



Lausanne World Pulse

Providing Evangelism & Missions News, Information and Analysis

Lausanne World Pulse, P.O. Box 794, Wheaton, Illinois, USA, 60187

Email: info@lausanneworldpulse.com

A free, monthly online publication that provides you with evangelism and mission news and information.

March 2010

PUBLISHER'S MEMO

A Wideness in God's Mercy and an Urgency to Proclaim

By Lon Allison

I completed a first read of several of the articles in this issue of Lausanne World Pulse just a few minutes ago. This issue on “World Faiths: A Primer on Evangelism” is anything BUT a primer—I was moved, challenged, and informed theologically and missiologically. The reader is in for a feast of ideas, both reflective and practical. And while the study of the gospel and evangelism is my field of “expertise,” I come away thinking of both old and new things in ways I had never imagined. How glad I am we have Lausanne World Pulse to give us global perspectives on matters of the mind and heart!

Two major thoughts linger. *First, how expansive and expensive is the love of God revealed in the historical reality of Jesus the Messiah.* It is a love reaching out to all humanity in every generation. It is a love carried by millions of believers but more, is best communicated by God himself who lives and speaks through us, and precedes us with witness in a myriad of “nature’s ways.” Every person deserves to know this God and through that knowing, bring glory to him.

Second, there is an urgency to proclaim him. I do not here speak of urgency in order that humanity may be saved and receive the gift of eternal life. I speak rather of the urgency that they may be saved so that they may in turn save our terribly corrupted world. Humanity loved by God deserves to know God in this world, and see the world made better as a result. Societies won’t be made better, however, until there are re-birthed souls remaking societies. And so, for this world and the one to come, I hear the cry of urgency. I know I’m not explaining myself very well, but I hope you hear my longing. These authors do the teaching better.

I urge you, therefore, to give yourself a couple of hours to read the articles surrounding our theme. I will revisit them soon. I have so much to learn from these writers, and so much of their passion that I need.

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

March News from around the World

EGYPT: Large Christian Population Faces Many Threats

The Christian population in Egypt is very large—estimated at six to nine million people, or between eight and twelve percent of the population. However, Egyptian Christians face discrimination in education, employment, and the courts, as well as harassment in daily life. Most prosperous Egyptian Christians have left Egypt. Christians who remain often live in extreme poverty. Those in rural areas are vulnerable to violence, and the police seldom offer protection. Incidents of anti-Christian brutality, kidnapping, and forced conversion to Islam are rarely followed by successful prosecution of the perpetrators. ([Barnabas Aid](#))

EGYPT: Coptic Christian Youths Arrested without Charge

Egyptian State Security has intensified its intimidation of the Coptic Church and Christians in Nag Hammadi and neighboring Bahgoura by carrying out random arrests of Christian youth. According to the [Assyrian International News Agency](#) (AINA), the ongoing campaign against Christians started in early January 2010. AINA said numerous members of families have been arrested, mostly at dawn, without warrants. More than one hundred Christian youth have been arrested without charge. Tension in the area has escalated following the 5 January 2010 shooting in which several Christians and a security guard were killed following Mass marking Coptic Christmas. ([Assist News Service](#))

ERITREA: Another Christian Dies in Detention Center

On 24 January 2010, Hana Hagos Asgedom, 41, became the eleventh believer to die in an Eritrean detention center. Asgedom reportedly suffered a heart attack while being held in solitary confinement at Alla Military Camp. According to sources with [Open Doors](#), "Shortly before her death, she apparently endured beatings with an iron rod for refusing to 'make the chief commander in the camp a cup of coffee.' When Asgedom resisted this order (which Christians interpret as a sexual advance), she was apparently sent back to her cell where she endured punishment and later succumbed to the heart attack." It was reported that Asgedom was serving a life sentence in solitary confinement because she refused to renounce her faith. The Eritrean government recently "ordered the heads of Islam, the Catholic Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church to stop receiving funding from their partners abroad." Instead, the government would fund and control the institutions. While the Catholic Church responded, saying the orders were against their belief, Open Doors does not know if the Evangelical Lutheran Church or Muslims have reacted. ([Mission Network News](#))

FRANCE: French Lawmakers Consider Ban on Face-Covering Veils

Six years after banning Muslim girls from wearing headscarves in public schools, French lawmakers appear close to a measure to ban women from wearing face-covering veils in some public spaces. On 26 January 2010, a parliamentary commission delivered a long-awaited report recommending that women be barred from wearing the full veil in public institutions and on public transportation. The bipartisan panel also recommended that foreigners who wear the full veil be denied French citizenship and residency. But in an indication of the issue's sensitivity, the panel did not call for banning the garment from private buildings or public spaces such as streets. Of France's six million Muslims, only a small percentage of women (the government estimates less than two thousand) wear the full veil. Recent polls also indicate the majority of French back a ban. The push for a crackdown is hardly unanimous. Many French Muslims, even conservative ones, are against face veils, but are dismayed by a debate they say unfairly targets their community—and underscores a European intolerance of Islam in Europe. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

HAITI: World Hope International Sends Aid, But Suffers Losses

Many of [World Hope International's](#) (WHI) orphanages, hospitals, and schools suffered damage from the catastrophic 12 January 2010 earthquake in Haiti. WHI reports that although the need is great in Port-au-Prince, they are also working in surrounding regions that are being neglected. "A lot of the efforts...are in

Port-au-Prince," explains WHI's Karl Eastlack. "World Hope International tends to go out into the other cities and do work. We found when we got out there that it was just devastation." WHI is responding with immediate aid in ten sites, three in the city of Port-au-Prince, but seven in other regions of the country. "We're doing our initial round of food and water and medicine and shelter," says Eastlack. "Through the end of February, that's our primary emphasis." Reports have estimated the earthquake death toll to be over 200,000. By April 2010, WHI hopes to be focusing in on the rebuilding process for its damaged orphanages, churches, and hospitals. ([Mission Network News](#))

HAITI: HCJB Global Rotates Medical Teams, Finds Inspiring Moments

Immediately following the devastating earthquake in Haiti, [HCJB Global](#) sent a medical team into Port-au-Prince. HCJB president Wayne Pederson says, "They've done about seventy major surgeries, but they've treated hundreds of others. It's almost impossible to count the number of people they've treated." The team was working at the Baptist Haiti Mission Hospital, one of the only standing hospitals in the region. In the midst of the despair there have been moments of hope and encouragement. Pederson says, "We were thrilled when about twenty Billy Graham chaplains arrived at the hospital earlier this week. And they are having devotions with the patients and sharing Christ. We heard Monday morning that on Sunday, twenty people prayed to receive Christ in the hospital." While HCJB's first team is getting ready to head home to Quito, Ecuador, Pederson says, "We will be sending in a second wave of medical professionals by the end of the week. This will be an ongoing process where we bring new personnel in and send others home for rest and renewal." ([HCJB Global](#))

INDIA: Church Planters Will Take the Gospel to New Places

[India Gospel League](#) (IGL) is commissioning one thousand church planters throughout the next three to five years to minister in areas mostly untouched by the gospel. "For two thousand years, India has been resistant to the gospel. Now, all of a sudden, it seems that the floodgates have opened, and now is the time for us to reap the harvest in India," said David Rice, executive director of IGL. "We are working to raise up one thousand new church planters to send into areas of India where there is absolutely no gospel witness." They hope to have all of the pastors ministering within three to five years. Rice said with the number of workers they are sending out and based upon past witnessing in new areas, they could see as many as two million people come to Christ. "These bold Indian brothers and sisters are going into places that you and I could never go. So our role is to undergird them with our prayer support, our financial support, and see a great harvest for the kingdom," he said. ([Mission Network News](#))

MALAYSIA: Non-Islamic Faiths Targeted for Using the Word "Allah"

More places of worship belonging to religious minorities in Malaysia have been targeted in a continuing dispute over the use of "Allah" by non-Islamic faiths, and the [World Council of Churches](#) (WCC) has expressed "deep concern" about the situation in the Muslim-majority country. In Geneva, WCC general secretary the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit urged "immediate action by both the [Malaysian] government and civil society to resolve the conflict in order to avoid renewed hostilities and escalation of violence in society." The attacks against Christian churches followed a court decision that outraged Muslim hardliners, as it opened the way for Christians and other non-Muslims to use the word "Allah" in their religious publications and prayers. At least ten churches are reported to have been attacked. About sixty percent of Malaysia's population is Muslim, while the rest, mostly ethnic Chinese or Indian, are Christian, Buddhist, Sikh, and Hindu. Christians constitute nine percent of the country's twenty-six million people. In one attack against a church building on 8 January 2010, Molotov-cocktail wielding assailants escaped on a motorcycle after fire-bombing the offices of the Metro Tabernacle Church, part of the Assemblies of God movement, near Kuala Lumpur. The offices were gutted. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

RWANDA: Prison Fellowship Responds to Children in Need

According to [UNICEF](#), there are approximately 100,000 children living on the streets of Rwanda without

a parent or guardian to care for them. Two years ago, [Prison Fellowship Rwanda](#) (PFR) began a program to help these struggling children. PFR now serves more than eighty-five young children with meals, counseling, group activities, and Bible teaching. They also provide medical insurance for many children and literacy training, since their situations have forced most of the children to drop out of school. Guma Alexandre of PFR says, "Prison Fellowship Rwanda believes that helping young and unfortunate children of the world is everybody's responsibility." PFR hopes to expand this needed program by building a shelter for the children that would allow for a more stable living environment and sustained access to education and healthcare, if funds become available. ([Prison Fellowship International](#))

UNITED KINGDOM: Praying the Lord's Prayer at Noon Each Day

The leaders of the [Global Day of Prayer London](#) (GDOP London) are calling for one million Christians to pray the Lord's Prayer at noon every day. Organizers hold a vision to host the GDOP event at Wembley Stadium in 2011. Ahead of Wembley, a venue that can accommodate ninety-thousand people, preparations are well underway for this year's event at West Ham Stadium on 30 May 2010. GDOP London convener Jonathan Oloyede is asking people to start setting their alarm clocks and mobile phones at noon every day. Oloyede said, "Set against massive social, financial, and spiritual upheaval and the barrenness and fractured nature of much of our society, we are crying out to God; Our Father in Heaven, Heal our Land! Extraordinary times demand extraordinary prayer." GDOP is part of a global network which began in South Africa at the turn of the millennium. In 2007, over 250 million Christians united in 203 countries to pray. In London, GDOP has been a focus of prayer and Christian action since 2006. West Ham Stadium in 2007 and Millwall Football Stadium in 2008 saw a combined attendance of thirty thousand Christians. ([Assist News Service](#))

THEMED ARTICLES: World Faiths: A Primer for Evangelism

The Uniqueness of Christ and Committed Pluralism: PART 1

By Knud Jørgensen

I have, for some years, been struggling with how to understand the meaning of the *uniqueness of Christ in a pluralistic world*. The challenges have come from my fellowship with Christians in Southeast Asia and the encounters with their pluralistic context. Often they have let me know that my thinking around these issues was rather black and white in a typical Western world of either/or. Another challenge has come from the memories of my youth when the mission preachers told us that all who had not heard the good news were doomed to perdition.

It is against this background that I use a term I have learned from Lesslie Newbigin: *committed pluralism*. "Commitment" is not a new concept in my life, but how do I, as an evangelical, uphold commitment in a pluralist world? And how does my commitment fare as my thinking has moved in a direction where I struggle with the concept of "a wideness in God's mercy?"

One could, in this situation, simply quote from the World Council of Churches San Antonio statement from 1992: "We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ. At the same time we cannot set limits to God's saving power....This tension we shall not attempt to solve." Here I shall try to take a few cautious steps further into a plural world. As I do so, I shall particularly lean on the British missiologist and theologian Newbigin.

Committed Pluralism

The claims of Rationalism have left us with a heritage that gives priority to the world of facts in the public sphere, while faith and values belong in the private sphere. In the private sphere our Western culture has

accepted pluralism. The Christian faith, together with other religions and religious worldviews, has been relegated to this sphere, where pluralism reigns in a growing jungle of religiosity and values, and where facts and truth are absent and belong to science in the public sphere.

One major consequence is that we have lost the concept of Christian faith as a *public truth* (i.e., as a truth that relates to all of us and which has importance for society and community). This development may be acceptable for some religious views and for new spiritualities which view themselves as an esoteric gnosis to be worshipped in closed circles.

For the Christian faith it is different. The Christian faith is a confession of Jesus Christ as Lord, not only my Lord or the Lord of the Church, but Lord of creation. Therefore, the Christian faith cannot accept to be relegated to the sphere of the individual, and it cannot accept that there is more than the reality over which Christ is Lord. The claim of the incarnation is that God has entered our common history, not just as one offer of interpretation among many, but as his presence in flesh and blood.¹

This does not imply that we should return to a Constantine era where only one truth was allowed. Neither does *public truth* imply a truth that cannot be discussed or queried, as if it originated from mathematics. It is rather so that only claims that may be questioned have to do with real life. When talking about the Christian faith as a public truth, we therefore accept pluralism in the public room, instead of relegating it to a private sphere.

In other words, truth about faith is as valid as other truths; we therefore accept pluralism, but we also maintain the right to challenge pluralism because we insist that there is something called truth also in the realm of religion. And for this truth I am ready to argue and debate.

This is what Newbiggin calls *committed pluralism*, in contrast to *agnostic pluralism*.² Agnostic pluralism (to which much of Western culture subscribes) has renounced any talk about knowledge and truth in relation to faith. The committed, engaged pluralism, on the other hand, takes other religions more seriously and dares to raise questions about the other's faith and to reveal the dogmatic background for the rationalistic claim about the world of facts. Committed pluralism will argue for a place in the public sphere and it will reveal the idols of materialism, consumerism, and individualism. It will call the many spiritualities to account in a public discourse—spiritualities which often disguise themselves in a private sphere.³

Religion as Ultimate Commitment

This view of *committed pluralism* is based upon the understanding of religion as that which has final authority for a believer or a society. Each religion is in that sense based upon an ultimate commitment, and these different commitments cannot be brought together in a single framework (as, e.g., John Hick has tried with his “Copernican revolution”). As my ultimate commitment, my faith must defend its claim to truth over against other truth claims. This implies

that the Christian will meet his friend and neighbour of another faith as one who is committed to Jesus Christ as his ultimate authority, who openly acknowledges this commitment, and seeks to understand and to enter into dialogue with his partner of another commitment on that basis.⁴

As a Christian believer I enter the dialogue on the basis of my own belief or confession and recognize that others will do the same.

This further implies for me as a Christian that truth is to be found in a life of discipleship to Jesus Christ, as he is known through a life lived in the fellowship of disciples, in faithfulness to the tradition about him, and in openness to all truth which may be discovered in the history of the human race.

My commitment is to a historic person and to historic deeds. Without these events, my faith would be empty. And there need not be any dichotomy between “confessing Christ” and “seeking the truth.” As I meet the other, I expect and hope to hear and learn more of truth. At the same time I shall interpret these new truths by means of the truth to which my life is already committed. How can it be otherwise? How can I shed my faith in the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ, as the true light and the true life? My encounter with Christ through scripture and faith represents my ultimate commitment. And I expect that my neighbour will be in the same position: the faith of each provides the basis of his or her own understanding of reality and truth.

Commitment without Judgement

What then does this mean for my understanding of other faiths? My evangelical background has led me to consider many of the answers given to this question:

- other religions and ideologies are wholly false,
- non-Christian religions are the work of the devil and demonic cunning,
- other religions are a preparation for Christ (which the gospel fulfils; this was the view of Edinburgh 1910),
- there are essential values in other religions,
- the Roman Catholic view of the world religions as concentric circles (with the Catholic Church as the centre),
- Karl Rahner’s view of non-Christian religions as the means through which God’s salvation in Christ will reach those who have not been reached by the gospel,
- etc.

Could it be that some of these answers somehow judge my neighbour even before we have started our dialogue? For example, I am “saved,” he or she is not. And as I meet my neighbour, I do not feel especially “saved”; what I do feel is that I am a witness (*martyr*) who has been placed in this relation where I can only point to Jesus as the one who can make sense of my situation and the whole human situation—situations which my neighbour and I share as fellow human beings.

So I am committed to believing that every part of the created world and every human being is already related to Jesus (cf. Paul’s speech on Areopagos where the presence of the altar for the unknown God implies that God is already there). Everything was made through the *Logos*, he is the life of all, and he is the light that gives light to every person. *The presence and work of Jesus are not confined within the area where he is acknowledged.*

In every human there is not only a moral consciousness (Romans 2:14-15), but also a religious consciousness. This does not imply that everything is light; both scripture and experience make it clear that there is also darkness, but the light shines in the darkness.

And this light may also shine in the lives of other human beings. My Christian confession does not force me to deny the reality of the work of God in the lives, thoughts, and prayers of men and women outside the Christian Church. Neither do I deny the dark side of religion. But this dark side does not prevent me from seeing the light of God in the lives of men and women who do not acknowledge him as Lord. Paul's speech on Areopagos points to a *continuity* between our lives and the only God, at the same time as there is *confrontation* and a call to *conversion*. This "twofoldedness" means that I am challenged to think two thoughts at the same time.

Endnotes

1. See Newbigin, Lesslie. 1986. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
2. Newbigin, Lesslie. 1989. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
3. Arendt, Niels Henrik. 2004. "Når de nu alle sammen tror på Gud..." In *Religionsteologi*. Ed. Harald Nielsen, 12-14. Fredriksberg: Unitas Forlag.
4. Newbigin, Lesslie. 1978. *The Open Secret*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 185.
5. Thiessen, Terrance L. 2004. *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 107ff.

Dr. Knud Jørgensen is dean of Tao Fong Shan in Hong Kong and associate professor at the Norwegian School of Theology.

The Uniqueness of Christ and Committed Pluralism: PART 2

By Knud Jørgensen

The Cross of Jesus and the Religions

Let us for a moment return to Lesslie Newbigin. He sees the cross of Jesus as the exposure of our rejection of God and of our sin *and* as God's way of meeting this rejection. The power of God is hidden on the cross *sub contrarie specie*, Luther says (i.e., under its contradiction).

What looked like defeat turned out to be victory. This historic deed, which we confess as the true turning point of history, "stands throughout history as witness against all the claims of religion—including the Christian religion—to be the means of salvation....religion is not the means of salvation."¹ At the same time the cross becomes *the master clue* in our search for salvation.²

In obedient discipleship with Christ, I find the truth, in faithfulness to the traditions about him, and in openness toward all truth that may come to light in the history of humankind. And it is along the same way that we are forced to wonder whether we who follow Christ can be saved apart from all who have not yet had the opportunity to respond to the gospel. The Church, and we as Christians, should therefore live in dialogue with the world, giving witness to Christ, but also open to whatever riches God may give us through others.

Newbigin's overall focus is on what he calls *the scandal of particularity* in the way God relates to the world. It is this scandal of particularity that we meet supremely in the Christ revelation as the master clue.

At the same time we cling to God's "amazing grace" and the confidence that this grace is sufficient for me and all other creatures. Therefore, we look for and welcome all signs of this grace in the lives of those who do not know Jesus as Lord. We may not set limits to God's grace, but at the same time we must reject an inclusivism that regards other religions as instruments for salvation in a Christian sense. Perhaps, says Newbigin, we could use a simple sketch, developed by Walter Freytag, to indicate the basis for dialogue between Christians and those of other faiths. On both sides are staircases facing inward. In the middle is a cross.

The staircase represents the many ways by which we learn to walk up toward God's purpose. Here we find all the ethical and religious achievements of humankind, including the Christian religion. But in the middle of them and at the bottom is placed a symbol that represents something different—the historic place and the historic deed in which God exposed himself. "God comes to meet us at the bottom of our stairways, not at the top—"I came to call not the righteous, but sinners."³ As I meet my neighbour, I meet him or her at the bottom of the staircase.

At the same time I affirm what scripture says about salvation and perdition. In a number of places the New Testament refers to both (e.g., John 3:16 and Ephesians 2:1-3). Scripture makes it quite clear that it is faith in Jesus that saves. Perdition is therefore a result of the disobedience that says "No!" to the word of the gospel about salvation.

I dare believe that all of us in one way or another shall have an opportunity to chose between faith and unbelief. Along these lines I read John 3:16 to say that those who deliberately say "No!" to faith in Christ are lost. The verses in Ephesians 2 emphasize that all of us as humans by nature are under the wrath of God, in the same way as Paul argues in Romans 1-2. This, however, does not *eo ipso* imply that those who have not heard the gospel are lost.

No Need for Mission?

Since the late nineteenth century, the following conviction has played a large role in missionary motivation: those who die without the saving gospel of Christ face an eternity apart from God.

I have struggled with this view—and reached the conclusion that it cannot be true. At least seventy-five percent of those who have lived and died throughout history have never heard the gospel. In spite of our best efforts today and in the future, there will be millions more who, through no fault of their own, will live and die without being presented with the good news.

John 3:16 talks about those who believe in him (that they will be saved)—and about those who are confronted by him and do not believe. It hardly talks, however, about those who are not rejecting him or failing to believe in him because they have never heard about him.⁴

But does not Romans 10 argue for the necessity of preaching the gospel for people to be saved? To be honest, I have preached several sermons along those lines. Today, I realise that the point Paul is making relates to *the Jewish people* and not necessarily to everybody else: God has sent messengers, the messengers have preached, and their message has been heard. Nevertheless, Israel has not believed, even though they have heard, Paul says (Romans 10:18). The point I (and many others) am making when using this text is *not* addressed in the text at all. The focus is on people who have heard the gospel, but have not believed.

But what then is the motivation for mission? Is not the primary motivation for mission *the glory of God*? I am not questioning the essential role of sending missionaries, but is it not so that God goes out ahead of his Church—and that he calls us to follow him?

In that sense, mission is *missio Dei*, God's work, carried out through us and others, upon his authority. The Pentecostal Amos Yong claims that the New Testament never makes "a direct link between missionary motivation and the fear of eternal damnation."⁵

There is a clear mandate from the Lord to disciple the nations, without any warning that, apart from their preaching, people would be lost. Let me hasten to emphasize that I firmly believe that there is a clear and strong mandate in scripture to evangelize and disciple, but the motivation for so doing is *the gospel itself* as Paul says: "I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (1 Cor 9:23).

According to Newbigin,

When Jesus sent out his disciples on his mission, he showed them his hands and his side. They will share in his mission as they share in his passion, as they follow him in challenging and unmasking the powers of evil. There is no other way to be with him. At the heart of mission is simply the desire to be with him and to give him the service of our lives. At the heart of mission is thanksgiving and praise...Mission is an acted out doxology.⁶

But what then about the *urgency* of mission? John Stott's primary concern includes a *burning zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ*. He reminds us that all people deserve to have the good news preached to them because it is good news also for the life we live now. Scripture does not tell me how many will be saved, but it does give me a firm hope in a God who is rich in mercy and whose heartbeat is to yearn for all of us to return to the Father's house.

Endnotes

1. Newbigin, Lesslie. 1978. *The Open Secret*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 200.
2. Newbigin, Lesslie. 1989. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William Eerdmans Publishing Co, 158.
3. Newbigin, 1978, 204ff.
4. Thiessen, Terrance L. 2004. *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 264.
5. Yong, Amos. 2003. *Beyond the Impasse: Towards a Pneumatological Theology of Religions*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 51-52.
6. Newbigin, 1989, 127.

Dr. Knud Jørgensen is dean of Tao Fong Shan in Hong Kong and associate professor at the Norwegian School of Theology.

Not Messiah to the Jews, Not Messiah at All: On Jewish Evangelism

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

At the Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand, the issue group on "Reaching the Jews with the Gospel" formulated the following:

*If Jesus is not the Messiah for the Jewish people, then neither is He Christ for the nations. Either Jesus is the Messiah for all, or He is not the Messiah at all.*¹

At the 2009 Lausanne International Leadership Meeting in Seoul, I had the opportunity, through personal conversations, to unfold what we who are involved in Jewish evangelism mean by this.

We, in the Lausanne “family” need to remind each other of the fatal consequences of a theological rejection of Jewish evangelism, because it implies a rejection of faith in Jesus as the only way to salvation and fellowship with Israel’s God for all people—Jews as well as non-Jews.

The Implication of a “No” to Jewish Evangelism

In many quarters, Jewish as well as non-Jewish, there are people who question the validity of Jewish evangelism. In fact, it is not just questioned; some people see Jewish evangelism as downright wrong, a leftover from the Middle Ages, an attempt at spiritual genocide of the Jewish people. Because of the Christian Church’s crimes against the Jewish people, not least the Holocaust, some believe the Church should leave Jewish people alone and concentrate on the proclamation of the gospel for non-Jews and make Christians better Christians.

I do not mind admitting that when I consider the church’s infamous attitude to the Jewish people through the ages, I (a Gentile) am tempted to keep quiet about Jesus toward Jews. I seek, however, to withstand this temptation, for it would be treason against the gospel. Indeed, much is at stake...for a theological “no” to Jewish evangelism would mean that Jewish people are deprived of the possibility of salvation through faith in Jesus, which is a serious enough matter. But it also means that Jesus has been reduced to an insignificant person for Jews. And why should this “insignificant” Jewish person have a momentous importance for me, a non-Jew?

I can understand that Jewish people think the so-called “two-covenant theology” is a good solution to the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Jews have fellowship with Israel’s God through the Sinai covenant, non-Jews through the Calvary covenant. But it is difficult for me to understand that Christian theologians can advocate it. And it is particularly puzzling that there are Bible-believing evangelical Christians who are eager to proclaim the gospel to all other peoples, but who would exclude the people of Israel from evangelistic mission, replacing gospel proclamation with acts of charity.

In other words, this “insignificant” person Jesus, who has no relevance for Jews, seems to be extremely relevant for us non-Jews! There is no biblical logic in this. How can one claim that the Jesus who met his own people (the Jewish people) with a demand to be heard and obeyed as God is obeyed, and who staked his own life on this, is no longer relevant for Jewish people—while also claiming that Jesus’ radical message is of utmost importance for all other people? As a non-Jew I cannot stake my life on a Jewish irrelevance!

Jesus can only have critical importance for me as a non-Jew if he is of critical importance for Jewish people. If he is not Messiah to the Jews, then he is not Christ to the nations. It is a biblical absurdity to claim that Jesus is not Messiah to Jews yet is Christ to non-Jews when practically all his deeds were done for Jews and practically all his teaching was addressed to Jews.

Some years ago, a Jewish writer who was also anti-missionary published a pamphlet with the title, “You take Jesus, I’ll take God.” As a Gentile, I decline the offer. I will not be content with Jesus if he is a “nobody” for Jews. It is because he is Israel’s Messiah that he can be my Christ.

Jewish Evangelism and World Evangelization

Jewish evangelism is not a higher calling or more important in God's sight than evangelization of other peoples. However, missiologically Jewish evangelism has a unique role to play. Can we who are involved in Jewish evangelism maintain that the people who have been historically closest to God need the gospel for salvation just as much as all the other peoples of the world?

When the legitimacy and the necessity of Jewish evangelism are questioned, then the door is wide open to religious pluralism. The uniqueness of Jesus is denied. But if we insist that Jews need the gospel, then Jewish evangelism has rendered world mission a great favour.

We in the [Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism \(LCJE\)](#) are grateful for all the support we can get from Christians whose primary calling is not to share the gospel with Jews. Thus, the [World Evangelical Alliance \(WEA\)](#) inserted a full-page ad in March 2008 in the New York Times expressing full support for Jewish evangelism. The ad's wording is as follows:

The Gospel and the Jewish People—An Evangelical Statement

As evangelical Christians, we want to express our genuine friendship and love for the Jewish people. We sadly acknowledge that church history has been marred with anti-Semitic words and deeds, and that at times when the Jewish people were in great peril, the Church did far less than it should have.

- We pledge our commitment to be loving friends and to stand against such injustice in our generation. At the same time, we want to be transparent in affirming that we believe the most loving and scriptural expression of our friendship toward Jewish people, and to anyone we call friend, is to forthrightly share the love of God in the person of Jesus Christ.
- We believe that it is only through Jesus that all people can receive eternal life. If Jesus is not the Messiah of the Jewish people, he cannot be the Savior of the world (Acts 4:12).
- We recognize that it is good and right for those with specialized knowledge, history, and skills to use these gifts to introduce individuals to the Messiah, and that includes those ministries specifically directed to the Jewish people (1 Corinthians 9:20-22).
- We deplore the use of deception or coercion in evangelism; however, we reject the notion that it is deceptive for followers of Jesus Christ who were born Jewish to continue to identify as Jews (Romans 11:1).

We want to make it clear that, as evangelical Christians, we do not wish to offend our Jewish friends by the above statements, but we are compelled by our faith and commitment to the scriptures to stand by these principles. It is out of our profound respect for Jewish people that we seek to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them, and encourage others to do the same, for we believe that salvation is only found in Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world.

The Charge of Supersessionism

Like similar statements, this has also been met with sharp criticism from Jewish quarters. For if you argue that with Jesus came "something more," something "which was not there before" but has now been fulfilled in Jesus, something which has existential and decisive importance for Jews today in relation to Israel's God, then you will be stamped as a *supersessionist*, which is little better than being an anti-Semite. But it is better to live with this charge than to keep the best that we have got from the Jewish people to ourselves. The best—he is called *Jesus*.

If we keep the gospel to ourselves, not only Jews suffer, but also our own understanding of what Jesus' life, death, and resurrection mean does as well. Either Jesus is the Messiah for all, or he is not the Messiah at all.

Endnote

1. [Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 60](#).

Dr. Kai Kjær-Hansen is international coordinator of the [Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism](#) and chair of the Danish Israel Mission. He is also the general editor of *Mishkan*, a theological journal on the gospel and the Jewish people. Kjær-Hansen is the author of numerous articles on mission as well as the author of several books.

Interfaith Interface with Buddhists

By Chandler H. Im

Buddhism runs deep in my family's religious history. My father was born in a Buddhist family, my mother was born in a Buddhist family. In fact, both of my parents' families' ancestors were Buddhists for generations. One of my ancestors on my father's side was Samyongdang, a well-known sixteenth-century Buddhist monk in Korean history. When I was born, my parents were not Christian; they became Christ-followers in the 1970s (and I in 1982). During my childhood in South Korea, I sometimes went on school field trips to various religious sites such as Buddhist temples. Seeing Buddhist monks in gray robes on the streets of Seoul was a common sight.

For over a millennium, Korea has been a multi-religious nation, teeming with world religions such as Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity. Currently, about one-third of the Korean population is Christian and one-third Buddhist. Christians' interfaith interface with followers of other religions is both a challenge and an opportunity for Christians in Korea. Likewise, in North America, Europe, and other continents, world religions endeavor for their survival and expansion in the twenty-first century. Interfaith interface is one of the most challenging themes in global Christian movements.

As Lesslie Newbigin explains, one reason for Christians' need to engage in interfaith interaction is to be "obedient to [the missionary] call of Christ."¹ To Michael Barnes, "the motivation for mission" is "responding to the gift of God's love" by sharing it with others.² Stephen Neill also echoes the same sentiment: "If we affirm that Christianity is true... we are faced by the painful issue of the intolerance of truth" [by not sharing the gospel with others].³

Attitudes do matter when one engages in inter-religious interaction with people of different faiths. John Stott lists four "marks" of attitude needed in interfaith interface: authenticity, humility, integrity, and sensitivity.⁴ I strongly concur with Newbigin's claim that until one has felt in one's soul the dynamic power and influence of a great religion, one has not heard or understood the message of it.⁵

Thus, for the goal of mutual understanding and enrichment, and also for the sake of evangelism, we need to take time to listen to and learn from the teachings of Buddhism.

The Buddha's Life

Buddha was born around 560 B.C. in Kapilavastu, a borderland squeezed between India and Nepal. Buddha is not a proper name, but a title of honor meaning "the enlightened one." His personal name was Siddhartha Gotama. Siddhartha was a prince of a small Indian kingdom. His mother, Maya, died

immediately after giving birth to him. A famous fortune-teller told his father that Siddhartha would either unite all the Indian states or become a humanity-saving saint.

As a ruler, the father rather wanted his son to succeed him. However, after seeing the disabled, the sick, the dead, and a yogi, the prince left the palace, leaving behind his noble status, his wealth, his beautiful wife, and his newborn son, Rahula.

The Buddha painfully experienced that life itself is suffering. He desperately searched for means to stop suffering. He became a wandering ascetic in a forest for six years. One day he realized that extreme asceticism does not liberate one from life's pains and sorrows, but extreme hunger actually distracted his mind. Thus, he abandoned ascetic practices and advocated that one should avoid extremes in life, for the true way to liberation lies in the middle way—between hedonism and asceticism. Even today, the middle way (moderation) is a key virtue in Buddhism.

Under a Bodhi tree, the truth-seeker had an enlightenment experience. Many people came to hear the awakened one's teachings and became his disciples, forming a community (*sangha*) of faith. According to Buddhist legend, the Buddha went back to his hometown before his death, and his son also became a Buddhist monk. Pensive and down-to-earth, he cherished silence and solitude as his favorite virtues. He died around 483 B.C.

The Buddha's Basic Teachings

Suffering was clearly the Buddha's departure point both for his truth-seeking and his teaching, and relief from suffering was its climax.⁶ The Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths as the Way to nirvana: self-liberation from the cycle of rebirth, suffering, and ignorance. The Four Noble Truths, the essence of his teachings, concern "the nature and extent of suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation."⁷

First Noble Truth: Recognize that life is *dukkha*, generally translated as "suffering." To the Buddha, being or life in and of itself is always impermanent or incomplete because everything is transitory or constantly changing. Nothing stays the same. The impermanence or incompleteness of existence is *dukkha* itself. To all creatures, suffering is plentiful and unavoidable.

Second Noble Truth: Perceive that craving for or clinging to things causes present sufferings. This dislocation of one's intention is called *tanha*, commonly translated as "desire," "thirst," "attachment," "craving," or "yearning." So the aim of religious life for Buddhists is freedom or liberation from all *tanha*, which causes *dukkha*.

Third Noble Truth: Know and believe that this suffering ends when one "extinguishes" the flames of wanting or burning desires. Thus, nirvana, which literally means "blowing out," is sometimes described as the ceasing of craving or extinction of desire. For this stage, the Buddha confidently declares, "...whoever in this world overcomes his selfish cravings, his sorrows fall away from him, like drops of water from a lotus flower."⁸

Fourth Noble Truth: Know that desires and sufferings end when one practices the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path is a methodological system of therapy and liberation. It introduces the necessary elements of the spiritual yet practical path to self-liberation when one diligently practices the following on a daily basis:

1. correct view
2. correct motive

3. correct speech
4. correct conduct
5. correct occupation
6. correct effort
7. correct mindfulness
8. correct contemplation

After the death of the Buddha, the highly philosophical religion flourished in India for about five centuries. Emperor Ashoka of India in the third century B.C. sent out Buddhist missionaries to many countries to spread the teachings of the Buddha. Buddhism gradually began to decline in popularity, for it mainly appealed to a certain group of people in society rather than the masses, who could not follow strict precepts of the Buddha (e.g., do not drink, do not eat meat, etc.). Before it became a minor voice in India, the religion spread to its neighboring countries, and has been expanding around the globe for the past two thousand years.

Two major branches of Buddhism exist in Asia: *Theravada* and *Mahayana*. *Theravada* (“Little Raft”) is strictly ascetic in nature, and has appealed to monks predominantly in these Southeast Asia countries: Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar (Burma). *Mahayana* (“Big Raft”) Buddhism emerged about four hundred years after the Buddha’s death. Mahayana Buddhism is less strict in interpreting the Buddhist sutras, and has attracted many lay people and flourished in the Far Eastern countries of China, Japan, and Korea. To treat Buddhism as an Eastern religion is an obsolete view, for Buddhism has been steadily increasing its influence in the West in the last 150 years as well.

It is important to mention here that Buddhism, as in Christianity, has a variety of branches, ranging from non-theistic, iconoclastic Zen Buddhism to pantheistic (pan-Buddhistic, Buddhists would argue) Pure Land Buddhism. Accordingly, their buddhologies (plural, as in theologies) on key doctrines such as karma, nirvana, and enlightenment vary from tradition to tradition.

Interacting with Buddhism

In the current backdrop of postmodern religious pluralism, in which religion A is as valid and true as religion B, Christian-Buddhist interface would be fruitless if focused only upon the religions’ similarities without examining their differences as well. Two major irreconcilable differences between Christianity and Buddhism are (1) the existence of God and (2) Jesus as the historical incarnation of God.⁹

In today’s academic circles, the debate on whether the Buddha was an agnostic or atheist is still ongoing. He simply preferred not to speak of the Divine, for he firmly believed that speaking about the metaphysical would not relieve anyone from his or her suffering. To him, it did not matter whether God exists or not, since God’s existence is irrelevant to human sufferings.

On the contrary, Christians believe the Judeo-Christian God exists and has names (e.g., the name God gave Moses in the burning bush was “I AM WHO I AM”; Exodus 3:14). Christians maintain that God has also revealed himself to humanity through the Bible and in the person of Jesus. Jesus is the incarnate being, the consummate revelation of God by himself, who came down from heaven to redeem the children of God. In Buddhism, there is no specific mentioning of “beginning” *per se*, and no sharp-lined separation exists between the Absolute and its creations.

In Judeo-Christianity, there is a distinctive beginning and an end executed in time. The very first verse in the Bible proclaims God as the Creator of the universe: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). The Christian religion teaches that the creator/creature difference exists, and that the distinction is of monumental importance.

Based upon the above items discussed briefly, Christians would do well to refrain from initially striking interfaith dialogue with Buddhists at a supernatural level on Christian theology-based topics. Christian presuppositions of supernatural nature (such as the existence of God and creation) neither attract nor convince the Buddhist mind.

Beginning the Conversation

Instead, I propose we start a conversation with Buddhists at the ground level (since Buddhism is a down-to-earth, existentialistic religion in essence), and that we start moving up (literally and figuratively) from there. In other words, as Kenneth Cragg, the renowned Christian scholar on Islam, suggests, we ought to start from where they start. Since suffering is an issue many Buddhists (if not all) can identify with, it is a good and safe topic to use.

In Buddhism there is a direct link between one's attitude and elimination of suffering, as emphasized by their Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddhist view of humbleness as emptying oneself is very similar to the incarnational model of Jesus Christ (cf. Philippians 2). Although God himself, Jesus did not demand and cling to his rights as God. The key concept of Jesus' humility is portrayed well in Philippians 2:3. He "emptied" himself or made himself nothing. Jesus was our Suffering Savior who died for us in our places because of our sins (Isaiah 53). He humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death on the cross—a Christian aspect Buddhists tremendously admire.

In short, Buddhism is a religion of "self power," whereas Christianity is a religion of "other power." In Christian faith, God rejects auto-soterism (salvation by self). When in dialogue with Buddhists, it is imperative to emphasize that there is no power within people that can save them. Salvation by human efforts, however sincere they might be, is a futile attempt that ends in despair and result in eternal damnation. Buddhism may offer temporary relief from suffering, but it does not offer liberation from death, the ultimate test of authentic religion.

Based upon my experiences with Buddhists, the most effective way of reaching them with the gospel is demonstration of Christian love in person, on a long-term basis. Some of my relatives in Korea are devout Buddhists. I had been sharing the message of Jesus with a cousin of mine for a few years. A perennial Buddhist on her (my) mother's side, my family's Christian action (forgiveness and love) toward her family in the past had touched her.

When her son (my nephew) came to study at a Christian school in Washington State two-and-a-half years ago, I took care of his needs (spiritual, emotional, and legal) as much as I could. Two years after his arrival, in the fall of 2009, she accepted Jesus, was baptized in a church, and is growing in the knowledge of Christ.

Before the baptism, she made sure she removed all her Buddhist amulets, paintings, and artifacts from her house. It was not the Christian message initially, but the prayers and actions of Christian family and friends eventually motivated her and her son to make the decision to leave Buddhism and follow Christ.

According to one survey I did with Korean Buddhists, many Buddhists respected Jesus and his teachings, but they got turned off by Christians' "arrogant" attitudes and "discrepancies between Christian faith and lifestyles." Christians' insensitivity, arrogance, impatience, lack of love, and our lack of grace offend them.¹⁰ The common denominator between Christianity and Buddhism is self-giving for the benefit of others, as Jesus did on the cross.¹¹

Both Christians and Buddhists are called to pursue selflessness or self-offering for other humans as a goal and virtue in life. God saves and glorifies through suffering. Let us intentionally step into the broken

world to save and encourage suffering humanity, one person at a time, thereby fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, honoring God and loving our neighbors.

Endnotes

1. Newbigin, Lesslie. 1978. *Open Secret*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 206.
2. Barnes, Michael. 2002. *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 148.
3. Neill, Stephen. 1978. *Call to Mission*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 9.
4. Stott, John R.W. 1975. *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 77.
5. Newbigin, 1978, 208.
6. Fernando, Antony. 1991. *Buddhism and Christianity: Their Inner Affinity*. Kelaniya, Sri Lanka: Empire Press, 182.
7. Gowans, Christopher W. 2003. *Philosophy of the Buddha: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 119.
8. *Dhammapada*, trans. Juan Mascaro. 1973. New York: Penguin Classics, 336.
9. Yandell, Keith and Harold Netland. 2009. *Buddhism: A Christian Exploration and Appraisal*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 181-212.
10. Im, Chandler H. 2008. "Korean Christians and Won Buddhists in Dialogue on Suffering." Ph.D. Dissertation. Pasadena, Calif.: Fuller Theological Seminary, 195-196.
11. Im, 2008, 167-168.

Dr. Chandler H. Im is director of Ethnic Ministries at the [Billy Graham Center](#) at Wheaton College. He also serves as director of the [Ethnic America Network](#) and is adjunct professor of missions at Faith Evangelical Seminary (Tacoma, Washington, USA).

Sharing Christ in Hindu Contexts

By Lalsangkima Pachuau

During a recent visit to a mission field in north India, I was introduced to a group of women participating in a self-help project. They shared with me how they received Christ in their lives. They were all active members of a Christian fellowship, and all except one were baptized. “Her family does not allow her to be baptized, but she is one of us,” the other members explained. It appeared clear that they wished her to be baptized, but they also did not exclude her from being a Christian just because she was not baptized.

Questions surrounding (1) the Church as detached from the Hindu community and (2) baptism as a symbol of belonging have been debated in India for centuries. Led by such well-known missionaries as Robert de Nobili in the early seventeenth century and Alexander Duff in the nineteenth century, missionary efforts have been expended on how to reach upper-caste Hindus. Jesus Christ has been taken seriously by many Hindus from the time of Ram Mohun Roy and Keshub Chandra Sen in the nineteenth century. Further, faith in Christ has been affirmed by a good number of people who have not been

baptized. What form of faith affirmation should be expected from caste Hindus if they are to be converted to Christianity?

Basic Characteristics of Hinduism

In any consideration for evangelistic ministry among the Hindus, it is important to recognize the vast difference between Hinduism and Christianity. In the absence of clear corresponding concepts and worldviews, “translating” Christian thoughts and teachings into the Hindu religious (spiritual) system remains a challenging task.

At the risk of oversimplifying the complex Hindu spiritual system, two basic characteristics of Hinduism are relevant for the purpose of finding means to communicate the gospel:

1. What we call “Hinduism” is a system of community life more than a creedal religious system. It has no common dogma or set of beliefs that defines the religion. If there is a common feature to be identified, it is the practical-ethical aspect of life called *dharma* (often translated as “duties”) that is demanded from all Hindus.

Dharma is often interpreted to be what upholds the order of the world. There are two specific *dharmas* (*varna-dharma* and *asrama-dharma*) and one general *dharma* (*sadharana-dharma*) for all Hindus. Every Hindu is born into a specific *varna* (or caste), and is expected to be faithful to that caste identity and perform the duties of his or her caste. *Asrama* refers to the four stages (as well as spiritual development) of life. They are: student stage or *brahmacharya*; householder or *grhastha*; forest-dweller or *vanaprastha*; and a final life of renunciation or *sannyasa*.

These two *dharmas* are essential features of every Hindu. In other words, every Hindu has a caste to which he or she has been birthed and is expected to live according to the different duties expected for the caste community (*jati*) of different ages. Functionally, Hinduism is often referred to as “*varnashramadhharma*” (combining the three words *varna*, *ashrama*, and *dharma*). In other words, Hinduism is governed by living out (*dharma*) one’s caste identity (*varna*), and each of the spiritual stages (*ashrama*) of life.

In addition, cardinal virtues (*sadharana-dharma*) are a common duty to all castes and stages of life. Life is fundamentally believed to be evil and escape is the final good. Faithful service to the caste duties and living a virtuous life according to what is expected leads one higher and higher to the final escape of life (*nirvana*).

2. Religiously, Hinduism is relativistic by nature in that it believes in different gods and spiritual ways. As is often said, a father and a son need not worship the same god. Every religious belief can find a place within Hinduism. As Gandhi once said, all morally-governed religions are different paths to the same God. In other words, there is a way to be a Christian within Hinduism. This nature of Hinduism became most conspicuous through modern representatives and spokespersons often referred to as “neo-Hindus” (Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, et al.) who often demand the recognition of all religions as equally valid ways to the one God. They do not have difficulty in believing Jesus as a savior, but typically refuse to affirm him as the Savior.

Evangelistic Efforts among Hindus

Many serious evangelistic workers are now slighting the effort to create new Christian communities detached from the larger Hindu community. In the light of failures to attract caste Hindus to Christianity, many mission thinkers today affirm identification (to different extents) with Hindu community. To what

extent such identification should go has been debated,¹ and most recently debated by evangelical Christians.²

While some insist on public and visible demonstration of their faith in Jesus Christ, others find being labeled “Christian” unnecessary and unhelpful as it isolates them from their native (Hindu) community. But they all seem to agree in insisting ultimate loyalty and faith in God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Evangelism as a process should connect with the thought-world of the Hindus through their culture and community values, but aim at bringing them to affirm and follow Jesus as the only Lord and Savior.

In a group discussion with missionaries in one of the cities in north India, field missionaries suggested that different approaches should be utilized for different sections of Hindu communities. To connect a caste Hindu community with the message of the gospel that should gradually transform their lives and thoughts, missionaries need to take their community identities (*varna* and *jati-s*), their yearning for escape from the evil world, and their insistence on identity-based good works seriously. But if we end there, the evil of endemic casteism (which systematically excludes and horrifyingly oppresses the “outcastes”) and salvation through good deeds will hold them from justification and sanctification by faith in Jesus Christ.

Thus, there are some key issues one needs to bear in mind. Hinduism is more about right practice than right belief. Furthermore, such rightful practices for salvation are not needed not because human beings sin, but because the world itself is evil. Yet, Hinduism is about the right way: the right knowledge, the right worship, and the right living.

The Christian concept of salvation from sin through faith (both as belief and dependency) in God are new to the Hindu. To bridge such difference, gradual infusion of concepts may be needed. Start from where they are to meaningfully communicate the good news of Jesus Christ, and pray and work for their transformation in the power of the Holy Spirit from within.

Endnotes

1. For a useful summary of the debate between Lesslie Newbigin and M. M. Thomas, see George Hunsberger. 1998. *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 176ff.

2. See the debate between H. L. Richard and Timothy Tennent (2007) in the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 24(4): 185-197.

Dr. Lalsangkima Pachuau is the director of the Post-graduate Studies Program and associate professor of the History and Theology of Mission at Asbury Theological Seminary (Wilmore, Kentucky, USA). Originally from Mizoram in northeast India, he is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of India (Mizoram Synod).

Christian Response to Islam: A Struggle for the Soul of Christianity

By John Azumah

One of the crucial issues facing Christians around the world today is finding the right balance in our response to the various challenges posed by Islam and engagement with Muslims. The quest for an appropriate Christian response to Islam and engagement with Muslims has sadly polarized Christians along evangelical vs. liberal, truth vs. grace, or confrontational vs. conciliatory lines.

As an African, my own struggle is the way these positions are presented as absolutes in *either/or* categories. In the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City (9/11), the Iraq war, the Madrid bombings, etc., the division among Christians has deepened. Reflecting on the situation, Joseph Cummings talks of a titanic struggle going on in the heavenly realms—a struggle not between Muslims and Christians or between Islam and the West, but “a struggle within Christianity itself, a struggle for the soul of the Christian faith.”¹

What Cummings is suggesting, and I couldn't agree more, is that Islam *per se* is not necessarily the greatest challenge facing Christians today, but rather how Christians choose to respond to Islam. There seems to be a general consensus that we should be talking about Christian *responses* rather than “response” to Islam.

To work out what constitutes an appropriate Christian response to Islam, there is a need to identify the various faces of Islam needing responses. I want to suggest four needing considered Christian responses:

1. The militant and violent face of Islam, including Islamic terrorism.
2. The ideological face of Islam in the form of Islamists conceptions of an Islamic State.
3. Islamic/Muslim criticism, rejection, and polemics against Christian beliefs.
4. Islamic missionary activity—*daw'ah*.

These faces of Islam impact Christians in different ways in different contexts, and will therefore elicit different responses from Christians depending upon the context.

Responding to Militant Islam

In our post 9/11 world, Islamic militancy seems to have become the driving force for responses to Islam and engagement with Muslims. In order to think of a Christian response to Islamic militancy, it is vital that at least three facts are stated. For as Jesus said in John 8:32, there is freedom in knowing the truth.

1. *Apart from instances of communal violence in Indonesia and northern Nigeria, Christians are not the primary targets of jihadists Muslims.* The targets are specific governments and states (Islamic governments and states included). Western democracies are surely prime targets.
2. *While Christians and several other non-Muslims have been victims of Muslim militancy, the actual number of Christians killed in Islamist violence pales in significance when compared with the number of Muslims killed.* In other words, Muslims are the main victims of Islamists violence.
3. *Research shows that Islamic militancy creates disaffection in Muslims concerning Islam.* Some convert to Christianity (where there is a friendly Christian presence) or simply backslide.

All the facts therefore point to the fact that Islamic militancy is more of a threat to Muslims and Islam than to Christians and Christianity. For Christian citizens whose nations are targets of Islamic terrorist groups, Paul makes it clear in Romans 13 that dealing with such threats is the responsibility of governments and state security forces. In times like these Christians should remain patriotic citizens without compromising their prophetic calling or sacrificing their pastoral care for the weak and vulnerable.

Responding to Islam as an Ideology

Related to but different from Islamic militancy is Islamists' concept of an Islamic State where *shariah* law is enforced as the legal code in civil and criminal matters. The history of early Islamic conquests of Palestine, Syria, and North Africa teaches us that Muslim militancy *per se* has never been the main factor for demographic changes in favor of Islam. Instead, pressures from the discriminatory tenets of the *shariah* and the humiliation of Christian minorities have been the single most effective factor in the conversion of Christians to Islam.

My Neighbour's Faith: Islam Explained for Christians: An Introduction

By John Azumah

John Azumah. 2008. My Neighbour's Faith: Islam Explained for Christians. Corby, England: Cana Publishing/Hippo Books.

In the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on America, interest in Islam among Christians across the world has been on the increase. Since then, on a regular basis we read about and see Muslims blowing themselves and others up in the name of their religion, while at the same time we hear Muslim leaders and Western experts proclaiming that Islam is a religion of peace.

One theological student in India once said to me, "Sir, I am confused! We hear Islam is a religion of peace, but we also read about and see Muslims praying with AK-47 rifles and teenage girls shot dead or disfigured for not wearing a veil!" To add to the confusion, Islam itself is far from being a monolithic entity. There are Muslims who assert and genuinely believe that Islam is a religion of peace, while there are others whose discourse and activities proclaim the opposite. All are using Muslim scripture and traditions, and all claim their version of Islam is the "true" Islam.

The war in Iraq and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has further added to the confusion by splitting the Evangelical Christian front as to what constitutes an appropriate Christian response to Islam. On the one end are those who strongly believe Islam is a threat and must be exposed as such. This approach ends up instilling fear in Christians about Islam. On the other end are those who insist that the best approach to Islam is to act out of love and grace to Muslims. Hard questions and difficult issues are swept under the carpet.

Islamic ideology therefore poses a serious challenge to Christians in Muslim majority countries in ways that Muslim personal and family laws in the West do not. Christian responses to Islam as an ideology will therefore vary from context to context. Speaking about ideological opposition, secular ideologies are to Christianity in the West what Islamic ideologies are to Christianity in Muslim countries.

Christians in the West should have the same concerns about secularist forces as Christians in Muslim countries as about the enforcement of *shariah* law. However, in light of 1 Corinthians 12: 25-26, Christians everywhere have a duty to stand in solidarity with and speak on behalf of Christian minorities facing discrimination and persecution wherever that may be. This does not mean, for example, that British Muslims should be demonized for the treatment of Christian minorities in Pakistan.

Responding to Islamic Anti-Christian Polemic

In its scripture (the Qur'an) and traditions (the *Hadith*), Islam is generally critical and polemical of Christianity. Anti-Christian polemic is deeply rooted in Islamic source books, and individual Muslim figures and groups have taken it up as their vocation. I have had occasions to challenge my Muslim friends to substitute the term "Muslim" into every place the word "Christian" appears in the Qur'an and to read the passages and tell me how they would feel if they were reading that about Muslims from the Bible.

Of course, I also tell Christians that in order to appreciate the Qur'anic anti-Christian material, they should read what the New Testament, especially the Gospels, say about Jews in general and Jews religious leaders in particular. That said, the question is not *whether* Christians should respond to Islamic anti-Christian polemic, but *how* we should respond.

I have heard some Christians say the best form of defense is attack. I personally do not like the word "defense," let alone "attack." It sounds like we are seeking revenge, which is unbiblical (see Romans 12:19). Christians are commissioned as witnesses to the transforming power of the gospel (Acts 1:8), not as defenders of the faith.

The aim of our response should be to correct and remove misunderstanding as far as we are able—not to attack Islamic beliefs and undermine the integrity of Islam sources. Robust apologetics, not polemics, should be the Christian response to Islamic anti-Christian polemic.

The purpose of writing *My Neighbour's Faith: Islam Explained* for Christians is to attempt an approach to Islam which is guided by truth and grace following the biblical teaching that Jesus was full of truth and of grace. To sacrifice one on the altar of the other is to betray Christ.

My approach in *My Neighbour's Faith* is guided, on the one hand, by my experience of having Muslims as neighbours in Africa. Islam is therefore the faith of my neighbour and as the ninth commandment teaches, Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbour. On the other hand it is guided by the same experience of Islam in Africa as a rival tradition to Christianity—the only missionary religion after Christianity, a religion that raises questions and makes demands and claims over Christians and Christianity in ways that no other religion does. Telling the truth about Islam includes raising the hard questions and talking openly about the difficult issues in the conviction that good relations can only be built on accurate and critical knowledge of one another.

In doing so, however, I have endeavoured to keep the human face of Islam at the heart of my writing. In Africa, as already noted, Islam is not an impersonal system of beliefs or the religion of immigrant communities. Rather, it has a human face: the face of a close relative, a neighbour, a teacher, and even a head of state. Maintaining the human face of Islam is therefore crucial if Christians are to avoid the trap of ending up with a hateful discourse. In my treatment of Islam, grace is an important factor because it as a tradition that has shaped the lives and values of millions of people across generations and continues to guard the identity and destinies of millions today.

A vital need to provide Christian theological students with credible and balanced information on Islam in order to prevent them from falling prey to unhelpful material on the market or simply separate themselves motivated me to write *My Neighbour's Faith*.

Responding to Islamic *Daw'ah*

Islam and Christianity are the two main missionary religions. While both religions have always taken their missionary calling seriously, it could be said that from the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century Christian missionary activity far outstripped its Islamic rival. However, since the post-colonial era (late 1950s onwards) Christian mission in Western hands has come under much accusation, attack, and suspicion, and has since been increasingly on the retreat into university departments and theological seminaries.

The few who venture into missions often do so as clandestines in hostile territories. Simultaneously, Muslim governments and organizations have embarked upon very aggressive *daw'ah* in Africa, Asia, and the West. This has been given a huge boost by the discovery of oil in large commercial quantities in Muslim countries.

Islamic *daw'ah* itself, however, is not the real challenge to Christianity. The challenge lies in the criminalization of Christian missions resulting in Christian missionaries resorting to clandestine strategies in order to share their witness with Muslims. The other challenge is governments (mainly Islamic) and fundamentalist groups who put legal impediments in the way of people who want to change their religion, especially conversion to Christianity.

By way of response, rather than behaving like drug traffickers always figuring out how to be one step ahead of law enforcement agencies, Christians need to publicly and consistently speak up for religious freedom. We have had the civil rights and gay rights movements and this might be the time for a Religious Rights Movement. The question Christians need to raise with Muslim scholars, activists, governments, and organizations is how Islam can criminalize an activity it is itself actively engaged in across the world.

Christian Response as a Witness to Islam

It is essential that any Christian response to Islam is not seen to be driven by fear and self-preservation. Jesus is very clear that: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." The crusades are a good example of a Christian response to Islam out of fear and self-preservation. But what is more, the legacy of the crusades and the witness it left in the Muslim psyche about Christianity speaks for itself. To quote Cummings once more:

It used to be commonly said that Islam was Satan's greatest masterpiece. I believe that is not true. I believe that Satan's greatest masterpiece was the Crusades. Why? Is it because the Crusades were the worst atrocity that ever happened in history? I think Hitler was worse. Stalin was worse. Pol Pot was worse. What is so horrible about the Crusades is that it was done under the symbol of the cross; that Satan succeeded in distorting the very heart of the Christian faith. The cross is at the heart of the entire Christian faith, and for the Muslims and the Jews of the world, what does the symbol of the cross now signify? The cross now signifies, "Christians hate you enough to kill you." What is the cross suppose to signify? It is suppose to signify, "God loved you enough to lay down his life for you, and I love you enough that I would lay down my life for you." Satan succeeded in taking the very heart of the Christian faith and turning it around to mean not just something different, but to mean the exact opposite of what it was supposed to mean.²

A Ghanaian proverb counsels that if someone deliberately breaks wind into your face and you muster all your muscles to take revenge, you could end up soiling yourself with stool. However we choose as Christians to respond to Islam, the question that should guide us is: *What witness are we likely to leave*

behind in our response, and how will it serve the course of the gospel and our mandate as witnesses to that gospel?

Endnotes

1. 2008. "Toward Respectful Witness." In *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues among Muslims*. Ed. Dudley Woodberry, 319. Pasadena, California, USA: William Carey Library.

2. Ibid, 322-323.

The Rev. Dr. John Azumah is from Ghana and did his masters and doctoral studies in Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. In 2008, he was appointed lecturer in Islamic and director for the Centre of Islamic Studies at the [London School of Theology](#). Azumah is author of *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa: A Quest for Inter-Religious Dialogue* and *My Neighbour's Faith: Islam Explained for Christians*.

PERSPECTIVES

2010-2020: A "Decade from Heaven"

By Grant McClung

As we move into the first year of a new decade (2010-2020), there are hopes expressed in the secular press that the next ten years will bring an improvement in our lives and new hope for our world. At the close of 2009, Time magazine made headlines with their eye-catching story, "The '00s: Goodbye (at Last) to the Decade from Hell." Andy Serwer took note of the massive Y2K computer scare at the beginning of the last decade (1 January 2000) and the global financial wipeout at the close of the decade. Also noted was the ten years of misery, mishaps, and misfortunes that caused the decade to also be labeled the "Decade of Reckoning," the "Decade of Broken Dreams," and even, "The Lost Decade."

All of this may be true on the surface, especially from the standpoint of North Americans who finally are catching up to the dismal economic realities already experienced for decades by those in the Majority World.

Followers of Jesus Christ, however, operate from a counter-cultural worldview quite apart from the predictions and prognostications of secular materialism. Living in-between the perils of our time and the promises of God, we follow Christ's command to make disciples of all nations, going to the ends of the earth until the end of time (Matthew 28:18-20).

Our confidence is that 2010-2020 will be "A Decade from Heaven," especially on a global scale. Why can we expect this possibility? Already there are signs that the next ten years will bring positive changes.

A Decade of Defined Discipleship. In the Great Commission community (local churches, denominations, networks, associations, mission agencies, mission training systems, laity in the marketplace, students, youth, children) there is a convergence of a generation of international, interdenominational cooperation and partnership in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. This is expressed in the great theme of the Lausanne Movement: "The whole Church taking the whole gospel to the whole world." There is unprecedented unity and collaboration in place to reach the remaining unreached people groups and most resistant areas of the world with the gospel and new church planting.

A Decade of Demographic Destiny. In the coming decade, one of the largest demographic blocs in modern history (at least in the United States), the “Baby Boomers,” will be firmly moved into retirement years (around the ages of fifty-five to seventy-five). Those keyed into kingdom values and the mission of God will use their financial means and mentoring influence to challenge the next generation.

Already, missiologists are calling for a massive evangelism effort in the “4/14 Window,” the largest global age grouping of ages four to fourteen. While we could shudder at the dismal prospect of losing that generation, think of the strategic potential and the demographic destiny of masses from that age grouping ten years from now. When the current international age grouping of four to fourteen comes to the close of this new decade in 2020, they will be in the age grouping of fourteen to twenty-four and will have, biblically/spiritually speaking, far-reaching potential. Just look at the impact of that age grouping in scripture, in Christian history, and in the most recent one hundred years of Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal. We must reach, teach, and deploy this group for demographic destiny!

A Decade of Desperate Desire. From all contemporary reports and accounts, it is precisely this generation of children, students, and teenagers who are experiencing a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their world and are calling out in spiritual hunger and a desperate desire for revival. Here is one report from an eyewitness to the recent Urbana 2009 Student Mission Convention where more than sixteen thousand students from over one hundred countries came together to consider their place in God’s work in the world:

Many InterVarsity staff who have been to Urbanas for decades have said this is the most spiritually hungry group of Urbana students they’ve ever seen. Seminars have been pouring out into adjacent halls and floors, long lines to get into Bible studies, and students weeping in the main session as speaker after speaker challenged them to live for Christ.

The “Great Century of Missions” (the era of William Carey and other notables) was preceded by over one hundred years of “Concerts of Prayer” in the Moravian and Pietist tradition. All of them were led by laity and students. The modern Pentecostal/Charismatic movement was preceded by years of desperate intercession and a longing for holiness in many parts of the world.

God answered those cries. In our day, scores of prayer movements, such as the “Global Day of Prayer,” are mobilizing multiplied millions of believers for ongoing intercession. It could very well be that we are on the verge of the greatest move of God in all of history, “A Decade from Heaven!”

A Decade of Divine Determination. The Bible is a mission book and our God is a missionary God. All of scripture is filled with God’s directives and determination that, “...this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations...” (Matthew 24:14a) and that, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (Acts 2:17a). We can rest with one hundred percent assurance that when God’s people meet God’s requirements, then God will “...hear from heaven” and proactively respond among his people and in their world (2 Chronicles 7:14).

As we track the rapid expansion of the Church around the world, may we witness once again in this new decade a recurrence of the affirmation of Paul, Silas, and Timothy to the young church in Thessalonica:

The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10)

In a suffering world, may we also be filled with the same “blessed hope” of Christ’s second coming that captured the imagination and actions of the Thessalonians who were promised that, “...the Lord himself will come down from heaven...” (1 Thessalonians 4:16a) and their suffering would be relieved when, “...the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels” (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

Like the first disciples, it is not for us to predict, “...to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7), but to “...receive power when the Holy Spirit comes...” on us and be Christ’s witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). As we move with faith and hope into this new decade, let us (like the early disciples) wait in prayer and expectancy for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that “came from heaven” (Acts 2:2; 1 Peter 1:12) and move into our world on mission with God.

Dr. Grant McClung is president of [Missions Resource Group](#) and a member of the International Executive Council of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee, USA).

Consumerism & Human Trafficking: A Socio-political View from an Eastern European Perspective

By Vladimir Ubeivolc

One of the hard questions today is, “What is the main reason for human trafficking?” In the past, people compared human trafficking with slavery. Wealthy individuals wanted to have a cheap labor force, so they initiated “crusades” to Africa and enslaved people. Africans didn’t have a choice; nobody asked, “Would you like to work at my farm, dear?” Masters forced, sold, bought, and used people as they wanted.

The second half of the twentieth century is known as a period of human rights’ victory. Western countries stopped predatory wars and many countries from Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe proclaimed their independence. However, the world faced the second wave of slavery in new forms that were more inventive, resourceful, and wlier. There are no armies, no ships with slaves and horses in one hold; there are no soldiers and guns. But how are recruiters winning? How are they entrapping that new generation of victims?

Let’s think about the reality in the majority of the world. Why do many people (especially youth) want to escape their countries? The most common answer is that they don’t have a job. This could be true for some African and Asian countries, but what about for Eastern Europe? Maybe not. Let me give some examples from Moldova (part of the former Soviet Union).

Consumerism

Some people indeed are forced to seek jobs abroad from their native land. Most of these people are naïve, and traffickers use that naivety, suggesting false options to them. There are some opportunities to find jobs in Moldova, but these either do not pay well, are not easy to learn, or will not lead to a career. There are many other reasons people leave. However, the reality is that these are not “reasons” at all, but only consequences of another reason: *consumerism*. Some people do leave in order to feed their families, but most want to go abroad not because they don’t have daily bread, but because they want to buy a new car, to pay for the best schooling for their children, to buy new furniture, etc.

The West has declared a new war against the majority of the world. Billboards, commercials, and advertising are the soldiers of this new army. They have attacked the majority of the world, convincing a new generation that consumption of their goods will make them happy.

People go to both Western and Majority World countries to get more money, to buy new products, to spend more money in bars and night clubs. More than ninety percent of the money which comes to Moldova from Moldovans working abroad (including victims of human trafficking) goes to consumerism. More than 1.3 billion (milliard) USD came to Moldova in 2008 from individuals working abroad. At least one billion was spent for new cars, food, clothes, computers, smart phones, houses, etc.

Many of the people in Eastern Europe compare themselves with people from the West and try to catch up with them in terms of buying capacity in a very short time. People in Western countries also are exposed to consumerism, but the difference is that they have preconditions for that (e.g., job, legacy, credit for up to thirty years, etc.). People in Eastern Europe live more day to day. When people from the West come to Moldova, they are surprised: according to the all statistics, Moldova is the poorest country in Europe, but streets are full with wealthy cars, and good dressed people. Western crusaders flooded our country.

Consumerism and Human Trafficking

There is a direct connection between consumerism and human trafficking, and companies and people which are seeking a cheap trade force are responsible. Western companies try to find illegal migrants because they don't ask for a lot of money and it's easy to manipulate by them. Most migrants go abroad illegally, but many of them as victims of human trafficking.

Toward an Anti-Consumerist Worldview

Our team began to work toward promoting a new worldview—Simple Style. The focus is on changing one's worldview such that a person does not view themselves as lesser than someone else if: he or she doesn't have a smart phone; he or she can't buy a big house for his or her family; he or she doesn't drive a new car. Alongside caring for victims of human trafficking and using our prevention program, we would like show the real reason of contemporary slavery and to help all like-minded persons and organizations to work together to lobby anti-consumerist worldviews on different levels.

There are at least four elements of an anti-consumerist worldview:

- A person can and should live according to his or her income.
- An estimation of one's life should not be build upon purchasing power.
- Glamour and the fashion establishment are not the rulers in this life game.
- The West should understand that the East is not a marketplace for Western products and cheap trade force.

Vladimir Ubeivole is president of Beginning of Life, a Non-Governmental Organization in Moldova.

Cross-cultural Guest Speaking: Helping Those in the West Make the Greatest Impact

By Kimberly Rae Thigpen

(Editor's note: Although this topic has been touched upon a number of times in other publications and our hope is that these guidelines are second nature to those speaking cross-culturally, nonetheless we feel it important that all of us remind ourselves from time to time what a biblical, effective, humble cross-cultural servant looks like.)

It was hot, as usual, sitting in the international church service in South Asia. Fans above us swirled the heat around in circles as we sang choruses. The congregation represented several different countries. Most of those present knew English as a second or even third language.

The guest speaker approached the pulpit and began his sermon. He gestured and paced, raised his voice, and then gave a flamboyant illustration about a mayonnaise and tomato sandwich that he had been trying to eat while driving, which, when he turned a curve, ended up with the tomato flying out of the sandwich onto the window.

To this day, I couldn't tell you what his sermon had been about. But I will always remember that story, given to a room full of people who did not know what mayonnaise was, much less a sandwich, who would never hold food with the left hand while driving. And even if the story had a vital point, the people wouldn't have been able to understand it because the speaker was talking so rapidly.

As tragically funny as the whole situation was, I couldn't help but think that something good had been wasted. A church in America had spent a great deal of money to send this man to the mission field, and he had good things to teach. But futility reigned due to a very simple, easily-corrected problem.

Although he had likely spent hours preparing his sermon, the guest speaker had spent little time preparing for the fact that he would be speaking to people of another native tongue.

Soon after the tomato sandwich incident, I started collecting pieces of advice that could have helped that man have a successful, impacting experience in a different cultural setting. (Many of the following originated from the preparation manual of my missionary colleagues in South Asia, to whom I give thanks for their insights.)

These tips are not just for those in missions, but for any situation in which you find yourself speaking with someone to whom English is not their first language. Below are suggestions for English speakers who are cross-culturally guest speaking.

Speaking in English to Audiences Who Do Not Speak English as a First Language

1. Speak slowly and clearly. Use small sentences and pause often.
2. Humor that your audience can identify with is appreciated, but jokes often fall flat in a different culture; it may be best to leave them out.
3. Beware of gestures that might offend. If you are visiting where there are established missionaries, ask them what gestures are considered rude (e.g., the thumbs up sign, okay sign, pointing, pounding the pulpit, gesturing with your Bible, placing your Bible on the floor).
4. Avoid negative statements about other religions. You are there to lift up Christ, not tear down other's beliefs.
5. Use a translation of the Bible that non-native English speakers will understand.
6. If you sense you are not being understood, do not just keep repeating yourself louder and louder. Likely it is your words or your accent that are not being understood. It would be best to pull aside a missionary in that culture, and ask what you can do to be better understood. This is an exercise in humility.

Speaking through an Interpreter

As you prepare:

1. Remember that with an interpreter you will speak only fifty percent of the time. If you are given twenty minutes for your message, prepare for ten.
2. Avoid plays on words, poetry, alliteration, and clichés. (For example, “Jesus, the SON, is the SUN that shines in our lives” will not translate well, because in other languages, those two words will be totally different. Also, using clichés such as “I put my foot in my mouth” will completely lose your audience, as they will all be wondering why you would do such a disgusting thing.)
3. Use stories. Jesus used them to great effect. Often stories connect with people across cultural barriers much better than other teaching methods.

Your interpreter:

1. Get together with your interpreter before you are to speak. Have a time of prayer. Then go over the general outline of your message.
2. Go over illustrations and stories you will use, asking the interpreter if they are appropriate and the audience will understand them. (In many cultures, it is not polite to correct a respected person, such as a guest speaker, so you will need to reassure your interpreter that you want to be as effective as possible and really want his or her help.)
3. Many cultures do not speak freely about certain subjects, and you will cause your interpreter great shame if you insist on their translation. (For example, in some countries, words like divorce, homosexuality, abortion, and child abuse are shameful concepts not to be spoken of in public.)
4. Show honor and gratitude toward your interpreter, as he or she is serving the Lord and you.

During your message:

1. Although you will be using child-level language, remember that you are communicating to adults who think deeply.
2. If you find yourself uncertain during your sermon, better to stop and check quickly with your interpreter than to continue and cause shame. This may feel embarrassing to you, but will show that you value his or her culture, and will earn you respect.
3. When you want a passage of scripture read, just have your interpreter read it in his or her language. This will save time.
4. At the end of your message, ask the interpreter or pastor to close in prayer in his or her own language.
5. Above all, pray. Ask the Holy Spirit’s help for you and your interpreter.

Your labor is not in vain in the Lord, and taking these few, small extra steps will not only show honor to those you desire to serve, but will give access to your words, and impact to your message.

Kimberly Rae Thigpen and her husband served as missionaries in closed (or restricted access) countries until health problems brought them back to the United States. They now live in Ohio with their two young children.

LEADERSHIP PROFILES

Leadership Profile: Mark Russell, Russell Media, USA

Q. Tell us about your family.

A. My wife, Laurie, and I have been married for over ten years. We met as missionaries in Russia and have served as a couple in Chile and Germany. Our son, Noah, was born in 2001 in Santiago, Chile. Our daughter, Anastasia, was born in 2003 in Munich, Germany.

Q. Give us a brief overview of your work and ministry.

A. My ministry has almost always focused on the marketplace and entrepreneurship. I've lived and worked in numerous countries and for various mission and microfinance organizations. My primary task at hand is growing our media company, **Russell Media**, whose mission is to rally the Church around global, transformational causes.

Q. What is your favorite quote?

A. "The difference between great people and everyone else is that great people create their lives actively, while everyone else is created by their lives, passively waiting to see where life takes them next. The difference between the two is the difference between living fully and just existing." - Michael E. Gerber, author of *The E-Myth Revisited*

Q. Who has been the most influential person in your life/ministry, and why?

A. My wife has influenced me and challenged me in more ways than I ever imagined. She is a wise person with a unique perspective on all matters of life. I never do anything of significance without getting her input.

Q. What is the best piece of advice you've received?

Evangelism. On Point.

Q. Describe a time in which you shared your faith in Christ with someone who didn't know him, and then saw God clearly work in that situation.

A. Not long ago someone mentioned to me that he was really working at knowing God. When I asked some questions, I realized he was trying to do more good deeds than bad

A. Listen. I am convinced that we can learn something from every other person in the world. There is something they know that we don't or something they understand better than we do. Listening enables us to learn more and understand deeper. When we talk, we cannot learn because we are saying what we already know.

Q. What one issue do you believe is the greatest barrier or opportunity to evangelism, and why?

A. The most significant barrier to evangelism is behavioral. It's not a lack of proof or understanding; it's that people don't want to change their behaviors to align with a sovereign God's expectations. The greatest opportunity is finding common ground with the world on causes (such as clean water, human trafficking, and world peace) and getting them outside of themselves (so they aren't focused on the behaviors) and come to see Christ and his followers as lovers of good and others.

Q. What book do you most often recommend, and why?

A. The book of James. It's powerful, challenging, and real. It grabs me every single time.

Q. What websites, bloggers, and tweeters do you regularly follow?

A. My favorite website is www.biblegateway.com. My favorite blogger is Michael Hyatt of Thomas Nelson Publishing House (www.michaelhyatt.com). My favorite tweeter is Scott Harrison of charity: water (@scottharrison)

Q. What would you like to be doing in ten years?

A. Writing books and developing documentaries that help people be transformed and become agents of transformation. To be transformed means to be radically changed in every aspect of life. To love others differently, to view life through an others-focused spiritual lens and to manage our various responsibilities with wisdom and sensitivity. Being transformed means we live our faith consistently on a continual basis, which sets us on a journey of knowing God better, loving others more, and growing in Christlikeness. Becoming an agent of transformation means we are influential and instrumental in helping others become transformed. This relates to people with whom we are in close relationship as well as those with whom we have minimal contact. Influential agents of transformation enable social and spiritual change by helping many other people be transformed.

so that he could get to heaven. I had him read Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." At first, he argued this could not be true and was contradictory to everything he'd ever heard. Slowly, as I talked to him about the person and purpose of Christ, I could tell it sank in that this was something he'd missed the entire time. He needed more time to think about it before responding in faith, but I could tell that God was at work.

Books by Mark Russell

Russell, Mark, ed. 2009. *Our Souls at Work: How Great Leaders Live Their Faith in the Global Marketplace*.

_____. 2010. *The Missional Entrepreneur: Principles and Practices for Business as Mission*.

Russell, Mark, Allen Yeh, Dwight Friesen, Michelle Sanchez, and Chelle Stearns. Forthcoming 2010. *Routes & Radishes: And Other Things to Talk about at the Evangelical Crossroads*.

Q. How can people be praying for you?

A. That I live in such a way that the people who are closest to me, feel loved, cherished, and respected.

LAUSANNE REPORTS

Summary Report: Cape Town 2010 U.S. Participants Meeting, 25-27 January 2010 in Dallas, Texas

By Dave Bennett

Nearly 300 men and women from 175 organizations—local churches, denominations, mission agencies, schools, businesses, and foundations—gathered at Highland Park Presbyterian Church in Dallas, Texas, for a foretaste of this October’s Cape Town 2010 and the Lausanne Global Conversation that will lead up to and ripple out from it.

In October 2010, four hundred U.S. participants will be in Cape Town with some four thousand other participants from two hundred countries. Many at this Dallas meeting commented on the beautiful diversity of the participants in age, gender, ethnicity, region, ministry focus, and denominational affiliation—a diversity that will also be reflected in Cape Town.

The Dallas gathering was intended to catalyze relationships between the U.S. representatives and other leaders identifying with the Lausanne Movement, to begin discussion around the six themes of Cape Town 2010, and to look beyond Cape Town 2010 to collaborative evangelistic efforts in the U.S. leading toward 2020.

Throughout the three days participants met around tables of six to eight. The core of the program consisted of six extended conversations related to the key issues of the upcoming Congress:

- Making the Case for the Truth of Christ in a Pluralistic, Globalized World
- Building the Peace of Christ in our Divided and Broken World
- Bearing Witness of the Love of Christ with People of Other Faiths
- Discerning the Will of Christ for Twenty-first Century World Evangelization
- Calling the Church of Christ Back to Humility, Integrity, and Simplicity
- Partnering in the Body of Christ toward a New Global Equilibrium

Each topic was introduced by brief, incisive comments by Nikki Toyama-Szeto, complemented by video clips and/or thought-provoking insights from Os Guinness and others. Woven around the lively table discussions were presentations of the genesis of the Cape Town 2010 idea and of the Lausanne Global Conversation and the supporting technology that would enable participation of thousands of Christians around the world before the Congress through the Internet, and during the Congress through 250 Cape Town GlobalLink sites.

Other highlights included meditations by Lindsay Olesberg on Paul’s prayers in Ephesians, worship songs in several languages, live greetings through Skype from Rick Warren, an enthusiastic invitation for U.S. delegates to re-gather in March 2011 to tend the flame and to plan for the coming decade of evangelization, and Doug Birdsall’s reminder of the “spirit of Lausanne” as expressed by Dr. Billy Graham: “the spirit of fellowship, humility, study, prayer, partnership and hope.”

The spirit of Lausanne was evident throughout the days in Dallas, a gathering that contributed powerfully to the growing momentum for Cape Town 2010.

Dave Bennett is senior program advisor for the 2010 Lausanne Cape Town Congress.

Terms and Conditions of Use

All material from LWP is copyrighted by Evangelism and Missions Information Service (EMIS), its partners, and authors. All rights are reserved. Except for personal use, no part of LWP may be reproduced by any mechanical, photographic or electronic process, or in the form of an audio recording, nor may it be stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or otherwise copied for public or private use without written permission of EMIS. For information regarding reprints or permissions, email info@lausanneworldpulse.com.