

Representing the Gospel Through the Scriptures

1. Executive Summary / Abstract

This report summarises the plenary session, "Representing the Gospel through the Scriptures," a presentation that evolved into a powerful call to recognise and act within a unique *kairos* moment in mission history. The session's core message was rooted in the incarnational nature of the Gospel: just as Jesus' gaze rested personally and purposefully on individuals, so must the Church's mission engage people in their own language and context. This principle gives profound urgency to the work of Bible translation, especially for the world's minority language communities, who represent 97% of global linguistic diversity yet are often institutionally silenced.

The session highlighted the unprecedented progress in Bible translation over the past 25 years. Driven by collaborative efforts like Vision 2025, the number of language communities without any Scripture has dramatically fallen from approximately 3,000 in 1999 to fewer than 600 today. It is now projected that the last people group could receive God's Word within the next decade. This historic acceleration is being fuelled by a new, transformative paradigm that synergises advanced artificial intelligence (AI), dedicated human expertise, and the indispensable authority of the local church.

This model was powerfully illustrated through the celebration of the first twelve books of the Bible in the Jalgo dialect of West Africa. This achievement, described as "AI assisted, human centred, consultant quality checked, and church approved," exemplifies how technology is catalysing progress while safeguarding theological integrity and fostering deep community ownership. The act of receiving Scripture was shown to be profoundly transformative, restoring human dignity and providing a new vision for community life. The session concluded with a clear call to action for global leaders: to embrace this moment of unprecedented opportunity, foster strategic unity, and wisely leverage technology to help fulfil the eschatological vision of Revelation 7—a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the Lamb.

2. Detailed Summary of Key Content

The plenary session, "Representing the Gospel through the Scriptures," offered a deeply moving and theologically rich exploration of the Bible translation movement, culminating in a celebration of a significant contemporary milestone. The presentation skilfully wove together the foundational 'why' of translation with the innovative 'how' of its modern practice.

The Incarnational Imperative: A Mission of Personal Encounter The session was theologically framed with a powerful reflection on the nature of Jesus' engagement with humanity. The audience was invited to consider the sheer impact of Jesus' gaze as depicted in the Gospels—a gaze that was never vague or casual but always pertinent, penetrating, and purposeful. From the Samaritan woman at the well to Zacchaeus in the sycamore tree, Jesus looked into the very soul of the person before him. In that moment of being truly seen, individuals felt recognised, dignified, and challenged. This, it was argued, is the foundational pattern of incarnational mission. The Great Commission flourishes only when it follows this same logic, meeting people personally in their own worlds, stories, and, most crucially, their own languages.

Building on this, the session contextualised Bible translation within the broader history of modern missions. Referencing Ralph Winter's "three waves" of mission (coastlands, inlands, and nations), it was asserted that the final frontier keeping millions from the kingdom of God is that of language and culture. The vision of pioneers like William Cameron Townsend ignited the modern translation movement, driven by the desire to see the all-inclusive, multicultural worship envisioned in

Revelation 7:9 become a reality: "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

The Scale of the Challenge: Dignifying the 'Minority' The session presented stark data to clarify the scope of this final frontier. While 97% of the world's population functions in just 3% of its languages (the so-called major languages of government, commerce, and education), the remaining 97% of languages are spoken by approximately one billion people. These "minority" languages, though often unwritten, fragile, and institutionally unsupported, are the languages of the heart—the languages in which people laugh, cry, dream, and pray. To neglect them is to neglect a personal encounter with a vast segment of humanity.

A Story of Unprecedented Progress Against this backdrop of immense need, the session charted a course of incredible hope, detailing the unprecedented progress of the last quarter-century. In 1999, an estimated 3,000 language communities remained without any access to Scripture. At the prevailing pace, it was projected that it would take until 2150 to complete the task. Deeming this unacceptable, the global translation community launched Vision 2025, a collaborative effort to ensure every remaining group had a translation project in progress by 2025.

Today, the fruits of that unified vision are clear. The number of language communities without Scripture has fallen from 3,000 to just 561. The number of active translation programmes has surged from 1,500 to nearly 4,500. This historic momentum has created a *kairos* moment, a unique threshold where the completion of the task is within sight.

The Jalgo Project: A New Paradigm in Action This story of acceleration found its living proof in the session's central event: the celebration of the first-ever Scriptures in the Jalgo dialect. Dr. Chang shared the origins of this project, born from the vision of church planters in India who sought a way to both plant churches and provide God's Word. Their vision converged with Alpa, an AI language company, sparking a new collaborative model.

This model, catalysed by a June 2024 summit where dozens of agencies adopted 117 scripture-less languages, was described as: "AI assisted, human centred, consultant quality checked, and church approved."

- **AI Assisted:** Leveraging technology to accelerate initial drafts and ensure consistency.
- **Human Centred:** Keeping native speakers and cultural experts at the heart of the process.
- **Consultant Quality Checked:** Ensuring theological and linguistic fidelity through expert oversight.
- **Church Approved:** Vesting ultimate authority in the local community of faith, ensuring ownership and acceptance.

The presentation of the first twelve books of the Jalgo Bible by Daniel and church planter Ruben Buma was a tangible first fruit of this new paradigm. This moment powerfully connected the abstract statistics of progress to the concrete reality of a community receiving God's Word. As one recipient of a new translation in another region stated, "Here is a proof that we are human beings. The first book in our language." This quote resonated deeply, reframing Bible translation not just as a religious exercise but as a profound act of restoring human dignity.

A Moment of Consecration and Transformation The session culminated in a sacred act of blessing over the new Jalgo Scriptures, led by Professor John Kim, a distinguished Old Testament scholar from Korea. His presence linked the legacy of past translation pioneers with the innovative

work of the present. Reflecting on the toilsome work of the translator, he led a heartfelt prayer that the new translation would be "life and light" to its people and a "blessing for a thousand generations."

This sacred moment underscored the transformative power of mother-tongue Scripture. The audience heard the testimony of a chief in Ghana who, upon receiving the Bible in his language, was moved to tears, saying, "When we go to politicians, they don't know us. But now God knows us. We are counted among the children of God." In that moment, Scripture became more than a text; it became a source of identity, confidence, and vision, empowering a community to flourish.

3. Main Topic and Core Message

Main Topic: The main topic of the session was the Church's incarnational imperative to provide mother-tongue Scripture for every person, and the unprecedented *kairos* moment we have entered where collaborative strategies, enabled by technology, are making the completion of this historic task achievable within our lifetime.

Core Message: The core message was a summons for global leaders to fully grasp and respond to this extraordinary threshold in mission history. The work of Bible translation is not a niche ministry but a central outworking of the Gospel itself, a personal, dignifying encounter with God. We are witnessing a divine convergence of unprecedented generosity, historic unity among Bible agencies (birthing initiatives like "All Scripture, All People by 2033"), and technological acceleration. The core message is therefore a call to move forward with renewed faith, urgency, and strategic wisdom, embracing the new tools and partnerships God has provided to ensure no one is left unheard or unseen, hastening the day when the knowledge of His glory covers the earth.

4. Primary Arguments, Key Principles, and Theological Points

Primary Arguments

- Effective mission must be incarnational, meeting people in the intimacy of their own language and culture, just as Jesus did.
- The Great Commission's mandate remains unfulfilled as long as hundreds of language communities, the final missiological frontier, lack access to any portion of Scripture.
- The statistical disparity between majority and minority languages represents a significant barrier to the Gospel that demands focused, strategic intervention.
- The historic pace of Bible translation is no longer an acceptable metric; the current *kairos* moment, marked by new models of collaboration and technology, makes radical acceleration both possible and necessary.
- The hybrid "AI assisted, human centred, church approved" model offers a blueprint for accelerating translation work while upholding the highest standards of quality, accuracy, and community ownership.

Key Principles

- **Incarnational Mission:** The foundational principle is that mission must mirror Christ's personal, dignifying engagement with individuals.

- **Restoration of Dignity:** Providing Scripture in a mother tongue is a profound affirmation of a people's identity and worth, serving as tangible proof of their humanity and their place in God's family.
- **Inspiration for Transformation:** Mother-tongue Scripture becomes an organising principle for community life, fostering a confident identity and a shared vision for flourishing as God's people.
- **Church-Centric Authority:** The local church is the ultimate steward and arbiter of translated Scripture, and their ownership is non-negotiable for its spiritual vitality.
- **Strategic Collaboration:** The scale of the remaining task demands broad, multi-agency partnerships that unify around the common goal of universal Scripture access.

Theological Points

- **The Gaze of Jesus:** Christ's purposeful, personal gaze serves as the theological model for all missional engagement.
- **The Vision of Revelation 7:** Bible translation is a direct and essential contributor to the fulfilment of the eschatological vision of a multilingual, multicultural host worshipping God.
- **The Word as Revelation and Life:** The driving conviction is that God's self-revelation in Scripture is intended to bring "life and light" to every people group on Earth.
- **A *Kairos* Moment:** We are living in a divinely appointed time of opportunity where God is orchestrating events, resources, and innovations to bring His missional purposes to a historic culmination.
- **The Fulfilment of Prophecy:** The accelerating progress points toward the days foretold by the prophet Habakkuk, when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

5. Conclusion and the Speaker's Call to Action

The plenary session was far more than an update on a ministry sector; it was an invitation to step into a pivotal moment in the history of God's redemptive work. The powerful theological framing of incarnational mission, combined with the compelling data of unprecedented progress and the tangible celebration of the Jalgo Scriptures, created an undeniable sense of divine momentum.

The conclusion and call to action for the global leaders of the World Evangelical Alliance was clear and urgent. It was a summons to lead the Church into a new phase of missional activity, marked by three key commitments:

1. **Cultivate a Renewed Vision:** Leaders were called to capture and communicate this vision of a finish line within reach, inspiring their networks with the faith that the long-held dream of a Bible for every people group is now an attainable goal.
2. **Foster Radical Collaboration:** The era of working in isolated silos must end. Leaders were urged to actively champion and forge strategic partnerships across denominations, agencies, and even sectors, reflecting the unified spirit that is already catalysing such extraordinary results.

3. **Steward Innovation Wisely:** The session called for a courageous and discerning embrace of technology. Leaders must guide their communities to see tools like AI not as a threat, but as God-given instruments for the harvest, to be stewarded wisely within a framework of theological faithfulness and human dignity.

Ultimately, the call was to align our efforts with the clear work of the Holy Spirit in our day. It was a call to advance together, with prayer and purpose, to ensure God's life-giving Word is faithfully represented to the last remaining tribes and tongues, hastening the day of the great, multilingual chorus before the throne.

Invitation for Further Engagement

Your voice is a vital part of this global conversation. We invite you to add your reflections, insights, and questions to this discussion by visiting the following link: <https://weafeedback.com/wednesday-29/>

1. Scroll down to the Panel session titles,
2. When ready, select 'Start Recording' and provide your input (responding to the questions below.
3. When done, select 'Stop'
4. No need to provide personal details
5. When ready, select 'Send'.

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