

What is Manna Publications?



A brief history of the Foundation,
and work of
Manna Publications USA
and
Manna Publications UK

From the diary of
Fred Morris

WHAT IS MANNA PUBLICATIONS?

◆A few printed lines on a sheet of paper! ◆A hurriedly devised sign hanging on a side street in Nairobi! ◆An entry on a web page in Lagos! ◆A student in Ethiopia translating a small Bible study commentary! ◆A co-publisher in Yangon binding Manna Bible study commentaries Vol. 1 – Matthew to Romans – translated into Burmese.

All these pictures flash through my mind as I sit at the computer keyboard answering the morning's e-mails. The morning 'mail' comes from Manna Representatives and Distributors in many lands. Thank God for e-mail which enables me to answer their inquiry and get their response in less than 12 hours!

God has certainly blessed our vision of 'growing' national publishers in countries where believers need Christian literature. The vision dawned slowly and not until we had served as faith missionaries for most of our lives.

We began with a bookshop in central Japan in the 1950s and finally expanded to a network of devoted literature agents spread across the face of the earth. We refer to them as "Manna Distributors." They work to bring Christian literature to their own people. At the same time they reinvest funds they receive from the sale of books to establish a publishing business of their own.

A PASTORS' CONFERENCE

A training conference for pastors in Port Moresby, capital City of Papua New Guinea,(PNG) catapulted me into writing Bible study commentaries in Everyday English.

In the sixties I had studied "Writing for New Literates" and "Techniques of Adult Literacy" under Frank Laubach and I had worked at Laubach Literacy's New Readers Press (1967-1982). This provided some background for writing in Everyday English. Before this I had edited the "*Caribbean Challenge*," a monthly magazine in English published by Christian Literature International in Kingston, Jamaica.

At the Pastors' Conference in Port Moresby, I taught one or two Bible sessions each day to men from many of the hundreds of different people groups in PNG. I had visited PNG several times and was somewhat familiar with the baby churches made up of people who had very recently come out of stone-age paganism.

Before I left the conference to return home to the USA, some Pastors complained to me about the "Oxford English" used by some of the speakers. Several Pastors approached me and asked if they could have a copy of my notes. They asked if I would "go home and write Bible study lessons in English we can understand."

In a unique way, God had prepared me to do this. True, we had been literature missionaries for several decades, but without much thought of the millions who read basic English or English as their second language. For these millions "Oxford English" is a nightmare! And that includes the King James version of the Bible.

BACKGROUND

Lorna, my wife, and I both graduated from Sydney Bible Training Institute (SBTI) after doing two years of Bible study. I had done some extra Greek. That is what the Mission asked me to do. Both the Mission we went out to Japan under, Central Japan Pioneer Mission (CJPM) and SBTI are no longer in existence.

From 1957 to 1961 we worked with Christian Literature Crusade (now Christian Literature



Author and ex-missionary
Fred Morris, USA,

International), in Australia, the land of our birth. When contemplating a move to Jamaica in the Caribbean to work with CLC, we had contacted Laubach Literacy International in Syracuse, New York. We had read of Dr. Frank Laubach's 'Each One Teach One' program and thought we might benefit from his method of teaching English.

An invitation to visit Laubach Literacy Int., signed by Dr Robert Laubach, soon came in the mail. I airmailed a response to inform Dr. Robert that I was a married man with a family of four. Lorna, and children: Gay, Wendy, Jeanette and Stephen. How could I leave them to join the training programs that Laubach offered?

Always optimistic, Dr Robert answered my letter by saying, "Come and bring your family with you." This proved to be a watershed experience for all of us.

In the first months of 1961, we booked passage on the Zwider (a Dutch ship) headed for New York. From there we had plans to go to Lake Chautauqua in western New York State where the Laubach Foundation held summer classes, an extension of Syracuse University School of Journalism.

Every morning I attended the Laubach courses in Teaching Adults to Read and Writing for New Literates. There I entered into the world of word lists, readability formulas and the Laubach method of teaching phonics. Easy English was the watchword in writing for new readers.

Our experiences at Chautauqua would fill a good-sized book. I pass over them to note our time in Jamaica. It was Dec 6th, 1961 when we finally walked down the steps of the plane on to the tarmac at Kingston International Airport in Jamaica. A hot wind blew in our faces as we walked across the tarmac to the passenger gate.

Another chapter in our lives began that day. I took over the editing of the Caribbean Challenge magazine from English missionary Thelma Cooper, who left the island soon after. The Challenge was modeled after a magazine of the same name published by Sudan Interior Mission in West Africa.

CLC's Caribbean Challenge had a circulation that covered most of the British West Indies and some other places such as Guyana in South America. Most of its readers learned English at school, but used Patois at home. They could read Everyday English but balked at more difficult prose. My training under Drs Frank and Robert Laubach paid off handsomely.

While I edited the Caribbean Challenge magazine from a tiny upstairs office on East Street, Kingston, Lorna helped out at Back to the Bible Broadcast's office in Constant Springs. Their programs were aired all across the Caribbean and it was not unusual to hear their program on almost every radio as you drove down the street.

WE MET AND MADE MANY FRIENDS

During our time in America we met wonderful families with the names Swift and Snell who lived at Jeddo in the western part of New York State. Hobe and Eleanor Snell had become close friends and came to visit us in Jamaica.

During our years in Jamaica, we kept in touch with Dr. Robert Laubach in Syracuse.

Jamaica was granted independence from Great Britain in 1962. This began a chain of events and a cultural climate that made it increasingly difficult for us to see any future for our children in Jamaica.

We prayed for a solution and Dr. Robert had the ace card. He offered me an Assistantship with Laubach Literacy, to help cover the cost of studying for my Masters in Journalism at Newhouse School of Communication, a renowned School at Syracuse.

Dr Robert Laubach had a program whereby he offered prospective students Assistantships. In exchange for 20 hours of work at Laubach's headquarters at 1011 Harrison Street, students received 9 credit hours free.

On the basis of this acceptance, we went ahead and booked our flight from Kingston to Miami. Our house was rented out, our furniture sold and our children farmed out with friends. But we still did not have the crucial piece of paper – Form I-90 – from Syracuse University.

Dr. Robert Laubach tried hard to get us an entry visa that would allow us residency in the United States, but the Immigration and Nationalization Service balked. Couldn't he find someone in America?

In the months before, I had sent my transcripts to Syracuse University and had been accepted as a graduate student at Newhouse. So the problem was solved.

At the last moment my I-90 form came in the mail which allowed us entry into the US. I rushed to the American Embassy in Kingston and arrived just as the doors were closing. I got my student visa and the necessary papers for my family!

Lorna carefully packed all we were taking into six suitcases and air freighted two more. The bags held our linens. Everything else we had sold or given away. Even the laundry still on the clothes line!

We piled everything in the middle of the floor and told the Faith Home people, "Come and get it; and the laundry off the line, too."

The children were upset about our beautiful wagon we had used; it had gone to a man who wanted it to carry pigs to market!

A NEW LIFE IN AMERICA

Parks Hunt, a Baptist pastor, sent his car to meet us as we stepped off the ship in Fort Lauderdale, Fl. to take us straight to morning service. He told us of the Esquire Hotel in Fort Lauderdale which had quite reasonable rates and was ideally situated on the beach. So we checked in for a week, to help us wind down from the draining last days in Jamaica.

There was a program for the children; Bible Study hour for us and all the swimming Wendy could pack in. She loved every minute of it!

From Miami north to Buffalo, we took 'the milk run' – a slow plane that made all stops! Hobe and Eleanor Snell met us. How good it was to see them again and to feel their loving concern for us.

Syracuse University married-student housing had not promised us a unit at B-2 Slocum Heights. We needed to go and see about one and find some furniture – at least beds. When we arrived at the housing office, someone had just turned in their key and the lady said we could move into their two-bedroom apartment.

Hobe Snell took me to Syracuse and we bought two sets of bunk beds. They completely filled the small room where the four children would sleep. The girl in the next apartment to ours took us to her mother's and we got a used day-bed and a chest of drawers for ourselves. Also a formica kitchen table and six chairs. That was all the furniture we had.

I visited Dr Robert to tell him we had arrived. He seemed genuinely pleased to see me and said he hoped we would get settled without too much trouble. We only knew two or three people in Syracuse. One was Mary Dun who lived on West Ostrander Avenue and Mr and Mrs Adolph Huttar.

Mary Dunn attended the Christian and Missionary Alliance church on Midland Avenue and came to pick us up every Sunday until we got a car. She also helped us with our grocery shopping. She was God's provision for us and helped in many ways until we found our feet.

The children enjoyed the Sunday School at the C & MA church and we loved the Pastor, Rev. Donald A. Miller, who was serving his last year. We could not then, and still can't, get enough of his preaching. It was first hand at the time; now we must get it from tapes.

The \$400 I got from Laubach was not enough to meet our needs, so Lorna helped Dr Frank and Caroline Blakely with secretarial work. We both took courses at Syracuse University.

Soon I found a small Plymouth wagon with a slant-six engine; we fitted into it just fine. Fall and winter came quickly in Syracuse, chilling us to the bone. People at church helped us with boots and coats . . . but even so the girls did not have adequate footwear to cope with the Syracuse winter of 1966-67. We feel badly about it to this day.

Dr Robert was standing with us in the foyer at 110 Harrison Street when he told his father, "Fred and I will make a million-dollar business out of the New Readers Press."

The Lord gave Lorna that verse from Esther: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

GOOD BYE NEW READERS PRESS

At the time I retired from New Readers Press in 1982 they had a turnover of 1¾ million dollars in sales and the Press has never looked back.

When Dennis Cook, the Business Manager at NRP promised me a computer terminal to be installed on my desk, I decided it was time to offer my resignation. I was already 58 and I could not see myself adapting to such technological advances.

We owned and operated Cove Campground at Sylvan Beach. It was really Lorna's project but we had worked together to develop it since we purchased the property in 1972.

By the time I left Laubach Literacy, the Cove Campground was an expanding business and getting to be more than we could handle. We tried to sell and eventually did so in 1985 to retire to a little bungalow we had built in Windjammer Ville of Little River, South Carolina, just north of North Myrtle Beach.

It was from there that we, looking on the fields "white to harvest", had sought the Lord on what we should do with our gifts and talents. For a time we helped with projects in Haiti and, when the opportunity arose, I ministered to Bible school students and pastors in Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

When Ambassadors for Christ invited me to share at their Pastor's Conference in Port Moresby, I agreed. All 200 pastors wanted my Bible study notes. They also asked me to write the story of Jim Spence, a friend who had served with New Tribes Mission. He had died of Leukemia and was buried at Bulolo. They said his story would be good for the next generations.

THE COMPUTER AGE

About that time, our friend Mona Wood invited Lorna to join her in taking a computer class at the Adult Basic Education center. God used this small beginning to lead us into the computer age. Yes, I bought an old computer and started to learn what instructors and salesmen don't tell you.

When we got a better machine, I started to enter my Bible study notes – which were scattered around the house on hundreds of old envelopes and scraps of paper.

At first I had no clear plan of action. I knew Christians in foreign lands lacked printed study materials and would be glad to have my notes, but how and where?

I prepared some small booklets on Creation and other Bible topics and sent them to my friend Cliff Westergren. Cliff had managed publishing for C & MA in Hong Kong and knew the ropes. His advice was crucial in getting Manna Publications launched.

Cliff's answer to my enquiry came soon enough, "Get samples of the books out to people overseas as soon as you can and let them tell you what they think of them."

This presented a challenge I had dimly comprehended. I know well how printers printed and bound books, but me?

Slowly, God gave the vision of 'growing' Christian publishers overseas in countries where the literature would be used. I would supply them with clean copy, known in the trade as camera-

ready copy, to take to their local printer. The copy would not be restricted by copyright, so that any national could take and translate it into a local language without further permission. We would also help them finance the first printing of our Bible study commentaries.

OUR FIRST VISIT TO AFRICA

When Pastor Timothy Chilfuya the APCI's [Ambassadors for Christ International] a key man in Zambia invited us to speak at their meetings, we were off. We had sent Timothy a camera-ready copy and funds to print a short study on the Gospel of Mark and we were anxious to see his ministry.

En route to Zambia we flew into Harare, Zimbabwe. We had made contact with a Rachael Binekar who ran a day care center for pre-schoolers in her home in Lincoln Green. She offered to lend us Stanley, her helper, to be our guide. Stanley took us downtown to meet the Scripture Union National Director, Mr. Tobias Nyatsambo. He was most gracious and suggested we visit the Rev. Henry Murray of CAVA [Christian Audio Visual Aid] a Christian organization that published Bible materials in many languages for southern Africa.

Our schedule was rather tight so we asked "how far is it?" Stanley answered "only a few blocks." Our legs were worn out by the time we reached CAVA's fourth floor office and we had only fifteen minutes to talk to Rev. Henry, grandson of the famous missionary to South Africa Rev Andrew Murray.



A Rwandan pastor using Manna Bible commentaries for teaching

That day we began a friendship which has lasted over the years and benefited us more than we can know. We showed some of our samples and outlined our desire to have Manna books

published in Zimbabwe. Rev Murray encouraged us and said that CAVA would print Manna books to be distributed in the ten southern African nations. He promised to send us quotations and we promised to send camera-ready copy as soon as we returned.

Our most exciting contact with CAVA staff came during our visit to the World Book Fair in Harare in the Fall of 1998. CAVA shared a booth with Scripture Union. Lorna and I helped CAVA's Andrew Childa set up and man the booth each day, Gerald and Annette McCullough offered us a room in their fourth floor apartment on Mazola Street and we walked to and from the Book Fair which was in the central park.

CAVA's booth was right at the entry to the Fair and all visitors saw our books first. It was a challenging few days. We talked to people from all stations in life and all backgrounds. Most notable were our contacts with the school children who came with only one or two Zimbabwean dollars in their pockets. They went straight to the shelves and took down the coloring books priced at \$6.95 and \$7.95. The Oh's and Ah's soon changed to sadness as they saw the prices. Manna books priced at Zim \$.15 and .25 were all they could afford and they bought them. They often stood at our table and read aloud from the books. They could easily understand the Everyday English. We prayed that the books would also get into the hands of their parents. I am sure they did.

In 1999 we had the privilege of entertaining Henry and Susan Murray in our home in Little River. Henry told the congregation at Ocean Drive Presbyterian church that his goal was to price the books printed by CAVA at no more than the price of a bottle of Coke (about US \$.50).

Sadly, the publishing of Manna books, initiated at the time of our first visit to CAVA, was brought to an end by the political turmoil of later years.

ON TO ZAMBIA

From Harare we flew to Lusaka, Zambia and then on to Ndola to meet Timothy and Kunda Chilufya. We had only communicated by mail some weeks earlier and had nothing more than a PO box number to guide us to Timothy's place of residence.

As our old twin engine plane rattled on toward Ndola, Lorna looked at me and asked "What is Plan B?" I answered her, "There is no Plan B. We just have to trust the Lord."

Sure enough, there at the gate was the smiling face of Timothy Chilufya! We praised the Lord together for a safe journey and set off for the big white house which was headquarters for the AFCI in Zambia. Kunda and the girls came out to greet us and welcome us with a typical African welcome.

Kunda showed us upstairs to our room and there on the bed was a copy of Mark, complete with hard cover embossed in gold and perfectly bound. Inside, the printing was adequate but not nearly black enough for our old eyes.

For two weeks Timothy drove us to meetings where we had complete freedom to show samples of our books and tell of our vision for Manna Publications. I sold the sample books, made on a copy machine, for 100 Kwasha each (about US \$ 0.10) Right then I knew Timothy's copies of Mark's gospel could not compete with that price.

One morning I looked out from the second floor and saw a young man hoeing the garden where Timothy had planted sweet potato vines. I went down to talk to him and gave him a copy of a tract I had written called "Judas". I asked him if he could read the English and he demonstrated that he could. After chatting for a while, I went back up to our room.

From the second floor bedroom window, I watched the drama unfold in the garden below. A man walked up to the gardener and asked what he was reading. Soon the gardener handed the tract to the other man. He stood and read it. Then a third man came in at the gate. He saw the two standing in the garden with the tract in their hands and asked to see it. For ten minutes, all three stood reading and discussing the Judas tract.

One of the men who came into the yard was Francis Kangwa. Later I talked with Francis. He said he was using a small room at the back of the house reserved for servants. Pastor Timothy had offered the accommodation to Francis while he was studying because his home was far away in northern Zambia.

Timothy was very excited about the provision of a source for sound Christian literature and agreed to be a Manna Representative. We agreed to send him camera-ready copies and funds to help him print the first printing of some of our books.

During our time with Timothy, we had opportunity to see African witchcraft at work and how God answered prayers for deliverance. Timothy discussed this deep-seated problem with us quite freely and shared with Lorna a manuscript he had written. He asked her to edit it for him.

The following April, Timothy suffered a severe headache. He was taken to hospital. The doctors could not find the cause and after two days he died at home leaving his wife Kunda and three small daughters. This came as a terrible blow to our eager beginning in Zambia.

Francis Kangwa emerged as a successor to Pastor Timothy. He said God had called him to walk in Pastor Timothy's shoes and to take up the work of representing Manna Publications in Zambia.

Soon after this, Francis decided to apply to the Theological College of Central Africa in Ndola (TCCA). He was awaiting acceptance and sponsorship. He wrote several times asking for help. His need of a sponsor was confirmed by the Principal. We agreed to help Francis with school fees and books.

ZAMBIA AGAIN

In 1997 I had a chance to visit Zambia again and see the College first hand. Francis had asked a

friend to come with his truck and meet me. They took me to the College and introduced me to the Principal, then showed me to the dormitory room I was to occupy. Francis had arranged meetings in his home territory and also in Ndola.

School was out for the month of August and I stayed in one of the men's dorms. (TCCA only accepts male students). Francis and a fellow student Kennedy stayed at the College with me and helped me get food.

We often refer to our Bible study commentaries as "bare bones commentaries" because they are small and low cost, but that means, out of necessity, much has to be omitted. It is left to the group leader or the person using the material to expand on the Bible references and add personal testimony of their own. My situation at TCCA was 'bare boards' to say the least.

The bed sagged dismally. I took the mattress off the bed and laid it on the floor, suspending my mosquito net from a hook in the ceiling. I fixed my own breakfast at the big desk – bread and a ripe banana or a hot mug of water with a packet of instant cereal. The boys always helped by cooking supper and for the most part we were on the road all day.

All flights to Zambia were via Harare, so I was able to stop in at CAVA and have them pack a big carton of books for me to take to Ndola. I must have had 100 copies each of JAMES, ROMANS, NEHEMIAH, the PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, HEBREWS and some smaller books.

TRAVELLING IN ZAMBIA

Travel in Zambia was by bus. Each time we took the bus to an outlying center, be it Kitwe, Chingola or to Mansa in the far north, we took the Manna books with us. Standing room only in the buses forced us to load the books on the roof and watch out for them at every stop.

Francis planned several days for our visit to Mansa and Nchelenge. For the 14 hour bus trip to Mansa and Nchelenge and our stay there, he packed a very large suitcase – one that he could barely lift to the roof of the bus.

The shortest way to northern Zambia by road is across the eastern neck of Zaire (now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo). At the border all road traffic has to cross the Lauapula river by vehicle ferry, a rusting creaky affair attached to a steel cable and propelled by a heavy-duty outboard motor.

The road was terrible and my back hurt from the jolting of the bus and my cramped position. For much of the way across Zaire I stood and held onto the overhead rail to relieve my back. At one point the bouncing got so bad that a window sprang out of its frame in the bus. The driver stopped and the conductor slowly walked back and picked it up. He pushed the glass under a front seat – the only space available – and the bus went on. I never could figure out why the glass did not break!

When the bus passed through a particularly dense patch of forest someone called for a bathroom stop. The driver obliged and we all climbed over the bags and bundles, alighted and found a private patch of bush. Soon all were back on board and our bus lumbered on toward Mansa.

At Nchelenge, on the shores of Lake Mweru, I stayed with a lovely Christian family while Kennedy and Francis stayed in the Pastor's home.

Francis led our meetings. Kennedy and I sold books at a book table. He helped me with the books as the table was always crowded and the people hard to control.

The people showed a hunger for the word of God I had not seen before. All the books were sold in the first two days and Francis had to promise to "bring more next time." It was like promising the moon!

Francis confided that many people in that part of Zambia were either possessed by demon spirits or under their influence. I saw this first hand. When Francis led in hymns or choruses

which told of the power of the blood of Jesus, people cried out in the meetings. Some collapsed and had to be carried out to another room. At one meeting their shrieks so unnerved me that I went outside and prayed, walking through the standing corn. Francis often closed a meeting by having people come to the front for deliverance. He laid hands on each one and commanded the demons to leave them in the name of Jesus. Believers stayed behind with those who needed further counseling or help.

On the day of our return, I was roused early and told the bus would leave before 6 am. We walked together to the town and waited and waited. The hour of 7 am. came and went, then 8 am. But there was still no sign of a bus. Some of the people standing around, who were also waiting for the bus, told us it had broken down. At last the bus came and we all climbed over each other and the bags and baskets to get a seat. The roof of the bus was piled to the heavens with sacks of maize and vegetables.

Every time the bus came to a gully and a stream the motor could not make it up the steep bank, so the driver asked all the passengers to get off and walk to the top of the rise. By doing this several times, the bus made it to Mansa.

All the passengers were asked to get off and we did so gladly as fumes in the bus made most of us feel sick. We stood together under the shade of a tree and waited. Then the driver informed us that this bus had broken down and that another bus would come for us.

I walked around the market and looked at the stands. No bus came. It was getting late and I needed to be back in Ndola that evening because Kennedy had promised to go with me to visit a printing press in Chingola the next day.

When it became apparent that no bus was coming, Francis took leave to find a man he knew, one Victor Chabala, who worked with World Vision and lived in the town. Kennedy and I agreed to wait and watch for anyone who would take us to Ndola.

Suddenly a pickup stopped some distance away and Kennedy dodging among the bystanders headed straight for it. He spoke quickly to the driver and then signaled to me. It was a fish vendor who had come to the north to buy fish for the markets in Ndola. The driver could make room for us, me in the cab and Kennedy among the boxes, but where was Francis? We shouted and waited. Neither of us knew what to do. The driver became impatient to be on his way because the last ferry over the Luapula River would leave our side of the river at 4 pm. If we missed that crossing we faced sleeping in the truck.

I was crushed against the driver by a very large woman who sat next to the door. Kennedy was cramped by boxes in the back of the pickup – I believe a Toyota. My last word to him was, "Don't let go of my bag." My black briefcase held all my money and the documents needed to pass safely through the French Customs Office at the border.

We raced on along a good asphalted highway until we came to the River. Vehicles of all descriptions and a bus waited for the ferry to dock on our side. We passed through customs and waited. The men bought some ground nuts at a tiny store; I walked down to the ramp and looked out across the broad expanse of water. It was a beautiful evening.

The road through Zaire was extremely rough. We bounced and lurched as the driver tried to avoid the worst pot-holes. The night was warm and the big lady had the window rolled down.

As we rushed through the darkness a wasp blew in and, without me noticing, got jammed between my forearm and my leg. The bite I got was most painful. I sucked the wound and prayed for relief. The Lord answered my prayer and the swelling soon went down.

Kennedy had supposed that the driver would drop us in Ndola city at a place where he turned off to his own destination but he took us right to the TCCA campus and let us out on the grassy parking lot. It was a miracle and I paid him what he and Kennedy agreed was a fair reward for his services.

Meanwhile Francis, who was left behind, made his own arrangement and came back by bus the next day.

MANNA MEETS THE TAX COMMISSIONER

Earlier that year we had instructed CAVA to ship a printing of our commentary on the book of James to Francis in Ndola. This was being held in Customs. Francis had tried to convince the authorities that it was a shipment of Christian books and was not subject to custom's duty.

I went to the Tax Office with Francis to seek some solution. We trudged from one government office to another trying to get the right forms and complete them according to directions. The tax men were most cordial, but no one seemed to have an answer to our problem. Some said there was VAT tax to pay. Others agreed there was no tax to be paid.

At last we met the Commissioner who gave us a Release for the goods – and no tax to pay. With the Release in hand, we gladly exited the tax office. I left Zambia the next day and trusted the collection of the books to Francis. For some reason not known to me, he delayed. When he finally went to get the books, the storage charges exceeded the value of the books and they were abandoned. At least that is what I understood.

Some time later, I received an inventory statement from Francis showing 149 copies of James commentary! No explanation was forthcoming.

My experience with the tax man in Ndola led to the decision to print Manna books in the country where they would be used and not to import them from other countries.

Friends helped us with Francis' school fees until his graduation. After College he engaged in evangelistic meetings and married Sheila.

Then we received a letter that Francis was not well. We sent funds for medicine, but Francis did not recover and died in hospital.

With no one to take over the ministry, Manna Publications – Zambia suffered a severe setback. We did not find anyone to champion the literature ministry until God raised up Pastor Leonard Chibende of Mufulira to help us.

EDITOR AT LARGE

When visiting Dr Joseph Tan in Singapore in 1987 we met Wendy Low a student at Singapore Bible College. As we waited in a hot dining room, she offered to turn on the ceiling fans to help keep us cool. Later we corresponded with her and prayed for her.

I sent some of my first book drafts to her for review. I remember one titled TALKING WITH GOD that got a very thorough overhaul. Based on her cross-cultural missionary experience, she thought that some of the stories included were not suitable and was bold enough to say so.

"All the western stories have to go," she said. "No one in the third world will understand them." Wendy then marked out much of my copy and returned the draft. It was a sobering moment that led to the "bare bones" approach to writing for our new readers.

At home Lorna diligently dissected my copy and made valuable additions to it. Lucy Walters-Ruffin was a close neighbor who had taught the Laubach reading program as a volunteer and had trained volunteers in how to use it. In her spare minutes, Lucy helped me by checking grammar and Bible references.

SELF-HELP PROGRAM

We like to think we are building national publishers, representatives and distributors. We work on the principle of self-help. Our goals for them are Vision, Challenge and Opportunity!

The more they involve themselves with Manna Publications, the more they will learn about publishing. This knowledge will benefit their own ministries and countries, and give them a certain 'status' in their communities.

Their ideas are always welcomed and we use them to develop our materials. We often send our distributors pretty cards with ideas on how to make them. Sometimes we can also send other items which they are able to sell alongside the books.

MANNA PUBLICATIONS EXPANDS TO INDIA

Rev Cody Watson of the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship (PFF) introduced Manna Bible study commentaries to two key persons in India. We had met Cody, and his wife Talulah, at Ocean Drive Presbyterian Church where we were members. He agreed to take samples of the books. So we made them in the church, together with him when he led a team to India.

Cody and PFF got in touch with Rev. S. D. Ponraj and his BORN program [Bihar Outreach Network, an association of mission agencies which Ponraj coordinates in their efforts to evangelize and train leaders in Bihar state, N. India]. He shared the Manna books with Rev. Ponraj who agreed to publish them at his publishing house in Chennai.

Rev. Ponraj is a missionary from south India to the needy people of Bihar. He spends approximately half his time in Chennai and half in Bihar, where he co-ordinates some 30 mission agencies in evangelistic outreach to the Santal and other minority peoples.

Because printing in India is very cheap we agreed to help Rev. Ponraj print our Bible study commentaries in English. He would have them translated into Tamil – his native tongue – and print them at his publishing house Mission Educational Books, in Chennai.

We agreed to send Rev. Ponraj two or three commentaries of different books of the Bible, totaling about 130 pages, each time he was ready to print them. We were under pressure to get the books I had hurriedly prepared, edited and laid out to meet this demand. At that time, we had less than half the books of the Bible completed.

True to his word, our brother published all the Bible study commentaries; two or three at a time and all beautifully finished.

During his visit to our home in South Carolina in December 2002, we were able to hand over the last book – Revelation. All the books were printed individually and later bound and boxed as thirteen volumes. In India the boxed set of thirteen volumes sold for the incredibly low price of US \$12 .

OPERATION AGAPE

Cody introduced us to another contact in the far north of India in Punjab State, Dr Alex Abraham, a Neurosurgeon at the Ludhiana Christian College Hospital. Dr Alex had involved himself in an evangelistic outreach that had outgrown his resources and time. He and his wife, Dr Anne, were faced with a real challenge. They believed God was leading them to step out of their teaching ministry at the Ludhiana Hospital to head up the work of Operation Agape.

Operation Agape already had many full-time evangelists and thousands of house churches in India's far northwestern states. But God would add many thousands more. Dr Alex agreed to have the Bible study commentaries translated into Hindi and Punjabi then distribute them to his many groups.

Recently Dr Alex wrote, "Manna books are really a blessed tool for teaching new Christians. We sell the books for R5/(US \$.11) per book although some books cost more to print. We only want to cover our costs."

SELECTING A DISTRIBUTOR

How did we find Distributors in places where we had no one to introduce Manna Publications? In whatever way we could. Fortunately some were recommended by missionaries we know or other contacts we had made in the past. Some come to us via e-mail or just out of the day's mail.

Lorna always complained about the volume of mail, but I scanned every page for the e-mail addresses of national leaders. To many of these I sent sample books and a short introduction to our program.

We have learned to take people at face value, always trusting God to lead us to the right ones. Many have taken our advice to heart. And they have done well. Some have faltered and fallen away and some have disappointed us. This usually happens because they do not follow the Manna vision and guidelines.

A brother in India used money from sales to buy Bibles for the pastors in his group. They were poor and needed Bibles. At first we did not object to him using funds from the sale of Manna books in this way. When it became apparent that he was not following our guidelines, we parted company. He still sends e-mails asking for prayer for his work.

Another brother in Africa, about to graduate from Bible school, had books printed and sold 500 in a very short time. He used the money he got from sales to buy himself a suit for graduation and a new dress for his wife.

We have learned that family pressures play a big part in the lives of our Distributors. When there is a sickness or death in the family, the eldest son becomes responsible. The whole extended family looks to him to provide what is needed. If he happens to be a Manna Distributor and has money in hand, so much the better!

MARKET RESEARCH

How does a Distributor know which books to print? We often suggest small ones with 12-16 pages to start with as these are not too expensive to print and give the Distributor a chance to get his or her feet wet.

Most Distributors are not sophisticated enough to do market research. Those who feel the need for this, circulate samples of Manna books and ask people for feedback. We find it is always hard to get genuine opinions from readers.

Early on we had to make decisions about the cover and style. It was reported that a certain book was very popular. When we asked what readers liked about it the Distributor replied, "The brightly colored cover." The printer had used a fluorescent pink!

I believe all the books of the Bible are important. Sooner or later the Christian reader must study them all to have a good understanding of God's word. Like most others, I have my own favorites, among which are the prophet Isaiah in the old Testament and Hebrews in the New. Evidently there are many who feel the same way about the book of Hebrews. After a lively meeting in a Pentecostal Church of America meeting in Kabwe, Zambia, we sold books on a long table outside the church until darkness overcame us. By that time all but a handful of books had been sold. The pastor gathered those up in his hands. "These are for me," he said.

That evening a lady wanted a copy of Hebrews. She was so disappointed when I said they were all sold. She lamented so much that I promised her the only copy I had back at the Orphanage where we were staying.

The next day two of the elders from the church came to visit us. They said the money from the sale of books was to be used to support missions to distant towns. They seemed so excited about this prospect. Their church had been sending men out to neighboring towns to share the gospel with the people.

"The people in the villages have nothing but witchcraft," they told us. They explained, "The men we sent out had no resources to buy food and soon had to come home." Without enough support to feed themselves, these national missionaries were forced to return to their homes before they could establish a daughter church.

On a visit to Jamaica, a ladies' group asked for the book of Hebrews. The demand for Hebrews persisted so that I did a shortened version of only 24 pages to bridge the gap, while working on a longer study which took much more work and did not go to press until late 2002.

QUALITY VERSUS QUANTITY

Friends in Harare, who were engaged in the book trade, suggested that they could get a much better grade of paper to print our books for almost the same price. CAVA was using a low grade of newsprint. I asked Henry Murray if this was desirable. He told me of a test of printing papers they had carried out some time ago. The same book was printed on both good and poorer quality papers. He said the average reader did not distinguish between the two, and they saw no reason not to use the cheaper paper.

From the beginning Manna's goal has been to provide Bible study books at a low cost so that the average person can afford to buy their own. People who have no resources to buy western books – since the price of the book might equal a week's wage – can usually afford the small cost of a Manna Bible study book.

Two major costs govern the price of a book – the cover and binding, and the number of pages. The saddle-stitched booklet is the least expensive form of binding pages together. To cut costs, the cover of small books was printed on the same weight of paper as the inside pages. This is known as a self cover and the text for study begins on the inside of the cover sheet which is numbered "Page 2". By doing this the cost is kept lower.

This light-weight cover sheet is not suited for library use and it does not appeal to bookshops. But for the everyday reader it has proved adequate.

As distributors gain experience they challenge this concept and go for heavier weight covers. While these appear more attractive they seldom further a book's mission.

OUR VISION

Because every country has different problems and opportunities, it is not easy to set out a *modus operandi* that applies to Manna Distributors everywhere.

Our vision is to put Bible study materials into the hands of the man on the street. We seek out people with the same vision. When we find them we put 'tools' into their hands and challenge them to bless their own people with Christian literature produced in their own countries.

Most of our Bible study materials are written in 'Everyday English.' They are for people who find it difficult to read standard English or English is their second language. In countries where English is not used, Manna Bible studies can be translated into the local language. Manna Bible study commentaries are not restricted by copyright.

The first printings of these Bible study commentaries are our investment in the Distributor's ministry. When our contact person gets a reasonable quotation for printing a book, we send a camera-ready copy for the printer and pay for the first printing. As the books are sold, the Christian ministry in the country where the materials are printed benefits. None of the money from book sales comes back to us. We don't publish or sell the books, the Distributor does.

SMALL BOOK – SMALL SUBSIDY

We don't believe that 100% subsidy is useful! When books are given without charge, people do not learn to value them, there is never enough and books go to people who cannot or don't really want to use them.

Because we work with unknown quantities and rapidly changing exchange rates we try to begin small. We offer our new contact a small subsidy to print a small book. This is usually sufficient to test the integrity of a potential distributor. The quantity to be printed may range from 500 to 2,000 copies. The potential distributor is instructed to take a sample book to at least two printers and get quotations.

Before the advent of e-mail, printer's quotations were often out of date before we could get

funds to the distributor. Distributors learn by experience not to pay all the money up front. We suggested 50% at the time of placing an order to print and 50% on delivery with an acceptable quality agreed on.

Once we lost money on a printing project in Uganda when the print shop burned to the ground. Several times we lost bank checks in the mail, but our bank always reissued them. Because of the high bank charges and the weeks it took for foreign banks to collect checks on US banks, we turned to Western Union and sent funds by wire transfer. This has proved most satisfactory.

LITERATURE IS LIKE SEED

Where the books go after they are printed is in the hands of the Manna Distributor and Christians in that country. I think of Christian literature as seed planted deep. It abides and springs up when the Holy Spirit waters it. There is a great need for sound Bible teaching that opens the word of God and makes it easy for new Christians to understand. This needs to be provided at low cost.

The literature 'missionary' is a vital link in developing believers and extending the Kingdom of God. This 'missionary' never gets tired or sick, never leaves for vacation and is always there when the inquirer wants to 'talk' to him. And, in most places, this 'missionary' can be placed in people's hands for just a few cents per book. Manna Distributors try to put books into the hands of people who can't afford them. Then they tell the buyer to share their books with others in their family or church.

The books are most suited to small-group studies, but are useful for individual study also. Many don't know how to have a small-group study, so our Distributors teach them. The commentaries are often referred to as "bare-bones commentaries" because much has to be left out to keep the books small. The group leader must add to what is presented in the text by using his own personal testimony and expanding on the Scripture references. The leader directs the Bible reading and discussion. People in study groups discuss the questions marked "Talk About" in the books.

Books are kept small and therefore light to carry. This is very important when we remember that most Manna Distributors use public transportation and carry their wares in back packs or shoulder bags. The small books are not overwhelming to readers and inexpensive. It is our hope that every person in a study group can have their own book.

Pastors who sell books after church meetings should encourage those who buy them to meet and study together in small groups. This is the very best way to learn, to gain confidence and to share what God has done in a person's life.

Some pastors set up a book table at their church once a month and sell Manna Bible study books. On a weekday evening they gather together those who bought the same book title for a time of study.

Laymen also lead groups and we encourage them to do this in colleges, work places and homes. Cell group studies and fellowship-evangelism are powerful tools in church planting.

IDENTIFYING DISTRIBUTORS

In Ghana, our Distributor asked for an authorization document that he could show to police or any other official who asked what he was doing selling books on the street. The Distributor and his helpers sent photographs which we laminated with the words, "Authorized Distributor of Manna Publications."

In some countries Manna Publications is registered with the local authorities as a business. Where it is helpful, letters of recommendation can be provided.

A LITERATURE SECRETARY

Every church should have a literature secretary to order books and sell them as part of the church's ministry to its members. This person can take books to other churches or meetings in the area, even outside their own group of churches, if they have the permission of the pastor.

It does not take much to start a book department – just two or three boxes and a dry place to store the books. A small committee of two or three people can take charge of distributing literature in an area where books are being published. The committee will be in charge of the books, selling them at prices agreed on, collect money from sales and be accountable to the Manna Distributor.

PRICING BOOKS

Price is not everything, but it is important if books are to be reprinted after the first printing is sold. Usually, the lower the price the more books will be sold. Books can be sold at cost, but a small mark-up is advisable. Some Distributors prefer a 100% mark-up. Pricing is in the hands of the Distributor.

Producing books in the 'host country' is the key to avoiding heavy shipping costs.

Prices are set according to the number of pages in a book, here we quote in US dollars. Example: 12 pages for US \$.15, 16 pages for US \$.25, 20-24 pages for US \$.35, 32-36 pages for US \$.50, 40-48 pages for US \$.75, 54-60 pages for US \$ 1. However, each Distributor would set the price in the local currency.

Prices will change according to local conditions. Some factors influencing price are: ♦ transportation costs ♦ commissions paid to individuals who sell books ♦ special groups of people: refugees, prisoners, hospital patients with even less money. We try to find ways to give the books that can't be sold freely to these and similar groups.

In most places, Distributors have been splitting sales 60% – 40%, keeping the 60% in fixed-interest accounts until they want to print another tract or booklet, and using the 40% for expenses or commissions given to those who actively sell books.

ORDERING BOOKS FROM THE PRINTER

A Christian printer is a wonderful blessing. Your local printer will be glad to talk to you about printing our books. When you talk to him let him know that you would like to 'work with him'. Explain that if he gives you a good price, you will give him more work. In this way, his business and your ministry will both benefit and can grow together.

The Distributor needs to be sure he understands how the books will be printed. The self-cover cuts down cost. He must discuss the number of books to be printed, the size and weight of paper and ask to see a sample of the printer's work. Usually books are black on white, but sometimes a printer will add a color ink to the cover! And he must try to get the printer to wrap books in 20s or 50s to keep them clean until he is ready to sell them.

CARE OF BOOKS

Books hate getting wet! And they don't look well when they are dirty! Always keep books in a clean, dry place. Separate them into titles and wrap them in plastic if they have to be stored for long periods or shipped to other places.

Books take a lot of work and time to produce. Besides the printing cost, there is all the months of writing and editing that leads up to the finished copy. People should be taught to value the books they buy and keep them clean. Encourage them to put their books in a clean plastic bag and keep them off the floor.

All this may sound like too much time and work. We strongly advise that you find volunteers in

your church, group or school who can help you do these things. Few people have a vision for Christian literature, so those who do must be encouraged and given the opportunity.

All our books are updated from time to time as we get suggestions from users. We call this 'feedback.' It is important to us that you read all the books and make suggestions for improvement. Maps, time lines, cover illustrations and translations can all be made better with your suggestions.

When we revise our books, we sometimes change the picture on the cover. You may find that one of the new samples we send you looks quite different from the same book you received before. Each time we revise a book, we put the new date on the back page.

If you want to translate a book, ask for the latest revision. We will be glad to send it to you.

HOW MANNA PUBLICATIONS ARE SOLD

Our books are not well suited to bookshop sales. They do not look bright or big enough to the bookshop owner who wants to make as much profit as he can on each sale.

Manna Publications sell best on a book table at a church meeting, at conferences and outdoor events like March for Jesus. A brother in India always ended his church's March for Jesus with refreshments and a book table. It proved very effective.

Some shops are willing to give a corner to Christian books.

When books are sold on market stands in country towns, it helps your sales if you have other things to sell along with them ♦ paper supplies ♦ scratch paper ♦ note pads ♦ writing paper/ envelopes ♦ school supplies are popular ♦ exercise books ♦ pens and pencils ♦ sewing supplies ♦ pretty cards and book markers ♦ toilet items like soap, hair clips and combs ♦ office supplies.

SHOWING WHAT YOU HAVE TO SELL

People must be able to handle and look at the books they are going to buy. We call this 'browsing.' If you have a market stand, where many people pass by and look at the books, you must have books on display for people to take up and read. Keep clean copies under the table. When someone wants to buy a particular book tell them, "I'll get a clean one for you". If you have plastic bags, offer to put the book in a bag. In some places bags used for bananas are clean and can be used again to protect books.

Space is provided on the back cover of some books. Stamp a local address in this space if you wish. We encourage Distributors to advertise their local ministry. Let everyone know that you are selling good Christian books and where they can buy them.

Christian literature does not sell itself. Books need an advocate, or a 'book representative', to speak for them in the community. You may want to be a Representative and represent Manna books with other lines of books supplied by different publishers.

Because books are heavy to carry, it is best to have just one or two in your bag. Whenever you have to wait for a bus, an appointment, or whatever, read a book. When a truth from God's word blesses you, share it with someone else. Tell them where you got your 'thought' from and show them the book. This is a good way to introduce the gospel to someone who is not a Christian.

Don't expect too much too soon! Nelson Clemens says, "Book selling is for a 'farmer' who is not in a hurry to 'grow his plants'."

MANNA PUBLICATIONS – SPECIAL FEATURES

- We present the truth of God's word in Everyday English (EE). The spelling is English rather than American because many English-speaking countries use that spelling. We aim for short sentences that the man on the street will understand.
- We used Scripture verses from the New International Version of the Bible.
- Difficult words are underlined for further study.
- There is no copyright on any of the materials and they can be adapted or translated freely by those who choose to use them.
- We recommend that our books be printed and sold at the lowest possible price. And we make every effort to pay for the first printing. After the books are sold, money should be put into a revolving fund to pay for reprints.
- Self-cover and less pages help lower the cost per book.
- Questions for discussion are grouped after each main section.
- Some have asked for more questions, so we will be revising to include more discussion questions. In answering questions, the reader is encouraged to turn to a Bible reference.
- The reader may not have owned a book before. Group Bible studies are an excellent way to 'open the Bible' to those who don't know Christ as their Savior. Each person in the group should have a Bible and a book of their own, if possible. This makes them feel 'equal' to the next person and a part of the group. They should be directed to study a particular page and have questions or answers ready before the group meets.
- Content is what we call 'bare bones'. There are no western stories or first person stories.
- The leader must add these from his/her own personal experience and use/expand references to suit the group.
- The text can always be divided into study units if needed.
- A pronunciation guide for difficult Bible names follows the King James Version.
- Related Bible readings are given under headings.
- We have tried to break up each page with sub-headings and illustrations. Most places which we have named are identified on a map.
- Special information and Scriptures may be placed in boxes and can be omitted if a translator is pressed for space.
- The Bible and the Christian faith have a foundation in history. This dimension is emphasized by illustrations from archaeological findings and time lines.
- Our emphasis is always on the holiness of God and living a holy life.

FROM SUBSIDY TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY

I don't like subsidy, unless it has a product and a cut off point. Subsidy without these two things is like pouring water from a jug on to a sandy beach. The water is quickly absorbed and the jug has to be replenished.

Manna Publications was never intended to support a Distributor. Distributors are expected to have work in the local community that provides for their daily needs. Funds from the sale of books must be directed toward reprints and building the publishing business.

The business model we promote is simple enough. We make every effort to pay for the cost of the first printing of two or three different print runs. Then these books are to be sold at a little above the cost of printing, with 60% of the sales money put toward the printing of the next title. The remaining 40% to be used for commissions and expenses.

Distribution always presents a bottleneck to progress. So Distributors are encouraged to enlist the help of others and to take the books to church conferences. Helpers are given a small quantity of books to take on condition that they return money from sales to the Distributor. At

that time they are given 20% commission and possibly some help with transportation costs.

Pastor Leonard Chibende in Mufulira, Zambia has four books stalls in four cities. Trusted helpers take care of each bookstall. They receive 20% of sales.

A lady in Kumasi, Ghana took books with her when she went out with a large tray of shoes to sell. She carried these on her head.

A MANNA TEAM IN ENGLAND

At the Litt-World conference in Hoddesdon, England in 1994, we met David Page. We talked briefly with David who introduced himself as a professional editor. He expressed interest in our Laubach background and took some samples we had with him.

MANNA FOR THE WORLD

Written by David Page, Manna Publications (UK)

How a world-wide literature ministry meets local needs

“Late last year in a Christian Seminar I bought the book ‘Beginnings, Genesis 1–11’ by Mr Fred Morris. This book blessed my soul by the deep exposition in it.... Our church is young and without a Bible expositor; therefore your help will go a long way in supporting our spiritual growth.” – Kenya, E. Africa.

This testimony is an example of feedback from booklets written by Australian-born missionary Fred Morris published under the imprint of Manna Publications. In 1994 Fred was one of 120 delegates at the MAI-sponsored Litt-World conference – the first to be held at High Leigh, England. That year, many international publishing ventures were conceived among the 40 countries represented. Fred came to the conference looking for distributors for his Bible commentaries. Now retired in the USA, God had called Fred to meet the needs of literature-starved believers in the countries he had visited as a missionary. It was his experience that churches were growing faster than trained pastors could provide sound foundational teaching. His vision was to provide low-cost, easy-English, self-teaching Bible commentaries for new converts where there was a shortage of teachers and teaching material.



David Page Editor (centre) with Peggy and Peter Skinner, directors UK team.

During the week-long meeting, Fred met a British freelance editor with experience in editing in Worldwide English. He offered his services on a part-time basis to edit his Bible commentaries into easy-to-read English with a reduced vocabulary and in a non-idiomatic, jargon-free style. The plan was to produce commentaries that could be used by any readers who understood basic English as a second or third language. The editor accepted the brief which included removing Western concepts in order to increase cultural acceptance and relevance in countries world-wide.

By the year 2000, Fred had completed his task of writing Bible study commentaries on every Book of the Bible. Peter & Peggy Skinner who at that time were on the staff at SOON Publications in Willington, visited Fred at his home in South Carolina. While working at SOON they had seen the need for something beyond an introductory Bible Course for believers in developing countries. Fred needed someone to take on the administration and overseas travel and Peter was willing to do this. Manna Publications (UK) was set up at the Litt-World

conference in October 2000. In the first five years of the UK operation, 18 countries in three continents printed 126,670 copies from 76 separate print runs in 14 different languages. God has made this possible through prayer partners and sympathetic friends who have provided funds and through part-time volunteers who have added value to the commentaries through their Bible knowledge and skill with words and page layout.

The target readership is new converts in Africa and Asia and Eastern Europe. A typical print run is 2000 copies in stapled A5 36-page format with low-cost single-color paper covers. In this way, costs are kept low and the booklets can be sold at affordable prices, typically 15p/25c each. Distributors are encouraged to insert their own publication details inside the back cover including the words "Printed by . . . and distributed by . . ." This increases local acceptance. No books are sent out from the UK/USA. No money comes back to the UK/USA. By printing at the point of need, this helps the local economy and encourages ownership. It also develops business and management skills in publishing, marketing, sales and logistics. New publishing ministries are established in the countries where the books are printed and used.



Bulgarian gypsies
studying Manna Bible
commentaries

One important side effect of this ministry is that the use of Worldwide English has made the translation into other languages very easy and with a high level of accuracy. To date, the commentaries have been produced in 23 languages through translators sponsored by USA/UK donors and others are under way. Profits from sales are used to reprint further copies and to pay travel expenses but in the poorest countries the booklets are usually given away. All workers at home and abroad are unpaid volunteers who are often involved with other missions.

Author Fred Morris, now 80, has seen his former missionary work grow and be blessed by God in ways that he could never have imagined. And for his UK editor, it is a fulfilment of a 50-year vision that God gave him whilst a young teenager before the age of computers and globalisation. He believed that one day God would involve him in a literature ministry that would reach around the world although his name would never be known to any of the readers.

Contact: Manna Publications (UK)

Peter Skinner
4 Sealey Close
Willington, Derby
DE65 6EP
England

Manna Publications (US):

www.mannapublications.org

24 Jan 2006