

Editorial Reflections

Where have all these “Lausanne” conferences come from? And why are they needed?

Two Missionary Kids, Two Wives, Two Global Leaders

That’s right. Two young women, who grew up on the mission field, married two men who became global Christian leaders, Billy Graham and Carl F. H. Henry. The latter became the editor of *Christianity Today*.

Was it Dr. Henry’s wife Helga who urged him to propose to Billy Graham that the two of them jointly sponsor the World Conference on Evangelism in Berlin, in 1966? Quite likely!

Was it Billy Graham’s wife who seconded the motion? Quite likely.

Helga Henry was the one who translated (from the German) for that conference *The History of Evangelism* by Paulus Scharpf, a groundbreaking book that tells of fervent evangelists preaching justification by faith long before the Reformation. Her father had been caught up in the Student Volunteer Movement. She also wrote a keen slim book, entitled *Cameroon on a Clear Day*, which tells the whole fascinating story of his missionary pioneering in the northern part of the Cameroon.

The next conference—eight years after Berlin 1966—was held at Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974, the International Congress on World Evangelization (ICOWE), the first of a series of “COWE” conferences.

Why is the Lausanne movement needed? There is already a global association, the World Evangelical Association (WEA), which is primarily an association of denominations with explicitly Evangelical tone. By contrast, the complementary Lausanne movement is a network of individuals who have been specifically chosen on the basis of their Evangelical activity—no matter whether they are or not members of a denominational member of the WEA. This thus makes it a much more pervasive and extended movement.

Both organizations have high value. We have to hand it to two daughters of missionaries who played a significant role behind the scenes.

Homosexuality and Toxic Wastes

To me it is almost totally mysterious why both camps, pro and con, talk as though there are only two possibilities: 1) Homosexuality is perfectly natural and normal; and 2) Homosexuality is due to sinful decisions.

According to a book entitled *The Feminization of Nature* by Deborah Cadbury, the facts are clear: toxic factors in groundwater and agricultural products—hundreds of tons annually of female hormones in both—are affecting a whole range of different forms of animal life. Other articles have pointed out that 40% of the salmon going down the Columbia River change gender by the time they get to the sea.

But in all the many accounts of the influences on animal life I have not seen any mention of gender confusion in humans resulting from such influences. All I see simply labels homosexual orientation as either perfectly normal or perfectly sinful. Even if someone is born with homosexual orientation, the toxic influence could be prenatal. *Science News*, June 4, 2005, page 355 reports that mild to severe “demasculinization” results in genital deformation, lowered sperm counts, etc. when phthalates are found in women’s bodies—and today are found in 25% of women, stemming from various cosmetics, nail polish, perfume, etc.

This distorting source is in addition to and entirely separate from the massive hormonal influences already mentioned. Presumably few animals suffer from the influences of nail polish or perfume and yet are extensively distorted.

Why, then do we mainly hear from some that human homosexuality must be considered entirely normal and from others that it is entirely sinful? Does such a simplistic polarization not deter us from seeking out causal environmental factors that could be changed?