

## **Chrysalis Is Different:** *what are the basic issues at stake?*

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Different may not be the best place to start this discussion, but it seems necessary because so many questions tend to focus on why Chrysalis does what it does and why Chrysalis does not look like a typical missionary enterprise. At one level, the difference seems like a contrast between old and new. But this is not the major issue, nor does it describe the motives and distinctions of what were the common practices of historical missions in contrast with what is becoming a “newer” approach to the mission of the church of Jesus Christ.

Neither does *innovation* as developmental change describe the emergence of Chrysalis. We cannot rightly claim that the distinction arises from the *new* versus *old* contrast. What Chrysalis represents and the way Chrysalis works is much more a matter of a return to much older styles of motivation, operation, and organization. In fact, the major source-book for what Chrysalis is doing is in the New Testament, and its clearest scholarly representation is found in the masterpiece of contemporary missiology, *MISSIONARY METHODS—ST. PAUL’S OR OURS?*, which first appeared in 1912 from the pen of Roland Allen, an Anglican minister who was a China missionary under the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel from 1895 until 1903. This book provides a clear picture of the mandates of Scripture as understood *before* the innovations that accompanied the more “up to date” western missionary movement. Roland Allen is a “must read” for anyone who argues that “the old ways” (understood as the ways of the Twentieth Century) are not only more familiar and acceptable, but more faithful to the mandates and illustrations in the New Testament.

Without attempting to deal with the whole of this issue nor to mount a defense based upon what Chrysalis has been doing, several profound distinctions form the basis for dealing with the following two questions: *Is Chrysalis different for good reason?* And *what are the basic issues at stake in carrying out the missionary ministry of the Christian church?* To introduce the discussion of these issues in a manageable way, this document suggests **three** contrasts in which the motives as well as the ways and means of twentieth century “modern missions” differs from the mission and procedures of Chrysalis.

### ***Is Chrysalis different for good reason?***

Many missionary ventures are one-man operations. No matter the genius of the single operator, the mission of the church in the world is a collective enterprise. The great pioneer missionary, the apostle

Paul demonstrated this through his accountability to the people who sent and supported him. Although early in the formation of the church, Paul set a careful example of reportage, requests for support, and inclusion of others as he moved about. He was often alone, in the pioneering sense, but never lonely. He “returned to home base” with remarkable purpose and frequency. His criteria for validity of converts seemed never preoccupied with social status nor academic accomplishment: he accepted and nourished those whom the Holy Spirit had brought to Christ. His views of social customs and stylistic rightness seem minimally to represent his own background and accomplishments. Though he wrote and spoke of these matters plainly, there is no attempt to reshape the cultures of others except as essential to the integrity of the body of Christ.

In contrast with twentieth century missionary practice, Paul was itinerant. Readers of the book of ACTS OF THE APOSTLES whose education and experiences are mono-lingual are impressed by the ease of Paul’s movement from one place to another. The breadth of his impact on the known world at that time suggests that Paul’s linguistic skills were not only academic and classical but openly and flexibly attuned to the voices among whom he encountered life.

Particular to this point of language, in Paul’s era there were dominant languages, particularly Latin and Greek, but the commoners of the remote cities and towns would have had little of the global *lingua franca* of today’s English-Spanish-Mandarin majority world. Chrysalis has instead ministered primarily to English-speaking persons whose multi-lingual influences have already been established. In most cases, those who are engaged with the leaders of Chrysalis, are encouraged to pursue and enhance their roles as leaders among their own people. Despite their theological education which includes great emphasis on the “biblical languages,” Chrysalis ministries depend extensively on the use and application of the education and linguistic practices of the emerging churches. Thus they limit their didactic tactics and conversations to the linguistic realm of those among whom they are ministering.

The question of career development and especially of the educational climb to leadership in the church is understood as beyond the scope of Chrysalis ministries. This handful of missionaries does not carry applications to western graduate schools in their backpacks. They recognize, as did the Apostle Paul, that leadership in the church is not a matter of academic status; it is a matter of spiritual giftedness and of commitment of the heart. Thus the twentieth century’s emphasis on formal education, especially formal ministerial education, is seen as less important than Bible-based acquaintance with the ways of the

Gospel, underlined by prayer and continuous and persistent spiritual growth. These are accepted as the “qualifiers” for church leadership

### ***What are the basic issues at stake?***

Whether Chrysalis represents a shift away from biblical precedents in the motives and ministries of missionary enterprise is indeed an issue. To be different in order to accomplish different outcomes would likely raise questions of deviation without legitimacy, of being different just to be more popular or more acceptable. To be different in order to be more “up-to-date” is likely the pursuit of a false and probably worthless motive. True, “modern missionaries” depend on special schools for their children. Odd, isn’t it, that God called Paul, not a married man, to open up the non-Jewish facets of church growth. In light of the biblical examples, it should not be surprising that God has called into Chrysalis several folk with child-rearing behind them. The extra burdens, conflicting claims on time, energy, and emotional preoccupation—to say nothing of massive contrasts in costs, flexibility and residential mobility--argue for a return to simpler forms of missionary enterprise.

Chrysalis maintains no schools. Chrysalis does all its work on the field through itinerant missionaries. Its mode is conversations and consultations. These missionaries maintain residences “back home” where they work extensively through electronic modes of communication to nurture, encourage, plan and organize the increasingly expanding and deepening leader-developers whom God has called to lead and nurture His church in many parts of the world.

No large-scale support exists for this sort of mission. It is too new, too different, too unusual, and too foreign to our experiences. Truly? ***Too new?***—Chrysalis clearly is closer to the ways and means through which the early church was planted and nurtured. ***Too different?***—Chrysalis responds to the socio-economic realities of this period in our worldwide stresses. ***Too unusual?***—Chrysalis responds more deliberately and more precisely to what our overseas Christian communities have been asking for. ***Too foreign to our experiences? Aye. There’s the rub. And we don’t feel comfortable doing things that are foreign to our habits, our own styles, and our ordinary traditions. After all, God can’t expect us to be flexible. That would really be different.***

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