

*Chronological Communication of the Gospel Goes from Country to City*  
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## **Introduction**

Some three decades after its introduction, most involved in the missions community have heard of some chronological Bible model for evangelism, discipleship, and/or church planting. In this paper I will trace the modern orality movement centered in a chronological communication of Scripture introduced by Trevor McIlwain of New Tribes Mission (NTM), Philippines, in the early 1980s.<sup>1</sup> I will seek to answer the following questions: Who are the major players? What contributions have they made? What changes have they introduced? Who does the movement reach? Any significant outliers out there? How accurate is the movement's history presently conveyed? This paper documents some of the seminal stories that have shaped, and are shaping the spread of the modern orality movement. I begin with the last question.

One of the reasons I decided to document this young movement is because of the inaccurate information that already exists. For example, many believe, incorrectly, that the movement began with the Mouk people of West New Britain popularized through the EE-Taow! video.<sup>2</sup> The authors noted correctly, however, that the movement did begin in the countryside. Another and more important reason is because God is using the orality movement to start new communities of faith and mature existing ones around the world. But the orality movement has done much more than just go global, its implementation has also crossed from country dwellers to the city dwellers.

Movements often have multiple starts and sputters, but they keep marching along over time, demonstrating legitimacy. Movements have both promoters and dissenters. In the orality movement, for example, some advocates argue that they have discovered God's way, and therefore, the only way. Some dissenters say it takes way too long, stories are for kids, and therefore inappropriate to teach theology. Far from monolithic, movements tend to find themselves moving in multiple directions at the same time, often to the consternation of the initial founder(s). The innovators, however, feel that they are increasing the breadth of the movement. Movements also tend to have outliers, i.e., those not connected to the movement but promote similar ideas. All of this can be said of the modern orality movement as the stories below will show, not all of which are presented in chronological order but rather clusters of related events.

## **Modern Beginnings**

*Trevor McIlwain, Chronological Bible Teaching, 1981*

In 1975, Dick Sollis of NTM put together the first South East Asian (SEA) Leadership Conference to be held in Manila. Since syncretism was a major issue found in NTM tribal ministries in Brazil and Colombia,<sup>3</sup> Sollis was looking for someone who could provide a stronger evangelism model. Dell Schultze, then Field Chairman of the Philippine field, suggested Trevor McIlwain in that he had been experimenting with a chronological model among the Palawanos where syncretism seemed to abound.<sup>4</sup>

McIlwain spoke to the SEA field leaders in 1975, introducing an overview of an emerging understanding of a chronological approach to tribal evangelism and church planting. By the 1981 SEA Leadership Conference held in Pattaya, Thailand, and just returning from home assignment in Australia where he continued to develop his chronological model, McIlwain was ready to

present a seminar on his growing understanding. McIlwain introduced his ideas daily for four hours from mimeographed notes, and was videoed. His seven-phase church planting model driven by biblical theology emphasized, among other things, that the Bible is history (His Story); the Bible is one story—the story of Jesus Christ; the gospel requires a firm Old Testament (OT) foundation; tell Bible stories and define the nature and character of the God conveyed in the stories; the Bible not only tells us what to say, but by example, shows us how to teach it—chronologically; don't talk about Jesus until listeners understand their separation from a holy God; all of this should preserve an objective gospel and help produce genuine followers of Christ.

The SEA Leadership conference held in Thailand in 1981 became the seminal moment when McIlwain's chronological model would spread beyond the shores of the Philippine Islands to around the world within NTM.<sup>5</sup> Leaders returned to their respective fields of ministries and began to implement the chronological model designed for multiplying tribal churches that remain true to the Bible. Eventually, McIlwain would entitle his model Chronological Bible Teaching (CBT).<sup>6</sup> While no one anticipated or expected it, a modern-day movement was just born. This did not go unnoticed by David Hesselgrave, who in *Scripture and Strategy* (1994) identified CBT as one of major contributions to missions in the twentieth century.

McIlwain returned to the Philippines and taught seminars on his chronological model on the various islands for all foreign and national NTM missionaries. It should be noted that his model assumes extensive culture and language acquisition, and is designed for long-term, incarnational, church planting driven by exit strategy.<sup>7</sup> McIlwain's ever-expanding mimeographed notes would eventually result in multi-volume series entitled *Firm Foundations*. The first volume that came out in 1987 provided the CBT's philosophy. It would claim that this is "God's way," "follows divine guidelines," and has a "divinely revealed order of teaching." The remaining volumes were Bible lessons designed for tribal peoples. The evangelism phase consisted of 68 lessons, 42 from the OT, and 26 from the New Testament (NT).

Sometime between 2008 and 2009 a name change occurred. Some began to challenge the linear, chronological approach that required evangelism to always begin in Genesis. They argued that some people prefer an eventline over a timeline; they prefer "seeing-things-together" (themes) rather than "one-thing-after-another" (chronology).

For them, history did not always follow a chronological path. Foundational Bible Teaching (FBT) replaced CBT.

#### *Herbert Klem, Oral Communication of the Scripture, 1982*

There is an interesting outlier that took place a year after McIlwain introduced his chronological model in Thailand in 1981. Herbert Klem published a book on his research in 1982 entitled, *Oral Communication of the Scripture: Insights from African Oral Art*. Klem wanted to discover if the Yoruba tribal people living in West Africa could learn the Bible without having to become literate? If indigenous music was added to an oral presentation of the Bible, would learning increase? Klem used the book of Hebrews to test his hypotheses. He concluded that both the schooled and the unschooled performed better and more nearly alike when oral communication tools were used (p.178).

#### *Joy Ridderhof, Gospel Recordings Network, 1939*

A second outlier is Gospel Recordings Network (GRN) started by Joy Ridderhof in 1939. GRN's goal is to tell the story of Jesus in every language, no matter how small the population or distant the village. Since its conception, GRN has used Bible stories to communicate spiritual truths to oral populations. They train missionary recordists to use native bilingual interpreters to record Bible stories. These are then disseminated through audiovisuals and audio players. GRN has reached some 6000 different ethnic groups using this approach <<http://globalrecordings.net/en/>>.

*Dell and Rachel Schultze, God and Man, 1984*

Trying to simplify McIlwain's lessons and cut down the total number of stories to 35, yet retain the story nature and chronological order, Dell and Rachel Schultze wrote and published privately *God and Man* in 1984. They dedicated the book to their friend Jack Connor who had recently went to be with the Lord after a brief bout with cancer. They wrote: "As we were preparing these lessons we remembered when we were students with Jack at the Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of North Dakota. Jack spoke in chapel presenting salvation and the gospel of grace, chronologically, covering the same things contained in this volume." Those themes included creation, sin, and promise. The Southern Baptist's International Mission Board (IMB) would shortly pick up this little volume and use it globally, preferring the story emphasis in contrast to McIlwain's highly expositional model. *God and Man* is still available electronically from <[jot2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jot2@sbcglobal.net)>.

*Bisorios of Papua New Guinea, 1981*

George and Harriet Walker and Bob and Noby Kennell started their ministry among the monolingual Bisorios who reside in the East Sepik province of Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 1978. After three years of culture and language acquisition they began to teach the Bisorios chronologically (1981). Around 40 people—which soon grew to around a 100—listened as they taught five days a week, sometimes up to three hours a day, for 23 weeks. To help comprehension of the Bible stories they used drama.

On the day of the gospel presentation, some 70 Bisorio made a profession of faith in Christ. Monowa, an elderly blind man, made this commented about the message of grace he had just heard, "It's too good to be true, but it *is* true!" This was the first use of the chronological model in PNG. A manual of 40 Bible lessons, *Evangelizing Cross-Culturally: The Bisorio Example, and Drama in Chronological Teaching: The Use of Skits*, are available through NTM.

*Mark and Gloria Zook, EE-Taow! Video, 1989*

After teaching OT Bible stories chronologically over two months without mentioning Jesus Christ, the day finally came for Mark Zook to present the gospel to 310 Mouk residing in West New Britain. This took place in December of 1986. A people movement soon began and the gospel began to expand among outlying villages. The award-winning video entitled *EE-Taow!* ("It Is True") produced in 1989 documents this movement of God through a reenactment of their story. *EE-Taow-The Next Chapter* conveys to doubters that this movement was no flash-in-the-pan, but a genuine, authentic, sustainable movement of God.

***CBT Expands to Other Agencies and Audiences***

The modern orality movement had now taken deep roots within NTM. Its influence will soon impact Bible translators. Translators who formerly began with the book of Mark would now

begin with Genesis. Influenced by CBT, translators recognized that just as Jesus needed a forerunner, John the Baptist, so the NT required a forerunner, the OT. CBT would also later influence the *JESUS* Film. Stepping into the last third of the Bible story, the NT, opens up multiple ways of misinterpretation for audiences.<sup>8</sup> A brief OT introduction of seven to eight minutes was added to the *JESUS* film for Muslims. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. I will now look at how CBT spread beyond NTM, and its slow spread to the city.

*Jim Slack, IMB in Philippines Acquires CBT, 1983*

Jim Slack, church growth consultant for the Foreign Mission Board (presently IMB), served in the Philippines as a church growth consultant. He had read Hans Weber's book *The Communication of the Gospel to Illiterates* in a doctoral seminar with Cal Guy at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in the early 60s. He and his wife Mary, and Susan Stokeld, used Weber's and George and Mary Ingram's 30 Bible Stories for Church Planters (from India) at the Southern Baptist College in Mindanao in the early 70s.

Friends with NTM's Dell Schultze, Slack heard about McIlwain's chronological Bible story model in the early 80s. Impressed, he invited McIlwain to teach seminars for IMB in Luzon and Mindanao. McIlwain taught a seminar in Baguio in 1983 and a second one in Davao in 1984. Some 600 IMB missionaries and nationals attended one of the two one-week seminars. CBT had now moved beyond NTM to IMB.

The IMB missionaries in Mindanao, however, decided not to follow McIlwain's lengthy, highly expositional, and rigid model. They therefore invited NTM's Jay Jackson to provide a more streamlined, flexible model. Using Jackson's "Phase Planning" insights driven by a worldview focus, along with chronological lessons produced by NTM's Bryan and Diane Thomas, IMB's Stan Smith, Sam Stallings, Paul Stevens, and later, Jeff Palmer developed a 54-lesson story set entitled, "Chronological Bible Storytelling." This model was less expositional and somewhat shorter than McIlwain's CBT.

*Caloy Gabuco, 105 Pictures, 1985*

Jim Slack approached Dell Schultze about developing a set of pictures to accompany each of the evangelism Bible stories. In that IMB had or would have a good number of missionaries working among lowland Filipinos who did little reading, they preferred 2D pictures. That worked great for tribal people as well so the project was on. IMB put up \$100,000 and NTM oversaw the "Picture Project." A Filipino artist, Caloy Gabuco, painted 105 pictures. Black and white, and color picture sets of various sizes were made off of the 105 pictures <[www.ntmbooks.com](http://www.ntmbooks.com)>. 2D pictures were now available for each evangelism Bible story connecting the verbal with the visual. The original artwork was eventually shipped to NTM in Sanford, FL., and remains stored there in a fireproof, climate controlled room.

After several printings of the 105 pictures by Church Strengthening Ministry (CSM) in Manila, CSM, through the assistance of J.O. Terry, introduced a short set of 40 pictures to reduce the number storytellers had to carry, as well as the cost. A new set of 210 pictures by a British artist will soon be available through NTM. See:

<http://www.foundationmatters.org/store/index.php?dispatch=categories.catalog>

*J.O. Terry, Chronological Bible Storying, 1992*

Jim Slack enlisted J.O. Terry, a media specialist for the Asia-Pacific region with IMB, to help develop CBT. Terry had been experimenting with using stories in various countries beginning

early 1988. He joined Slack in 1991, and they traveled the world co-teaching CBT. Terry then went out on his own to East, Southeast, and South Asian countries though heavily focused in Bangladesh, Orissa, India, Pakistan and Myanmar, becoming the quintessential practitioner, and a seasoned storyteller. He continued to update his materials from what he learned on his own and from information streaming in from his many contacts around the world. Terry was now ready to announce a major change.

As time passed, Terry became less and less comfortable with McIlwain's highly expositional stories along with its rigidity. He also felt McIlwain's model was too literate based. Terry preferred telling the Bible story, not just talking about it. He preferred to risk the power of the story and let the listeners discover the meaning. Interactive dialogue rather than top-down exposition would provide necessary feedback. For Terry, providing guidelines with options would offset CBT's rigidity. All of this led Terry to conclude a name change was necessary. In 1992 he renamed CBT "Chronological Bible Storying" (CBS).

Within two years another name change would be made. While Terry agreed that a strong foundation to the gospel was necessary, he felt this could be accomplished through shorter story sets that fit the more limited contact times with some people groups and worked better for short-term mission trips. Terry was also exploring with what he called "fast-tracking," i.e., covering Genesis through the creation in a few minutes to a few days or telling multiple or a sequence of stories without stopping for dialogue or exposition. The roots of fast-tracking stories came about during times when he found that a panoramic overview of the Bible story before telling the stories one by one was needed. This helped people realize that the Bible is a progressive story that is linked story by story. Unanchored stories often get misinterpreted. He also used it to probe for responsive listeners. Fast-tracking was a valuable program for radio listener rallies and pre-JESUS Film presentations to prepare viewers for what was coming.

Terry also wanted to become less dependent on chronology, more conversational, more situational, and more topical focused for specific ministry opportunities and contexts with time constraints, such as short-term missions. He wanted to encourage the flexibility and adaptability of Bible Storying to fit different strategic situations and ministry needs rather than having one-size that fits all. He also wanted to provide one-on-one storying opportunities the same attention that one-on-group received. The evangelism theme is subtle with more focus on relation with God but increases toward the latter stories. To meet the various needs, Terry wrote *Hope Stories from the Bible* (32 stories), *Food Stories from the Bible* (44 stories), *Death Stories from the Bible* (42 stories), *Water Stories from the Bible* (22), *Grief Stories from the Bible* (39 stories), *Bible Storying Handbook for Short-Term Mission Teams and Mission Volunteers* (32 stories). Forthcoming ministry-themed story sets include: *Heaven is for Women*; *God's Gift of Forgiveness*; *Peace for Women for Hindu*; *Ebenezer Stories*; *HIV Hope*; *Let's Just Talk*. Digital downloads are available at no cost. See: [www.churchstarting.net/biblestorying/Books.htm](http://www.churchstarting.net/biblestorying/Books.htm)

It should be noted that these need-based short story sets are seen as precursors to evangelism. Terry also laid the stories out chronologically but they can be taught randomly. The generous number of stories included in a story set provides the storyteller opportunity to pick and chose the appropriate stories for the situation. All this called for a more generic, inclusive term that could cover CBT, CBS, fast-tracking, thematic story sets, shorter story sets. Terry dropped chronological from CBS. Bible Storying replaced CBS in 1994.

*Bible Storying Newsletter, 1994.*

In January of that same year, 1994, Terry launched “Bible Storying Newsletter,” mailing a one-to-two page newsletter to whomever requested it. He had kept the many stories sent to him about how people were using CBS from around world. It was time to share their insights to a broader audience. The newsletter also keeps readers abreast of new Bible storying resources. It is now available free via email upon request <[jot2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jot2@sbcglobal.net)>.

*IMB Worldview Studies, 1995.*

But was there more than simply telling Bible stories? Should there be some worldview studies conducted *before* beginning to tell stories? Would such a study not help in the selection and development of appropriate story sets? How much worldview study is too much? Too little? While some in leadership pushed to get churches planted, Terry concluded that their missionaries needed at least the information that directly affects story choice and a means to discover evangelism bridges and barriers. They did not need a lot of extraneous detail that is interesting but not immediately relevant. To help storyers, Terry first came out with what is now called “Worldview Informing and Instructing Bible Storying” in 1995. Other simplified IMB worldview study helps continue to emerge.<sup>9</sup>

*Slack, Terry and Lovejoy, Storying Courses at Southwestern, 1995*

Slack and Terry again teamed up to assist in the development of CBS at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas in 1994. In that they believed the help needed was communicational in nature, they approached the preaching department rather than the missions depart. This brought Grant Lovejoy into the picture. It was time to bring structure to practice. The initial course taught in 1995 focused strongly on orality. In time, more practice (telling Bible stories) was included along with class and assignment development of short story sets. Trying to bring scholarship and practice together in the academy was not easy. During the initial courses, Slack and Terry spent a lot of time addressing objections and doubts. That would change over time. The modular courses could be taken for credit or noncredit.

Slack had now moved on to other ministries. Lovejoy left the seminary to become International Director of Orality Strategies for IMB (SBC) in Richmond, Virginia in 2005. Terry therefore teamed up with Daniel Sanchez to continue the modules. Courses are now offered on a regular basis at **Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.**

*Tom Steffen, Narrative Course at Biola, 1995*

In on the foundational development of CBT in the Philippines I continued to track what was happening, and began to publish on the use of narrative, mostly in relation to church planting.<sup>10</sup> In 1995 I introduced the course “Narrative as an Educational Philosophy” at the Cook School of Intercultural Studies, Biola University, to help primarily graduates to capture the power of story in ministry. I needed a textbook that would help recover the lost art of Bible storytelling and address crosscultural pedagogical issues that CBT or CBS did not tackle. To provide this missing background I published *Reconnecting God’s Story to Ministry: Crosscultural Storytelling at Home and Abroad* in 1996/2005. But I needed to go further; I needed to practice what I preached. In 1999 I published *Business as Usual in the Missions*

*Enterprise*, a textbook on short-term missions in story format. No easy task for a highly propositional thinker, but a necessary one.

*Paul Bramsen, The Way of Righteousness, 1998*

Influenced by McIlwain, Paul Bramsen used and adapted materials from *Firm Foundation* to produce 100, 15-minute radio programs first written for the Wolof people residing in Senegal, West Africa in 1998. The Wolof are a deeply religious people who blend Islam, animism, and maraboutism.

*The Way of Righteousness* presents key stories chronologically, searching for the central message of God's prophets. It begins with the Torah of Moses and journeys through the writings of the prophets to discover how people can be made righteous before God. All the 100 programs are interconnected, yet each can stand alone.

*Dorothy Miller, The God's Story Project, 1998*

In 1998, Dorothy Miller introduced The God's Story Project (TGSP). Using paintings by Norm McGray, lead illustrator for Disney and Hanna Barbera Inc., Miller oversaw the project to put them into a full-length film with the help of filmmaker Pat Matrisciana. An 80-minute video resulted that covers Genesis through Revelation. God's Story: From Creation to Eternity highlights God's plan to rescue fallen man is now available in over 250 languages with the potential for hundreds more. It is now available through multiple media methods.

Miller introduced Simply the Story (STS) in 2006. STS is a storytelling approach that helps a trainee learn how to absorb a Bible story in such a way that it can be accurately retold in an engaging fashion. **The heart of the technique is how to do inductive Bible**

**study of the story by using questions to unpack the spiritual observations and applications that are embedded in the narrative, thus allowing personal discovery of truth through discussion. STS can be used for evangelism, discipleship, leadership development, counseling and family devotions. Fifty-three stories and passages are used in the STS workshops with an additional 158 stories suggested for use in Oral Bible Schools. Certified instructors teach potential storytellers for literates and non-literates how to prepare and share Bible stories orally that have first touched them. Unlike CBT and CBS, STS stresses the supracultural power of a told story to address the needs of all cultures without an extensive study of a receptor's worldview as a prerequisite to the presentation of Bible narratives.**

**A recent addition has been the institution of Oral Bible Schools (OBS). These schools teach Bible stories to students and encourage them to tell them to others. To evaluate the effectiveness of OBSs, they ask the following questions (among others):** Are the treasured doctrines central to orthodox Christians understood by the graduates from their ownership of 200 Bible stories and passages? Do the graduates evidence personal spiritual growth? With their

two weeks on, two weeks off school schedule, do the students see a measurable increase of spiritual fruit in their homes, ministries, and lives of villagers?

*Frank Schattner, Jonathan Project, OMF, 1999*

In 1999, Frank Schattner of OMF launched a ministry called the Jonathan Project (JP), which has since grown to include other missions organizations. JP identifies, mobilizes, trains, and coaches global “Jonathans” (1 Samuel 14:6) for the purpose of facilitating holistic Indigenous Biblical Church Movements (IBCM) among least-reached people groups. IBCMs generate CPMs by using local resources with the goal of worldview and societal transformation. In that many of these groups are non-literate, Jonathans are trained to tell Bible stories chronologically from Genesis through Revelation, and then to train the new followers of Christ to do the same (2 Ti 2:2). The JP integrates narrative, Bible storying (to provide an adequate foundation for the gospel), and CPM strategies.

Taikadai (pseudonym) would later build on the oral C.A.R. (comprehensible, applicable, reproducible) approach by connecting it to mass media through a 30-minute radio program broadcasted daily from FEBC (Far Eastern Gospel Crusade) in the Philippines. He is presently investigating the possible use of FM stations as feeding points for existing or new believers.

### **Orality Networks: Two Tracks**

Orality networks are about to explode on two parallel tracks as understanding leaps forward and advocates multiply. The first track consisted of smaller missions organizations while the second track comprised larger ones. Both tracks were interested in integrating orality, unreached peoples, and church planting movements. Both tracks would spawn a number of orality movements that will find application both in the country and in the city as orality distinguishes no geographical boundaries. I begin with the first track.

*Track 1: Bridges Global Training Network, 1998*

One track, composed of smaller agencies and churches, went under the umbrella of Bridges Global Training Network. This internationally-based network has spread to some 50 countries within South Asia, Islamic Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia with the goal of starting church planting movements among unreached peoples living in rural, and in some cases, urban contexts.

The Bridges Training Network South Asia (BTNSA) includes partner organizations that champion the Oral Bible Movement from India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, having around 100 hubs and sub-hubs. The Bridges Training Network Africa (BTNA) includes Senegal, Mali, Burkina, Niger, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Somalia, having around 15 hubs and ten sub-hubs. To date, they have trained over 60,000 grass roots church planters resulting in more than 10,000 oral Bible churches in just the last three years. Their focus was to start church planting movements among unreached peoples through systematic oral communication of the Scriptures in the mother tongue.

*Jim and Carla Bowman, Scriptures in Use, 1998*



Jim and Carla Bowman pioneered and founded the Bridges Training Network in 1998 through their organization Scriptures in Use (SIU) <[www.siustraining.org](http://www.siustraining.org)>. They developed in-country training for nationals to become Bible storytellers capable of starting church planting movements through three incremental training modules. Bridges I provides a basic introduction to Scripture storytelling, dramatizations of the parables of Jesus, as well as Scripture in song. Bridges II adds worldview issues, and discipleship through storytelling and leadership development. Bridges III pulls it all together into a church planting movement context. The Bridges training course series is available in 17 languages.

In that women form the majority of the population within non-reading societies, Carla Bowman has developed Bridges for Women to address their needs, providing Scripture-based models of good and bad behavior. Bridges for Women includes 120 Bible stories of women in Bible times placed in nine collections. Series titles include: The Essentials, Motherhood, Suffering and Sorrow, Comfort, Wisdom, Love, Infertility, Women Who Follow Jesus, Cunning and Manipulation (negative moral examples). Carla presents the individual stories as a journey seen through the eyes of women, e.g., “Tamar the Widow,” “Jael a Tent Dweller,” “The Treachery of Jezebel.”

The Ancient Path, completed in 2002 and available in 12 languages, is a 3-hour video series that accompanies Communication Bridges to Oral Cultures training course for grassroots church planters. The video series takes participants into the field to see real-life storytelling situations and case studies among unreached peoples.

SIU, in partnership with Vision Synergy, co-authored an orality-based training course that gives specific partnership training to newly planted Oral Bible churches in the Bridges Global Training Network to work together toward a more holistic, transformational expression of the church. The course ends with challenging churches to work together toward four distinct goals: 1) church planting movements, 2) local economic development, 3) local community development, and 4) social justice. This curriculum has been very successful and has produced hundreds of community-based projects that are locally funded that reach out into the community with a broad transformational message of Christ. The training has spread throughout the South Asia Network. Plans are underway to begin in North Africa.

In 2010, Belhaven University and SIU formed a partnership to provide a certificate of achievement at two levels for partner members of the Bridges Global Training Network:

Level 1: Certificate for those who have successfully completed Bridges I & II for grass roots church planters.

Level 2: Certificate for those who have successfully completed Bridges I, II & III as Certified Master Trainers.

The SIU/Belhaven partnership is a first step in bringing credibility to church based non-formal education for semi-literate and non-literate oral learners for volunteers, elders, evangelists, bi-vocational church planters, and emerging leaders.

Also, SIU and Freedom to Lead Ministries have entered into a partnership to provide a four-year continuing education model that focuses on leadership development for oral learners. The first of 10 modules were taught in Delhi in February of 2011.

*Track 2: Amsterdam 2000, Table 71*

The Billy Graham Conference on Evangelism held in Amsterdam in 2000 met to strategize how to reach the many unreached people groups (UPGs). Over a 100 dinner tables filled the room. At table 71, those representing the larger organizations—Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI), IMB, Youth With A Mission (YWAM), Transworld Radio (TWR), Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT)—formed a coalition that would eventually lead to a strong focus not just on primary orality (illiterate people who cannot read or write) to secondary orality (literate people who prefer oral and visual means to learn, imagine, and communicate). From then on, they referred to themselves as Table 71. Here's a little of the backstory.

Steve Douglass, just installed as Bill Bright's successor of CCCI, facilitated the discussion on how to reach the unreached to complete the task. They decided making new disciples by *addition* was out; *multiplication* was in. Those representing Table 71 continued to meet annually over the years.

In 2002, Bob Varney invited Jim Slack and Steve Evans to introduce orality to the group. Steve Douglass responded: "When I got exposed to orality at Table 71, I said, 'Wow!' but I was just thinking about *primary* orality" (Willis and Snowden, 2010:184). It will not be long before the leaders sitting around Table 71 would begin to see the possibilities for secondary orality. By 2005, Steve Douglass was using Bible stories among students attending the University of Central Florida, a definite urban context.

A life-changing question would begin Avery Willis' journey into orality. Marcus Vegh asked, "Avery, how do you make disciples of oral learners?" "I don't know," I replied with a shrug of my shoulders. "People have asked me that question for twenty years. I just say, 'I'm not working with illiterates. If you are, figure it out,'" "It's been twenty years, and no one has done it." Marcus retorted. "You know about discipleship. Avery, it's your job. Seventy percent of the unreached people are oral learners" (Willis and Snowden, 2010:21-22). In light of the 20 years of orality history noted above that was getting the job done primarily but not exclusively in country settings, Marcus' observation is interesting.

Avery continued, "Little did I realize that addressing the challenge of discipling oral learners cross-culturally would solve a close-to-home problem I had wrestled with for more than forty years: how to make disciples in America—not just with people who can't or won't read, but also with millennials under twenty-five who don't like to read books" (ibid. 2010:22).

*Avery Willis, Oral Bible Network, International, 2001*

In 2001, Avery Willis and Paul Eshleman helped create the Oral Bible Network comprised of CCCI, IMB, SIU, and WBT. This new network would hold consultations in 2002 and 2004. Mission to the World, Presbyterian

Church in America, would begin using CBS the same year the Oral Bible Network was formed.

In 2002, Avery and others produced "Following Jesus: Making Disciples of Oral Learners." The seven audio modules include a total of 404 Bible stories (289 unique).

Module 1: Making Disciples of Primary Oral Learners

Module 2: Choosing to Follow Jesus

Module 3: Living in the Family of Jesus

Module 4: Becoming Like Jesus

Module 5: Serving Like Jesus

Module 6: Multiplying Spiritual Disciples and Leaders

Module 7: On Mission with God

Those familiar with NTM's CBT training will recognize some of their key concepts peppered throughout the modules, and built upon.

*StoryRunners, 2001*

In December 2001, Campus Crusade for Christ International birthed StoryRunners <[www.christianvolunteering.org/org/storyrunners.jsp](http://www.christianvolunteering.org/org/storyrunners.jsp)>. Its mission is to take the gospel to every UPG by using Story Bibles and audiovisual expressions to start church planting movements. It will also provide the infrastructure (support of web sites, developing communications systems, mobilizing churches) and training for a future organization, Finishing the Task. StoryRunners will later join forces with a permanent taskforce coming out of the 2004 Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, the International Orality Network.

*Avery Willis, OneStory, 2004*

Five of the largest missions organizations involved in orality—CCCI, IMB, YWAM, TWR, WBT—along with some 50 other groups partnered together in 2004 to form Epic which was changed to OneStory in 2006. Its goal is to serve as a catalyst to initiate ministries in more than 5500 unreached peoples by 2020. OneStory "works with mother-tongue speakers to develop and record worldview-sensitive, chronological Bible 'story sets' for each specific group—typically 40 to 60 stories in a two-year period. Mother-tongue speakers spread the stories to others. These story sets form the beginnings of an 'oral Bible' to be told and retold for generations" <[www.onestory.org/Default.aspx](http://www.onestory.org/Default.aspx)>.

*Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP) No. 54, 2005*

The Lausanne Committee for Word Evangelization (LCWE) called a Forum to be held in Thailand in 2004 to discuss 31 of the major issues facing those taking the good news to the

world. One of the 31 Issues Groups focused on orality. Twenty-eight people participated in the discussion for the week, co-led by Avery Willis and Steve Evans. Grant Lovejoy served as Chair and general editor. From their joint efforts came the Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP) No. 54. This small document focused on making the Word of God available to unreached people by using appropriate oral strategies for primary and secondary oral learners.

The authors included a controversial term that would create a lot of discussion, “oral Bible.”<sup>11</sup> They also noted the oral needs of Deaf. *Making Disciple of Oral Learners* came out in 2005 and is viewable at <[www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP54\\_IG25.pdf](http://www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP54_IG25.pdf)>. An updated second printing of 10,000 copies came out in 2007. It is also available in Korean (2007), Chinese (2009), with plans for French, Russian, Spanish and Arabic to follow.

#### *Avery Willis, International Orality Network, 2005*

In 2005, those who had worked on *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* during the 2004 Lausanne Forum and members of the OBN merged to form the International Orality Network (ION) <[www.oralbible.com](http://www.oralbible.com)>. ION seeks to “radically influence” the use of primary and secondary orality among unreached peoples in rural and urban contexts. ION task forces focus on prayer, music and the arts, secondary orality, publications and websites, annual USA consultations (the first held in Anaheim, CA in 2005), world consultations (the first in India in 2006), research, discovering best practices, field training, theological education, women and orality, children and orality, funding. ION and LCWE co-published *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* covered above. In 2009, The Mission Exchange presented ION the Innovation in Mission Award based on the values of excellence, innovation, partnership, and finishing well.

#### *Finishing the Task, 2005*

Finishing the Task (FTT) is an association of 300+ denominations, mission agencies, and churches that began in 2005 <[www.finishingthetask.com](http://www.finishingthetask.com)>. FTTs goal is to see indigenously-led, reproducing churches planted among every people group in the world without creating dependency.

#### *Call2All, 2007*

Call2All is a partnership of hundreds of the top missions agencies, denominations, and organizations in the world, including tens of thousands of Christian leaders, all working and strategizing together to complete the Great Commission in our generation. Call2All formed in 2007 as a “strategy-centered, action-oriented movement” to draw together the global church to get the church where it is not <[www.call2all.org](http://www.call2all.org)>.

#### *Orality Breakouts, 2010*

In 2010, Samuel Chiang and others edited a follow-up to *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, 2005. They concluded that *Orality Breakouts: Using Heart Language to Transform Hearts* confirms and verifies the first volume. The Editorial Committee divided the book into three sections: Backstory, The Word Became Flesh, and An Unfinished Story. Nineteen chapters from practitioners and professionals fill the three sections. The contributors highlight passion, prayer, paradigm shifts, successes, failures, lessons learned, worldview studies, story models and strategies, oral evaluation, and breakouts. The authors define the movement beyond storying to include song, art, dance, drama, community development, and appropriate technology.

The chronological model continues to morph and influence outliers and inliers. Chronological models have also now moved increasingly from the country to the city.

### **Chronological Practices and Possibilities in the Urban World**

The recent emphasis on orality in the U.S. has caught many by surprise. Orality is something for preliterates, as M. T. Clanchy assumes in this statement, “The most difficult initial problem in the history of literacy is appreciating what preceded it” (1993:41). The passage of time, however, calls for a restatement of Clanchy’s quote. We must not only appreciate what *preceded* it, but also what *followed* it! It soon becomes evident that we have moved beyond print to the verbal and the visual; we have moved beyond linear to relational, to multi-dimensional, to non-sequential, to simultaneous conversations, to images. We will now explore the move from primary orality to secondary orality as CBT / CBS continues its unfettered march to the city.

*Viv Grigg, Urban Poor, 1975, 2010*

Viv Grigg serves as an outlier who became an inlier. Grigg (1984) began telling basically memorized Bible stories in broken Tagalog among the urban poor in Manila in 1975. The stories were translated by Filipinos which not only expanded them but also created storytellers that taught in ways comfortable to them. After hearing of CBT, he felt that long stylized storytelling process from Genesis to Revelation did not fit the ad hoc nature of slum life. The key to Grigg in an urban setting was not the chronological storytelling but the story-to-story conversations. In 2010, Grigg embraced Bruce Graham’s very simplified chronological approach into the training. See: <http://www.urbanleaders.org/transrevival/2Transformational%20Conversations.htm>

*Tom Boomershine, Network of Biblical Storytellers, 1979*

Another outlier is Tom Boomershine who began the Network of Biblical Storytellers (NOBS) in 1979, going international in 1988. Their focus began with telling NT Bible stories with the goal of 75 percent word accuracy and 90 percent content accuracy. Boomershine wrote the still well-used *Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling* in 1988. NOBS also produces the journal *The Biblical Storyteller*.

*Bill and Bobbie Boggess, Paris, France, 1989*

Bill and Bobbie Boggess, TEAM missionaries working in the suburbs of Paris, France, discovered that a post-Christian nation such as France where the majority of the Catholics rarely practiced their faith required a firm foundation for the gospel. It would take some time for the secularized French people to grasp a true understanding of God, sin, and salvation. They came across McIlwain’s *Building on Firm Foundations* series and began teaching through them. This resulted in a new church planted in 1989 with some 35 attending weekly.

*Dallas Theological Seminary, 1989, 1992*

Trevor McIlwain visited Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) on two separate weekends, November 14-17, 1989 and September 18-19, 1992, to present his developing chronological approach to evangelism and church planting. The sessions were videotaped and copies made available in the DTS library. He spoke in seven classes.

Many of the faculty had first heard of CBT through an audiotape by George Walker and Bob Kennell of the Bisorio tribe in Papua New Guinea in 1983, circulated by Dottie Connor. With

interest sparked they later heard the Mouk Salvation Story in 1984 (also audiotape). Many would eventually view the EE-Taow! video. After watching it, President John Walvoord commented, "Makes a lot of sense! They know the release [forgiveness of sins]; we don't sense it that much!" Around 60 students attended each week-end seminar, many of whom were already working in evangelism. By word of mouth, the interest grew to the point that many of the students graduated with *Firm Foundations* as part of their library arsenal.

Michael Pocock, department chair of World Missions and Intercultural Studies presently, estimates that half of the DTS faculty is aware of CBT today. Many students have seen EE-Taow! or one of the follow-up versions. Pocock advocates the use of CBT as the best possibility for achieving worldview change in a traditional people with little or no exposure to Scripture.

While at DTS, McIlwain made a side trip to speak to a group working in an inner city ministry called Little Asia. This resulted in many of the workers using CBT.

*Inter-City Ministry, New York, 1992*

The following quote was included in a letter written by Trevor and Fran McIlwain to Dottie Connor December 10, 1992: "I was absolutely astounded to discover how a book written about reaching the Palawanos, would be so relevant to inner-city ministry here in New York. For years (20 of them) we have wrestled with the question as to why so many drug addicts go back to their old way of life after an initial experience of getting off drugs, and seemingly excited about their new-found relationship with Christ...Your book contains the key to the problem."

*Trevor McIlwain, Firm Foundations: Creation to Christ, 1991*

As NTM missionaries returned on home assignment, many used CBT in small groups and Sunday Schools. More focused lessons for a North American audience were needed. So to meet this growing demand, McIlwain, with the tireless efforts of Nancy Everson burdened and determined to reach the U.S. churches as well as tribal peoples, published in a fifty-lesson volume to be taught in a year. *Firm Foundations: Creation to Christ* came out in 1991. CBT had moved from the country to the city within NTM.

*Chronological Bible Teaching for Children, 1993*

In 1993, Trevor McIlwain, again with the help of Nancy Everson, published a five-volume child's edition of CBT. Designed especially but not exclusively for third and fourth graders, the 50 lessons provide children an overall understanding of the metanarrative of Scripture.

*John Cross, The Stranger On the Road to Emmaus, 1996*

John Cross, a former NTM missionary, began GoodSeed to provide tools and training to fit the many pieces of the Bible into a cohesive whole, understand worldview, be able to present a clear gospel, and be able to pass it on in ways that make sense to the audience. In 1996, he wrote *The Stranger On the Road to Emmaus* that creatively ties the Bible together chronologically. In 2007, Cross wrote *The Lamb* for children four years and above. The full color, 186-page volume covers the core message of the Bible chronologically.

*Deaf Outreach, 1997*

While sign language is not universal it is heavily based in orality. That's why many Deaf find it difficult to attend church, even those with signers. The speaker jumps all over the Bible, assuming listeners understand more than they do, and making it difficult to follow. Deaf prefer things be told chronologically, leaving out no detail.

While still at Southwestern, Deaf Outreach asked Grant Lovejoy to make a presentation on Bible Storying to their U.S. staff in 1997. After the presentation someone commented, "This is it!" With Lovejoy's help, a Bible story curriculum of 110 Bible stories was chosen. The evangelism track consists of 32 stories in chronological order. The discipleship track consists of 78 stories that repeated the 32 evangelism stories. A Believers Series consists of 33 stories, beginning at Acts 2 and moving beyond Acts. For teasers, some tell the story from Creation to the church in ten minutes.

*Blair Faulk, Storying Scarf, 1999*

In 1999, Blair Faulk designed a scarf to tell 21 Bible stories chronologically. He self-published *Word in Narrative: A Tool to Effectively and Efficiently Build God's Kingdom* to provide storytellers a practical and proven system to work their way through the S-shaped path of God's story. Several years later, in 2001, Lifeway, through the help of Dale McCleskey, designed another scarf with a different story set more appropriate for other audiences. The scarf is available in various colors. The story set is also now available on tee shirts <[www.storyingscarf.com](http://www.storyingscarf.com)>.

*Bill Perry, International University Students, 2002*

Bill Perry, Director of Training Materials of InterFACE Ministries, wrote the *Storyteller's Bible Study* in 2002 to reach international university students. This 12-story study (nine OT lessons and three NT lessons) captures the storyline of Scripture from creation to Christ from a crosscultural perspective. The revised version is entitled *Storyteller's Bible Study for Internationals*.

*The HOPE, 2002*

The HOPE is an 80-minute dramatic presentation of God's epic story of redemption from Genesis to Revelation. Produced by Mars Hill Productions, The HOPE has now been translated into multiple languages with cultural adaptations. An on-line study guide is also available <[www.thehopeproject.com](http://www.thehopeproject.com)>.

*John Walsh, The Art of Storytelling, 2003*

John Walsh, a professional storyteller, writes curriculum for Christian schools and home school families <[www.christianstorytelling.com](http://www.christianstorytelling.com)>. Moody Publishers published his book *The Art of Storytelling* in 2003. The same year he studied CBS with Grant Lovejoy and J.O. Terry. Beginning in 2005, Walsh began publishing a series entitled BibleTelling <[www.BibleTelling.org](http://www.BibleTelling.org)>. The series includes 36 key Old Testament stories (four volumes with nine lessons each), 36 Life of Christ stories, and 36 Book of Acts stories (which includes the epistles written during the time of the book of Acts, and the last two chapters of Revelation). Each lesson provides activity ideas that encourage students to personalize the stories. Walsh calls this multi-dimensional learning. He uses 36 stories to fit the academic school year.

In 2005, Walsh began to travel internationally to train missionaries and nationals in the use of BibleTelling. In 2009 the Navigators asked him to partner with them in the development of a story-based discipleship program. Part of that program takes place in Angola Prison in Louisiana where prisoners learn all 108 BibleTelling stories. The instructors are the inmates Walsh trained. New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary offers credit to successful inmates. Also in 2009, Walsh started a BibleTelling video podcast called "BibleTelling - Story of the Week," which is available free. Currently he is completing a project of grouping all the narratives of the Bible into 250 stories. These will be offered on the web as a free downloadable.

*Roberta King, Storytelling and Song Course, 2004*

Roberta King has taught throughout Africa since 1978. Much of that teaching surrounded the integration of oral communication and music. One of her textbooks, *A Time to Sing: A Manual for the African Church* (2008) was developed over a span of 10 years working with the Nyarafolo (Baptist) Believers in Ferkessedougou, Côte d'Ivoire. King's publications include *Music in the Life of the African Church* (2008) in collaboration with Jean Kidula, James Krabill, and Thomas Oduro, and *Pathways in Christian Music Communication: The Case of the Senufo of Cote D'Ivoire* (2009). She first taught the course Communicating Christ through Oral Performance: Storytelling & Song at the School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary in 2004.

*Good Soil E & D, The Way of Joy, 2005*

After several years of research lead by Wayne Haston, Good Soil E & D (evangelism and discipleship), a department of ABWE (Association of Baptists for World Evangelization), was formed to motivate, train and resource people in worldview-relevant E & D. In 2005, they produced *The Way of Joy*. The Bible study booklet is designed for leaders to follow up on evangelism and disciple new believers. Unlike CBT designed for a group, *The Way of Joy* is designed primarily for one-on-one discipleship.

In 2007, the ABWE team produced *The Story of Hope* comprised of 20 OT events and 20 NT events. This evangelistic tool is also designed primarily for one-on-one or small group evangelism, but also instructive for believers unfamiliar with the metanarrative of Scripture. Presenters can shrink the message to 15 minutes or expand it to 20 hours or more. The goal of the Good Soil E&D is to make the gospel clear so that people will genuinely embrace it, and cling to it over time <[www.GoodSoil.com](http://www.GoodSoil.com)>.

The ABWE team believes that the original versions of *The Story of Hope* and *The Way to Joy* are sufficiently culturally neutral that they can work in many cultures around the globe. To become more focused on the major non-Christian religions, however, they have plans to produce at least four generic booklets for such religions as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Animism (tribal religions).

*The Roots of Faith—Exploring the Bible from Beginning to End* came out in 2010. The study covers the Bible in 100 events, 50 OT and 50 NT. Each event is illustrated with an image <<http://www.goodsoil.com/projects/100-images-progress/>>. Seemingly remised on biblical theology, this volume can be used individually as a read-thru-the-Bible or used in small or large groups.



Gil Thomas wrote *Gaining Ground with Good Soil* in 2010. The Good Soil principles (worldview, CBT, etc.) rise out of an engaging narrative. It is basically a seminar in a book <[www.GoodSoil.com/gainingground](http://www.GoodSoil.com/gainingground)>. Leader's Guides, flash card visuals, and powerpoints are available for all of the above publications.

*Bill Jackson, Nothingsgonnastopit!, 2006*

Based on the nothing can hinder motif (*akōlytōs*) found in Acts, Bill Jackson published *Nothingsgonnastopit!* (NGSI) in 2006. This book traces the storyline of the Bible making God's word an exciting, historical story of hope. But Jackson's journey, however, had begun years prior to its publication. Influenced by Walter Kaiser's promise theology and Dan Fuller's Unity of the Bible syllabus from Fuller, Jackson began asking big picture questions of the Bible in the late 1970s. While in seminary in 1979 he identified six over-arching themes of the Bible that describe *what* God is doing in history and *how* he does it.

The first time Jackson taught NGSI publically was when John Wimber asked him to do a series of Bible studies on the biblical basis for world missions at a Vineyard's pastor's conference held in Denver in 1990. After the presentation, Wimber announced that he wanted Jackson to conduct this seminar all across the Vineyard. NGSI was launched. NGSI is also available in Mandarin.

See: [www.nothingsgonnastopit.com/blog](http://www.nothingsgonnastopit.com/blog)

*Jim Putman, Post Falls, Idaho, 2006*

At the request of two couples from Post Falls, Idaho, the Jim Putman family joined them in 1998. Real Life Ministries was born. Today, more than 8,500 in a town of 26,000 meet for worship. Not only do the small groups produce disciples who can multiply themselves, they also provide finances for social needs in the counties that surpass government assistance (Sells, 2011:7). To date, six other churches were born at home, and released to be on their own. The churches, however, network together to plant new churches. Other churches were born in other nations as well.

Avery Willis eventually convinced the leadership team of the power of story in making disciples. Leadership bought the idea in 2006, requiring that all pastors and small group leaders use Bible Storying in disciple making. Experience compelled Putman to conclude, 'Bible storying works here *and* overseas. We discovered that what we had done in our small groups prepared us to minister in Ethiopia' (Willis and Snowden, 2010:187). And other countries as well. See:

[www.RealLifeMinistries.com/immersion-one](http://www.RealLifeMinistries.com/immersion-one)

*Carla Clements, Bible Quilt, 2006*

*Stephen Stringer, S-T4T, 2007*

Ying and Grace Kai began a new ministry in November of 2000 to reach 20 million people residing in the cities of Asia. They called it Training for Trainers (T4T). T4T is a facilitator model, that is, expatriates training national believers to win the lost and disciple them so that reproduction results in new communities of faith and leadership development. T4T trains obedient trainers to train obedient trainers through a practical process that includes need-oriented Bible studies and life-on-life discipleship so that generations of church planting movements

multiply (2 Ti 2:2). Basic themes include: (1) assurance of salvation, (2) prayer, (3) devotional life, (4) church, (5) the character and nature of God, and (6) widespread gospel presentation. But there is a major weakness with T4T, at least for 60 percent of the world. T4T is primarily a literate model. To reach the oral world, IMB missionary Stephen Stringer, general editor of *S-T4T: Intentional Evangelism Utilizing Stories from God's Word Resulting in Multiplying House Churches*, n.d. (2008?), and a number of others added story to evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. They renamed it S-T4T in January of 2007. S-T4T is the oral counterpart of T4T, wedding oral communication to T4T. While not chronological Bible storying, S-T4T uses Bible storying to convey truth. It demands "intentionality, accountability and immediacy" (n.d., p.10). The authors want S-T4T to be easy for people to use, adapt, and reproduce.

The evangelism strategy begins with listening to their story, telling your story, telling the possessed man Bible story (a changed man who went home to tell others), followed by God's story from creation to Christ. A discipleship core of some twenty plus Bible stories follows, covering discipleship basics found in T4T. The church formation core takes new believers through the stories of Acts. Subsequent church planting components could include other story sets from the prophets, Acts, the Epistles, as well as those addressing special needs (see: <http://storyingt4t.ning.com/>). Each story within a story set is (1) crafted to fill in missing background information and break up scenes appropriately, (2) considers worldview issues, (3) covers T4T principles, (4) demands thematic themes maintain inter-story cohesion, and (5) includes key biblical terms to consider. Three questions follow each story: (1) How are you going to remember this story, (2) Who will you tell the story to? (3) What in the story must be obeyed? (ibid., 12). Team members have developed other-language story sets as well.

### *3Story, Youth For Christ, 2007?*

Here's another outlier. Youth For Christ (YFC) sees 3Story (Your story, My Story, God's story) as an integrative operational system that seamlessly connects others to God who naturally seeks to infiltrate his lordship to all of life (see Figure 1 below). 3Story is a relational paradigm designed to connect our relationship with God to other people in a natural, freeing, nonthreatening way. The model relies on stories more than steps; honesty more than perfecting; the Spirit more than agenda; lifestyle rather than a tool; authenticity rather than a performance; them more than you; questions more than answers; love more than knowledge; three stories rather three steps. How long does all this take to lead someone to Christ? As long as it takes.

## Figure 1: 3Story Connections

*Oklahoma Baptist University, Orality Minor, 2007*

Through the assistance of Avery Willis and Grant Lovejoy, Bob Dawson set up an orality minor at Oklahoma Baptist University in 2007. The minor includes two courses in CBS and a practicum <[www.okbu.edu/go/academic/oralminor.html](http://www.okbu.edu/go/academic/oralminor.html)>.

*Debbie Topliff, Painting Scripture, 2007*

Remembering the difficulty of trying to understand the book of Revelation at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Debbie Topliff set out to bring clarity to a very confusing book. She did this through the paintbrush. Using a single 5'x7' canvas, Topliff began painting a visual story of the entire book through 100 scenes. The story of Revelation comes alive as Topliff tells the story behind each of the individual scenes. The visual scenes make the sacred written text become verbal. The 45-minute DVD of *Painting Revelation* (2007) is available through Amazon. See: <http://debbytopliff.com/>

Topliff has done the same to capture the story of Mark and the 25 years of linear history of Acts, both in 100 scenes. Digital images are available as are paintings on durable cloth to carry from one location to another. She is in discussions with ION as to how her art may be used to tell God's story in various contexts.

*Caesar Kalinowski, Story of God, 2007-08*

Caesar Kalinowski, an elder in the Hilltop Expression of Soma Communities Church in Tacoma, Washington (which he helped launch), is involved in planting storying communities (10-20 people) in western settings and travels extensively to provide missions training in international settings. On one of those visits to a foreign country his ministry would change forever. Kalinowski met John Witte, an IMB missionary working in south Sudan. While comparing notes, Witte told him about the success he was having in using the *The Story of God* (35 stories, The Redemptive Arc). He challenged Kalinowski to create a story set for westerners.

Months later while on home assignment, Witte told a group of leaders from Soma the *Story of God* from memory in around four hours, including dialogue. Kalinowski was embarrassed of what he didn't know about Scripture, angry that he had never been taught this, and overjoyed with the bigness of God's word. Witte then trained the group to tell simple Bible stories combined with powerful dialogue (series of questions for post-Christian American audience).

Out of this exercise would come, among other things, *Story of God Training: Using Narrative and Dialogue in Making Disciples* (2007-08), a reworking of Witte's materials.

Credit for this document goes to John Witte, Michael Novelli, Grant Lovejoy, J.O. Terry, Avery Willis and the elders of Soma Communities in Tacoma <[www.gcmcollective.com/mediafiles/story-of-god-training.pdf](http://www.gcmcollective.com/mediafiles/story-of-god-training.pdf)>. This document would become the foundation for ongoing church planting at home and abroad, and discipleship. All their communities begin with a dialogical story set of 25-35 Bible stories, followed by *The Story Formed Way* (10 weeks) that consist of 35-40 major discipleship themes, all of which emerge out of the metanarrative of Scripture already covered.

*Paul DeNeui, Communicating Christ Through Story and Song, 2008*

*Communicating Christ Through Story and Song*, edited by Paul DeNeui, is the fifth volume published by Southeast Asian Network (SEANET), which is a collection of papers presented in

Chang Mai, Thailand, in January 2007. The fifth volume in the Buddhist World series presents models and case studies of communication of the Gospel through oral means in Southeast Asia. While focused on the Buddhist world, the principles found in this book easily cross over to the wider oral world in both urban and rural settings.

*Clyde Taber, Visual Story Network, 2008*

In 2006, a number of leaders from OneHope, the JESUS Film Project, Bearing Fruit Communications (“The End of the Sphere”), and the Caleb Group met in Orlando. From that outlier meeting Visual Story Network would emerge in 2008 under the capable leadership of Clyde Taber. Their goal? Leverage visual media (films, webisodes, television, viral videos) and story for the gospel. Images tell stories. They move beyond 1,500 years of preaching and 500 years of printing, to add portraying. The 21<sup>st</sup> century world communicates through the language of visual story.

During Christmas 2010, I came across “The Digital Story of Nativity” on YouTube. I enjoyed it so much I forwarded it to a colleague teaching in another college. His response, “Thank you! The Christmas story finally told in my language.” We live in a digital world. See:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZrf0PbAGSk&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZrf0PbAGSk&feature=youtube_gdata_player)

*Kurt Jarvis, Chronological Bible Storying for Kids, 2008*

Assisted by J.O. Terry, Kurt Jarvis began Chronological Bible Storying for Kids (cbs4kids) in 2008. Designed for four and five year olds, cbs4kids walks children chronologically through 60 Bible stories cast in 5 sets of 12 lessons. Each of the four age-graded set fills in more and more of the gaps and expands the sequence of the first set of 12 lessons. Cbs4kids not only teaches children Bible stories, the sequential story series is also designed to teach them how to tell God’s plan for the world through stories. Numerous resources are available, including two story symbol fabric panels (4’x6’ or 20”x26”) in black print on white cloth. See: [www.cbs4kids.org/](http://www.cbs4kids.org/)

*Michael Novelli, Post-Modern Youth, 2008*

Michael Novelli thought he had tried everything over a 13-year period to help postmodern youth connect to Scripture. A visit with a missionary using CBS would change his experiential teaching approach to a learner-centered approach. Novelli learned to tell Bible stories sequentially, take time for the creative retelling of the stories, and conclude with in-depth dialogue. *Shaped by Story: Helping Students Encounter God in a New Way* (2008), *Enter the Story: 7 Experiences to Unlock the Bible* (2010), and *The Story Teen Curriculum* (2011), capture the pedagogical change and the accompanying transformational results among postmodern youth within mega church groups (e.g., Willow Creek [where he was Executive Director of Student Ministries], Christ Community Church), as well as smaller youth groups. Novelli also founded Echo ([www.echothestory.com](http://www.echothestory.com)), an organization that helps people discover the art of "Storying," a dialogical approach to Bible learning. See: [www.echothestory.com](http://www.echothestory.com)

*Promoters of Story Sermons*

If pastors are to communicate effectively with a postmodern generation setting in the pews, those teaching homiletics will have a responsible role to play. And that is happening. Grant Lovejoy, formerly of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, focused on the use of narrative in preaching. The same is true of Don Sunukjian and Kent Edwards at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, and Vic Anderson of Dallas Theological Seminary. In November of 2007, Anderson presented a first-person drama of the Bible story from Genesis to Revelation for the DTS chapel.

*A Sign Bible for Deaf, 2009*

Recently, Deaf have been categorized as an UPG. With some 200 different sign languages among 70 million Deaf scattered around the world, print Bibles will not provide this people group with what they need. With only one sign New Testament, another New Testament and several Old Testament books, and not one complete sign Bible, Wycliffe and DOOR <[www.doorinternational.com](http://www.doorinternational.com)> partnered to translate the Bible into sign languages in 2009. See: [www.deafmissions.com/?PageID=62](http://www.deafmissions.com/?PageID=62)

*ION, Innovation in Mission Award, 2009*

In 2009, The Mission Exchange (formerly EFMA) presented the Innovation in Mission Award to the International Orality Network. ION's ability to take an innovative approach and breakthrough thinking to produce practical, effective training resources that aid those serving at the grass roots, gained it the award.

*Missiology: An International Review Focuses on Orality, 2010*

*Missiology: An International Review*, 38:2, 2010, dedicated the entire issue to the theme of orality. Eight writers cover an array of issues related to orality. Interestingly, the Evangelical Missiological Society has yet to select this topic as an annual theme.

*Paul Koehler, Telling God's Stories with Power, 2010*

With over a decade of training hundreds of Bible storytellers, Paul Koehler's *Telling God's Story with Power* (2010) offers novices and experienced Bible story trainers alike a treasure trove of insights. In his Oral Bible Project, storytellers learned 101 Bible stories in chronological order from creation to the ascension. As they told these stories in the villages, more than 200 new churches were planted. Research showed that some stories went out to five successive generations of listeners. Koehler concludes that storytelling is superior for transferring understanding in oral contexts.

*Biola, CSICS, Starts MA Concentration in Orality, 2011*

The Cook School of Intercultural Studies (CSICS), Biola University, will offer a concentration of courses on oral communication to those preparing to serve among peoples who prefer to communicate through oral channels. This concentration will address both primary and secondary orality. CSICS's goal is to equip students with both the theory and researched-based practices associated with understanding the special demands of communication in oral cultures, and with the techniques for using a wide variety of oral communication strategies.

Whether the audience consists of literates, semi-literates, illiterates, or some combination of each, this concentration will help prepare students to effectively reach a variety of oral learners. Whether presenting the gospel, discipling, training leaders, teaching community development,

working with youth, counseling, conducting business, working with the deaf, translating the Bible, participating in short-term missions, this concentration is for you.

*Avery Willis and Mark Snowden, Truth that Sticks, 2010*

When over half of the people in U.S. won't or don't read much, teaching methods must change. *Truth that Sticks: How to Communicate Velcro Truth in a Teflon World* (2010) takes on the challenge through Avery Willis and Mark Snowden. The authors go back to first century discipling, arguing for the use of stories, dialogue, drama, and songs. The book serves as an apologetic primer for the use of oral communication in a postmodern world.

*Walk Thru the Bible, Story Thru the Bible, 2011*

Walk Thru the Bible plans to have *Story Thru the Bible: An Interactive Way to Connect with God's Word* available by May 15, 2011. This 336-page volume for adults provides an old, yet engaging way, to teach new ideas, oral communication. The book uses 52 Bible stories that are adaptable for any culture or age group. The authors provide summaries, questions and practical applications.

*Bryan Thompson, story4all, 2006*

With all that's happening in the orality movement today it is very difficult to keep abreast of the players and new innovations. Here is where Bryan Thompson, founder of Story4all, comes in. Based in Ireland, Story4all, founded in 2006, is committed to bringing the story of God to all peoples orally. Winner of the Christian New Media Awards and Conference 2010, Story4all accomplishes this through podcasts, show notes, resources, and links <[www.story4all.com/index.shtml](http://www.story4all.com/index.shtml)>.

### ***Some Reflections***

Chronological Bible Teaching emerged some three decades ago, not because of orality, not because of UPGs, not because of CPMs, not because of pedagogy or andragogy, but because of syncretism resulting from well-intentioned, but uninformed crosscultural evangelism. CBT has moved far from beyond those first initiatives. I will now make a few observations.

—Worldview studies were first noted within NTM, and other groups that followed. The deconstruction of a person's worldview should be part of the storytelling process in that this will help mitigate syncretism. Leighton Ford is correct when he argues that "Conversion, in the truest sense, is a collision of narratives" (1994:14). Good storytelling demands deconstructing and challenging every one's worldview with a critically contextualized rival story, the gospel. Such an endeavor assumes that the audience's worldview is understood on more than a superficial level.

—The orality movement has moved far beyond story to include song, art, symbols, drama, pictures, audiovisual, audio players, radio, film, television, webisodes.

—The orality movement has moved beyond Bible stories in print for storytellers to oral Bible stories that can be heard.

— While most Christian workers are well versed in systematic theology, fewer are familiar with biblical theology, and for most, narrative theology, which Gabriel Fackre defines as “discourse about God in the setting of story” (1983:343), remains a total unknown. In that Bible is a Sacred Storybook with narrative as the predominant genre of choice of the Holy Spirit, it is time to resurrect a narrative theology that respects history.

— The orality movement has moved beyond reaching tribal villages to one-on-one, children, small groups, students in the classrooms (oral Bible schools, home schools, Christian schools), undergraduates, graduates, postmodern youth, people in the pews, women, Christian families, post-Christians, short-termers, leadership, drug addicts, a recently defined new unreached people group, the Deaf, the masses via radio, TV, computer.

— The orality movement has moved beyond addressing solely spiritual needs to include social needs as well. Various story sets now focus on immediate needs of the audience.

— The orality movement has moved beyond telling stories with strong exposition to include questions, dialogue/conversation, retelling the story, drawing pictures, composing songs, dramatizing. The power of the visual to portray is now much more appreciated.

— The orality movement has moved beyond beginning Bible translation in the NT to the OT. Genesis has replaced Mark as a startpoint.

— The orality movement has moved beyond a long-term incarnational model to include a situational model of shorter stays.

— The orality movement has moved beyond long evangelism presentations of months to years to fast-tracking. Fast-tracking provides storytellers opportunity to provide backstory for the gospel when time is short. It provides opportunity to hear the metanarrative of Scripture, something considered important for the majority of the world’s population who think from whole to part, and for those living in a post-Christian context.

— The orality movement has moved beyond evangelism, discipleship, and church planting to short story sets that address current felt-needs, counseling, business, textbooks written in story.

— Building on the shoulders of NTM, IMB has played a major role in the expansion of the orality movement through research, training, and curricula.

Some questions I have include:

Which Bible characters relate well to postmodern children? Youth? Adults? Post-Christian children? Youth? Adults?

Will more preevangelism / evangelism story sets be needed for child soldiers, children of war, human traffic victims, victims of property grapping, those jailed and tortured, those trapped in various addictions, those experiencing health issues, family conflict?

Bryant Myers levels this challenge to CBT (and CBS), "...this method focuses solely on the issue of personal salvation and the Bible as the story of God's salvific work in history. While this is certainly true it is not enough. Part of the story is left out. After all, God's story is about more than saving souls . . . the biblical account has a more holistic view of salvation, seeking the restoration by grace alone of our relationships with God, with each other, and with God's creation" (1999:234). Should acts of kindness to meet individual and communal social needs, such as found in Scripture In Use above, accompany the cognitive teaching found in need-oriented story sets?

Will the readily availability of various curricula encourage storytellers to by-pass the process of considering worldview implications in story selection related to both biblical truths and contextual issues? Will ABWE's generic (glocal) curriculum for the major religions play a future role in rural and urban settings? Are transferred (global) standardized story sets sufficient? What role should transformed (local) story sets play? Why is it that few want to take the time to create context-specific curricula? Why do storytellers prefer to buy into a program rather than people?

Will the west's zest for speed reduce the total number of stories within story sets so that the foundation for the gospel is compromised? The metanarrative of Scripture lost?

How ethno is the art used within chronological models? The music?

What research is needed to verify the authenticity and sustainability of CPMs in primary oral societies? In secondary oral contexts?

In light of the fact that God not only spoke his word, but also had it written, what constitutes an oral Bible?

How do different time orientations (linear, events, circular) impact a chronological presentation of the Bible? Are there other startpoints besides Genesis that can still retain the metanarrative?

Would an introduction of narrative theology in our training/educational institutions facilitate the training of emerging oral learner-leaders in the country and the city? Those ministering to postmoderns?

What role should character theology (using some of the 2900 plus Bible characters to teach doctrine, values, ethics, and so forth) play in primary and secondary oral contexts?<sup>12</sup>

In that we have moved from the oral, to print, to digital, how has the later returned to the country? How has the chronological digital world influenced those living in the country?

What are the next roads CBS should travel? Who will take the lead?

## **Conclusion**

The use of story, symbol, and song in missions in World A (where Christ, the gospel, and Christianity are not known) has a long, evolutionary history, and a continual cycle of rediscovery. As we tracked the modern orality movement it soon became evident that reaching oral learners



finer the geographical lines between country and city blurred. Primary orality soon morphs into secondary orality across the world and across time. That is because, as Charles West observes, "Truth is concrete and historical, now as then" (1999:49).

As seen above, the primary players are many with multiple and varied contributions to reaching an oral world, from illiterates to postmoderns. Each participant noted above, along with the many not mentioned, is involved in a modern global movement of God. May many more join their ranks.

## Notes

1. For a brief history of missionaries who taught the Bible in some chronological order that precedes where this article begins, see: Steffen and Terry, "The Sweeping Story of Scripture Taught Through Time." *Missiology: An International Review* (2007) 35(3): 315-335.

2. See <http://oralbible.net/about/history> and Harriet Hill, "Conversations About Orality," *Missiology: An International Review* 38(2) 2010:215.

3. View the story of syncretism and solution experienced by Tim and Bunny Cain as they serve among the Puinave that reside along the frontier borders of Colombia and Venezuela in NTM's DVD *Now We See Clearly*.

In *Seeing the Church in the Philippines* (1972:120), authors Tuggy and Tolivar argue that the problem with the Palawano people movement was a lack of shepherding and teaching. McIlwain would argue that the evangelist's lack of using the receptor language and culture, and the failure to provide a solid foundation for the gospel to offset a tribal myth that claimed that a white person would come with a black book and that the Palawanos should do whatever he says, baptism included, would lead to widespread syncretism. McIlwain believed that the real issue was on the front end, an inadequate presentation of the gospel, not on the back end, follow up.

4. See: Steffen, *Passing the Baton*, 1997:133-34.

5. For more details on what happened within NTM in relationship to CBT, see: Steffen and Terry, "The Sweeping Story of Scripture Taught Through Time." *Missiology: An International Review* (2007) 35(3): 329-332.

6. I have always wondered what influenced McIlwain to begin with Genesis and progress to Christ chronologically. When Bob Gustafson, then Field Director, heard about the syncretism while visiting in Palawan he told McIlwain that he's got to start all over, he's got to start from the beginning (paraphrase). Were some of the authors McIlwain cited in those early mimeographed notes in 1981 and 1983 influential in a Genesis through Christ presentation? These included: J.C. Ryle, Leland Ryken ("The Bible: God's Storybook"), C. H. Spurgeon, Edmund P. Clowney, Robert D. Brimsmead, Eldon Ladd, J. Sidlow Baxter, Dean Alford. No book or article titles accompanied the author's name except for Ryken. Biblical theology seems to drive CBT. McIlwain would also have been aware of Jack Connor's thinking and practice to tell the story of grace chronologically by beginning with the creation story, working through the

Old Testament, and concluding with the story of Christ. Connor had picked up this approach from his mentor, Lance (Doc) Latham. Other influencers included William R. Newell, F.B. Meyer, and C. H. Mackintosh.

Connor would first use the term "Mystery Man" in Plano Texas, as he told the message of grace, beginning in the OT, to a troubled/suicidal group of youth to emphasize that the "punch line" should not be told until the listeners understood their lost condition before God and His redemptive plan of grace. According to the *U.S. News & World Report* (Feb. 24, 1986), suicides ceased in May of 1984 in Plano, the same month Jack concluded his chronological lessons with several youth believing in the "Mystery Man"—Jesus! He went to be with the Lord three months later. (Jack and Dottie served among the Tagbanwa in the Philippines from 1972-1977 on the island of Tara, close to, and northeast of Palawan where Trevor and Fran McIlwain served.)

7. McIlwain's seven phases of Chronological Bible Teaching would now overlap Steffen's (1997:234) five stages of church planting driven by exit strategy which had debuted outside the Philippines at the NTM, SEA Leadership conference held in Papua New Guinea in 1979.

8. See: "Don't Show the Jesus Film..." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 1993, 29(3): 272-275.

9. For other IMB worldview studies see: "Bible Storying Toolbox" in *Basic Bible Storying*, 2008:131-151; Sanchez, et. al., "Discovering Worldview Issues and Processing Worldview Information" in *Bible Storying for Church Planting*, 2008:195-198; [www.oraltystrategies.org/media\\_detail.cfm?ResourceID=550](http://www.oraltystrategies.org/media_detail.cfm?ResourceID=550).

10. See: Steffen, "Storying the Storybook to Tribals: A Philippine Perspective of the Chronological Teaching Model." *International Journal of Frontiers Mission*. 1995, 12 (2): 99-104; "Paradigm Changes for Effective Evangelism." *Evangelism: A Lausanne Cooperating Periodical*. 1995, 9(4): 136-140; "A Narrative Approach to Communicating the Bible, Part 1." *Christian Education Journal*, 1994, 24 (3): 86-97; "A Narrative Approach to Communicating the Bible, Part 2." *Christian Education Journal*, 1994, 24 (3): 98-109.

11. J.O. Terry was the first to use the term "oral Bible" back in 1992 or 1993. Jim Slack later popularized the term in a article entitled "Giving People an Oral Bible."

12. See Koehler, *Telling God's Stories with Power*, 2010:41,110 and Steffen, *The Facilitator Era*, 2011:145-150.

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