

WEA helps Rwandan evangelical pastors meet government training requirement

The WEA and Re-Forma, with financial support from Local Leaders International (formerly Overseas Council Australia), have performed a crucial facilitation role in assisting evangelical pastors in Rwanda whose work was challenged by recently adopted government requirements.

In 2018, the Rwandan government adopted a measure stipulating that by 2023, preachers with supervisory responsibilities must possess a degree in religious studies from an institution of higher learning or any other degree with a valid certificate in religious studies issued by a recognized institution. The motivation behind this regulation may be honorable, as Rwanda has faced a proliferation of unaccountable pastors forming independent congregations and sometimes even scamming their parishioners. Moreover, it is understandable that Rwanda, which is predominantly Christian in nominal affiliation yet experienced a horrible genocide in 1994, should want to improve the quality of moral leadership offered by its pastors. However, connecting legitimate pastors without bachelor's degrees to indigenous training opportunities seemed to be an overwhelming challenge.

In 2021, Bishop Eson Maniragaba, General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance of Rwanda, reached out to the WEA seeking assistance. In response, Theresa Lua, WEA director of global theology, contacted Local Leaders International, which has a partnership with Anglican colleges across Africa to promote theological education.

Through their collaborative efforts, 20 Rwandan pastors received Local Leaders International funding to enroll in suitable degree programs at East Africa Christian College.

Viateur Ndikumana, principal of the college, noted that the 20 pastors seeking degrees there come from numerous denominations. He indicated that the financial support is not only giving the Rwandan church more highly trained leaders but also promoting unity and an ecumenical spirit among them.

'Our goal is to help many pastors remain in ministry, and I thank the WEA for its focus on national alliances', Bishop Maniragaba stated. 'Though the need is huge, this help has encouraged us and we pray that God will continue to open the door for other students.'

The WEA and its Rwandan affiliate will be working to obtain a time extension beyond 2023 from the Rwandan government for pastors of established quality, as identified by the Rwandan Evangelical Alliance, who have been unable to attain a bachelor's degree thus far.

Reuben van Rensburg, Project Director of Re-Forma (the WEA-supported initiative designed to help Christian leaders without formal training attain a global standard of biblical ministry), is also seeking to assist Rwandan evangelicals. He has met twice with the Chief Executive Officer of the Rwanda Governance Board, who has encouraged denominational leaders to continue their fruitful discussions



Bishop Eson Maniragaba, General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance of Rwanda © WEA

with Re-Forma regarding training options. It is hoped that these denominations will urge their pastors to attain the Re-Forma Certificate, which is underwritten by the WEA, as a means to demonstrate their competence as pastors.

The significance of Re-Forma's efforts was recognized in the following article that appeared on 9 April 2023 in *The New Times*, a publication based on Kigali, Rwanda's capital.

Rwanda: Govt Looks to Weed Out Impostors from Churches

From *The New Times*, Kigali, Rwanda
by Eddy Abayisenga

The Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) is collaborating with Re-Forma, a South African religious institution, to train church leaders and reduce the number of impostors in churches. The move is aimed at improving the capacity of religious leaders and ensuring that they have the necessary theological qualifications.

Re-Forma is a South African religious institution which offers informal and non-formal training programs worldwide to ensure that millions of pastors and church leaders are biblically trained by providing a recognised, global standard for outcome- and impact-based assessment.

Dr Usta Kaitesi, CEO of RGB, said that effective training of church leaders will improve the religious sector and nurture communities by promoting true faith. She noted that if training of church leaders is effectively done, Rwandans would get good services from the religious sector.

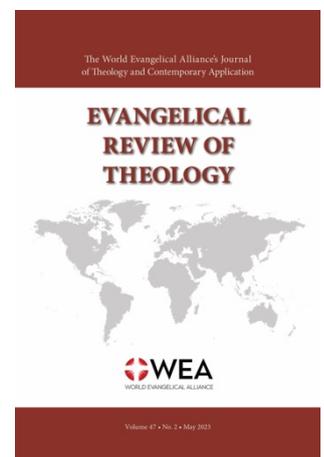
'The most concerned with training are those with pastors who have insufficient training in relation to the required standards', she added.

Recently, the RGB CEO attended a virtual meeting which gathered church leaders and Re-Forma Project Director Dr Reuben van Rensburg, to discuss how this movement can help the Rwandan community. The partnership will help to address the problem of some spiritual servants lacking integrity and leading congregations without the required skills and capacity.

May issue of Evangelical Review of Theology breaks new ground

If you're not a free 'subscriber' to the WEA's *Evangelical Review of Theology*, you should be! You can join the subscriber list at <https://theology.worldidea.org/evangelical-review-of-theology/>.

The May issue breaks new ground in our efforts to tackle important practical topics with high-quality articles. In this issue, Asian mission leader Joe Handley discusses the state of global disciple-making efforts. We also have an article by an expert on the work of sports chaplains and two articles on the New Apostolic Reformation controversy, plus book reviews on the theology of video gaming, Philippine evangelical attitudes toward the "war on drugs," and church planting movements. Sign up now to get the May issue link in your inbox, or read all prior issues free at the ERT website.



WEA publishes stimulating book on ‘Research as Worship’

The WEA has co-released Martine Audéoud’s fascinating book *Research as Worship in the Company of God*, along with the Society of Christian Scholars and Bakke Graduate University (BGU). Audéoud, who spent much of her career as associate director for graduate studies at the University of the Christian Alliance of Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire), is now PhD program director for BGU and an advisor to the Society of Christian Scholars.

To encourage graduate students and other scholars to approach their academic work as service to God and not just as part of their career advancement, Audéoud develops, in her book, an extended analogy between the steps in the research process and the features of the Old Testament tabernacle as described in Leviticus. Readers—especially those preoccupied with the professional challenges of thesis writing—will gain many insights about integrating their Christian faith and spiritual growth with their academic pursuits.

We asked Audéoud to share some of her inspiring perspective with *Theological News* readers.

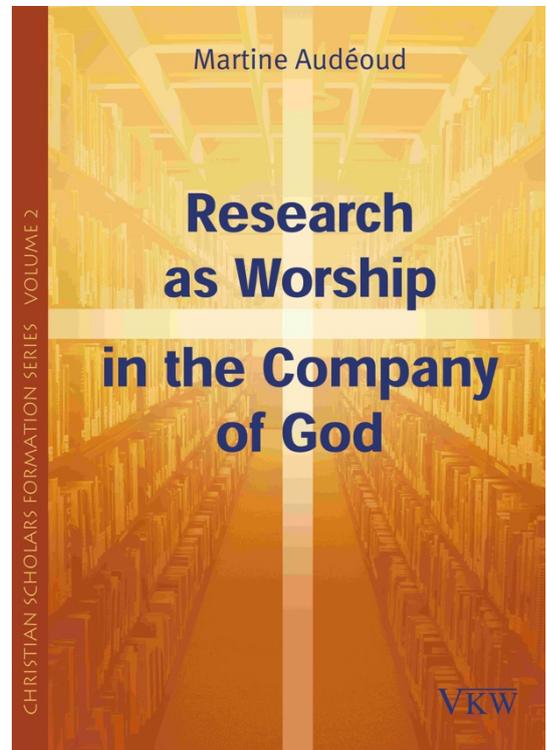
Q: You’ve worked with a lot of graduate students over the years. Can you describe what caused you to feel that this book was needed?

Audéoud: I have often taught research methods courses to students in Christian universities. In most institutions, although faith is integrated into teaching in some way, the course texts and the course development pattern are essentially taken from the secular world. I was looking for an endemic, faith-integrated approach to research. I don’t mind using secular books to support research methodologies. However, I have long been wondering—what unique elements does the Christian faith bring to a Christian researcher’s work? What does the Lord expect from a Christian doctoral researcher?

Q: How did you derive the idea of comparing scholarly research to the tabernacle?

Audéoud: A little over 40 years ago, I went to eastern Congo (then Zaire) to work in the tropical rainforest with a missionary family. Since I had quite a bit of time available after completing my main assignment of teaching children, I learned the local language (Swahili), and within a few months I was able, with some literate Christian native women, to start systematic Bible teaching in the surrounding villages, where most of the women were illiterate. We wanted people to understand how God is different from and offers so much more than their traditional beliefs. How do you teach about God in such a context? I reflected on that situation, and the Lord inspired me to make a model tabernacle with banana leaves and other local items. We used this display and the Old Testament sacrificial laws to teach various aspects of who God is for a Christian believer.

Many years later, when I was reflecting and praying about what kind of faith-integrated framework could be proposed to Christian doctoral researchers, the Lord put the tabernacle on my mind again. I wanted a metaphor that would give non-Western students a more tangible anchor regarding faith-integrated research methodology and that could be used cross-culturally. The tabernacle serves that purpose well.



Q: It is easy for Christian academics, especially if in a secular institution, to become secularized into doing their work like everyone else. What remedies for this problem do you suggest? How do you enable Christian scholars to perceive their uniquely Christian calling in academia?

Audéoud: It is easy for Christian academics to go with the flow and do their work like everyone else. They do need to communicate in a way that is understandable by the secular world. However, I strongly believe that the Christian researcher has a much higher (or deeper) calling: to unfold some of God's glory here on earth.

Christian scholars must surround themselves with an accountability group of fellow Christians. In the Western world, research has often been done solo, even in secrecy. This individualistic mindset regarding research may still be prevalent in some circles and contexts. I urge Christian researchers to share their research in small accountability circles that can keep them focused on their end goals and support them through prayer and encouraging communication. This is also why I am involved with the Society of Christian Scholars as it seeks to build a network with Christian scholars throughout the world and across geographic barriers.

Q: What do you think is possible if Christian scholars all over the world, especially those in secular institutions, really devoted their intellectual gifts and careers to God's service?

Audéoud: For Christians, devoting their intellectual gifts and careers to God's service should be non-negotiable! Wherever Christians live and work, they are called to devote their lives to God's service. Sometimes, we have not taught a theology of work well enough, especially because of the Western tendency to compartmentalize the various parts of our lives. This has led to a dichotomy between Sunday and the rest of the week, between worship and work, for Christians. My book attempts to show a particular segment of the Christian workforce—academic researchers—how their work can benefit society, draw people to Christ, and display additional rays of God's glory.



Martine Audéoud © private

JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS WITHIN THE GLOBAL THEOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Evangelical Review of Theology (quarterly)

<https://theology.worldidea.org/evangelical-review-of-theology/>

Islam and Christianity (English & German) (semiannual)

<https://www.islaminstitut.de/en/category/publikationen/journal/>

Jahrbuch für Verfolgung und Diskriminierung von Christen [Yearbook on Persecution and Discrimination of Christians]

<http://jahrbuch.iirf.global/>

International Journal of Religious Freedom (semiannual)

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Jahrbuch für Religionsfreiheit [Yearbook on Religious Freedom]

<http://jahrbuch.iirf.global/>

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Theological News (quarterly)

<https://theology.worldidea.org/theological-news/>

Bonn Profiles (twice a week)

<https://bonn-profiles.net/>

WEA RLC Religious Liberty Prayer News (monthly)

<https://worldidea.org/whowere/newsletter-signup>

Business & Ministry News (Business Coalition) (monthly)

order from business@worldidea.org

Bonner Querschnitte (twice a week) (German)

<https://bonner-querschnitte.de/>

WEA RLC Research and Analysis Report (periodic)

<https://worldidea.org/whowere/newsletter-signup>

Increase Association holds fruitful training conference in Asia

The Increase Association, which connects and strengthens church-based training movements across Asia and beyond, welcomed WEA Secretary General Thomas Schirmacher in late November 2022 for a conference at Seremban, Malaysia that attracted 170 Christian leaders from about 30 countries.

Following an extensive process of seeking the Lord's direction, Increase structured the event around seven 'pearls' or activity areas: building relationships, providing resources and training, building partnerships and connections in theological education, sharing fruitful practices, serving the diaspora, supporting new theological education by extension (TEE) initiatives, and digital delivery. The pearls are to be held together and supported by a 'golden thread' of unity, love, respect, prayerfulness, and focus on and faithfulness to God's Word.

In advance of the main conference, a training day for leaders of Increase member organizations covered five topics, derived from member input: conflict resolution, organizational development and governance, succession and transition planning, effective program administration, and sustainability.

Sessions on digitally enhanced learning were led by four Increase equippers: Hanna-Ruth van Wingerden (Netherlands), Sharjeel Munawar (Pakistan), Rick Weymouth (Jordan/New Zealand) and ND Lama (Nepal). Plenary sessions covered course writing and discipling believers in the diaspora. The four afternoon training tracks addressed, respectively, contextualization of material originally written for other settings; training of group leaders; achieving life-changing practical application; and designing effective pathways to equip Christians for specific roles and contexts.

For more information on Increase's activities, write to increaseassociation@gmail.com.



WEA Secretary General Thomas Schirmacher addressing the Increase conference. © WEA



The WEA Secretary General with the board of the Evangelical Alliance of Malaysia. © WEA

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New Central and Eastern European Bible Commentary Available

Recently, high-quality commentaries on the Bible have been produced from distinctively Asian and African perspectives. Now Langham has published a similar work from another part of the world with a rich Christian history.

The Central and Eastern European Bible Commentary is the first such work to emerge from this region. It provides a contemporary, contextually relevant, church-based commentary written exclusively by biblical scholars from 20 countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Rooted in solid scholarship and written in clear and accessible language, this commentary will appeal to Christians everywhere.

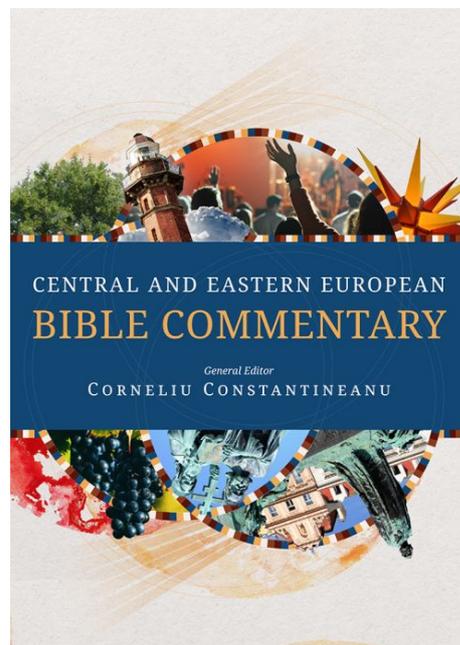
Edited by the late Corneliu Constantineanu, a Romanian-born theologian who served as professor and academic dean at theological schools in Romania and Croatia, the commentary contains applications of biblical teaching to the Central and Eastern European context, along with more than 100 articles addressing issues related to living as Christians in the 21st century.

Globally prominent theologian Christopher J. H. Wright delivered the keynote address at the book's launch ceremony in Prague, Czech Republic on 3 March.

Peter Penner, one of the commentary's theological editors, took over the project after Constantineanu's untimely death from COVID-19 in 2021. Penner described the new commentary as a successful attempt to unite Christian scholars across a region of diverse countries and languages. 'Corneliu has been very instrumental in bringing together, bridging, and connecting people', Penner stated. 'This is one big step. And I hope we will follow with some more steps as we continue in this direction.'

The Langham Partnership, founded by John Stott, has been supporting the development of regionally based one-volume Bible commentaries for the last two decades. Previous commentaries have covered Africa, South Asia, Central Asia, the Slavic region, the Middle East, and Latin America. Many of these commentaries have been published in multiple languages.

The book can be ordered at <https://langhamliterature.org/central-and-eastern-european-bible-commentary>.



Remembering George Verwer

George Verwer, founder of Operation Mobilisation and one of the most innovative mission leaders of the 20th century, died on 14 April. Many obituaries of Verwer are available, including a inspiring article in Christianity Today (see <https://worldmag.org/yourls/tn522ct>). To those remembrances, we wish to add the following comments by WEA Secretary General Thomas Schirmmacher.

I am glad that George Verwer left his legacy, in his last appearance before a large global audience (in 2019), not to a specific section of the spiritual family he belonged to, but to the World Evangelical Alliance's General Assembly. I am thankful that my predecessor, Bishop Efraim Tendero, wisely chose George Verwer as the final plenary speaker of that General Assembly, not knowing that this would be the last such platform for George. I am thankful to George himself, who came despite being limited by his

health already. And I am especially thankful for his message about his shirt with the world map on it; on world mission, the central topic of WEA since 1846; and on radical discipleship, the fulfilment of the topic of the General Assembly surrounding the Decade of Discipleship.

In my private meeting with George after his message, he was worn out but extremely happy that his life-long investment in recruiting, encouraging and always pushing people to do more for Jesus had brought forth so much fruit and was accepted by the global church. We promise to champion his legacy of radical discipleship for Jesus.

I first saw George Verwer as a small boy, when he visited my family. Already at that time, he seemed somehow chaotic in style, shocking others with what seemed to be strange ideas about short-term missionaries or buying large, old ships and turning them into global mission tools. God blessed his out-of-the-box thinking mightily! George—much like Billy Graham—spoke openly about his failures; he even wrote a book called *Messiology*. In his sermons, speeches and books, he always gave examples of his fallibility. He was rightly convinced that this should be part of every sermon, every witness to the grace of God.

George encouraged me, in my leadership position, not to listen to those who expect one always to do the right thing, never to fail, never to sin. Instead, he assured me that we can be leaders only by the grace of God, who uses us for his purposes despite our limitations and our constant need for forgiveness.



George Verwer and Thomas Schirrmacher at the General Assembly of WEA in Indonesia November 12, 2019 © Thomas Schirrmacher

WEA THEOLOGICAL NEWS

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- Re-forma (Untrained Pastors Training)
- Increase (Church-Based Training)
- Society of Christian Scholars
- International Institute for Islamic Studies (IIIS)
- Evangelical Training Directory
- International Alliance for Christian Education (IACE)
- Galilean Movement