

Media and Technology - Moving Forward Together

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Wherever we live in today's globalized and pluralistic world, information and communication technologies increasingly influence and impact our human lives, our Christian witness and our Christian ministries.

I write this as an apologist and ethicist involved in educating journalists and Christian communicators in an evangelical liberal arts college in Norway. My perspectives and reflections are also coloured by my access to and uses of various media messages and information technologies.

We certainly need to learn from each other globally on how to approach media and technology appropriately as Christians. This is where double listening is an essential common foundation for our conversation, with the commitment to listen both to God's Word and God's world.

Living and witnessing in changing media cultures

The rapidly developing information and communication technologies constitute a radically different media context for the Lausanne III-congress compared to the previous two Lausanne world congresses in 1974 and 1989, not to mention the much earlier conference in Edinburgh 1910. This is illustrated by defining features such as the present Global Conversation and the upcoming GlobalLink.

More importantly, the various uses of these media technologies are shaping our everyday lives and give us potential access to a variety of media cultures. Such contemporary media cultures may be global, local or glocal. The latter term (?glocal?) describes the fact that current media cultures often combine global and local elements and perspectives, both in terms of the actual messages and the ongoing interpretations. These complex media contexts create a number of challenges and opportunities both for authentic human living and credible Christian witnessing.

The various modern media are no longer the privileged area of media professionals and media academics. Almost everyone everywhere in today's globalized world seems gradually ? and at least potentially ? to become both users of modern media technologies and participants in modern media cultures. When analysed properly, we discover that media messages always contain traces of secular and religious worldview perspectives and thus both reflect and shape current worldview trends.

Engaging these complex media technologies and cultures is an integral part of making the case for the Truth of Christ in a pluralistic, globalized world.

Engaging media in global partnerships ? through awareness, presence and mission

As evangelicals we have a track record for being involved in and with the media, but not always appropriately and with integrity. Traditionally, the global evangelical community has been strongest in the area of media missions, but much weaker in the equally important areas of media awareness and media presence.

There is an urgent need to develop proper media awareness in local churches and youth ministries and to do this in global partnership. Such potential media awareness initiatives need to take into account both the global and the local media messages in any given cultural context. This means developing culturally relevant approaches and material, which integrate a number of complementary perspectives. Thus, we need to become more aware of how technological, aesthetical, cultural, worldview, theological and spiritual dimensions together contribute to the making of the modern news and entertainment media.

There is often a lack of authentic Christian role models in the general (or major) media and a corresponding lack of proper training. As a global evangelical community, we need to practice an appropriate media presence in the news and entertainment media. This is where talented Christian journalists, documentarians and commentators have the opportunity to introduce neglected stories, key ideas and new perspectives. The same is true of gifted Christians in the areas of creative media and arts, where the creation of fictional stories may open up new ways of imagining Christian truths. I would also like to add that there are increasing opportunities for general media presence through the creative use of interactivity and social media.

There is a wide spectrum of evangelical media missions, often with complementary strategies and considerable experience. Recently, the arrival of the internet and related digital technologies has introduced such media as key elements in most Christian missions and ministries. This is certainly true also of evangelical ministries. We need a variety of strategic media mission initiatives and ministries in today's global world. This involves the creative and critical use of various media platforms, genres and formats to communicate the Gospel Truth of 'God in Christ reconciling the world to himself' in the context of a holistic biblical worldview.

Engaging the media ? ?in the world, but not of the world?

Being salt and light in a fast-paced media-saturated world also includes the call to all of us to nurture critical reflections, authentic relationships, and genuine space for silence, meditation and prayer. This means living with the truth, reality and holiness of Christ in the midst of the trivialities, the spin, and the fantasies of many contemporary media worlds.