



Lausanne World Pulse

Providing Evangelism & Missions News, Information and Analysis

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PUBLISHER'S MEMO

Reconciliation between God and Humanity

By Lon Allison

There are numerous images in scripture concerning the doctrine of the atonement. When I am teaching my course in evangelistic communication, we delineate many of them. However, the image that attracts the most interest from students I teach in North America is “reconciliation.”

At first, reconciliation conjures up pictures of relationship problems between people which causes them to become alienated, or worse, to become enemies. Reconciliation brings warring parties, even nations, together. Reconciliation has the power to make friends of enemies. Reconciliation is a great idea!

However, before we focus on reconciliation between people and nations, we must remember that the most powerful portrait of reconciliation is God with humanity:

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

The concept of God reconciling includes at least three primary components:

- **The world.** The scope of God’s reconciliation is the whole world. Even creation is included, things seen and unseen (see Colossians 1:20).
- **Enemies of God.** Scripture reminds us that “while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God” (Romans 5:10 in part). It is not friends whom God reconciled. It was not family whom God reconciled. It was not good people whom God reconciled. It was enemies. It is hard to think of all people as enemies of God. However, in our sinfulness that is what we were. And all persons apart from Jesus Christ are still God’s enemies. However, being an enemy does not mean a person is hated. Throughout scripture we are told God’s love reaches to his enemies: “...but God shows his love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). “Loved enemies” is what we were and what the world is.

- **Costly love.** God’s love for his enemies was so vast that he sacrificed his life to save his enemies: “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10).

It is not such a big deal to see reconciliation between people when there is little distance to begin with. But when there is a vast chasm of separation (enemies), then reconciliation takes on gigantic proportions. To cross a small stream with one jump is not a big deal, but to leap the mighty Colorado River at the bottom of the Grand Canyon is a big deal. Our sin caused a Colorado River of separation between God and us—yet God leaped across the chasm and reconciled us to himself. And the leap killed him. Such was the extent of his love. Praise be to his name!

To declare this truth and make it known throughout the world is worthy of our lives. I pray this issue of Lausanne World Pulse and our work in the Lausanne Movement will give us greater appreciation for God’s reconciliation and our commitment to be reconcilers.

Dr. Lon Allison is executive director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, USA. He also serves as director for the Institute for Strategic Evangelism at Wheaton College. He is co-publisher of Lausanne World Pulse.

NEWS BRIEFS

AROUND THE WORLD: World Vision International Names New President

Kevin Jenkins, managing director of a Canadian investment firm and vice chair of the board of [World Vision Canada](#), has been appointed the new president and chief executive officer of [World Vision International](#) (WVI). The appointment is effective 1 October 2009. At its semi-annual meeting in Kenya, the WVI board unanimously voted for Jenkins to succeed Dean Hirsch, who announced last year that he was stepping down as president. Jenkins becomes the seventh president of World Vision since its founding in 1950 by Bob Pierce, an American evangelist who sought help for Korean war orphans. World Vision operates in ninety-eight countries with forty thousand staff and an annual budget of \$2.5 billion USD. ([World Vision International](#))

CAMBODIA: Self-sufficiency Program Ready to Launch in Local Churches

The [FARMS International](#) self-sufficiency program, which provides microfinancing and lessons in technical skills through local churches in Cambodia, is almost ready to launch. Christians are especially excited about the program and will be the ones to get the program going. As other Cambodians see the progress Christians are making toward self-sufficiency, they will hopefully come to the Church for help. The Church in Cambodia is growing quickly; this should spur that on even more. ([Mission Network News](#))

GUATEMALA: Evangelistic Campaign a National Event

Guatemala's president, first lady, vice president, and three ministers of state all attended the two-day *Guatemala Festival at Parque de la Democracia* 13-14 March 2009, a first in the history of evangelist [Luis Palau festivals](#). President Alvaro Colom addressed the crowd from the main stage, sharing his feelings toward evangelicals in Guatemala and his appreciation toward Palau and his team. The country is known as one of the most evangelical nations in the Spanish-speaking world. Over three thousand Guatemalan churches invited Palau and his team to hold this historic campaign—the largest community service initiative the nation has ever seen. Included in the campaign were several private meetings with the president and his Cabinet and gatherings with the Supreme Court, military leadership, police cadets, lawyers, judges, doctors, mayors, and other top-level dignitaries. ([Assist News](#))

PERU: New General Secretary Named to Latin American Council of Churches

The Rev. Nilton Giese, a Lutheran pastor from Brazil, has been named the new general secretary of the [Latin American Council of Churches](#) (CLAI), following the resignation of its previous top official in 2008. “The aim is to consider national witness as a priority, to get closer to the national Church reality and, taking up these challenges, to shape an action plan for the programmes and regional desks of CLAI,” said Giese in a statement after his election during a 19-22 March 2009 meeting of the church grouping’s board of directors in Lima. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

PUERTO RICO: COMIBAM Appoints New Executive Director

Dr. Decio de Carvalho, a Brazilian living in Puerto Rico, has been appointed by the [COMIBAM](#) (Cooperacion Misionera Iberoamericana) board as the new executive director. He replaces Jesús Londoño, who has held the post since 2000. Carvalho has experience in mission in Brazil and in other countries in Latin America and has worked in Turkey and lived in the United States. The transition ceremony will occur during the General Assembly of COMIBAM in November 2009. ([World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission](#))

TURKEY: Mistrust of Christians Presents a Barrier in Evangelism

In Turkey, it is estimated that the number of Christian believers declined from twenty-two percent to only .2% between 1900 and 2000, and most of these Christians are non-Turkish. The other 99.8% of the Turkish population is Muslim. Behnan Konutgan with [I.N. Network](#) says that “identity mistrust” has been a challenge in their ministry. Church planting and evangelism are carried out by a small church that was planted in Istanbul, through personal visits and discipling church members and building them up in their faith. I.N. Network also works with internet evangelism. While evangelism is not specifically forbidden, many view it with suspicion. ([I.N. Network](#))

UKRAINE: Churches Challenged to Address Children at Risk

With 160 delegates gathered for the Eastern European Summit on Orphans and the Church 17-18 March 2009, Mikhail Kozitsky of Christian Foster Families in St. Petersburg, Russia, challenged churches to step out of their comfort zones and respond to the crisis of children at risk. In the opening session of the conference at Donetsk Christian University he said, “We are called together to have a great impact. I know this conference will be blessed by God.” According to conference director Karmen Friesen, director of [The CoMission for Children at Risk](#), the summit had a wide range of participants, from pastors who desired to mobilize their churches to care for orphans, to those who had already been actively serving children at risk. Friesen hopes that not only will conference delegates be better equipped but will benefit from networking with other organizations. ([Assist News](#))

UNITED STATES: Evangelicalism on the Verge of Collapse?

According to an article published by Michael Spencer in the [Christian Science Monitor](#), some believe evangelicalism in the United States is on the verge of a major collapse. He says this breakdown could also be the beginning of the marginalization of Christians as a whole in a country founded on a Judeo-Christian ethic. Warren Smith, author of the new book *Lovers Quarrel with the Evangelical Church*, agrees. Smith says, “There are all kinds of data that say we actually have fewer Christians today than we did fifty years ago.” There are more megachurches in the United States than ever before; however, Smith says it’s not because there are more Christians. He says the data suggests that more Christians are flocking to mega churches and abandoning small churches. According to Smith, the sad thing is, “Megachurches provide an opportunity for people to come and be spectators rather than come and be participants or engage in true disciple-building activity.” ([Mission Network News](#))

UNITED STATES: Number of Homeless Children Increasing

One in every fifty American children experiences homelessness, according to a new report by the

National Center on Family Homelessness. The report ranked New Mexico fourth from the worst. In the midst of the growing numbers, **Joy Junction (JJ)** in New Mexico shows the love and patience of Jesus Christ to all guests in its shelter. JJ is a shelter providing both emergency and longer term food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and other services for homeless women and families. According to JJ's website, it is the largest shelter of its kind in the state, and shelters about three hundred people daily. At JJ, letting Christ begin to heal their broken hearts, in his time, is a key component in the recovery model used. (Assist News)

ZAMBIA: Compassion Program Deals with HIV/AIDS Care

With an infection rate among adults nearing twenty percent and one of the highest proportions of orphans in the world, few countries in Africa have been harder hit by HIV/AIDS than Zambia. Motivated by the conviction that the Church should be the catalyst behind the needed change, Baptist Mid-Missions launched *A Refuge of Compassion Ministries (ARC)* in the southern province of Zambia. The ARC program partners with local Baptist churches and conducts a broad layer of ministry that uniquely mobilizes believers in biblical responsiveness and the compassionate care of orphans, widows, and the destitute. (Baptist Mid-Mission)

THEMED ARTICLES: Reconciliation

Jesus Reconciles Man and Woman for Partnership

By Leslie and Chad Neal Segraves

In 2001, we walked among the pilgrims in Allahabad, India, where on one “holy” day, twenty-four million Hindus dipped in the Ganges River, many chanting, “Behold the Mother Ganga who takes away the sins of the world.” We prayed, “Jesus, what do you think when you see these masses of people?”

Immediately, our minds turned to Matthew 9:36: “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Jesus then instructed his followers to pray that God would send out more workers, realizing more laborers would provide direction and hope. With the heart of a shepherd, Jesus demonstrated both compassion and commitment to work with humans to complete the *Missio Dei*—God’s purposes to redeem, restore, and renew creation.

As mission practitioners focused on the least-reached peoples, we consistently find ourselves trying to better understand the heart of God as well as God’s purposes and strategies. How can the Church mobilize effectively all of its people and resources so that the whole world, all ethnic groups, can experience the whole gospel?

“Ironing Out” the Wrinkle in Relationship

We propose that when both males and females partner together and use their God-given gifts, the Lord uses this powerful unity to advance his mission. In John 17, Jesus prayed for unity, stating that the world would recognize the unity of the Church, and this unity would help the world understand the love of God. The first human relationship attacked on the earth was between the male and the female. Could this be a wrinkle in the Body of Christ that Jesus intends to be “ironed out” so that the Church can impact society at its most fundamental level?

Following the Hebrew concept of “book-end” theology, if this was the first human relationship attacked, will it then be the final human relationship reconciled? A more poignant question may be, “Is God

waiting to bring in the final harvest when the Church demonstrates a new kingdom ethic related to males and females?” Read these questions we have been posed:

- A young Hindu woman approached me on the Delhi University campus. She stated, “I know you and your husband are Christians, and I know you teach about marriage. In my country, both Hindus and Muslims say men are here and women are here (she indicated inequality with her hands). I have two questions for you: What does your God think about men and women? And what do followers of your religion practice?”
- An Indian government leader sat in our home one evening. With a bit of condescension, he stated confidently, “I know Christianity is not true. Show me your female priests! Show me your female pastors or preachers! At least in Hinduism, we worship and value female energy.”
- In the U.S., a Christian woman in her thirties shared, “I always knew I was smart, talented, and gifted. But I just figured that God didn’t really need me because I was a woman.”
- A 10-year-old girl attending a Christian school asked with a furrowed brow, “Does God love boys more than girls? I felt like it when the teacher told the story. The boys started rubbing it in that they were better than girls and used the Bible to do it.”

As a married couple, we have journeyed together to understand how God desires to use both males and females in his kingdom. Our studies have led us to ask questions such as:

- Does God distribute spiritual gifts based upon one’s gender?
- Are gifts of leadership, visionary thinking, and preaching male-only gifts? If so, what should a woman do when she possesses such gifts?
- How does the redemptive act of Christ affect the male/female relationship and authority structures of the world?
- Do the authority structures in the world mirror exactly God’s ideal authority structures, or does the world skew God’s original intent?
- How does God desire for males and females to participate in his mission to reconcile the world to himself?
- If “mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation,”¹ then how does Christ’s crucifixion heal and impact God’s purposes for males and females?

Reconciling the Relationship between Man and Woman on the Cross

Obviously, the work of Jesus on the cross reconciles God and humanity. From our theological studies, we propose that the cross powerfully affects every type of relationship, including the relationship between a man and woman. The cross provides the opportunity for men and women to reflect again the *imago Dei* from a Trinitarian perspective of co-blessing, co-responsibility, and co-dominion.

We know different beliefs exist within the Church on the topic of males and females. Yet our own theological journey and experience in God’s mission, particularly with some Chinese and Indian brothers and sisters, has led us to a conclusion: when the Church releases believers to use the gifts God gives, regardless of gender, the Great Commission advances.

In 2001, an Indian couple asked us to teach a seminar to about one hundred Indian pastors on male/female relationships in the church and home. One month later, we received this report. “Praise the Lord! X [the husband] went to one unreached village and thirty-five people received Christ! Praise the Lord! Y [the wife] went to one unreached village and 315 people received Christ!” Churches began in both areas and remain to this day.

Empowering the Women

Our organization currently partners with X and Y. In 2007, we began a coordinated effort with Y to empower women as church planters. We documented each equipping seminar, each woman, and each woman's effectiveness on the field. We wanted to discover if women could be equipped, empowered, and used by God in leadership in a society known for its oppression of females. God truly uses the weak vessels of the world to confound the wise! At the end of 2008 we and our partner had equipped 996 women as church planters. These women began 4,185 new house churches (numbers verified) among eleven different least-reached people groups. Each house church consists of at least ten baptized adults. Thus, *these women have led at least forty thousand men, women, and children to Christ.*

Recently, we attended a church in the West where a leader stated, “At the foot of the cross, we are all equal.” Yet when we looked around, we saw that only men took up the offering, made announcements, prayed, and baptized others. Only men taught adult Sunday school classes. Men on staff were called “ministers” or “pastors” while women on staff were “directors.” Posters of the men’s ministry indicated that the success of a family, church, or nation depends solely upon men. Of course, women could teach children, sing, attend women’s ministry, or work in the nursery.

We contrasted this Sunday experience with the remark of a Chinese sister: “I am amazed that women in some nations find great privilege in taking up the offering. In our context, women and men start churches and both serve as co-workers. Both men and women lead millions. If God gives both the power to start churches, God will certainly give both the gifts needed to lead and pastor the churches.”

Accepting the Gifting Is Accepting the Holy Spirit

Essentially, accepting the gifting of another brother or sister is accepting the Holy Spirit in that person. This acceptance includes all God’s people in God’s mission. In 2005, I (Leslie) attended a mission conference in Indonesia called *Ethne*. Chad did not go. Upon leaving the conference, I rode to the airport in a bus with a man from Colorado. He asked about our ministry. When I described our work he responded, “So what are your husband’s spiritual gifts that enable him to do this?” Another time, I sat at a table with a leading Christian apologist from the United States. Again, Chad was not there. I shared about our ministry, and the apologist remarked, “So I need to meet your husband. What are his spiritual gifts?”

We encourage the Church to reflect upon the redemptive story of scripture and recognize the gifting that God implants within believers—both males and females. With millions who still need to hear and see the story of Jesus, let us discover how we can multiply the laborers. Let us discover how we can display a unity that draws the world to understand God’s love (John 17). Let us do anything and everything to live as effective ministers, ambassadors, and messengers of reconciliation.

By our willingness to partner with one another, Christians display God’s ability to heal and restore creation. May men and women partner together with unity, synergy, and power for the Great Commission.

Endnote

1. Guder, Darrell L., Lois Barrett, Inagrace T. Dietterich, George R. Hunsberger, Alan J. Roxburgh, and Craig Van Gelder. 1998. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: William B. Eerdmans.

Leslie and Chad Neal Seagraves co-founded **10/40 CONNECTIONS**, which works with the least-reached primarily in India, China, and Nepal. Leslie serves as executive director; Chad serves as international ministries director.

Reconciliation of God: Men and Women Working Together

By Elke Werner

How does the reconciliation of God in Christ apply to the question of men and women working together in the Church? Let us look at what Jesus did on the cross, when he died for men and women and brought them back to the place God had designed for them from the beginning of the world.

The Original Plan

In creation, God designed men and women different but equal in his image. God himself saw that it was not good for the man to be alone; therefore, he created the woman to be the exact partner in life and ministry—the *ezer kenegdo*—“the helper (*ezer* is most often used for God) that is the exact counterpart.”

He empowered, blessed, and sent them both to rule the world, without assigning either a specific place according to their gender. They were supposed to do it together.

The Problem

The Fall brought separation into the relationship of Adam and Eve. They could not trust each other anymore. As a consequence of their separation from God, they would follow a new kind of relationship: rulership of one over the other. That rulership was not existent in God’s original design.

After the Fall, God did not take away the task of ruling over the earth, neither from men nor from women. So this command is still valid for both men and women.

The Intervention

In Jesus, God reconciled the world to himself. He reconciled men and women equally to become again what he had created them to be: sons and daughters of God. When Jesus died on the cross, he took on himself the punishment for the sin of men and women and reconciled them both to the Father and to each other.

In Christ, there is neither male nor female, but all are one in him. That is why Jesus had male and female disciples; why he taught, healed, and loved men and women; and why he sent them to preach the good news of Christ’s resurrection.

The Holy Spirit is poured out on men and women alike, as the prophet Joel predicted. The Holy Spirit gives his gifts to whomever he wishes. There is not a list of gifts for men and an extra list for women. They both receive the same gifts and with them the same tasks.

The Command

The Great Commission is therefore given to men and women alike. They are sent into this world to preach, teach, and serve the Lord. The place of their service is not determined by their gender, but by their spiritual gifts and the personal direction of the Lord to a specific place of service.

In the Body of Christ, we all serve together. No part can be left out, no part is more important, and no part is independent of the others. No part only leads; no part only submits. All receive and give at the same time. Christ himself is the only head.

The Impact on Women in the Church

Why would Jesus die for women if they would not be fully delivered from the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin? Why would women have to give up the gift of preaching, teaching, or leading in the church, and yet still be allowed to do the same things in children's ministry, women's ministry, on the mission field, and even more so in the world? Why would women be redeemed by Christ, but not be brought back to their full assignment of rulership over this world? What else could prove that God in Christ brought the full and only salvation for women?

Of course, we still live in a world that is separated from God. Sin is still existent, and men and women fail. But in the Kingdom of God, in his body—the Church, we do not live under the rulership of sin, but under the gracious rulership of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If we want to show the world what Christ has done for us on the cross, we have to show others that he brought us back to the place of equality in diversity. This is not about gender; it is about gifts. It is not about one being more redeemed than the other, but about portraying the love of Christ in this world.

If we look around and see how women are perceived and treated in other world religions and beliefs, we cannot but be even more thankful for the work of Christ on the cross. He wants to see men and women cooperating and giving each other the respect that they, as children of God, deserve.

A New Way of Working Together

We must find new ways of working together. We must work, each one, at the place and with the gifts God has given us by his grace. We should submit to one another and serve, not rule. The world is waiting to see the redemptive power of Jesus in the lives of men and women, reconciled to each other, partnering in family and church, in leading and serving, in teaching and helping this needy world to understand that there is only one way to the Father: Jesus Christ, the Lamb who was slain so that we can live.

It behooves us well in the evangelical world at large and in the Lausanne community in particular to stress the fact that Christ's redemption brings together men and women in prayer, in the life and the work of the kingdom.

We face an enormous missionary task in reaching Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, adherents of traditional religions, and others. Working together is an indispensable part of our witness to the redemption of God.

Elke Werner is the senior associate for women in evangelism for the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. She also is founder and director of WINGS (Women's International Network in God's Service) in Marburg, Germany. Werner is the co-leader of a vital interdenominational church fellowship (Christus-Treff). She resides with her husband, Dr. Roland Werner, in Marburg.

Fighting for Peace in the Middle East

By Rev. Canon Andrew White

Many people present solutions to the various crises in the Middle East; many more think they have solutions to the region's manifold problems. The reality is that the Middle East does not have just one problem. Those who think that solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will solve all the problems in the region are very wrong. The conflict which caused havoc in Algeria had nothing to do with the Israel-

Palestine issue. Neither does the conflict here in Iraq. There are many problems in this region, and the problems are not all about land, territory, or occupation.

A Deeper Look at Religion as the Cause of Conflict

A major cause is religion. It was Archbishop William Temple who said, “When religion goes wrong, it goes very wrong.” Religion has gone very wrong. Much destruction in the name of religion has occurred (this is what we read about in John 16:2-3: “The time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.” This is what we are seeing with people who are killing others with the belief they are pleasing the Almighty. Sadly, many people in the diplomatic political world are scared of religion. They fail to realise the role religion has in much of the world.

Many of those involved with interfaith matters are often Western liberals who do not believe in much at all. When dealing with the type of people you find in the Middle East, these Western liberals have no credibility.

Here, orthodoxy is fundamental. Here in Iraq, we have seen uncontrollable violence and death; the massacring of thousands of people who are killed by those thinking they are doing God’s work. They believe God’s work is preventing the other from having power. Much terrorism is committed by people who feel they have lost something—land, territory, money, or influence—but ultimately, it is about the loss of power. It is therefore essential that we work with people who can make a difference.

The High Council of Religious Leaders

When I first started working in this area, I tried the Western way of working from the bottom up; however, I soon realised that those from the lower ranking religious positions could not change things. If we wanted to change things, we had to concentrate on those who could bring about change. Thus, we formed the High Council of Religious Leaders in Iraq. Criteria were established for people who could join this group. They had to fall into one of four categories:

1. Religious leaders with major influence and following
2. Individuals with a major television following
3. Individuals with very significant political influence
4. Individuals who represent those involved in causing violence (terrorist groups such as Al Qaida cannot be worked with)

All of our delegates fall into one of these categories, including the chief of staff of the Grand Ayatollah Sistani, the Iraqi Sunni sheik who is on television daily, the chief religious advisor to the Prime Minister, and the chief spokesperson of Muqtada Al Sader’s Mahdi Army.

The High Council is made up of Sunni and Shia leaders. Initially, this group was anti-American and anti-coalition. Over months of meetings, things have changed to the extent that they now say the Americans have given their country back to them. The Council also issued the first joint Fatwa (decree) that they produced together against all violence.

Below is the most recent declaration they issued together:

1. A strong demand for the unity of the Iraqi land, defense of the legitimacy of Iraq and its full independence, and an end to the foreign presence in the country.
2. A resolute condemnation of organized criminal violence against the Iraqi Christians who form a genuine part of Iraqi society. In addition, a call for all the political parties, the official institutions, and the civil institutions to stand firmly against such criminal behavior and to work together to stop such inhumane activities.
3. Despite there being positive indications of decline in the amount of sectarian tension, those present in the meeting emphasized the importance of spreading the spirit of forgiveness and of putting an end to sectarianism and discrimination using media channels and through all levels of education.
4. Keeping arms in the hand of the State is the only way to ensure establishment of the state of law. At the same time, pursuit of such a path will meet the demand of the Iraqis to build their state and secure common peace and communal life.
5. It is so important to activate the general amnesty law, to secure as soon as possible the release of the innocent, to stop the arrests that have taken place outside the legal process, and to put an end to torture and any other actions against human rights.
6. A strong condemnation of terrorism, regardless of the shape or name under which it is carried out.

The High Council of Religious Leaders produced a strong and excellent statement. These are people of influence who can bring about change. We need to realise that all religion has power. Either it will create something beautiful or it will destroy.

In all this work of reconciliation, I simply keep thinking of Jesus' command to love our enemies. In Christ, those you hate can become your friends.

(Editor's note: White's recent book, The Vicar of Baghdad: Fighting for Peace in the Middle East, was just published by Monarch.)

Rev. Canon Andrew White is president and CEO of the [Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East](#), chaplain of St. George's Church in Baghdad, Anglican/Episcopal chaplain of the International Zone Baghdad and senior advisor in Inter-Religious Affairs to the Prime Minister of Iraq. Over the past few years he has acted as a negotiator in many conflict situations, including the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the riots between Muslims and Christians in Northern Nigeria. In recent years, he has been awarded several prizes for his peace work, including the U.S. Cross of Valor, the Tanenbaum Peace Maker in Action Prize, the International Sternberg Prize, and the ICCJ Prize for Sustained Intellectual Contribution to Jewish-Christian Relations.

Environmental Ethics

By Thomas Schirrmacher

Christianity Is *Not* the Root of the Ecological Crisis?

In 1967, historian Lynn White¹ published a now famous piece entitled "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," in which he concluded that many of our environmental problems could be traced to the Christian notion that God gave this earth to humans for their use and specifically directed humans to exercise dominion over the earth. In 1972, Carl Amery² followed with an even heavier accusation.

The first major answer was written by the evangelical reformed philosopher Francis Schaeffer in 1972.³ He warned against a dichotomy of nature and grace in Christian and evangelical circles and saw the disinterest in the future of the visible world as platonism. He saw the roots of the ecological crisis in the renaissance, humanism, and enlightenment, with their borderless trust in human ratio and technical development. This is a line of argument that was taken up by Jürgen Moltmann⁴ in his teaching on creation. Moltmann criticized a secular kind of Christianity that made itself the handyman of technical and economic growth without ethical linkage.

Many Christian thinkers have formulated a response to White's indictment and proven him wrong. The response has taken three distinct forms of argument.

One path, which can be called the *stewardship model*, concludes that God did give humans dominion, but only on the condition that we act as wise stewards, exercising our dominion with prudence and care. This model is preferred within evangelical circles. Proponents can point to forerunners like Schaeffer or the Danish bishop Hans Lassen Martensen,⁵ who, in his ethic of 1854 (German 1878), clearly formulates an Ecotheology, demanding the preservation of creation in line with the traditional doctrine of the Church, including the Fall as reason for the crisis between humanity and creation.

Within mainstream and liberal Christianity are two more models, *eco-feminism* and *creation spirituality*, which actually agree with White and Amery and therefore want to overcome traditional Christianity. Eco-feminism sees domination over women and over the earth as stemming from masculine, patriarchal institutions. The belief is that salvation for the earth will only flow by modifying these institutions. Creation spirituality attempts to recover the nature mysticism of some medieval Christians such as Meister Eckhart, Julian of Norwich, Mechtild of Madeburg, Hildegard of Bingen, and Francis of Assisi.

Creation and the Bible

Environmentalists have made the preservation of creation into a political issue. Christians must remind them that there can be no creation without a creator, and that hope for creation implies hope in the creator.

Humanity's dominion over creation serves primarily human beings; however, God intended it to serve creation as well. Unlike the ungodly, anyone who keeps God's laws of creation will also serve creation: "A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel" (Proverbs 12:10). God gave humans the responsibility to "work" the world and to "take care of it" (Genesis 2:15), to change it, and to preserve it. These two ideas seem to contradict each other. However, in everyday life they are inseparable; they belong together like the two faces of a coin.

Beginning with Genesis 1:26-28, Christians must point to God's instructions that humanity protect the creation in God's name. The biblical emphasis is on stewardship, not ownership. The earth remains the Lord's and does not belong to its human inhabitants, as Leviticus 25:23 shows: "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants."

Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher is professor of ethics and sociology of religion in Germany and Turkey. He is also president of Martin Bucer Theological Seminary, spokesman for human rights of the World Evangelical Alliance, and director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (Bonn, Cape Town, Colombo). Schirmmacher has four doctorates (theology, cultural anthropology, ethics, and sociology of religions).

PERSPECTIVES

The Unseen Iraq

By David LeCompte

Dohuk, northern Iraq, Kurdistan. The Iraqi government recently held regional elections; those participating hoped for a peaceful outcome that will help the war-torn regions of Iraq find peace and stability. While the elections were being held, the international borders of Iraq were closed. The military in Baghdad and other major cities were on high alert for any signs of terrorist activity that would disrupt the peaceful and orderly process of people casting their votes. The military itself had voted several days before—as evidenced by the purple dye on the index fingers of the soldiers.

The Beginnings of Revival in Iraq

Iraq is moving into its sixth year since American and Coalition forces toppled Saddam Hussein and his brutal regime that held Iraqis captive for over three decades. War and turmoil has been the air most Iraqis have breathed the last few years; violence and human suffering continue. Random suicide bombers still strike in Baghdad street markets; yet, many continue to hope for peace to come. Some areas are beginning to see security and stability. Indeed, the overall feeling in the country is that Iraq is at an historical crossroad concerning its political future. However, there is an even greater historical event taking place in Iraq—a spiritual revival not seen in modern history.

Although predominately Islamic for many centuries, Orthodox Christianity has been a visible part of Iraq's historical landscape since the second century. From the early church period until now, Iraq's ethnic makeup has included Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Assyrian Christians. Yet since the war began in Iraq in 2003, the resurgence of Protestant evangelical believers has been spreading at an incredible rate.

Iraqi Christian Evangelical Leaders Gather

Recently, I visited the biblical plains of northern Iraq near the ancient city of Nineveh. Over sixty Iraqi Christian evangelical leaders and believers gathered for a Bible conference to learn more of God's word. From both Kurdish and Arab bloodlines, orthodox Christian and Muslim backgrounds, everyone came for one purpose: to see new leaders raised up to become pastors to disciple and lead new believers who are coming to Christ in Iraq in unprecedented numbers. This unique conference was organized through the efforts and cooperation of Iraqi evangelical pastors and leaders from Baghdad, Mosul, and Dohuk. It was sponsored by [Mission International](#), Calvary Chapel, and [The Joshua Fund](#).

During the conference many new disciples shared testimonies of how they had come to faith in Jesus. One man from the city of Najaf shared how he had been raised in a very strict Shia Muslim family. Trained from nine years old to be an imam in the local mosque, he became a part of the infamous Medhi army loyal to the radical Shia cleric, Muqtada al Sadr. When the Americans came to Iraq in 2003, he and his friends took up arms and fought against the Americans.

He shared that his faith in Allah prepared him to become a suicide bomber in order to defend his faith in Islam. Through a series of events, he became disillusioned with Islam and someone gave him a Bible. As he began to read, his eyes were opened to the reality of God and Jesus Christ. He found a group of Christians in Baghdad who showed him God's love. He became a believer in Jesus two years ago. He is now a fervent servant of Jesus and wants to go back to his city to preach the love of God to his friends in Najaf and to the Medhi army.

We also witnessed the water baptism of an elderly Yezidi Kurdish man from the region of Mosul (or Nineveh), northern Iraq. The Yezidi people are an ancient ethnic group of Kurdish people who have the reputation of being mystical fire worshippers. This man's story was one of incredible deliverance and God's grace.

During the intense six days of teaching, several Calvary Chapel pastors took part in teaching through the Book of Ephesians. There were also special classes taught for the women and new believers. At the end of the week, several new pastors and leaders committed themselves pioneer new churches. Many left with renewed courage and faith to continue serving the Lord with great joy and fervor.

Countless Muslims Coming to Christ

This historic revival taking place in Iraq is another wonderful example of the great spiritual awakening that God is creating all across the Middle East and the Muslim world. For the past ten years, thousands of Muslims have come to Christ from within some of the strictest Islamic communities on earth. Believers from Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Indonesia are now surfacing to tell of their glorious conversions to faith in Christ. Accounts of supernatural conversions are commonplace, with many testifying to having received Christ after seeing a vision or dream of Jesus himself.

This sovereign move of God is a continuation and fulfillment of God's heart for the nations that he began on Pentecost. If one will observe God's word carefully, Acts 2 clearly shows that the early Church was made up mainly of indigenous believers from many of the countries that today we know as the Islamic Middle East. Long before Islam, the faith of these regions was predominately Christian.

I believe God is a God of completion. As his Church was born in the Middle East, I believe these people will, and are, seeing a great revival again. As Christianity was spread throughout Europe, then the Western world, then Asia, God has brought and will continue to bring full circle his plan on earth. The last great revival on earth is happening among the peoples of the Islamic world and the Middle East.

David LeCompte is co-director of [Mission International](#), a ministry whose primary mission is to assist the indigenous church in the Middle East and Northern Africa. He also is the author of *No Escape from Grozny: A Christian Working in War-Torn Chechnya*, a personal story of his work with war orphans and Chechen refugees from 1997-2006.

New Data on World Religions: Introducing the International Religious Demography Project

By Todd Johnson and Brian Grim

The academic field of religious demography is underdeveloped. Although there are thousands of sources for religious demography, little has been done by scholars in religion, sociology, or other disciplines to collect, collate, and analyze these. As a consequence, there is much confusion over the status of religion and its adherents around the world.

Secondary sources for religious demography, such as Adherents.com, Wikipedia, or the CIA Factbook, are woefully inadequate and riddled with errors and contradictions. The [World Christian Database](#) (WCD) is the most extensive source, but its focus and methodology have been directed toward measuring Christian adherence.

In 2008, the International Religious Demography (IRD) project was launched for the purpose of providing comprehensive religious demographic information. The IRD project is collecting, collating, and analyzing primary and secondary source material on religious demography for all major religions in every country of the world.

As data is collected and analyzed, estimates from these sources are made readily available and fully transparent to the scholarly community. The IRD project is currently publishing its findings in an online

database ([World Religion Database](#) or WRD), and in the future will publish its findings in print. By offering best estimates based upon a methodologically-rigorous reconciliation of the various sources' estimates, the IRD is a valuable resource for anyone doing research on religion.

The IRD project is based at the [Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs](#) (CURA) at Boston University. The data primarily come from an analysis of the two largest collections of religious demographic data:

- The [Center for the Study of Global Christianity](#) (CSGC) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Massachusetts (USA), has over one million documents on Christian and religious demography. This center has detailed information on Christian denominations as well as numerous documents related to other religions. The center has published much of this data related to Christianity in the *World Christian Encyclopedia*¹ and online in the [World Christian Database](#), but has detailed information on other religions that has not been published.
- The [Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life](#), a project of the Pew Research Center in Washington, DC, has collected census, survey, and other primary source material on religious demography for many countries and is currently developing detailed adherent estimates for the countries of Africa. The Pew Forum is posting some of this material online, with plans to greatly expand its online religious demographic analysis. Other targeted demographic projects are being planned for the future, including a demographic analysis of the Muslim world in cooperation with Muslim demographers. In time, much of this material will be archived here for scholars and students to use.

The IRD project at CURA provides a venue for the cross-validation of religious demography sources, reconciling conflicting sources of data and determining the best sources for countries where data are in short supply. The project has the capacity to compare cross-tabulated adherent data from demographic and health surveys, census data, and other social science sources with other demographic information such as age, level of religious participation, and so forth.

However, survey and census data are lacking for many countries of the world. To make estimates for countries where such data is absent, the IRD has the capacity to analyze the CSGC's unsurpassed collection of religious membership data, as well as draw on its extensive ethno-linguistic data, which provides an alternative method to estimate the size of religious groups in countries for which religious adherent data are not available.

The IRD project is continually being updated with the latest, most comprehensive and reliable information available. Main directions of the project include conducting cooperative research and publishing the research.

Research

- Reconcile census and social survey material with clearly sourced data from ethnographic and other data sources to obtain best estimates.
- Updating a database that allows for past, present, and future projections (1900, 1970, 2010, 2025, and 2100) for the seventy-two major religious affiliation "schools" for the world's countries (238), provinces (3,000), and cities (5,000).
- Write methodological notes and articles related to database estimates.

- Hold colloquia and invite country and demographic experts to provide feedback.

Database Publication

- The [World Religion Database](#) is published by Brill as a fee-for-access website designed for researchers and marketed to libraries in the U.S. and abroad.
- The initial online publication was published in December 2008.
- The starting points are Oxford University Press' *World Christian Encyclopedia* and available country-level census and survey material, with quarterly updates (with the understanding that the WRD is a dynamic and evolving product).
- The database is structurally similar to the World Christian Database, where the typical user is someone who knows how to query a database with an option to download the data to an Excel file.

Differentiation of the WRD from World Christian Database

The WRD is substantively distinct from the WCD, focusing on clearly sourcing estimates of all religions (not primarily Christianity, as is the focus of the WCD) and providing a clear methodology for reconciling differences between religious organization estimates and social scientific estimates. The WRD aims to provide the academic community with the most comprehensive and current information on religious demography on all major religions.

The IRD Project and Christian Churches

The IRD project is valuable to churches and mission agencies as an objective source on religious demography, especially as it relates to religions other than Christianity. The project plans to provide demographic details on Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, and other religious traditions and sub-traditions.

The information will enable to the user to track changes over time and to observe trends by country and region. The project will also enable users to evaluate claims made by various organizations about religious demography. Feedback on data and methodology is welcome.

Endnote

1. Barrett, David, George Kurian, and Todd Johnson. 2001. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dr. Todd Johnson (left) is trained as a quantitative historian in the field of ecclesiastical cliometrics—the quantitative analysis of historical data on churches. He specializes in projection methodology for forecasting religious statistics. He is a research fellow in the [Study of Global Christianity and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary](#) and a visiting research scholar at the [Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs \(CURA\) at Boston University](#). **Dr. Brian Grim** (right) is trained as a quantitative sociologist and survey methodologist. He specializes in the analysis of cross-national data on religion and on the generation of quantitative data from qualitative sources, particularly in the area of international religious freedom. Grim is a senior research fellow at the [Pew Forum](#). In addition, he is a visiting research scholar at the CURA as well as a research affiliate of the [Population Research Institute at Pennsylvania State University](#). He has recently been a visiting researcher at [Georgetown University's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding](#).

[ATS Theological Forum on Stewardship Draws 772 Participants](#)

The two-day Fifth Asian Theological Seminary (ATS) Theological Forum with the theme “The Earth Is the Lord’s and Everything in It: Reflections on Stewardship in the Asian Context” was held 12-13 February 2009. The 772 participants came mostly from Metro Manila; however, a few came from the rest of the Philippines and other parts of the world.

Speakers, both local and international, tackled different aspects of stewardship, including care and preservation of the environment, managing financial and material resources, creating just and humane structures and organizations (governance), and faithful stewardship lifestyle.

Four plenary sessions set the tone and the mood of the forum. Dr. Gordon T. Smith of reSource Leadership International of Canada spoke on spirituality that is Christian and that takes creation seriously. Dr. Katsuomi Shimasaki of **Japan Bible Society** pointed to the biblical teaching on the new heavens and new earth as our hope and motive for stewardship. Rev. Peter Harris of **A Rocha International**, a Christian conservation network, shared on “Why Theology Matters to Mangroves.” Marides Carlos Fernando, a local city executive who has led her city to the ranks of “Best Managed Cities in the Philippines” inspired the group with her stories of transformation.

Altogether, there were twenty-six breakout sessions from which the participants could choose. The topics ranged from theological reflections and practical actions on the care and preservation of the environment to concrete models of financial stewardship.

With the current global climate change and international financial crisis looming as a backdrop, the forum was a timely and opportune event. An editor of a Christian publishing company wrote:

[We came] expecting to learn much from the plenary and breakout sessions. We were not disappointed. We, in fact, deepened our resolve to do our part in educating the evangelical community on caring for God’s creation.

Dr. George Capaque, Lausanne International Deputy Director for southeast Asia, chaired the forum, which was held at the facilities of Union Church of Manila in Makati City.

URBAN COMMUNITIES

The Importance and Strategic Role of the City in Missio Dei

By Duky Charles

It would be unthinkable to discuss the project of God and his work in the world without recognizing the role the city plays in every aspect. It is undeniable that, as Jean-Bernard Racine says, “Today the city has won the world.”¹ Nearly every one of the earth’s inhabitants, in one way or another and whether they realize it or not, is connected to a city. The God who loves the world (John 3:16), who seeks by every means to reach each one of us with his love, is deeply interested in the complex and attractive space that is the urban milieu.

The City and Its Influence

The definition of a city cannot be limited to its geographical area. We must take into account its lifestyle and the influence it holds over all society. Perhaps this is why Racine added to his former comment,

The city is more generally an urban reality that generated from the heart to the society as a whole. The lifestyles, attitudes, mentalities, and values lived out in the city are adopted by the general population to the further corners of its geographical regions.

Dr. Ray Bakke confirms this as well. He has dedicated two of his books to call the Church to take up its responsibilities in light of the rampant growth of urban centres. In his book, *A Theology as Big as the City*, he wrote,

The spectacular growth of large cities on this planet represents an awesome challenge to the Church of Jesus Christ on all six continents. In 1900, eight percent of the world's population lived in cities. By the year 2000, that number will be nearly fifty percent.²

Bakke's thinking parallels that of Racine when he anticipated with amazing clarity the increasing importance of the city:

You see, there is no place to hide. The city is a media stage prop in this cybernetic era, and its presence will impact everyone eventually. So, even in places far from large cities, banks, businesses, and families are linked up to urban centres. We must acknowledge, then, that not only do nearly three billion of the earth's nearly six billion persons live in cities, but the other three billion are being urbanized as well. Sorry, you have an urban future, whether you like it or not.

The overarching reach of a city is immediately recognizable when classed by function instead of size, density of population, location, or shape on a map.³

But is the city synonymous with evil? Does it represent a constant threat to the spiritual health of God's people, as so many affirm by their attitudes and demonstrate by their negative opinions of cities? The following section will examine this question.

The Importance of the City in God's Project

Even with the most cursory flipping through the pages of the Bible, we quickly understand that God loves the city and counts on her to extend his kingdom to the four corners of the world. There are 1,385 passages in the Bible that mention the city. Racine states, "Statistically, it is the twenty-first most common word in the whole Bible!"⁴ In contrast to what many believe, Racine continues, "The city is not evil, in and of itself: it becomes evil. And it will not always be that way, because the final act in the divine story is the manifestation of the city of God." He also makes a poignant remark that demonstrates the supreme importance that the Almighty God accords to the city and its central place in his precious plan:

This story that began in a Garden at the beginning of Genesis ends in a city in the last chapter of Revelation. Here we find paradise once again, but this time, paradise is in a park situated in the middle of a heavenly city.

One of the clearest and most relevant texts regarding what God expects of his people can be found in Jeremiah 29, where the Jewish people find themselves in exile in the foreign city of Babylon.

General Considerations of Jeremiah 29

Underlying this text concerning the Jewish exile to Babylon,⁵ three great universal truths are revealed.

First, God knows how to address times of great confusion, sweeping away all prejudice.

Acknowledging that Jeremiah was merely the one transmitting the message from God (who is the real

author of the letter), we see that far from being closed off in a worrisome silence, God spoke clearly and he lovingly communicated his holy and unchanging will in times of confusion.

So many examples can be cited in the Old and New Testaments, when God clearly spoke into the clouds of confusion, which were also key turning points in his story. Was it not he who calmed the people panicking at the sound of Pharaoh's chariots at the time of the great exodus from Egypt (Exodus 14:15-18)? Centuries later, when Peter faced the momentous moment of entering Cornelius' house to begin preaching to the Gentiles, the voice of God spoke clearly the same message three times (Acts 10:16). The fullness of the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his household, witnessing to the clear message that God is not a respecter of persons, pushing against the Jewish preacher's prejudices concerning non-Jews (Acts 10:34).

In Jeremiah's time, our God, the only true mediator, revealed to his people in captivity his own will regarding their host city by vilifying the false prophets.

Second, instead of opposing their integration into the host city, God ordered them to do so. Three of the first eleven verses of chapter 29 (5-7) demanded their integration into the urban space of Babylon. Of the sixteen verbs used in these three verses, ten are in the imperative, transmitting a commandment from God. He insisted on their participation in the social activities and fabric of a city they considered foreign (read: evil).

It was not a question of utilizing strategies of escape and marginalization, because there would be no other recourse during this time in God's waiting room of exile. His objective was to see his people living fully their lives where he had placed them.

Jesus demonstrated this same perspective when he presented his followers to the Father in his prayer, "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one." In the same way that God is not a respecter of persons, we can conclude that he does not have favourite nor condemned places. His people and his Church cannot impose their own limits if they truly consider him master and Lord. The city is not a symbol of evil to God, but an opportunity to reach great numbers of people for which his Son experienced the most horrible of deaths.

Third, integration into the city is a dynamic, not a passive, action. The three aforementioned verses give eloquent and explicit instructions as to how God's exiles should become a vibrant part of that city's ethos in the three basic aspects of life: physical activities, emotional well-being, and in the spiritual dimension.

- *Physical integration.* The people were called to settle down in the communities. They should have participated in the construction and expansion of the city. "Building houses" contributed to the urban economic progress. "Planting gardens" made them treat the land as their own. They must have lived where they built houses and shared many of the aspects of their existence with their fellow citizens, such as food and pastimes.
- *Emotional well-being in their adopted city.* Beginning in verse six, their integration needed to penetrate to a deeper level to touch their emotional attachments. It is not explicitly stated that they should intermarry with the Babylonians. But it is clear that their new status in this city would not reduce their sexual needs and that they and their children were called to settle down in marriage relationships. To be free to marry in a foreign city demonstrated full integration into that culture. It allowed them to identify with that community and assured their future there.

- *Spiritual integration in enemy territory.* God commanded the captives to pray for the well-being of the city in which they were forced to live. This Jewish nation, these chosen ones among all the people of the creator God, had to be actively committed to pray incessantly for the welfare of the community.

The people of God were called to integrate into this foreign city: physically settling into neighbourhoods, creating emotional attachments through marriage and family and, above all, praying with spiritual conviction for the city's prosperity.

Therefore, God's plan for the city is not to extricate all his people from its evil, but to purify it and protect it by the presence of his people. He looks to select, transform, and equip men and women who will give clear direction and leadership in city life and who will preserve its well-being.

This is why Racine believes that the essential lesson here is that the city does not need new structures, but new people.⁶ The Church needs many change agents, and change must take place in urban centres.

A Brief Reflection on Urbanization in Haiti

So what is the particular reality of the influence of the urban centres in Haiti, my own country of origin? Haiti has not been spared the galloping urbanization we see across the world. After it gained its independence in 1804, the urban population was less than ten percent, with a rural population of over ninety percent. Today, forty percent live within the urban sprawl of several cities. *All* services are concentrated in the cities and the rural areas have practically none.⁷ In other words, reaching the city is to reach the whole Haitian population.

Thus, dialogue on the possibility of impacting this country in a positive and sustainable way must start with the cities. Any strategic plan of the Church for an eventual integration into the affairs of our society carries the kiss of death if it does not take into account the importance of the city.

Our prejudices in regards to urban life that carry the belief that our cities are too corrupted for God to find any pleasure in working there are the very thing that keeps our influence merely marginal. Yet God favours urban centres to carry out his plan. In the case of my country, we would say that he is counting on Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien, Gonaïves, Jacmel, and other cities to realise his great project.

Endnotes

1. 1993. *La Ville entre Dieu est les Hommes*. Genève: Presses Bibliques Universitaires, 10.

2. 1997. *A Theology as Big as the City*. Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press, 12.

3. Bakke, Ray et al. 1994. *Espoir Pour la Ville – Dieu Dans la Cité*, Québec: Les Éditions La Clairière, 43.

4. Racine, 259.

5. We can still see the ruins of this great ancient city today near Baghdad, east of the Euphrates River. It was one of the largest cities in antiquity and knew its glory days under King Nebuchadnezzar II. The etymological sense of the word is "doorway of God," according to Microsoft's Encyclopedia, Encarta. This letter was addressed by God through Jeremiah to the captives of this great and imposing city. Babylon represented the greatest city humanity had ever built.

6. Racine, 14.

7. In contrast to many other countries, centralized services are predominant in Haiti. Everything is concentrated in Port-au-Prince: consulates, immigration and passport services, identity cards. In Haiti, we need our cities.

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LAUSANNE REPORTS

Learning from Each Other: Using New Tools

By Raphael Anzenberger

Whenever I attend conferences outside my country, I pay close attention to new ideas and tools that can better increase the effectiveness of meetings. I must say that rarely have I seen more innovation in communication than at the 2007 Lausanne Biennial Leadership Meeting in Budapest. Outstanding! Or, “smashing,” as the Brits would put it! Below are two innovations I took back to France and implemented during our January 2009 Evangelist Forum in Vevey, Switzerland.

The World Café

The concept: As a conversational process, the World Café is an innovative yet simple methodology for hosting conversations about questions that matter. These conversations link and build upon each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, or community. As a process, **the World Café** can evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of any group, thus increasing people’s capacity for effective action in pursuit of common aims.

In Budapest: Young leaders from across the globe hosted conversations during three days to help the body of participants to brainstorm about the planning of the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization: Cape Town 2010. In each room, tables were set for six, and people moved from one table to another in sessions of twenty minutes each, talking and wrestling with key planning questions. Two hundred people were involved in two hundred conversations as a result.

In Vevey: We used World Café to help us brainstorm on the ministry of the evangelist in the local church. Two questions were asked at each table: (1) What must be done to better recognize the ministry of the evangelist in churches? and (2) What does the evangelist need in order to fulfill his or her ministry? Conversations ran for two hours. Coffee and cakes fueled the energy in the room. Young evangelists from France, Belgium, and Switzerland hosted the conversations, stimulating participants’ input, and synthesizing the thinking into workable solutions.

The result was great participation and interaction. Over 160 people took part in the conversations, and all of them felt their opinions mattered and could make a difference.

Dispatches: Live 60-minute Television Magazine

The concept: As far as I know, this was a first, pioneered by the planners of the Budapest Lausanne gathering.

In Budapest: Nick Page and Dave Adams produced, from scratch, a live 60-minute television news magazine at the end of the event, summarizing many conversations and ideas that ran throughout the

week. Nick hosted the show and Dave was the producer/editor. The program featured several segments: headline news, analysis from "professor" Peter Brierley, interviews with Lausanne leaders, etc.

In Vevey: We "copy-pasted" the structure of the Budapest dispatches. Alain Stamp, evangelist and radio-broadcaster for the past twenty years, hosted the show, and I produced it. In sixty minutes, we covered a lot of content: input gathered from the World Café, discussions among experts about the ministry of evangelism and its implication in church planting, interviews with emerging evangelists as well as older leaders, news about next year's program, etc.

The result was amazing. Everyone agreed that it was a productive yet interactive way to bring together the results of strategic thinking and experiences gathered throughout the conference. It was a phenomenal way to bring the conference to a close, while still pointing us toward the future.

Conclusion

If you want to add some spice to your meetings, why not try World Café or dispatches? They are entertaining, yet effective. They are another way to look at productivity from the world of arts and creativity.

Raphael Anzenberger is serving in France as an evangelist, with a passion to raise a new generation of evangelists who will bring the message of the cross into all corners of French society. Married with four children, he lives in Tours, France. He is general secretary of [France Evangelisation](#) and author of *Moi aussi je voudrais croire, mais*, published by BLF Europe.

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