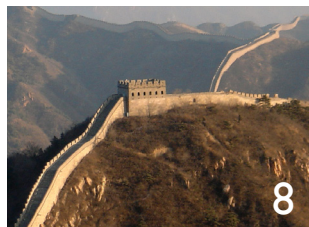


III | 2013



Lausanne
GLOBAL ANALYSIS

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The Lausanne Global Analysis seeks to deliver strategic and credible information and insight from an international network of evangelical analysts so that Christian leaders will be equipped for the task of world evangelization.

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ISSUE OVERVIEW

*David Taylor, Editor,
Lausanne Global Analysis*



Welcome to the November issue of Lausanne Global Analysis.

Whether you are planning to read the full articles or just the executive summaries, we hope that you find this issue stimulating and useful. Our aim is to deliver strategic and credible analysis, information and insight so that as a leader you will be better equipped for the task of world evangelization. It's our desire that the analysis of current and future trends and developments will help you and your team make better decisions about the stewardship of all that God has entrusted to your care.

In this issue we address several topical themes. We analyse what has come out of the groundbreaking Asian Christian Leaders' Forum held in Seoul in June, and we address Business as Mission (BAM), one of the key themes of the Global Leadership Forum held in Bangalore the week before. We also explore a topic related to BAM — that of Stewardship and Justice in the way we behave as consumers. We follow up our article in our March issue on the various ideological trends in China and Christian responses to them by analysing the results of a recent conference on the subject. Last, but by no means least, we examine the outlook — and many opportunities — for Christians in the Middle East amid the current turmoil and persecution.

The Asian Church Leaders Forum (ACLF) held in Seoul in June 2013 seemed at first like any other international conference, writes Ezra Jin. "However, for the representatives of the house churches in China, it was a conference of far-reaching significance. The deep sorrow felt by Chinese representatives at not being able to attend the Third Lausanne Congress at Cape Town in 2010 was greatly relieved". ACLF also brought comfort and unity for Chinese representatives who "felt accepted and included by the global family". The impact of ACLF will be felt in various areas, not least its '2030 vision', which provides a specific and clear direction for the church in China, mobilising resources and passion for world mission.

The eruption of revolts across the Middle East during the last two years has unleashed a process of change

that will take generations to play out, writes Wafik Wahba. The main beneficiary of this change was the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the Islamist agenda has been exposed for what it is. Meanwhile, in the last twenty years there has been a "significant surge in the number of Muslims coming to Christ". The estimated 5 million Christians from a Muslim background today can be found in almost every country in the region. They face severe persecution. "However, their perseverance and faithfulness are a remarkable witness to the gospel". Middle Eastern Christians may well face further times of persecution. However, the church will be stronger and bolder in its witness. The global church needs to be active in praying for and standing along their brothers and sisters, who for centuries have kept the lamp of faith burning amid turmoil and persecution.

Business as Mission, BAM, is a new term but the underpinning concept is not, writes Mats Tunehag. It is a rediscovery of biblical truths and practices. Our first God-given mandate is the creation mandate (Genesis 1-3). This includes being creative in business — to create wealth. "As Christians we often focus more on wealth distribution, but there is no wealth to distribute unless it has been created". We need to affirm and encourage business people to exercise their calling with professionalism, excellence and integrity. BAM is a small but growing global movement of Christians in the marketplace seeking to serve God and the common good through business. BAM is about societal transformation, which implies building the formal economy. He concludes: "BAM is an intergenerational issue, like other movements of societal transformation. We want to set a stage and serve our generation in such a way that it will be a blessing for many generations to come".

Our homes, workplaces, shops and markets are full of items made from around the world. However, we do not often consider the individuals behind the making of what we buy. "Because our world is global, we have an opportunity to care for others across borders through our everyday shopping, simply by being aware of the conditions in which they work and by making purchases that help those behind our products", writes Carrie Ngangngang. Tithing a tenth of our income to God is one

way to express gratitude and acknowledgment that all we have are blessings from him. However, we often do not consider how we spend the remaining 90% — which is also a stewardship issue. Organisations such as Trade as One and Food for the Hungry encourage consumers to spend in a way that extends compassion across borders. “Followers of Jesus can participate in restoration work throughout the world and the redemption of land and people by making purchases that seek to care for others globally”, she concludes.

In August 2013, the 6th Annual Forum for Chinese Theology on ‘Christian Faith & Ideological Trends in Contemporary China’ in Oxford brought together a significant group of Christian, Confucian, Leftist and Liberal Scholars from China and around the globe. It produced two notable outcomes, Thomas Harvey

writes. Firstly, the Oxford Consensus 2013 commits them to work together in mutual respect and shared concern to address the various challenges facing China and the world. Secondly, the conference served notice of the relevance of global Christianity when it engages secular academic scholars to address issues impacting civil society. “This conference represents an important step towards understanding the relationship between Christian faith, ideology and civil society. It also created significant connections between leading Christian and non-Christian academics and institutional leaders from China and the West”, he concludes.

Please send any questions and comments about this issue to analysis@lausanne.org. The next issue of Lausanne Global Analysis will be released in January.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A LANDMARK ENCOUNTER: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACLF FOR THE CHURCH IN CHINA

Ezra Jin

Some events only happen after an extraordinarily long wait — and during such a wait, many people persevere through failures and frustrations, praying in the midst of hardships and making great efforts to see things happen. The Asian Church Leaders Forum (ACLF) held in Seoul in June 2013, convened by Asia Lausanne (ALCOE) and hosted by Korea Lausanne, was such an event.

It seemed at first like any other international conference. However, for the representatives of the house churches in China, it was a conference of far-reaching significance. The deep sorrow felt by Chinese representatives at not being able to attend the Third Lausanne Congress at Cape Town in 2010 was greatly relieved.

When Chinese representatives were preparing to attend Cape Town 2010, they hoped to restore the fellowship and connection with the Global Church; to learn what churches throughout the world are doing about world mission and see how churches can all partner together; and to see different networks and different parts of the body in China become connected, be a witness together in Chinese society, and partner together in evangelisation and world mission.

ACLF basically fulfilled these purposes. It was a significant gathering of Christian leaders, including more than 100 representatives from churches in Mainland China — the traditional Chinese house church; rural networks; emerging urban house churches; Christian communities in education, culture, and business; and mission organisations in China. There were deep interactions and conversations with leaders from around the world about challenges pertaining to the urban church, theological education, witnessing in Chinese society, the 'Back to Jerusalem Movement' etc. ACLF also brought comfort and unity. Chinese representatives felt accepted and included by the global family.

During the past two years, the overseas Chinese church and the house church in China were estranged over the Cape Town 2010 controversies. However, ACLF

reduced this divide, strengthening everyone's determination to grow in mutual understanding, commitment, love, and prayer.

Furthermore, this gathering encouraged participants to move toward deeper unity and firmer commitment to each other. The 'Seoul Commitment' expresses their common aspiration.

The impact of ACLF will be felt in various areas, not least its '2030 vision', which provides a specific and clear direction for the church in China, mobilising resources and passion for world mission.

The global church should recognise that China still needs attention from the mission world. China is still the world's largest country that contains people who have not heard of the gospel, with many unreached people groups.

Furthermore, the Chinese church has experienced enormous challenges of urbanisation. Young people from the rural church are leaving. There is a shortage of pastoral leadership in the cities. The rise of heresy, tensions in church-state relations, and rampant materialism are among many daily challenges.

The global church should join with the church in China in shouldering this responsibility. The deepening exchanges between the global Church and the church in China should lead to a gradual building of deeper partnerships.

TURMOIL IN THE MIDDLE EAST: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS THERE AND GLOBALLY

Wafik Wahba

The eruption of revolts across the Middle East during the last two years reflects the region's dire socio-political situation, especially for the young and educated. It has unleashed a process of change that will take generations to play out.

The main beneficiary of this change was the Muslim Brotherhood. It held power in Egypt from July 2012 to July 2013. However, it quickly became clear that it lacked the capacity to govern. Over 15 million Egyptians

took to the streets, and the military took control of the country. Islamist rule collapsed in just one year.

The Islamist agenda has been exposed for what it is. Many moderate Muslims are questioning the validity of political Islam and calling for a secularised state system. During the last year, the number of secularists and even atheists has increased significantly in Egypt and in other countries in the region. Events in Egypt since June have created new positive relationships between Christians and Muslims, many of whom stood side by side against extremist Islamist policies, although in other parts of Egypt Christians and Christian property have face unprecedented levels of attack.

In the last twenty years there has been a significant surge in the number of Muslims coming to Christ. For centuries, it seemed that Muslim evangelism was impossible. However, the estimated 5 million Christians from a Muslim background today can be found in almost every country in the region. They face severe persecution for their faith. However, their perseverance and faithfulness are a remarkable witness to the gospel.

Middle Eastern Christianity has a long history of worship, fasting and prayer. Today, in the midst of turmoil and persecution, there is a renewed desire. Many Christians believe that it was the power of prayer that has exposed the source of corruption and injustice in the region

Middle Eastern Christians may well face further times of persecution. However, the church will be stronger and bolder in its witness. The prayer movement will spread to other Middle Eastern countries and will influence all denominations. There are new signs of Christian unity.

The global church needs to enable Christians around the world to be active in praying for and standing along their brothers and sisters, who for centuries have kept the lamp of faith burning amid so much turmoil and persecution. Churches outside the Middle East should consider active participation with Middle Eastern Churches, including joint ministry programmes, and joining in prayer and worship together. The global church will be richer through connecting with the long spirituality of the Middle Eastern church.

Above all, we need to trust in God's wisdom in reshaping the whole region and using the church for the furthering of his kingdom in the midst of the current chaos. The Lord who holds all power and authority in heaven and

on earth has promised to be with his church to the ends of the ages.

BUSINESS AS MISSION: BUILDING A MOVEMENT THAT CAN BRING LASTING SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION

Mats Tunehag

Business as Mission, BAM, is a new term but the underpinning concept is not. It is not a new discovery, but a rediscovery of biblical truths and practices.

Our first God-given mandate is the creation mandate, Genesis 1-3: we are to be creative and create good things, for ourselves and others, being good stewards of all things entrusted to us — even in the physical arena. This includes being creative in business — to create wealth. Wealth creation is a godly talent. As Christians we often focus more on wealth distribution, but there is no wealth to distribute unless it has been created.

God calls and equips some people to business. We need to affirm and encourage business people to exercise their calling with professionalism, excellence and integrity. BAM is a growing global movement of Christians in the marketplace seeking to serve God and the common good through business.

There is a global shortfall of about 1.8 billion good formal jobs. Many people live and work in the insecure, informal job sector. Most people hope for a formal job, but many have little or no prospect of finding one. BAM is about societal transformation, which implies building the formal economy. The backbone of developed countries is small and medium size enterprises (SMEs). SMEs also drive job creation in developing countries. Societal transformation implies good and lasting change.

The BAM movement is still small (a minority), but vision and values are increasingly shared across the globe. The first global think tank on BAM (2003 – 2004) and the Lausanne paper on BAM (2004) helped catalyze a common global understanding of the concept. We are aiming at a positive impact economically, socially, environmentally and spiritually, leading to holistic transformation of people and societies — to the greater glory of God. We are especially concerned about the world's poorest and the least evangelized peoples.

The 2nd global think tank process (2011 - 2013) has increased the connections, building a global BAM movement, establishing a shared vision, developing

common values, and facilitating a global network of BAM practitioners and other key leaders in the overall BAM eco-system.

Without critical mass of sizeable BAM businesses, SMEs and beyond, we cannot see transformation at a macro level — on cities, cultures and nations. Critical mass, in the BAM movement, is yet to come, although promising indicators are emerging in some countries and areas.

BAM is an intergenerational issue, like other movements of societal transformation. We want to set a stage and serve our generation in such a way that it will be a blessing for many generations to come. The modern BAM movement is still young. We want to build a movement that can bring good and lasting transformation. We embrace the promise that God will bless us so we can be a blessing — in and through business — in our generation and for many generations to come.

STEWARDSHIP AND JUSTICE: A CHALLENGE FOR CHRISTIAN CONSUMERS

Carrie Ngangnang

Our homes, workplaces, shops and markets are full of items made from around the world. However, we do not often consider the individuals behind the making of what we buy. Because our world is global, we have an opportunity to care for others across borders through our everyday shopping, simply by being aware of the conditions in which they work and by making purchases that help those behind our products.

For example, with the increase in demand over the past 15 years for electronics products, such as cell phones and computers, the need for coltan, the mineral used to make these devices, has increased dramatically. However, the largest mine of coltan is in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). With such a high demand for coltan, militia groups have been fighting for control of this highly valued resource for years.

Tithing a tenth of our income to God is one way to express gratitude and acknowledgment that all we have are blessings from him. However, we often do not consider how we spend the remaining 90% — which is also a stewardship issue.

The Cape Town Commitment puts it this way, “We support Christians whose particular missional calling is to environmental advocacy and action, as well as those committed to godly fulfillment of the mandate to provide

for human welfare and needs by exercising responsible dominion and stewardship.”

Organisations such as Trade as One and Food for the Hungry encourage consumers to spend in a way that extends compassion across borders. Followers of Jesus can participate in restoration work throughout the world and the redemption of land and people by making purchases that seek to care for others globally.

Additionally, there are practical steps consumers can take to help to slow the demand for coltan and help protect the Congolese people from unnecessary suffering, such as only buying new electronics goods when necessary and encouraging leading electronics companies to be vigilant in their purchasing of coltan.

Jesus is the hope of the world. He uses his Church to spread his good news of life and love for all of his creation. As his Church, we can participate in God’s plan for justice in an unjust world, simply by making purchases that care for others.

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND CURRENT IDEOLOGICAL TRENDS IN CHINA: THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ‘OXFORD CONSENSUS’

Thomas Harvey

In August 2013 in Oxford, England, the 6th Annual Forum for Chinese Theology on ‘Christian Faith & Ideological Trends in Contemporary China’ brought together a significant group of Christian, Confucian, Leftist and Liberal Scholars from China and around the globe. It produced two notable outcomes.

Firstly, the Oxford Consensus 2013 commits them to work together in mutual respect and shared concern to address the various challenges facing China and the world. They agreed that academic engagement at the highest level could nurture deeper understanding and greater appreciation of each other’s positions and concerns regarding the various issues raised during the conference.

Secondly, the conference served notice of the relevance of global Christianity when it engages secular academic scholars to address issues impacting civil society. This unique gathering brought together Christian and non-Christian scholars to address the issues surrounding current ideological trends in China and produced relevant and insightful engagement across academic disciplines.

This conference represents an important step towards understanding the relationship between Christian faith, ideology and civil society. It also created significant connections between leading Christian and non-Christian academics and institutional leaders from China and the West.

Though not without risk, it was novel and fruitful to bring together Christian and non-Christian Chinese and Western scholars in a joint conference to air views

on Christianity and ideology in China. The favourable reception this approach received from non-Christian delegates should suggest ways going forward to foster understanding, appreciation and even some amelioration of tension between Christianity and its religious and secular critics. It provided an alternative way forward for informed faith and secular perspectives to address the question of Christian faith in China outside traditional religious institutional frameworks that are too often fraught with bureaucratic and diplomatic hindrances.

A LANDMARK ENCOUNTER:

The significance of the ACLF for the church in China

Ezra Jin



Some events only happen after an extraordinary long wait — and during such a wait, many people persevere through failures and frustrations and keep praying in the midst of hardships, making great efforts to see things happen. The Asian Church Leaders Forum (ACLF) held in Seoul in June 2013 was such an event.

It seemed at first like any other international conference. However, for the representatives of the house churches in China, it was a conference of far-reaching significance. The deep sorrow felt by Chinese representatives at not being able to attend the Third Lausanne Congress at Cape Town in 2010 was greatly relieved. Their presence at ACLF symbolically fulfilled the mission of attending Cape Town 2010, and ACLF partly fulfilled the purpose of Cape Town 2010 for them.

When Chinese representatives were preparing to attend Cape Town 2010, they aimed to fulfil three purposes:

1. Fellowship with the Global Church in unity

Since 1949, when foreign missionaries were expelled, the church in China has been isolated from other churches in the world. Though the connection was partly restored after China's reform and opening up, the church in China still hopes to see a deeper, comprehensive, and more open fellowship with the Global Church.

The existence of the church in China is the fruit of Gospel seeds sown by countless

missionaries in the past 200 years with blood and tears, and is the evidence of the mission work of God's Spirit throughout the church. Chinese representatives hoped to restore the fellowship and connection of the church in China and the Global Church in the body of Christ, to inherit the history of the Universal Church, and to strengthen the mutual understanding of the church in China and in other parts of the world.

2. World mission

They sought to mobilise the church in China to participate in world mission. They wanted to learn what churches throughout the world are doing about world mission, and to see how churches can all partner together to advance the work of the Gospel of Christ.

3. Growing in maturity

They also wanted to help the church in China grow in maturity. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said that God's people are scattered in this hostile world. This is especially true in China's context. He then said that when we meet and gather in the name of Christ, it should be a foretaste of God's eschatological gifts. Hence, Chinese representatives also desired to see different networks and different parts of the body in China become connected through this whole process, to be a witness together as a loving body in Chinese society, and to partner together in evangelisation and world mission.

ACLF basically fulfilled these purposes:

- It was a significant gathering of Christian leaders. Representatives from different regions and organisations around the world, including 200 church leaders from Asia and the global church, and more than 100 representatives from churches in Mainland China, gathered together. Although not all of the 200 Chinese representatives invited to Cape Town were able to attend for various reasons, the basic constituency of participants remained the same. They were from the traditional Chinese house church; mainly rural networks that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s; emerging urban house churches; vibrant Christian communities in education, culture, and business; and mission organisations in China.
- ACLF was highly strategic. The history, current status and challenges of global mission movements, especially in an Asian context, were presented. To meet the needs of churches in China, ACLF also arranged workshops on church planting and pastoring in an urban context, theological education, and world missions. Chinese representatives shared the status and opportunities of Christianity in China in the 21st century, and issued the '2030 Mission China' vision of the church in China for world missions. There were deep interactions and conversations with leaders from around the world about challenges pertaining to the urban church, theological education, witnessing in Chinese society, the 'Back to Jerusalem Movement' etc.
- ACLF brought comfort and unity. During the three days, many world-renowned leaders did not even have a chance to speak publicly; yet they came just to be with Chinese representatives, and were fully involved throughout the conference. Chinese representatives received their fellowship with gratitude, and felt accepted and included by the global family through their silent companionship.

Part of the family

One night, Dr. Michael Oh, the newly appointed Executive Director of the Lausanne Movement, came to the Chinese delegation's meeting. He said "You are our heroes, but I also know deeply that you are sinners who

need God's grace in Christ. We are ready to see what kind of sinners you are as we walk together". When the delegation heard this, they truly felt that this was the family of God, because they, with their weakness and sin, were fully accepted in love.

One particular example illustrated such love. When delegates were about to watch the video testimony of Rev. Jin Tianming, the media staff suggested that only three minutes be aired since the broadcasting quality was extremely poor due to technical difficulties. However, the ACLF committee did not follow this suggestion.

"Since 1949, when foreign missionaries were expelled, the church in China has been isolated from other churches in the world".

Despite the poor quality, everyone listened carefully to the testimony of this suffering servant together, which made Chinese representatives feel that the Global Church was sharing the suffering together with them in Christ.

The most touching scene was on the last day's morning session when God's word, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35) was shared. After the sharing, the General Secretary of Chinese Coordination Centre of World Evangelism (CCCOWE), Joshua Ting, on behalf of the overseas Chinese church, solemnly apologised to representatives from Mainland China, for not effectively supporting the persecuted house church.

His action led many to confession and repentance, and brought many to tears. During the past two years, the overseas Chinese church and the house church in China were estranged over the Cape Town 2010 controversies. However, ACLF reduced this divide, strengthening everyone's determination to grow in mutual understanding, commitment, love, and prayer. Is there a greater testimony than to see brothers and sisters live together in unity? This gathering greatly encouraged each participant. Towards the end of the conference participants were asking each other, "How many times did you shed tears at this conference"?

Seoul Commitment

Furthermore, this gathering encouraged participants to move toward deeper unity and firmer commitment to each other. The 'Seoul Commitment', drafted by representatives of the church in China in response to the Cape Town Commitment, expresses their common aspiration:

1. "We commit ourselves to love the Gospel of Christ. We are determined to humbly learn the vision of evangelisation of the Lausanne Movement, to walk in the light of the Gospel, to proclaim the Gospel in Chinese society, and to advance the evangelical movement.
2. We commit ourselves to maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We are determined to accept one another, to strive for the unity exemplified in the Lausanne Movement and to live out a loving covenant community, so that we can bring praise to his glory as a spectacle to angels and men.
3. We commit ourselves to joining hands with the Global Church in world mission. We are determined to take the vision of world mission of the Lausanne Movement, to pray faithfully for world mission, and to take action in mission mobilisation, mission education and missionary sending.
4. We commit ourselves to raise up younger leaders of the next generation. We are determined to respond to the challenges and opportunities of our era in the spirit of the Lausanne Movement, pass the vision of evangelisation onto the younger generation and proclaim the salvation message of the old rugged cross with creative methods".

In addition, Rev. Daniel Li of Beijing City Revival Church, cast the vision of '2030 Mission China' (which he authored) during the conference. He urged the Chinese church to work and pray to see 20,000 missionaries sent out from China by 2030.

ACLF future impact

The impact of ACLF will be felt in various areas:

- ACLF provides a clear '2030 vision' for the church in China. This vision provides a specific and clear direction for the church, mobilising resources and passion to augment the waves of world mission.

"The global church should recognise that China in the 21st century still needs careful attention from the mission world".

- This vision will catalyse strategic meetings and organisations.
- The church in China will enter a new phase of consolidation.
- As the spirit of Lausanne becomes more deeply rooted, theological dialogues and conversations among churches will inevitably increase, which will have a profound and positive impact on the development and maturity of theology in China.
- The leadership networks and platforms formed around ACLF will have a direct impact on urban church planting, the transformation of rural churches, cross-cultural mission to minority groups in China, and overseas missions.
- Connections with overseas Chinese churches and mission organisations in different continents will reduce the preparation period for churches in China to participate in world mission.
- There are also some people speculating that the successful participation in ACLF by Chinese representatives is a sign of a new phase of church-state relations in China.

Suggested responses

The global church should recognise that China in the 21st century still needs careful attention from the mission world. Although China's Christian population has increased rapidly, reaching tens of millions (33 million according to official statistics), less than 7% of the population is evangelised. China is still the world's largest country that contains people who have not heard of the gospel, with many unreached people groups.

Furthermore, the Chinese church has experienced enormous challenges of urbanisation. Young people from the rural church are leaving. There is a shortage of pastoral leadership in the cities. The rise of heresy, ten-

sions in church-state relations, and rampant materialism are among many daily challenges facing the church after its recent rebirth.

The global church should join with the church in China in shouldering this responsibility. The deepening exchanges between the global Church and the church in China should lead to a gradual building of deeper partnerships. This could include working together, not only in ministries among indigenous Chinese, but in mission to minorities, in cooperation with churches in China. It could also include opening the door for the Chinese church to be engaged in world evangelisation. At this current stage, the aim should be to increase strategic dialogue and communication.

It is undeniable that God has led his church through the valley of the shadow of death, and made his church a beautiful testimony on the earth. Indeed, his faithfulness is its stronghold.



Pastor Ezra Jin graduated from Peking University, Beijing Yanjing Seminary and Fuller Theological Seminary (Doctor of Ministry). While serving as a pastor at Beijing Gangwashi Christian Church for ten years, he also taught Systematic Theology and Pauline Theology at Yanjing seminary. In 2007, Pastor Jin became the founding senior pastor of Beijing Zion Church, a leading emerging urban church. He also serves as the president of China Christian Seminary in Beijing.



TURMOIL IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

Implications for Christians there and globally

Wafik Wahba

INTRODUCTION

The eruption of revolts across the Middle East during the last two years reflects the region's dire socio-political situation: years of regime corruption, police brutality, human rights abuses, economic injustices, poverty and high rates of unemployment, especially among the young and educated. It has unleashed a process of change that will take generations to play out, but it seems unlikely for now that the new regimes will improve economic and social conditions, or deliver democratic participation and a better future for the young generation that fought for freedom.¹

Islamists thwarted

The main beneficiary of this change was the Muslim Brotherhood, the most influential and organized Islamic political movement in modern history. It started in Egypt in 1928 and has inspired other Sunni Muslim organizations across the Middle East and beyond. In the face of previous corrupt and unjust regimes, such groups presented themselves as saviours under their slogan 'Islam is the Solution'.

It held power in Egypt from July 2012 to July 2013. One of its offshoots is the major player in the governing coalition in Tunisia, and its influence is growing in Syria and elsewhere. However, once the Islamists assumed power in Egypt, it became clear that they lacked the capacity to govern:

- Their exclusionary policies drove investors away and created social chaos.
- Instead of building an inclusive government, they targeted wealthy Christians, confiscating their businesses and properties.
- Security deteriorated and economic growth stagnated while Islamists were fighting over secondary issues such as proper Islamic dress codes and the policing of morality.

By the end of June 2013, over 15 million (and possibly as many as 30 million) Egyptians took to the streets demonstrating against the Brotherhood, and the military took control of the country, establishing a secular government. It is striking that Islamist rule collapsed in just one year. This has been felt everywhere in the region:

- The Tunisian coalition is in crisis over its future.
- The 'soft' Islamist Turkish government is facing increased opposition from secularists.
- Islamists in Libya are losing political ground.

The constant instability in the region is affecting tourism, forcing businesses to close and companies to move out, scaring investors away and encouraging emigration.

Fundamental regional changes

Current upheavals could transform the territorial arrangements and nation states that were established a century ago after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. For example, the borders of Iraq could be shifting towards the creation of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, while Syria is being dismembered by the civil war and may well not survive in its current form.

There is a greater emphasis on sectarian, ethnic and tribal identities over national identity. Many Sunnis, Shia, Alawis, Kurds and others are now more focused on sect or ethnic group rather than national state. Sunni-Shia conflict is increasing in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Bahrain. If this continues, it will result in weak or no effective state control.

“The constant instability in the region is affecting tourism, forcing businesses to close and companies to move out, scaring investors away and encouraging emigration”.

However, such a trend can be reversed, as with the sudden collapse of the Brotherhood government. This has shown that the Islamist system of governing, which does not allow for multiculturalism, participation and democracy, cannot survive in a world of advanced social media and increased secularisation.

Moreover, the Islamist agenda and political programme has been exposed for what it is. Many moderate Muslims are questioning the validity of political Islam and calling for a secularised state system. During the last year, the number of secularists and even atheists has increased significantly in Egypt and in other countries in the region.

Events in Egypt since June have created new positive relationships between Christians and Muslims, many of whom stood side by side against extremist Islamist policies, although in other parts of Egypt Christians and Christian property have face unprecedented levels of attack.

Christian decline

Today, there are more than 25 million Christians in the region (including an estimated 5 million from Islamic background), representing 6% of the population:

- From the third century to the fourteenth century, Christians were the majority population in the region.
- Christians lived under Islamic rule for over thirteen centuries.
- However, due to persecution, Christians ceased to be the majority in their homeland by the fourteenth century.

The decline accelerated during the twentieth century due to mass killing, as in the case of Armenians and Assyrians, and emigration:

- By the beginning of the twentieth century, Palestinian Christians numbered over 40% of the population; today they are less than 5% in Israel and the West Bank.
- In Jordan, the percentage has fallen from over 30% to less than 3%; in Lebanon from 70% to less than 30%; and in Iraq from 30% to 2% last year.
- Over 3 million Egyptian Christians have emigrated since the 1960s and thousands of Christians are fleeing Syria.

Muslim background believers

However, in the last twenty years there has been a significant surge in the number of Muslims coming to Christ. For centuries, it seemed that Muslim evangelism was impossible. However, the more Islam and Islamism influence and control the region, the more people are searching for a way out of its grip over their lives:

- Social media are playing a significant role in reaching Muslims with the message of the gospel.

- Satellite TV and the Internet are reaching millions of Muslims.

The estimated 5 million Christians from a Muslim background today can be found in almost every country in the region, even in the most closed and hostile countries to the gospel:

- The number of Christians in Iran today is estimated to be ten times higher than in 1979 when the Islamic revolution started.
- There are indigenous Christians in almost every Gulf state today.
- While the church in North Africa was utterly destroyed by the sixteenth century, God is reaching out to many North Africans through dreams and visions and raising leaders who are building a network of churches and ministries.

Christians from a Muslim background face severe persecution for their faith. They are often branded 'apostates', and as a result risk death, detention, imprisonment, torture, loss of property or annulment of marriage. However, their perseverance and faithfulness are a remarkable witness to the gospel.

Christian influence

Twenty years ago, late king Hussein of Jordan stated correctly that "Middle Eastern Christians are the glue that keeps this region together". Christians were instrumental in influencing and shaping the social life of the region for centuries. Many respected educational institutions were started by Christians:

- Christian Evangelicals initiated women's education in the region in the 1920s.
- The influence of Christian universities led to Lebanon, Egypt and Syria contributing to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.
- Christians were active participants in the drafting of new constitutions in their countries in the twentieth century based on democracy and equality.
- They were catalysts of secularised political systems that were supposed to respect freedom of speech and religious beliefs of all citizens.

Their active participation today in social services, education and politics, even on a limited scale, provides inspiration and hope for many moderate and educated Arabs who envision a modern state not governed by religious laws:

- Christians across the region are actively involved in establishing high quality educational institutions, which inspire generations of Arabs to call for more democratic systems.
- Christian social organisations are ministering to the wider community in their countries. Examples include the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD) serving thousands of people through education and social services (currently also serving the needs of Syrian refugees), and the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS), which is reaching two million Egyptians through education, small business and health care programmes, empowering them to escape the poverty cycle.

Prayer and sacrifice

Middle Eastern Christianity has a long history of worship, fasting and prayer. Today, in the midst of turmoil and persecution, there is a renewed desire. Many Christians believe that it was the power of prayer that has exposed the source of corruption, injustices and confusion that have dominated over the region for many centuries.

For years before the Egyptian revolution, Kasr El-Dobara (KED) Evangelical Church in central Cairo dedicated days of prayers and fasting for the country. One of the most remarkable prayer meetings took place on November 11, 2011:

- Over 50,000 gathered overnight at the Cave church in Cairo.
- That night of prayer, fasting and repentance was unprecedented in the recent history of Middle Eastern church.
- The prayer was led by church leaders from all denominations and attended by Christians and non-Christians who were drawn to praise and worship with Christians.
- God's glory was manifested and the prayer movement spread to many churches and communities in Egypt and beyond.

“There are indigenous Christians in almost every Gulf state today”.

In August, more than 120 churches, monasteries and Christian institutions were attacked and burned in Egypt. Thousands of Christians have lost their homes and businesses. The reaction of Egyptian Christians and the church leadership was remarkable. There was no revenge, and Pope Tawadros II, the head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, said “we offer these institutions burned and destroyed by Islamic extremists as a redemptive sacrifice for the country”.

These events created a new atmosphere of hospitable relations between Egyptian Christians and Muslims. Many Muslims were puzzled by the Christians’ reaction and started asking about the Christian faith. There were even reports of Muslims losing their lives defending church buildings against Muslim extremist attacks.

Outlook

The revolts of the last two years are exposing the real issues facing the region: corruption, oppression and injustice. They are also exposing the socio-political structure of the dominant religion in the region. The swift demise of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt will have significant ramifications for political Islam worldwide. Governments influenced by the movement in Tunisia and Turkey are facing greater challenges, while the suppression of the Brotherhood in Egypt will drive it underground and could lead to renewed extremist violence in Egypt and beyond.

While it seems that the Middle East is moving towards sectarianism and religiously-oriented governance and away from the former semi-secular systems, the current realities of globalisation and global connectedness will curb governments’ attempts to exercise excessive power. Social media will play an instrumental role in shaping the socio-political structure of the region and exposing injustices and corruption

Religious strife among Sunnis and Shia, and moderates and Salafists will intensify and may weaken their overall influence. Again social media will play a key role in exposing the social and political agendas and ethos of such groups.

Implications for Christians

Middle Eastern Christians may well face further times of persecution due to the current unrest and poor security. However, the church in the region will be stronger and bolder in its witness, as in Egypt since August. The prayer movement will spread to other Middle Eastern countries and will influence all Christian denominations: Orthodox, Catholics and Evangelicals. There are new signs of Christian unity, for example the newly formed Egyptian Christian Unity Council.

The global church needs to be aware of the complex realities of the Middle East. It needs to voice its concerns about what is happening in order for Christians around the globe to be active in praying for and standing along their brothers and sisters, who for centuries have kept the lamp of faith burning amid so much turmoil and persecution.

Churches outside the Middle East should consider active participation with Middle Eastern Churches, including joint ministry programmes, and joining in prayer and worship together. The global church will be richer through connecting with the long spirituality of the Middle Eastern church.

Above all, we need to trust in God’s wisdom in reshaping the whole region and using the church for the furthering of his kingdom in the midst of the current chaos. The Lord who holds all power and authority in heaven and on earth has promised to be with his church to the ends of the ages.

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BUSINESS AS MISSION:

Building a movement that can bring lasting societal transformation

Mats Tunehag

Business as Mission, BAM, is a new term but the underpinning concept is nothing new. Business as Mission is not a new discovery, but a rediscovery of biblical truths and practices.

Our first God-given mandate is the *creation mandate*, Genesis 1-3: we are to be creative and create good things, for ourselves and others, being good stewards of all things entrusted to us—even in the physical arena. This of course includes being creative in business—to create wealth. Wealth creation is a godly talent: “Remember the Lord and your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18). As Christians we often focus more on wealth distribution, but there is no wealth to distribute unless it has been created.

God calls and equips some people to business. We need to affirm and encourage business people to exercise their calling with professionalism, excellence and integrity. Martin Luther puts it this way:

A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and the office of his trade, and they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and every one by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another.

Or as stated in the Business as Mission Manifesto, from the Lausanne paper on BAM 2004:

We call upon the Church worldwide to identify, affirm, pray for, commission and release business people and entrepreneurs to exercise their gifts and calling as business people in the world – among all peoples and to the ends of the earth.

We call upon business people globally to receive this affirmation and to consider how their gifts and experience might be used to help meet the world's

most pressing spiritual and physical needs through Business as Mission.

Business is more than...

If business was only about maximizing profit, it would be acceptable to get involved in human trafficking, which is relatively low risk (few traffickers are caught and sentenced) and has a relatively high profit margin. If job creation was the only purpose of business, one could commend the Mafia for the jobs they create.

Businesses need to make a profit to survive but they should also look beyond that. Pope John Paul II wrote: “The purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a community of persons who in various ways are endeavouring to satisfy their basic needs, and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society.”

BAM and a challenge before us

A focus for many in the global BAM movement is the Arab world and Asia since there is a concentration of many needs in these regions:

- The name of Jesus is rarely heard in the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist worlds.
- These regions are where a large part of the world's poorest are found.
- Unemployment and underemployment in many of these countries range from 30% - 80%.
- These regions have the fastest population growth, with hundreds of millions of young people coming into the labor market looking for jobs.
- These are also often high-risk areas for trafficking and prostitution. Unemployment makes people vulnerable.

A common denominator in the above points is jobs: there is a great need for jobs with dignity. BAM is a strategy to address these challenges and demonstrate the Kingdom of God. BAM is a growing global movement of Christians in the marketplace seeking to serve God and the common good through business.

1.8 billion jobs needed

There is a global shortfall of about 1.8 billion good formal jobs, according to Jim Clifton, CEO of Gallup. Many people live and work in the insecure, informal job sector, which is often filled with survival activities in the form of subsistence businesses. Most people hope for a formal job, but many have little or no prospect of finding one. The problem is growing, and the challenge is huge and global. What must be done?

Handouts do not give dignity – jobs do.

Aid can ease problems temporarily but cannot create 1.8 billion new jobs. We know, for example, that aid has not lifted Africa out of poverty, as the international economist Dambisa Moyo has clearly demonstrated in her book *Dead Aid*.

“God calls and equips some people to business”.

Micro-loan programs can help, but tend to build the informal economy and thus run the risk of cementing people and nations in poverty. BAM is about societal transformation, which implies building the formal economy. The backbone of developed countries is small and medium size enterprises (SMEs). SMEs also drive job creation in developing countries. For example, more than 80% of African jobs are created by SMEs, according to World Bank surveys; yet those businesses are often neglected by traditional aid agencies.

Societal transformation

There have been movements of societal transformation throughout history.¹ Key leaders like Luther, Calvin, Knox, and Zwingli catalyzed the Protestant reformation. Approximately 200 years ago, William Wilberforce and others spearheaded the movement fighting for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade. The civil rights

movement in the USA brought about significant change and Martin Luther King was an audacious leader.

Societal transformation implies good and lasting change. It is not about achieving perfection; there will always be room for improvement. Looking at the movements of societal transformation, one can observe some common themes and denominators. Such movements:

- started as a small minority;
- shared a vision;
- embraced common values;
- connected with one another;
- built critical mass; and
- had commendable tenacity.

BAM is another movement for social transformation. Today there is a global BAM movement; it did not exist 20 years ago. There were expressions of BAM back then and even long before that. However, now there is an unprecedented global cohesion and connectedness. BAM shares the common themes outlined above.

Small minority and common values

The BAM movement is still small (a minority), but vision and values are increasingly shared across the globe. (The Lausanne paper on BAM 2004 deals with values and essential BAM building blocks, especially in chapter four; see <http://www.matstunehag.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/BAM-LOP-June-05.pdf>)

Shared vision

The first global think tank on BAM (2003 – 2004) and the Lausanne paper on BAM (2004) helped catalyze a common global understanding of the concept.

It sought to address how businesses can:

- serve *people*;
- align with God's *purposes*;
- be good stewards of the *planet*; and
- make a *profit*.

This is often referred to as the quadruple bottom-line. We are aiming at a positive impact economically, socially,

environmentally and spiritually, leading to holistic transformation of people and societies – to the greater glory of God. We are especially concerned about the world's poorest and the least evangelized peoples.

Connected with one another

The 2nd global think tank process (2011 - 2013) has increased the connections, creating global connectivity of key players in the BAM eco-system, with people from every continent.

The global BAM think tank had approximately 30 national, regional and international working groups collaborating. Leaders from these groups and other BAM leaders at large, about 80 in total, met at the Leaders' Forum in April in Thailand.

The largest global gathering ever of social and intellectual capital in the BAM space followed this. More than 550 people from over 40 nations came to the BAM Congress later in the month. The Congress collaborated with a BAM Trade Fair, which followed immediately after and had over 200 participants.

These BAM think tanks (2003 – 2004 and 2011 – 2013), processes and meetings, and the BAM Congress, have been instrumental in building a global BAM movement, establishing a shared vision, developing common values, and facilitating a global network of BAM practitioners and other key leaders in the overall BAM eco-system.

Critical mass

Without critical mass of sizeable BAM businesses, SMEs and beyond, we cannot see transformation at a macro level – on cities, cultures and nations. Critical mass, in the BAM movement, is yet to come, although promising indicators are emerging in some countries and areas.

Tenacity

BAM is an intergenerational issue, like other movements of societal transformation. BAM is not instant coffee: take a few bits of BAM thinking, stir into a business and transformation is the result. On the contrary, societal transformation takes time, and we want to set a stage and serve our generation in such a way that it will be a blessing for many generations to come.

BAM and the olive tree

We can learn from the olive tree. Many of us think in terms of two kinds of olives: green and black. However, there are 1,000 or more varieties. In the BAM movement, we are not just two categories: business people on the one hand, and church and mission people on the other. Rather, we are part of a greater eco-system – of investors, bookkeepers, prayer partners, entrepreneurs, academics, human trafficking experts, theologians, marketing and sales people, and many others.

It takes 20 to 25 years before an olive tree bears fruit – olives that can be eaten. However, once it starts bearing fruit, it can produce olives for 2,000 years or more. Olive trees are intergenerational blessings.

The modern BAM movement is still young; we are in some ways still within the first 25 years of the life of an olive tree. We do see some fruit, but are eagerly awaiting more. However, we need to nurture and care for the BAM olive tree in these early days of the movement. We want to build a movement that can bring good and lasting transformation, and we know it takes time. However, we need tenacity – we must hold onto our vision and maintain our values, as we build BAM communities.

We embrace the promise that God will bless us so we can be a blessing – in and through business – in our generation and for many generations to come. That is BAM and the olive tree.

To learn more about the Global BAM Think Tank see www.BAMThinkTank.org

For BAM material in English and 15 other languages see www.MatsTuneag.com

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STEWARDSHIP AND JUSTICE: A CHALLENGE FOR CHRISTIAN CONSUMERS

Carrie Ngangnang

With Response by Bosela Eale

Our homes, workplaces, shops and markets are full of items made from around the world. However, we do not often consider the individuals behind the making of what we buy. We in the consumer nations should be concerned with the welfare of those making the products we buy and thus ask ourselves questions such as:

- As followers of Jesus Christ, how do we respond to others with humility, love, compassion and justice through the purchases we make?
- Is stewardship limited to our 10% tithe to church or does it encompass 100% of all that we have?

Consuming affects others

Ken Wytsma, in *Pursuing Justice* said, “We live in an interconnected world. The way we consume directly affects the lived realities of other people, whether we want it to or not.”¹

Because our world is global, we have an opportunity to care for others across borders and cultures through our everyday shopping. We can care for the poor simply by being aware of the conditions in which they work to make our goods and by making purchases that help those behind our products.

Chocolate and slavery

CNN’s Freedom Project has told the story of Abdul (then ten years old) who was trafficked across a border to work in the cocoa farms of Ivory Coast seven days a week as a child slave.² Chocolate is a precious commodity and likely a household staple in many homes across Europe and America. In fact, Europeans and Americans consume most of the world’s chocolate.³ The question arises whether it is possible to consume chocolate and make a way for children like Abdul never to end up working as slaves.

Electronics and war

With the increase in demand over the past 15 years for electronics products, such as cell phones and computers, the need for coltan, the mineral used to make these devices, has increased dramatically. The largest mine of coltan is in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

With such a high demand for coltan, militia groups have been fighting for control of this highly valued resource for years. The current rebel group fighting for control of coltan is M23. In the past two years, the Rwandan-backed group is estimated to have made over 250 million dollars from the sale of coltan.

When asked to comment on the current situation in DRC, Ryan Mariden, a board member with Africa New Day said, “I have seen firsthand the horrific impact these militias have on the children of eastern DRC. One boy shared with me his story of capture at age ten and his life as a child soldier that spanned over five years before he was finally free. What these kids go through is so shocking – so deplorable, that I doubt we would see it in our worst horror movies in America. Awareness is key. The political background in all of this is complex to say the least. What is needed is amplified world awareness, a beaming spotlight straight on Congo that will make the situation simply impossible to ignore.”⁴

Stewardship and justice

Tithing a tenth of our income to God is one way to express gratitude and acknowledgment that all we have are blessings from him. However, we often do not consider how we spend the remaining 90% — which is also a stewardship issue:

- In *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*, author Randy Alcorn writes, “The tithe was never a ceiling for giving, only a floor. It was a beginning point. The tithe was a

demonstration of obedience. Voluntary offerings were a demonstration of love, joy and worship.”⁵

- A deeper look at God’s heart for the poor reveals he is much more concerned with how we daily spend the 90% than he is with the 10% tithe (Amos 5:22-24, Is. 58, Mt. 23:23).

Choosing to spend our money in a way that cares for those making the products we buy aligns our hearts with God’s heart for justice. What concerns him ought to concern us. This is both obedience and worship, and it creates space to share the Gospel across borders and cultures.

The Cape Town Commitment puts it this way, “We support Christians whose particular missional calling is to environmental advocacy and action, as well as those committed to godly fulfillment of the mandate to provide for human welfare and needs by exercising responsible dominion and stewardship.”⁶

In addition, Ken Wystma writes, “My greatest frustration with consumerism is that it encourages selfishness while reinforcing the lie that happiness is found in consumption — the opposite to Jesus’ call to give our lives away. And paradoxically, rejecting the consumerism of our culture is the way to find our greatest joy. What if consumerism that plagues our churches — that plagues our hearts — could begin transforming into compassion?”

Just purchases

Organisations such as Trade as One and Food for the Hungry encourage consumers to spend in a way that extends compassion across borders. Followers of Jesus can participate in restoration work throughout the world and the redemption of land and people by making purchases that seek to care for others globally.

Trade as One offers a simple approach: “Our mission is to use fair trade to promote sustainable business and break cycles of poverty and dependency in the developing world. We all have a conscience. We want to make sure people get the chance to use it when they shop.”⁷

Trade as One has established partnerships with a number of accredited fair trade groups that work to create jobs for the impoverished in an effort to restore dignity and the ability to provide for family and community. Consumers can buy their everyday products and be

“Followers of Jesus can participate in restoration work throughout the world and the redemption of land and people by making purchases that seek to care for others globally.”

guaranteed no one experiences injustice in the making of that product.

In relation to chocolate, Trade as One has partnered with Divine, an organisation based in Ghana that not only provides honest work for the cocoa farmers, but also ensures the workers own a significant portion of the business and therefore have a voice in its growth and development in their community.⁸

By considering others when purchasing, consumers can continue to buy chocolate and help to create and sustain jobs for others. In this way, injustice will be prevented, a life of slavery avoided and a self-sustaining livelihood developed for families and communities around the world.

Additionally, there are practical steps consumers can take to help to slow the demand for coltan and help protect the Congolese people from unnecessary suffering:

- Only buy new electronics when necessary.
- Tell others about coltan and encourage them to learn more.
- Contact leading electronics companies and urge them to be vigilant in legitimately purchasing coltan from the Congolese people and not ultimately from the militias.

Conclusion

Jesus is the hope of the world. He uses his Church to spread his good news of life and love for all of his creation. As his Church, we can participate in God’s plan for justice in an unjust world, simply by making purchases that care for others.

Wendy McMahan, Director of Church Engagement with Food for the Hungry, put it this way, “As Christians, it’s important that we honor God in every area of our

lives. We can't separate our tithes and offerings from the way we spend the rest of our income. In God's eyes, our spending is critical to our discipleship. Food for the Hungry works with church partners in the Global North who develop deep relationships with vulnerable communities in the Global South. When a church forms that kind of relationship, they begin to see how the choices they make every day have an impact on people living in poverty around the globe. It's a wake-up call to do justice--not only by giving more generously, but by spending more wisely.”⁹

“Jesus is the hope of the world. He uses his Church to spread his good news of life and love for all of his creation.”

Nathan George, founder of Trade as One, offers this concluding encouragement: “We offer a fair trade food subscription service that provides a quarterly box of various fairly traded food from around the world. We connect you to the producers behind the food and tell you why it's important to consume that product ethically. There is hope! Each year, more and more people catch the vision of fair trade—that the poor can come out of poverty simply by the choices we make in the products we consume. Our spending does make a difference, and it's when we realize this, and embrace it wholly in connection with our faith and God's love for all people that we begin to see why it matters.”

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. – 1 John 3:16-17

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A Response: Coltan and the Conflict in the DRC

Bosela Eale

The situation of conflict and war in the eastern DRC is complex. Many observers have questioned why the Eastern Congo has gone through all kinds of massacres and violence leaving behind orphans, widows, a high rate of drop out from schools etc.

Some believe the reason is found in the political sphere while others blame neighbouring countries seeking to control the region's vast mineral resources:

- The DRC is endowed with various natural resources.
- Out of envy, surrounding countries participate in looting those natural resources and creating disorder, arming rebel groups to terrorise villagers.
- When people flee, the rebels settle and start the exploitation of coltan and other minerals.
- The beneficiaries of that illegal exploitation of Congolese resources are neighbouring countries and their governments.

The growth of mining in the Eastern Congo is hampered by poor overall management of resources, fraud and inadequate legal structures, such that the country has not benefited from the opportunities provided by rising world mineral prices. Furthermore, the involvement of armies from neighbouring countries in the North and South Kivu regions has made it difficult for the DRC to exploit its coltan reserves. Mining of the mineral is mainly artisanal and small-scale. Coltan smuggling provides income for the military occupation of the DRC, as well as prolonging conflict.

Not only has the illegal exploitation of coltan caused the loss of thousands of Congolese lives, but it also raises environmental concerns. Uncontrolled mining activities are eroding land and polluting lakes and rivers, affecting the ecology of the region.

The invasion of eastern DRC by neighbouring countries is primarily motivated by the desire to gain control over its natural resources. Rebel groups in the Eastern Congo are also motivated by economics rather than political considerations. In the view of many Congolese, those rebel groups are just puppets for neighbouring countries and Western corporations.

As you use a cell phone or laptop or any other devices made of coltan, think of the thousands upon thousands of innocent Congolese who are dying in the areas where coltan is being mined.



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Editor's Note: On November 6, 2013, news services reported that as a result of international pressures, one of the main rebel groups in the eastern DR Congo, known as M23, was laying down its arms and resolving to pursue political means to address its concerns.



CHRISTIAN FAITH AND CURRENT IDEOLOGICAL TRENDS IN CHINA:

The implications of the 'Oxford Consensus'

Thomas Harvey

In August 2013 in Oxford, England, the 6th Annual Forum for Chinese Theology on 'Christian Faith & Ideological Trends in Contemporary China' brought together a significant group of Christian, Confucian, Leftist and Liberal Scholars from China and around the globe. It produced two notable outcomes:

1. 'Oxford Consensus 2013'

The Christian, Confucian, Leftist and Liberal scholars from China produced the Oxford Consensus 2013. Though these scholars represent differing and often antagonistic ideological backgrounds, the Consensus committed these key leaders to work together in mutual respect and shared concern to address the various challenges facing China and the world.

In sum, the Consensus, signed by the 28 scholars, echoed the spirit of the conference: that academic engagement at the highest level can nurture deeper understanding and greater appreciation of differing ideological positions addressing shared concerns.

2. Christian relevance

The conference served notice of the relevance of global Christianity when it engages secular academic scholars to address issues impacting civil society. This unique gathering brought together Christian and non-Christian scholars to address the issues surrounding current ideological trends in China.¹ It produced relevant and insightful engagement across academic disciplines as political, philosophical and religious perspectives intertwined. Indeed, it was fitting that at the conference the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) announced its new endeavour to develop a new research centre in Oxford devoted to research on global Christianity and its impact on civil society.

Why is this significant?

The conference and its outcomes are already being reported on widely in China. News outlets from various ideological perspectives have expressed general approval of the Consensus. Further, some have noted that having the conference overseas in Oxford lent gravity to the conference and opportunity to discuss issues with scholars from Asia, North America and Europe openly.

Pre-conference concern that bringing together secular and religious scholars to discuss Christian faith and ideology in China would create friction and stifle productive discourse proved unfounded. Indeed, the opposite held true. The cross-disciplinary nature of the conference enhanced dialogue that served the production of the Consensus.

Of great significance is that this conference represents an important step towards understanding the relationship between Christian faith, ideology and civil society:

- It served to bring out points of tension between various ideological perspectives in China and Christianity. This helped Christian scholars to understand and address those concerns.
- Further, because this was an academic conference, it represented an academic inquiry seeking clarity and consensus and was thus not regarded by the delegates as an inappropriate meddling in China's internal affairs. The academic tenor of the conference led to careful listening, response, dialogue, recognition of difference and potential consensus.

Outlook

The conference created significant connections between leading Christian and non-Christian academics and institutional leaders from China and the West. This should open a path for research scholars from China to pursue related matters raised at the conference. Further, the conference built and strengthened ties between leading Christian academic and mission institutions with representatives from 11 global research centres, 29 Chinese, Asian, European and North American universities and 12 NGO, Christian ministry and mission organisations attending.

Implications

Though not without risk, it was novel and fruitful to bring together Christian and non-Christian Chinese and Western scholars in a joint conference to air views on Christianity and ideology in China. The favourable reception this approach received from non-Christian delegates at the Conference should suggest ways going forward to foster understanding, appreciation and even some amelioration of tension between Christianity and

its religious and secular critics. It provided an alternative way forward for informed faith and secular perspectives to address the question of Christian faith in China outside traditional religious institutional frameworks that are too often fraught with bureaucratic and diplomatic hindrances.

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