Benjaras, that contained forty Christian songs. At the time there was a holiday with great festivity. I had three groups of Lombadi women, two on the train, and one in Warangal approach our group. They sang and danced and insisted upon us giving them money for these festive activities, a very common and acceptable practice in this culture. Because they were singing and because we had Christian song books in their language, I asked each one of the women if they could read with the intent of giving them a song book. In those three groups of women, which represented at least 30 Benjara women, there was not a single one who could read. This amazed me, and also made

me realize that for people who have an oral tradition, cassette players and tapes were the only feasible way of giving them the Word of God.

You can see the whole demeanor of a person change from being rather glum and serious (even though they laugh and dance a lot), to one of tenderness, love, and radiance with the joy of the Lord. These things do not come merely by evangelism, they come by receiving the character of God, which is portrayed in the Word of God.

I have literally traveled all over the world, and especially in India. My main objective is to research the harvest field and the harvest force, then get the harvest force focused on the part of the harvest field that has not yet been targeted or reached. I cannot find a single society where the Christian character is developed without the Word of God. Our end goal is not to produce the Bible, but to see God develop the character of Christ within people of that society. It is “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” (Col. 1:27). Hence a life in Christ is more than being born again—it is going “from glory to glory.”

How can they follow Christ if they do not have His Word nor His example in societies that have a completely oral-tradition? In the end, these people may want to become literate. However, at the beginning stages, reading may not be something that appeals to them. In severely rural areas, the readers and literate people are not looked up to. Often we find a “kaik” (chief) say “Of course we can read that, we’ve got a young man who went to school.” They call the young man and he reads because he is ordered to read, not because

he is a leader or has any status at all, in fact, he may not be considered more than a village scribe. Often the young man who reads is considered lazy, weak, or even sickly. In these cultures real men focus on physical labor as opposed to obtaining an education. Therefore it is not uncommon for the person who gets an education to move to the city, not only because he can make more money, but also because his status improves. Once he makes more money and gains status, then he is indeed considered an important person in the village. A side problem is that many of the educated people cannot find jobs, consequently we often find 60% unemployment.

In the midst of this situation, our job is to know God and to make Him known. Paul gives Timothy instructions, “Everything you have heard me teach in public, you should in turn entrust to men who will be able to pass it on to others” (II Tim. 2:1). This then is our main objective within every people group. Where we do not have a literate society we can accomplish our goal best by using Gospel message tapes. The Word of God produces holiness, exhibited by humility, self-sacrifice, loyalty, forgiveness, transparency. “As I follow Christ, you follow me,” (I Cor. 11:1) was Paul’s formula for the Christian life. This can be accomplished through the application of the Word of God, whether written, spoken, or recorded.

Dr. Gene Davis is a veterinarian by vocation, he is a missionary to India and also coordinates the Serve-A-People office in Asia.

Storying the Storybook to Tribals: A Philippines Perspective of the Chronological Teaching Model

by Tom A. Steffen

This story approach to ministry works well among concrete-relational tribal people, especially non-literates. It has long been recognized that tribal people rely heavily on stories in order to socialize succeeding generations. Tribal people love to hear and tell stories. What Tom Clause says of native Americans is true of tribal people around the world: "Native Americans are great tellers" (1995:10).

In 1980, an evangelistic-discipleship model designed to reach tribal peoples living in urban or rural settings emerged under the leadership of Trevor McIlwain, a missionary ministering in the Philippines with New Tribes Mission. McIlwain called the model the "Chronological Teaching Approach." Within a few months, New Tribes Missions personnel were using the Chronological Teaching Model extensively throughout the archipelago. It soon spread to other countries where New Tribes Mission ministers. Numerous other mission agencies, such as the Southern Baptists, heard of the model and began implementing it in various fashions. Some have compiled contextualized teaching manuals for their personnel.

Since more than a decade has passed since the introduction of the Chronological Teaching model in the Philippines, I decided to return to the Philippines to evaluate the model's effectiveness within New Tribes Mission and other mission agencies that had adopted it, and investigate the adaptations made. A partial grant through Biola University and the generous gifts of friends turned my plans into a reality. This article documents the results of the evaluation made in June-July, 1993.

Procedures

To evaluate the model, a dual approach was used: a questionnaire and focus groups. The questionnaire gathers quantitative data while focus groups provide qualitative data. I felt the two-pronged analysis would effectively evaluate my hypothesis: Teaching the Bible chronologically to concrete-relational people, using a narrative approach, should result in: (1) national evangelists and teachers capable of teaching the various phases of the Chronological Teaching approach effectively, (2) followers who respect the national leaders, and (3) transformed relationships and use of resources (time/money).

The return of the questionnaires was disappointing with only 12 respondents from the 100 sent out. Logistics played a major role in the light return. The focus groups went much better. Six focus sessions (usually three hours in duration) were held at various locations on the islands of Mindanao and Luzon with 45 people participating, representing the following agencies: International Missions, Inc., New Tribes Mission, New Tribes Mission of the Philippines (Filipino branch), OMF, and YWAM (a Southern Baptist conference thwarted my connecting with Southern Baptist church planters, although I was able to obtain some of the Chronological Teaching curriculum they designed). Questions during the focus groups included:

1. What adjectives or phrases best characterize the Chronological Teaching approach from your/nationals' perspective?
2. What do you/nationals like best

about phases I, II, III, IV of the Chronological Teaching approach?

3. What do you/nationals like least about Phase I, II, III, IV?
4. What changes would you/nationals make in Phase I, II, III, IV?
5. How did the teachers'/recipients' behavior change due to this model?
6. What would you tell a friend interested in using this model?

Besides the focus groups, I conducted a number of individual interviews during my travels. Before data analysis, a brief overview of the Chronological Teaching model follows (Steffen 1993, 1994).

The Chronological Teaching Model

One of the most unique models that exists today for providing a firm foundation for the Gospel and an overview of the Bible is McIlwain's (1987; 1988; 1989; 1992) Chronological Teaching Model. McIlwain designed the model for long-term church planting rather than spot evangelism. He assumes Christian workers will build solid relationships, model Christianity and minister to physical and spiritual needs in tandem.

The model differentiates between felt needs and the Gospel, a distinction necessary to keep the focus of the message on Christ's efforts to restore our broken relationship with God. This is pertinent especially today in our pluralistic society when even some Evangelicals espouse universalism. The model clearly addresses the limitations of the anthropological theory of functional-

ism, i.e., focusing primarily on commonalities while tending to neglect contradiction and confrontation. It recognizes that conversion is a process as well as an event. It communicates well with concrete-relational thinkers due to its story format, and presents the big picture before introducing isolated parts and calls for constant repetition. It calls for laying a solid Old Testament foundation before presenting the Gospel, and it builds on the evangelistic foundation in a way that provides a comprehensive understanding of the entire Bible for believers in a short period of time.

The Chronological Teaching Model challenges current evangelism models (and Bible translation approaches) that begin in the New Testament. Such evangelism models, McIlwain would argue, do not provide listeners: (1) sufficient time for worldview challenge, or (2) sufficient foundational information to adequately comprehend the story of Jesus Christ. These truncated evangelism models are like asking a person to begin reading a book in the middle, rather than at the beginning, yet draw the author's conclusion. This requires the reader to make numerous uninformed guesses about the settings, characters, plot, episodes and theme(s) which may or may not be those of the author.

McIlwain urges Christian workers to begin evangelism with an overview of the history of redemption, beginning with Genesis and continuing through the ascension of Jesus Christ (Phase 1). Says McIlwain:

“We must not teach a set of doctrines divorced from their God-given historical setting, but rather, we must teach the story of the acts of God as He has chosen to reveal Himself in history. People may ignore our set of doctrines as our Western philosophy of God, but the story of God's actions in history cannot be refuted” (1987:81).

To accomplish this, McIlwain developed 68 lessons—42 from the Old

Testament and 26 from the New Testament. These lessons deal with the nature and character of God, Satan, and humanity. Designed primarily for unbelievers, the lessons are helpful also for believers in that they demonstrate the preparatory role the Old Testament plays in evangelism. Key words for the first phase are separation (from God) and solution (through Jesus Christ).

McIlwain emphasizes four basic themes in the evangelism phase. The first theme explores the character of God, who is supreme and sovereign. He communicates with humanity, is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent and holy. The second theme examines Satan's role—how he fights against God, holds humanity captive and is characterized by lying and deceiving. The third theme deals with humanity. Because of inherited and practiced sin all people are separated from their Creator. The fourth theme focuses on Jesus Christ who is God, man, holy, righteous and the only Savior. The interweaving of these four issues, argues McIlwain, allows for full understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which becomes the good news that God intends it to be in that the themes provide sufficient background for basic comprehension (See Figure 1). McIlwain fully expects listeners to be ready to receive the Gospel at the completion of Phase I teaching, if not before.

Phase II moves forward to demonstrate security in Christ, and contrasts this with separation and death that result apart from Him (Phase I). For example, in Phase I, due to lack of faith in God, unbelievers are found outside the closed door of the ark (separation). Death is inevitable. In Phase II, however, believers are safe within the ark behind the closed door. Faith in God results in safety and security.

By reviewing Genesis through the ascension of Christ, new themes are introduced in the lessons and further foundational material is provided as prep-

aration for Phases III and IV. For example, in that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is emphasized in the Gospels, Phase II highlights certain aspects of that ministry so that when the topic reappears in Acts (in Phase III), the listeners can build easily upon the previous background, thereby equipping them for spiritual battle and the advancement of the Kingdom.

The third phase begins with a brief overview of the book of Acts to introduce new believers to church life: the Power behind God's kingdom, the conflict with Satan's kingdom, the Christian life, miracles, instruction, worship, food, prayer, giving, conflict resolution, leadership and followership roles, and God's vision for planting and equipping new communities of faith in strategic areas of the world. Other emphases include: the spread of Christianity from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome. Subject matter in this phase provides the foundation for Phase IV, the Epistles and Revelation. (See Figure 1).

In Phase IV, new believers receive a brief overview of the remainder of the New Testament, with special attention given to their position in Christ, their relationship to the Holy Spirit, their daily walk, the function of the church and eschatological teachings. Teachers present thematic outlines for each book (whole to part), and cover briefly the basic content, tying it to the previous phase and applying it to the present context. They emphasize the concrete elements found in the text.

Phase V returns to Genesis and continues through the ascension of Christ, emphasizing God's methods of sanctifying and maturing his sons and daughters. This phase targets maturing believers. Sanctification now becomes the key word for Phase V, and for the remaining phases. Phase VI covers the book of Acts in a detailed, verse-by-verse exposition of each passage. The final phase deals with the

remaining New Testament letters expositively, emphasizing the believer's walk, church functions and God's final plan for the universe.

In that only two participants had any experience in phase V (none had moved beyond Phase V), the data evaluated for this project deals specifically with phases I-IV.

Overview of the Data

At this point I will isolate the representative comments made in answer to each of the focus group questions, along with formative information gleaned from the questionnaires. Personal perspectives of the data follow.

1. What adjectives or phrases best characterize the Chronological Teaching approach from your/nationals' perspective? This question always met with quick responses—so quick, in fact, I found it difficult to keep up with my note taking. Not only were the responses quick, they were also very positive. A sample of the comments follows:

It's clear, comprehensive, compelling and simple.

It's Bible-centered.

It provides many opportunities to correct thinking without turning off the audience.

It lays a firm foundation for the Gospel.

It works well with concrete-relational thinkers.

It works well with all ages.

It is the most effective means of communicating biblical truth cross-culturally.

It gives me more confidence as a teacher.

Nationals and expatriates often repeated the last comment: "It gives me more confidence as a teacher." If confident teachers make better teachers, then the Chronological Teaching model warrants further investigation.

2. What do you/nationals like best about Phase I, II, III, IV? What the participants appreciated most about phases I-IV can be summarized under

three categories: God's message, God's character, and people's misconceptions.

It clarifies God's message. The Chronological Teaching model demonstrates respect for God's Word in its entirety by outlining God's plan for the world from beginning to end. Com-

The Chronological Teaching model demonstrates respect for God's Word in its entirety by outlining God's plan for the world from beginning to end.

ments such as the following capture the preference for such an approach: "No one has ever taught us this way before. Before, the teaching was fragmented, making it difficult to follow." One people group claimed: "This (Chronological Teaching) is our way of teaching (holistic)."

Phases I-IV help clarify God's main message to humanity: as sovereign Lord he not only deserves our full allegiance and worship, he demands it. Listeners who go through the four phases will hear this message repeatedly.

The model helps people comprehend clearly the character of God. Through Bible stories of God's interaction with people, unbelievers grasp his righteousness and grace from a biblical perspective. They soon recognize that a

distant God desires to become a close friend. For believers, a personal God interested in one's day-to-day activities becomes evident. The Chronological Teaching model helps both unbelievers and believers "clarify who God is."

Clarifies human misconceptions. This model provides people ample time to change their minds about what they have substituted as Lord. This is done in a nonthreatening way in that the Bible stories and letters contrast personal and group beliefs and lifestyles with God's expectations. The recipients must interact with God's word rather than the laws of some new religion propagated by outsiders. "Truth repeated," stated one participant, "becomes more easily acceptable."

One of the areas addressed by this model is human manipulation of God through a variety of rituals. The selected teachings demonstrate vividly the ineffectiveness of such manipulation to gain God's favor for salvation or sanctification. This, in turn, helps sever the roots of syncretism and legalism.

3. What do you/nationals like least about Phase I, II, III, IV? This question began to reveal some of the jagged edges surrounding the Chronological Teaching model. I list the points of concern in order of suggested severity, from minor to major. Theological oversights. A number of concerns voiced related not so much to what was covered in the model, but what was excluded, or the sequence of the presentation. Questions arose concerning whether the Chronological Teaching model spent sufficient time addressing spiritual warfare, Psalms and Proverbs, the life of Christ and short-term witnessing.

There were those who did not feel the necessity of covering Phase II. For them, more important matters deserved prior attention, such as, teaching on fasting (which created a servant attitude), the gifts of the Holy Spirit, prayer, witnessing and spiritual formation. One

church planter lamented: “We did not get into Romans quick enough to address ways to restore the many personal broken relationships that now called for healing.”

Cultural insensitivity. The areas of cultural insensitivity surrounded the issue of sin, storytelling, obtaining feedback, and determining the reception of the Gospel.

In relation to the sin issue, How does saving face and being told repeatedly you are a sinner go together? Said one participant: To “beat people over the head that they are sinners in this culture”, as done in Phase I, “is not necessary.” While no one wanted to remove necessary barriers to conversion, a good number of the participants called for more sensitivity in this key cultural area.

Some felt the need to tie Bible stories to life-related beliefs and behaviors. For example, rather than merely present the story of Cain and Abel, begin by asking: What happens when two brothers fight (a key issue for some people groups in the Philippines)? The Cain and Abel story would then take on greater relevance. For audiences with a Catholic background, define the sin of Adam and Eve as disobedience rather than sexual misconduct. Contrasting Bible stories to key worldview beliefs and behaviors should also help audiences move beyond traditional mythology to acceptance of the biblical perspective.

From north to south, Christian workers raised the issue of how to discover significant feedback. Direct questions used in the Chronological Teaching model frequently failed to illicit the information needed. In fact, many people groups, due to the shame factor or cultural expectations of the student and teacher roles, would not respond to direct questions in public. This left the teachers wondering how well they communicated the phases.

The Chronological Teaching

model calls for conducting interviews at the end of Phase I to determine who has accepted Christ as Savior. Those passing the interview move on to Phase II. Creating separate classes within people groups who had few if any private meetings raised a number of questions and created suspicion in the minds.

Phases too lengthy. While this category could be placed under cultural insensitivity, it seems to stand alone. The most common complaint heard in all the focus groups was the length of the phases. Most of the participants would consider the following phrase accurate for their audiences: “It takes too long to teach.” Some solved the problem for Phase I by cutting the lessons from the suggested 68 to an average of 31 (see Table 1 below). This reduced the overall time for the phase to an average of 20 weeks. The comments that follow capture the concern of those interviewed.

“What constitutes a good foundation for the Gospel (Phase I)?”

The lessons are “hopelessly overloaded” and “absent of curriculum development skills.”

“We’re lucky to get three (teaching) shots at people.”

“The teacher’s credibility comes into question if over a long phase the teacher misses sessions because of sickness or work. The teacher’s time is also important.”

“How can we get it (Chronological Teaching approach) in a more concise form without sacrificing its content?”

Those working in urban settings found the time factor extremely important. With residents exposed to complex, competing cults, religions, various interpretations of the Bible, and also extremely busy, getting them to commit to a long series of lessons becomes very difficult. Said one urban church planter: “It would be great to teach this, but it is impossible.”

4. *What changes would you/nationals make in Phase I, II, III, IV?* The solutions proposed by the Christian workers

and nationals demonstrated a desire to retain as much of the Chronological Teaching model as possible, without becoming culturally insensitive. Their attempts to balance program with process follows.

Theological oversights. While some expressed the need for the inclusion of more teaching in the area of spiritual warfare and Psalms and Proverbs, I received little constructive feedback as to how to accomplish this.

Cultural insensitivity. Some participants answered the issue of saving face and confronting one’s sin by shortening the number of lessons in Phase I. They felt listeners could still grasp the issue of separation from a holy God without excess repetition, and more importantly, the seeker would feel much freer to continue the study.

Concerning the use of strictly Bible stories in a phase, some solved the problem by using traditional stories to lead into Bible stories. Others “used cultural illustrations to get to the heart of a story.”

Discerning the feedback method of choice has not been easy. For many, the lesson questions designed to illicit feedback failed. Typical responses to the questions included: “We’re ashamed to answer.” and “We forgot everything.” However, when a Christian worker now introduces questions to a people group not accustomed to such, they now become upset if the teacher forgets to ask questions. In urban settings, some found competition between sexes and age groups a natural way to gain feedback.

Discerning the interview method of choice continues. Lessons learned in the use of questions in relation to lessons also apply when trying to discern a person’s reception of the Gospel. Some opted for informal or formal testimonies. Others used questions that called for expanded answers so a professing believer could not just parrot

another's answers. Some found house-to-house interviews advantageous. For certain people groups, "Outside persecution tells which step they've taken."

One of the most surprising findings of the focus groups was the reported number of listeners who received Christ during Phase II rather than Phase I. The review of the Phase I lessons, plus the contrast between separation and security seemed to result in clarity and conviction. For many, Phase II made Phase I comprehensible.

Phases too lengthy. Practitioners took a number of approaches to address the lengthiness of the phases. Some curriculum designers sliced lessons from the phases, "selecting stories applicable to [their target] people." Another cautioned: "It's not how fast you go, but how much the people understand."

Teaching tips. Several valuable teaching tips surfaced during the discussion of question four. One team stressed the need to team teach so as to avoid burnout. This would be true for Filipino teachers as well in that once any teacher begins teaching several phases simultaneously, teaching "becomes very complex."

In relationship to leadership development, one participant commented: "I don't just turn the teaching over to nationals. I talk to the teachers about prayer, preparation time, the pastoral role, not just the teaching role."

5. How did the teacher's/recipient's behavior change due to this model? How well does this evangelistic-discipleship model transform the behavior of the teachers and recipients? The data developed from the questionnaire, shows that the teachers' and recipients' relationships change the same amount at 2.9 (out of a possible 4). Teachers showed a slightly higher transformation (2.8 in contrast to 2.6) in

the use of time and money. The focus groups revealed a number of behavior changes resulting from the various phases.

"The teachers became more aggressive and confident in teaching"

"After teaching on giving in Phase III, our giving went from 3

It assumes that the teacher's and the audience's view of God, Satan, demons, angels, sin, judgment, heaven, hell, faith, salvation... are synonymous with those of Scripture. Have these Christian workers underestimated the profound complexity of the Gospel?

pesos to 500 pesos."

"Phase III created a world vision; they prayed for believers in the USA and began witnessing."

"The believers composed songs to go along with each of the stories."

"They took over the leadership completely. They developed lessons and taught them."

"Demons left believers because of teaching on the sovereignty of God."

"The teachers will take 2-3 days, traveling 30-80 kilometers, for one teaching session. The way God meets their needs along the way is a great witness to all."

6. What would you tell a friend interested in using this model? This ques-

tion completes the focus group questions. The following quotes reflect the broad perspective of the participants' feelings.

"It is the only way to get a clear understanding of the Bible in that it starts at the beginning and proceeds to the end."

"If you are going to be a purist (to the model), it's a long haul to the Gospel."

"It is an effective tool for evangelism. Go with the long presentation if the people have time."

"It needs teaching objectives."

"Its order makes sense. People can take it up and keep moving."

"I'd highly recommend it, but it must be tailored for each specific context."

"It fleshed out my church planting. I vary the methodology, but it provides a path to walk on. It links Bible study with church planting."

In this section I will highlight some additional data gleaned from the questionnaire, how-be-it limited in responses: (1) Attendance tended to hold steady throughout the phases with a good number of national teachers participating. (2) The teachers effectiveness correlates strongly to the quality of training received. (3) Respect from the audience tends to be higher among believers than unbelievers. (4) In the area of curricula, national teachers felt the most ownership with Phase I. Their involvement in the development of the curricula, for the most part, included translation. One expatriate acknowledged the need for more national input in the areas of illustrations and questions. Even so, nationals tend to promote the curricula to others. (5) Stories appreciated most tended to reflect each group's worldview. For example, stories tied to the themes of judgment (Sodom and Gomorrah) and resurrection (Enoch, Jesus) [Mindinao], the Ten Commandments [Luzon], and demon activity

[both] received high marks. Stories responded to least tended to come from the time of the kings and the captivities. Book studies addressing future events were big hits, while only II Timothy received a negative review.

Personal Reflections of the Data

It is always enlightening to watch how other people use something developed by an outsider. Such observations can result in a much better product. The same may be true for the Chronological Teaching model.

It soon became obvious that personnel from different agencies looked at the model from very different perspectives. Some saw the model as simply an extended evangelistic tool, therefore, the evangelist left the area after a very brief encounter with the audience (tourist model). Some had little difficulty seeing the wisdom of the use of stories, but their teaching came across piece-meal because they missed the encompassing themes that tied each phase together. Their stories became great stories rather than teaching tools.

Central to the diversification of the model's interpretation stands four basic tenets: (1) the level of language and culture necessary to communicate effectively, (2) the definition of the Gospel, (3) the type of church one expects to develop, and (4) the grasp of the Chronological Teaching model. How personnel from the various agencies defined these four areas determined to a great degree the types of changes introduced into the model.

In the area of language and culture acquisition, one major weakness jumped out. Most of the Christian workers had received surprisingly little

background in the principles of cross-cultural education, i.e. how people process and store information, and in the principles of curriculum development, yet found themselves heavily engaged in each. Lack of training in these areas results in a grave disservice to those to whom Christian workers minister in that it tends to hinder nationals from reproducing the various phases naturally (see Steffen 1993).

In the area of the Gospel, some felt a few stories with a quick overview of the four spiritual laws would suffice. Such a seemingly ethnocentric attitude may reveal a lack of cultural sensitivity. It assumes that the teacher's and the audience's view of God, Satan, demons, angels, sin, judgment, heaven, hell, faith, salvation, soul, decision-making, reciprocity, Jesus, the cross, to name a few components of the Gospel message, are synonymous with those of Scripture. Have these Christian workers underestimated the profound complexity of the Gospel?

A major task standing before Christian workers not only in the Philippines, but around the world, is to produce hundreds of thousands of effective evangelists and Bible teachers. For this to become a reality, however, a prior step must take place—those hearing the message must not only be able to comprehend it, they must also be able to communicate it effectively to others through talk and walk.

How well did the data reflect my hypothesis? While improvements can be made in each of the three areas of concern, the quantitative and qualitative data support the hypothesis. Phases I-IV of the Chronological Teaching model, when contextualized, produce new and strong believers.

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Using the Vernacular Non-Print Media “That They May Hear”

Being user friendly—using familiar forms with an unfamiliar message—is effective communication so that people might hear the Gospel, call upon the Lord and be saved!

by Doris Porter

Recently I heard a sermon from a well-known preacher on why the Church needs to be open to change. Times change, bringing with them new perspectives, different ways of doing things, new technologies and innovations. The door has opened to whole new ways of transmitting and receiving information. The point was that in order to reach people in today's society, we need to make some adjustments in the way we do things. In the Christian context, the message and basic motivations for getting that message out do not change; but in order for the message to be heard and understood, the manner in which we do it needs to be altered.

Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) have a reputation for openness to change and innovation. We need to know and understand what is going on in the world around us in order to better reach the people we serve. We have been open to new methodologies, approaches, technologies, and fields of learning which have advanced the cause of the Great Commission. SIL training programs reflect these changes.

Conceptual Shift: The Non-Print Media Philosophy

Although use of non-print media in language development and Bible translation programs in SIL is not an innovation, it has been impacted by changes on the world scene. SIL language teams have for many years used audio-cassettes, filmstrips, flip charts, video, etc. What has changed is the philosophy regarding *why* and *how* non-print media may be applied in language programs.

These two interrelated factors

have influenced our current philosophy regarding non-print media for vernacular programs. First, we have learned more about effective communication. Historically, we have expected that once a language had written materials available, vernacular literacy would take hold and the written message would be understood. However, we are learning that traditionally oral societies do not bridge into literacy as easily as we thought. Pre-literate peoples need a more gradual approach into use of print materials. People who have depended on oral and visual forms of communication for generations cannot quickly relate to written forms. Writing is often perceived as foreign, belonging to a different kind of world. For this reason the message contained in the printed materials is also considered foreign, not particularly relevant to the society in which the audience operates. However, using familiar forms of communication to transmit an unfamiliar message helps to bridge the gap from the form of communication to the message it contains. If both the form and the message are new, the jump is too great for most if not all cultures.

Also, there will always be some segment of the population (e.g. the elderly and visually impaired) who are unlikely to ever use the written form of the language. How do we reach them? Audio and audio-visuals can be effective tools in reaching these audiences. Cassette players are increasingly common even in remote areas. Access to Scripture readings, Bible lessons, and Scripture songs can be a great boon to people in these areas.

Further, not all societies will accept written vernacular. It may be a taboo,

or be against their religious beliefs, to have their language written down. Although some changes have been taking place on a moderate scale, this is still generally true for Islamic societies. Very often Arabic is the only acceptable language for Holy Writ.

Because of all these elements, audio-visual communication has received greater attention. A better understanding of communication principles, plus the increased (and still increasing) availability and ease of using non-print technology have made non-print communication increasingly acceptable and popular.

Conceptual Shift: The How of Non-Print Media

The second factor influencing the use of non-print media is that we in SIL have become more concerned with effective *use* of materials produced in our language programs. One result of this concern has been a greater emphasis on *strategic* planning. “Strategic” planning focuses on directly tying short-term activities to the long-term goals. For example, before initiating any activity, (such as a literacy class or publication of a book), we ask, “Why am I doing this? What specific goal am I aiming at and how will this help me to get there?” We used to think of non-print media as an “add-on” to the language program—something extra you might do if you had the time. Often there was no formal tie to specific language program goals. Audio-cassettes, for example, were mainly used to put Scripture on tape for the non-reading audience. Not a lot of thought was given to how Scripture portions might be programmed to better fit the audience, and all too often, distribution and use

were taken for granted without a well thought out plan for how it would happen. There was no consideration as to how to integrate non-print media into the language program plan.

With an increased focus on strategic planning we are now concentrating on clearer identification of long-term goals based on the context in which the program takes place. Once the long term goals are established, it is easier to identify what paths we might take and what kinds of activities are needed to achieve the goals. We have found that non-print media is one of the tools,—a very useful one—to help us achieve our goals. The variety of options available to us (audio-cassettes, video, live dramatizations, radio, story-telling with flip charts, music and dance, or a combination thereof), open up doors for achieving literacy goals, translation goals, distribution and use goals, and teaching and training goals. In a strategic plan, we know why we have selected a particular media option or combination of options, what goal it is moving us toward, and precisely what we expect it to accomplish. Furthermore, distribution and use is planned into the activity as well as evaluation as to whether or not the activity accomplished its purpose.

Applications of Non-Print Media

One of the most popular uses of non-print media is audio-cassettes of Scripture songs using indigenous music forms. In African countries in particular this has enjoyed huge success. Ethnomusicologists study indigenous music, do research within the ethnic community on which forms would be most appropriate for Scripture songs, and assist local musicians in producing them. Sales of this kind of cassette tape far exceed those of any other cassettes produced. Because of its popularity, we can likely expect broad distribution. As a result the Gospel is communicated to a wide audience in a form

with which the people readily identify.

As a Bible translation organization SIL is, of course, concerned that the message of the Scriptures be communicated accurately, clearly, and naturally. Translators are well trained to apply sound principles in the process of translation for the printed page. Though in previous years SIL has focused primarily on New Testament translation, more recently we are looking for ways to provide larger portions of the Old Testament, if not the whole document. The Old Testament provides important background for better understanding the New Testament. Old Testament translation is a massive task, but non-print media can play a significant role in helping people make the bridge between Old and New Testament even while the translation of the New Testament process is going on. A cooperative effort between Vernacular Media Services (VMS) of JAARS, Inc., and the vernacular media section of the International Sociolinguistic Department (SLD-VM) in Dallas, Texas, is working to develop videos and flip charts for story-telling of sections of the Old Testament. We expect to field test these products by the end of this year (1995). After revisions, we will release them for general use to mission agencies.

Specialized Training

In order to maximize effective use of non-print media options, those involved in producing non-print materials need specialized training. To create higher quality productions, we need technicians who know what equipment best serves particular needs and how to use it well. In addition to skilled production, we need consultants who can advise teams on how to make non-print media programs effective. We don't want a product-mentality; where the product becomes the goal itself," but a process-mentality; the goal being to maximize the effectiveness of the product.

With training needs in mind, VMS and SLD-VM sponsor a training course for vernacular media specialists. It is held each spring at JAARS, Inc., Waxhaw, North Carolina from about mid-March to mid-June. The course is intensive with about 5 class-hours a day plus labs. The first month focuses on applications of non-print media in language development programs. It includes non-print communication principles, viable media options for ethnic communities and the implications of each of those options, exposure to media ideas through sample materials, and the place of non-print media departments in entity structures. Principles for involving nationals in various media roles are also covered. The final eight weeks concentrate on technical aspects. The focus is on production in a village environment, rather than in well equipped studios.

In Summary

We should be very enthusiastic about the potential of non-print media tools to assist us in fulfilling the Great Commission. An important key is planning. We must look carefully at the context, know what specific objectives we want to achieve, choose the most appropriate tools to achieve those objectives and plan a program (not just a product), to make the product as effective as possible. The second key factor is providing personnel with the training needed to produce quality products which are appropriate and relevant to the users.

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