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ISSUE OVERVIEW

*David Taylor, Editor,
Lausanne Global Analysis*



Welcome to the May 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 food security and its role in transformational development; overcoming Korean church divisions and encouraging cooperation among evangelicals globally in the aftermath of the WCC General Assembly; sports ministry and effective evangelism; and nationalisms and the issues they pose for evangelical mission.

'Food security is generally not seen readily as either an issue that determines response to the gospel or one that determines the health of a community', writes Ravi Jayakaran (Vice President, Global Programs, MAP International). However, both health and response to the gospel have strong relations to food security. Food security plays a significant role in transformational development, especially long-term sustainable transformation. Furthermore, it is not surprising that household food security status and response to the gospel are correlated. The gospel, which is integral and holistic, is both the proclamation and demonstration of the good news to the poor and needy. 'For us as Christians, it is a call to integral mission that ensures that we proclaim and demonstrate the good news in all that we do', he concludes.

The 10th World Council of Churches General Assembly (WCC GA) was held in Busan, Korea, in 20 October – 8 November 2013. The Korean Preparation Committee had the support of the WCC ecumenically aligned Tong Hap Presbyterian Church of Korea denomination. However, it generated strong opposition, led by the Hap Tong Presbyterian Church of Korea. 'Now, after

the WCC GA, the Korean church will most likely be more divided than ever', writes Bong Rin Ro (Professor of Church History and Missions, Hawaii Theological Seminary). The WCC GA has, however, shown that the centre of gravity of the ecumenical movement has shifted to the growing churches of the Global South. 'The role of The Lausanne Movement will become increasingly important. It can help bring unity among the evangelical churches within WEA and the evangelical leaders within WCC who are dissatisfied with WCC theology and practices', he concludes.

'No reasonable person can deny the importance of sport in the modern world', writes Stuart Weir (Executive Director, Verite Sport). The FIFA Football World Cup takes place in Brazil in June-July this year. The 2010 World Cup was shown on TV in every country and territory on earth. Sports ministry broadly falls into two categories—ministry to sport and ministry through sport. In recent years, Christians have seen the potential of a major event in their country or city as an opportunity for service and witness, particularly at the Olympics and football World Cups. The incarnational model emphasis of sports ministry, where Christians enter the world of sportspeople, requires a huge commitment in terms of time, vulnerability, and intentionality in relationships. 'This is a lesson for other spheres of evangelism that can sometimes emphasise a programme/event/"come to us" approach', he concludes.

'Nationalist and patriotic sentiments pose particular challenges for the church or mission agency leader responsible for managing multi-national teams', observes Darrell Jackson (Senior Lecturer in Missiology, Morling College). Nationalists, above all else, issue a call to difference in the face of homogenizing forces that are global in nature. The wise team leader prepares for heated discussions within the team as fault-lines converge around patriotic or nationalistic feelings. Evangelicals may choose on occasion to express solidarity with their government, and it is not always wrong to do so. However, it is not possible to work with an account of nationhood if this means a moral partiality or politics of superiority. This perspective reflects a biblical theology

of the nations. 'Christian identity and allegiance can only ever be to Christ. All other forms of loyalty are temporal and will pass away, finally exposed as worthless by the Judge of every tribe and every nation', he concludes.

More than 600 delegates gathered in Bethlehem in March for Christ at the Checkpoint 2014, the third such conference that asks 'What Would Jesus Do?' in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Speakers from a wide theological and political range discussed how evangelical Christians should respond. 'Christians have long been among the strongest supporters of Israeli policies. However, the conference highlighted the fact that evangelicals are taking in more of the Palestinian

narrative and theological perspective, and are seeking a more balanced take', according to Munther Isaac and Alice Su. The conference sought to 'challenge evangelicals to take responsibility to help resolve the conflicts in Israel-Palestine by engaging with the teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God'. Followers of Jesus need to take their calling to be peacemakers seriously and engage positively. 'If more Christians begin to develop this attitude, then we will see the hope that is desperately needed in the Middle East', they conclude.

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOOD SECURITY AND ITS ROLE IN TRANSFORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ravi Jayakaran

Food security is generally not seen readily as either an issue that determines response to the gospel or one that determines the health of a community. However, both health and response to the gospel have strong relations to food security.

Food security plays a significant role in transformational development, especially long-term sustainable transformation. The holistic integrated development programs of many Christian development agencies today have developed so well that livelihood and food security are taking their rightful place in giving traction to their programs. If we are to move towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal of halving global poverty, we need to consider food security.

Christian development agencies can use creative ‘food for work’ programs to ensure that food is available in an area, so that the community does not migrate away to other areas in search of food. The program can also be used to leverage long-term availability of food by using the ‘food for work’ part of the program to create community assets such as roads and ponds.

Food aid that is not used positively to bring traction to the local economy and stimulate local grain production will make the community passive and dependent on external aid. Ultimately, access to food will become the victim. It is easy for well-meaning but poorly directed Christian development agencies to do more harm than good—including for the gospel—through their development work.

In a normal community, food security is closely tied to asset creation. Surplus food produced by individuals and families is used for selling and purchasing assets. Assets are a means of saving. Asset creation from surplus food available, to be liquidated later in times of crisis, represents an integral part of food security. Organizations working with communities to help them become food secure must cater for this in their programming.

Ensuring food security means also bringing gender equality, because providing adequate food for the family requires it to be equally distributed.

It is not surprising that household food security status and response to the gospel are correlated. Households that are below the poverty line have great struggles. The debilitating impact of abject poverty is like a continued oppression on multiple fronts and can crush the spirit, make people lose hope and turn to desperate measures for coping and surviving. This is the group that is constantly in search of a Savior.

The gospel, which is integral and holistic, is both the proclamation and demonstration of the good news to the poor and needy. For us as Christians, it is a call to integral mission that ensures that we proclaim and demonstrate the good news in all that we do. The author’s organisation MAP International has in recent times started increasing its church engagement portfolio to get more churches into partnerships of integral mission in communities in the developing world.

God has helped them to develop new tools and strategies, particularly to help churches and their congregations to engage meaningfully in bringing transformational development through building household-level food security. They are happy to share this information with LGA readers and also partner with those with a heart for integral mission.

WCC GENERAL ASSEMBLY AFTERMATH: OVERCOMING KOREAN CHURCH DIVISIONS AND ENCOURAGING COOPERATION AMONG EVANGELICALS GLOBALLY

Bong Rin Ro

The 10th World Council of Churches General Assembly (WCC GA) was held in Busan, Korea, 20 October – 8 November 2013. The Korean Preparation Committee had the support of the 2.8 million strong WCC ecumenically aligned Tong Hap Presbyterian Church of Korea denomination.

As early as 2011, conservative evangelical churches and denominations in Korea began to oppose the WCC GA.

Mass demonstrations against the WCC GA occurred in Seoul and Busan, criticizing the WCC's liberal theology. Leading the opposition was the Hap Tong Presbyterian Church of Korea, considered the largest conservative Presbyterian denomination with 3 million members.

The Korean church is one of the most theologically conservative in the world. However, some Korean evangelical leaders choose to stay within the more 'liberal' Tong Hap denomination to provide a positive evangelical influence within the WCC family. By contrast, the more conservative Hap Tong denomination would consider any engagement with WCC liberals compromising. Despite this environment, the WCC selected Korea to host the WCC GA, in part because of the increasing importance of the church in the Global South, particularly Asia where rapid church growth has been taking place.

Now, after the WCC GA, the Korean church will most likely be more divided than ever, with the rift between Tong Hap and Hap Tong likely to deepen. Furthermore, it was announced on 11 February that the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) General Assembly due to be held in Korea in October has been postponed. The WEA statement cited 'internal differences among the evangelical community' in Korea.

The WCC GA has shown that the center of gravity of the ecumenical movement has shifted from declining Western Christendom to the growing churches of the Global South. Liberal leaders within the WCC have maintained control in the areas of church administration, finance, and seminary education. Evangelical leaders from Asia, Africa, and Latin America now need to increase their spiritual influence in these three areas within WCC.

The role of The Lausanne Movement (LCWE) will become increasingly important. The LCWE can help bring unity among the evangelical churches within WEA and the evangelical leaders within WCC who are dissatisfied with WCC theology and practices.

Evangelical leaders in LCWE can work closely with WEA in order to bring cooperation among the evangelical churches around the world. The past three Lausanne Congresses are good examples of gatherings that bring together all the evangelical church leaders around the world, within and outside WCC, to discuss the task of world evangelization.

One way is to work closely with WEA-related churches through WEA Commissions. Such cooperation will gain

the support of grassroots churches and church leaders that are associated with different national evangelical alliances and fellowships.

Evangelical leaders in LCWE can also open their doors to evangelical pastors and churches within WCC, because most churches within the ecumenical movement in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are theologically conservative and are looking for evangelical cooperation.

The key task for evangelical churches, whether or not they are affiliated to WCC, is to work together for the cause of the Great Commission. The whole church must take the whole gospel to the whole world.

SPORTS MINISTRY AND EVANGELISM: HOW AN INCARNATIONAL AND SERVICE EMPHASIS UNDERPINS EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM

J Stuart Weir

No reasonable person can deny the importance of sport in the modern world. The FIFA Football World Cup takes place in Brazil in June-July this year. The 2010 World Cup was shown on TV in every country and territory on earth, with 46.4% of the global population watching at least part of it.

Sports ministry broadly falls into two categories—ministry to sport and ministry through sport.

Ministry to sport means serving sport in the name of Jesus; sports chaplaincy is a good example of this. This is helping the (often) elite sportsperson to practise their sport Christianly as well bringing church to them when competition stops them getting to a Sunday service.

Ministry through sport is seeing sport as an evangelistic opportunity. This might involve running sports events with an evangelistic purpose or distributing leaflets or video material with a gospel message in the language of sport, often using the testimony of high-profile Christian athletes.

In recent years, Christians have seen the potential of a major event in their country or city as an opportunity for service and witness. This type of ministry began in the 1990s and has grown significantly over the years, particularly at the Olympics and football World Cups.

The chaplaincy programme at the 2012 London Olympics was arguably the most comprehensive ever conducted

at an Olympic Games. This was an excellent example of servant-hearted Christians working with the Olympic organizing committee to add value to the event. This shows how an attitude of servant-hearted support for the organizing committee of a major sports event is often appreciated and can build bridges between the Christian community and the sports administrators.

The incarnational model emphasis of sports ministry, where Christians enter the world of sportspeople, reflects the Pauline emphasis in I Corinthians 9:19-23 with a playing, participating, and supporting level of involvement that requires a huge commitment in terms of time, vulnerability, and intentionality in relationships. This is a lesson for other spheres of evangelism that can sometimes emphasise a programme/event/'come to us' approach.

Being open to supporting an incarnational approach in evangelism, and in envisioning, equipping, and supporting any sportspeople in the congregation to be the church's evangelists to their sports friends and local sports club, can be an effective strategy to help the church engage with its local sports community.

Another lesson applicable to other spheres of evangelism is that the serving emphasis within sports evangelism can break down many barriers and open up doors for other evangelism opportunities. Such an approach may not yield short-term results but the long-term favour that emerges (e.g., through sports chaplaincy) can lead to real growth of influence for the gospel.

Churches should also be open to serve in the community in and through sport, for example, in providing volunteers, coaches, pastoral care, or a meeting place for a local sports club, school, or college. There should also be a conscious decision to value and prioritise disability sport more than has happened up to this point.

NATIONALISM AND EVANGELICAL MISSION: ISSUES FOR EVANGELICAL LEADERS

Darrell Jackson

Nationalist and patriotic sentiments frequently cause headaches for Christian leaders and pose particular challenges for the church or mission agency leader responsible for managing multi-national teams. This simple observation requires us to understand the scope and significance of nationalism in the context of global mission.

While populist parties stir up fears, the churches often struggle to express a clear kingdom perspective. In some instances the churches find themselves, wittingly or unwittingly, portrayed as patriotic allies in the struggle to stem the influx of non-Christian immigrants.

Nationalists, above all else, issue a call to difference in the face of homogenizing forces that are global in nature. In resisting globalisation, most nationalisms use alternative narratives that are mythological, such as 'frontier' myths and 'sacred origin' myths.

The Lausanne Movement's commitment to a vision of the one worldwide body of Christ, fuelled by passion and enthusiasm, is entirely appropriate and wholly commensurate with a vision of the kingdom of God. Yet, it has to balance constantly the national interests and agendas of evangelical groupings with the global agendas urged upon it by the movement's leaders.

Mission teams currently located in various parts of the world will have members from competing nations, for example, Russia and Ukraine currently. The wise team leader prepares for heated discussions within the team as fault-lines converge around patriotic or nationalistic feelings.

The vital national interests of any one country may be rarely reported by the media of other countries; yet it is necessary for the astute cross-cultural Christian worker to be constantly alert to the spectre of nationalism raising its ugly head and threatening to undermine credible witness.

Of course, the curse of nationalism for the faithful follower of Jesus Christ is seen in the extent to which Christianity is mobilised as a unifying source of national identity over and against others. Responsible and astute media commentators will recognise that impact of religion on public and political conversation.

Evangelicals may choose on occasion to express solidarity with their government, and it is not always wrong to do so. However, it is not possible to work with an account of nation and nationhood if this means a moral partiality or politics of superiority that would deny to others the same human rights as those of its members.

This perspective reflects a biblical theology of the nations that portrays them as the pinnacle of God's creative acts (Gen 10:32); laments their incredible hubris (Gen 11:4); declares them to be at the centre of God's

missionary purposes (Gen 12:2-3); gathers all nations into the body of Christ (Rev 7:9); yet still concludes with an eschatological picture of the nations in submission and under judgement (Rev 19:15). Christian identity and allegiance can only ever be to Christ. All other forms of loyalty are temporal and will pass away, finally exposed as worthless by the Judge of every tribe and every nation.

We need to repent of any partiality or superiority that we instinctively feel or demonstrate toward co-workers or those among whom we work; to work hard at identifying potential sources of nationalist tensions within our own ministry and mission teams; and to be prepared to offer training to teams sent into areas where they are likely to encounter nationalist tensions.

CHRIST AT THE CHECKPOINT: AN EVANGELICAL SHIFT IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Munther Isaac and Alice Su

More than 600 delegates from across the world gathered in Bethlehem in March for Christ at the Checkpoint (CATC) 2014, the third such conference that aims to ask 'What Would Jesus Do?' in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Bethlehem Bible College organized the conference, inviting speakers from a wide theological and political range to discuss how evangelical Christians should respond to one of the most politicized conflicts of our time.

Christians have long been among the strongest supporters of Israeli policies, especially in the United States. However, CATC and its attendant controversies highlighted the fact that evangelicals are taking in more and more of the Palestinian narrative and theological perspective, and are seeking a more balanced take on the conflict.

The conference theme was 'Your Kingdom Come', which meant something different for each attending group, from Palestinian Christians to Messianic Jews, Mennonites to Reformed evangelicals and dispensationalists. The main theological division lay between Christian Zionists, who believe that Jewish return to the Holy Land fulfils biblical prophecy and thus demands Christian

commitment to political support for Israel, and those who believe otherwise.

Yet diversity was an asset to CATC, said Bishara Awad, founder of Bethlehem Bible College. Despite their wide-ranging theological beliefs, CATC attendees united in their commitment to peace.

Recognition of different narratives in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is key to reconciliation, the conference heard. The gospel calls for Christians to love their enemies by seeing them as neighbours, brothers, and friends. Reconciliation also requires loving one's neighbour despite eschatological differences.

Political complexity must not stop evangelicals from pursuing the peace that burns in the heart of God. The suffering, grief, and despair of Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the region are an affront to humanity and to our God, the conference heard. Eschatological disagreement should not impact Christians' commitment to resist injustice and love even those who hurt us.

Who is my neighbour? Who is my enemy? These questions guided discussions of not only Israel and Palestine, but also Christianity amid political turmoil and rising Islamism in the Middle East. The answers were consistent: everyone is my neighbour and no one is my enemy. Speakers called not for resistance or retaliation, but embrace.

Palestinian Christians founded and currently lead the Bethlehem Bible College, which organized CATC. They were the clearest speakers against the Israeli occupation. The difference between their narrative and the mainstream Palestinian one, however, was their call for ending occupation not by conquering the 'other' or by violent means, but by caring for the other.

CATC sought to 'challenge evangelicals to take responsibility to help resolve the conflicts in Israel-Palestine by engaging with the teaching of Jesus on the kingdom of God'. The time has come for followers of Jesus to take their calling to be peacemakers seriously and engage positively in this part of the world. If more Christians begin to develop this attitude, then we will see the hope that is desperately needed in the Middle East.

FOOD SECURITY AND ITS ROLE IN TRANSFORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ravi Jayakaran



Food security is generally not seen readily as either an issue that determines response to the gospel or one that determines the health of a community. However, both health and response to the gospel have strong relations to food security.

Food security role

Food security plays a significant role in transformational development, especially long-term sustainable transformation:

- This is often not understood clearly—people often see food security as food aid and as part of relief in famine-prone areas.
- Food security programming can become one of the most proactive means of lifting a community out of poverty, but handled badly, it can become a tool for exploitation or even destruction of the economy.
- People of integrity need to champion its cause, and above all, speak up on behalf of the poor.

Christian development agencies

The holistic integrated development programs of many Christian development agencies today have developed so well that livelihood and food security are taking their rightful place in giving traction to their programs. Whatever the core intervention program of the organization (clinics, water, child care, etc.), to be effective, food security and livelihood security must play a central role, since this is the lifeline for survival of poor and marginalized communities.

While the focus of the organization the author works for—MAP International (www.map.org)—is health, food security accounts for almost half of what happens in its major program, the Total Health Village (THV):

- This is what has made the programs robust and dynamic.
- It has delivered improvement in the health status of the community, coupled with prevention and treatment measures.
- The communities in the THVs have become empowered as they have come to control their natural and productive resources and gained more control of their health.

If we are to move towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal of halving global poverty, we need to consider food security.

A3U framework for food security

Food security has 4 dimensions: the **Availability** of food; **Access** to food; using surplus availability of food for **Asset** creation; and **Utilization** of food.

I. Availability

The first dimension is the availability of food in the community. In today's world this is much less of an issue as the world has progressed tremendously in food production. However, from time to time, there is a shortfall in availability of food in drought-prone or famine-affected areas:

- Persistent famine, such as the recent famine in the Horn of Africa, can cripple an area

because rainfall is insufficient for even the basic subsistence crop to be grown.

- This can make food grains unavailable and result in a food-security crisis as the community begins to starve.

The only thing that often works then is to bring in food grains from outside the area and donate them to the people to avert death through starvation. This ends up as a purely relief measure, and there is often no alternative to making the grain available year after year.

Christian development agencies can take such a situation and use a creative 'food for work' program to ensure that food is available in the area, so that the community does not migrate away to other areas in search of food. The program can also be used to leverage long-term availability of food by using the 'food for work' part of the program to create community assets such as roads, ponds, wood-lots, water shed development and planting of agricultural crops.

2. Access

Bringing in food from outside areas as food aid may satisfy the temporary availability need, and access may also become possible for the period of the intervention. However, this does not make any positive impact on the local economy—and may actually destroy whatever fledgling business exists for the local grain market.

Our purpose in development is to ensure that the local economy picks up and grain production and marketing become part of that process. Socio-economic relationships in the community help revitalize it and make it robust and vibrant.

Food aid that is not used positively to bring traction to the local economy and stimulate local grain production will make the community passive and dependent on external aid. Ultimately, access to food will become the victim. It is easy for well-meaning but poorly directed Christian development agencies to do more harm than good—including for the gospel—through their development work.¹

3. Asset creation

In a normal community, food security is closely tied to asset creation. Surplus food produced by individuals and families is used for selling and purchasing assets. Assets are a means of saving.

The author recalls making assessments in a community regarding their savings by checking if they had savings accounts and how much money was in them. He knew that many of the families were doing very well and had greatly benefited from a livelihoods security program. However, that was not reflected itself in the number of savings accounts and amounts in those savings accounts.

A farmer then showed them his newly purchased piglets, making the point that these were his 'savings'. His surplus grain had been sold in the market to generate funds to buy livestock. These served as a 'liquid asset' that could be sold whenever a crisis occurred. This was a logical move: the assets were available to him, and growing at a better rate than any bank would pay in interest.

Asset creation from surplus food available—to be liquidated later in times of crisis—represents an integral part of food security. Organizations working with communities to help them become food-secure must cater for this in their programming.

4. Utilization

The final dimension is the utilization of food that is available in the community:


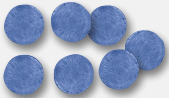



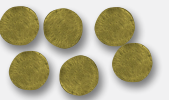








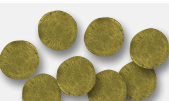

- When food is in short supply, the way it is consumed by various members in the family is affected.
- In many cultures the distribution then follows the pecking order: husband first, then sons, then daughters, and finally the mother.
- Food scarcity thus does not affect everyone in the family in the same way.

Thus ensuring food security means also bringing gender equality, because providing adequate food for the family requires it to be distributed equally.

Household food-security assessment

The Rapid Food Security Status Assessment (RFSA) tool can be used for rapid assessment of the food security status of a household. This is a simple participatory tool that was designed and introduced by the author in 2001 while working in Cambodia (details can be obtained at www.ravijayakaran.com/documents). The following diagram shows some of the information generated through an RFSA exercise carried out with a focused group in the Philippines for their village:

RFSA-of a village in Mindanao Island, Philippines

Number of Seeds	RFSA Status (Level)	Group Name in Tagalo	IE Ratio		Response to the gospel
			Income	Expenditure	
	Above Prosperity Line	Mayaman (well-off/rich) RFSA-1			
	Above Poverty Line	Ka Tam Taman (just alright) RFSA-2			
	Below Poverty Line	Mahirap (poor) RFSA-3			
	Below Charity Line	Pinaka Mahirap (very poor) RFSA-4			

The first column shows the approximate breakdown of the population in that village that fell into one or other of the four RFSA categories.² Poverty when defined from the perspective of household food security is: 'A household is considered to be poor if its expenditure on a consistent basis is more than its income, without the creation of an asset'. On this basis, a quick analysis here showed that approximately 60% of the community is below the poverty line, 20% just makes ends meet, and 20% is able to generate surplus. Among the population that is below the poverty line, 40% is in a condition of extreme poverty. The second and third columns show the RFSA status, and the local name that the community uses to describe the households in that category.

These categories are not based on some national figure of average household income, but on comparisons of the households in that community, which are in socio-economic interaction with each other:

- The ratios are very contextual and will change from community to community because household food security status is not based on income but on the ratio between income and expenditure for that household.
- Thus for the fragile categories of RFSA levels, for example RFSA-2, any circumstance

that causes imbalance between income and expenditure, such as accident or illness, can make that household drop in RFSA status, because when expenditure is more than household income, the family has to borrow money to survive, often at exorbitant rates.

Christian development agencies should therefore recognize that access to credit, access to health care services, and investment opportunities are good buffers against collapse in household food security status.

Food security and response to the gospel

It is not surprising that household food security status and response to the gospel are correlated:

- As can be seen from the diagram, the response to the gospel is highest in RFSA-3 and RFSA-4 categories, and lowest in RFSA-1 and RFSA-2.
- This openness mainly occurs during times when that household is going through crisis.

Working with the RFSA-1 group is the hardest, but it can show the greatest impact on the community when there is a breakthrough:

- This group does not need investment but an opportunity to invest in *corporate social responsibility* within the community, because that brings it status, recognition, and acceptance.
- The Bible has a beautiful example in Jesus' encounter with Zaccheus in Luke 19. Jesus' recognition of him, and honoring him by visiting him, accepting him 'as he was', was enough to transform Zaccheus' life.
- In fact he was so clearly transformed that when he declared his 'corporate social responsibility profile', he vowed in public to invest 50% of his assets in the lives of the poor in his community.

Food aid that is not used positively to bring traction to the local economy and stimulate local grain production will make the community passive and dependent on external aid. Ultimately, access to food will become the victim.

A case for integral mission

Households that are below the poverty line have great struggles. The debilitating impact of abject poverty is like a continued oppression on multiple fronts and can crush the spirit, make people lose hope and turn to desperate measures for coping and surviving (Proverbs 30:8-9). This is the group that is constantly in search of a Savior.

The gospel, which is integral and holistic, is both the proclamation and demonstration of the good news to the poor and needy. Jesus makes a very attractive offer in giving an open invitation to all: 'Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'.

Christian agencies are called to be an extension of that offer. The Nazareth manifesto is also a challenge to us to be engaged in integral mission as we follow in our Lord's footsteps (Luke 4:18-19).

In the Old Testament we have a description of one of the biggest food-security programs in history, mobilized by Joseph. God revealed his plan for his chosen people through the wisdom he gave to Joseph in interpreting Pharaoh's dream. The massive food-security program that ensued under God's guidance then provided a means for his people to enter Egypt through amazing circumstances.

For us as Christians, it is a call to integral mission that ensures that we proclaim and demonstrate the good news in all that we do. MAP International has in recent times started increasing its church engagement portfolio to get more churches into partnerships of integral mission in communities in the developing world. As with Joseph, God has helped them to develop new tools and strategies, particularly to help churches and their congregations to engage meaningfully in bringing transformational development through building household-level food security. They are happy to share this information with LGA readers and also partner with those with a heart for integral mission.

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WCC GENERAL ASSEMBLY AFTERMATH

Overcoming Korean church divisions and encouraging cooperation among evangelicals globally

Bong Rin Ro



The 10th World Council of Churches General Assembly (WCC GA) was held in Busan, Korea, from 20 October to 8 November 2013. Some 4,000 participants from 140 nations joined together under the theme 'Living God, Lead us into Righteousness and Peace'. The Korean Preparation Committee had the support of the 2.8 million strong WCC ecumenically aligned Tong Hap Presbyterian Church of Korea denomination.

Korean church divisions

As early as 2011, conservative evangelical churches and denominations in Korea began to oppose the WCC GA. Mass demonstrations against the WCC GA occurred in Seoul and Busan, criticizing the WCC's liberal theology of religious syncretism, notably interfaith dialogues, emphasis on the socio-political gospel without spiritual conversion, and promotion of homosexual practice.

Leading the opposition was the Hap Tong Presbyterian Church of Korea, considered the largest conservative Presbyterian denomination with 3 million members and 11,000 churches. Other conservative denominations including the Koryo Presbyterian denomination, Reformed Church denomination, Puniel Presbyterian denomination in Busan, and others came out with official anti-WCC GA statements. Furthermore, strongly anti-WCC booklets were published.

In the history of the movement since 1948, the WCC has never experienced such well-organized and vehement opposition.

Conservative theology

The Korean church is one of the most theologically conservative in Asia and the world:

- Each major denomination has an 'Anti-Cults Investigation Committee' to monitor non-biblical doctrines and theology.
- The church has been very sensitive to theological issues, especially the liberal theologies of the WCC.
- Most Korean pastors and churches even within the more 'liberal' Tong Hap denomination are theologically conservative and often critical of WCC liberal theology.

However, these Korean evangelical leaders choose to stay within the more 'liberal' Tong Hap denomination to provide a positive evangelical influence within the WCC family. By contrast, the more conservative Hap Tong denomination would consider any engagement with WCC liberals compromising.

Financial considerations

Despite this environment, WCC leaders in Geneva selected Korea to host the 10th WCC GA for two basic reasons:

- With a continual decline of membership in Europe and North America and a financial crisis in the WCC in Geneva, the Korean church was chosen primarily for its spiritual vitality and financial strength (Korea is home to 23 of the largest 50 mega-churches in the world).
- WCC leaders felt that five ecumenical large Korean National Council of Churches (NCC) denominations—Presbyterian Church (Tong Hap), Presbyterian Church (Republic of Korea), Methodist Church, Full Gospel

Central Church, and Anglican Church—would be able to support the WCC GA financially.

Global South importance

The WCC GA in Busan highlighted the increasing importance of the church in the Global South, particularly Asia where rapid church growth has been taking place. The ‘wildfire’ church growth in Korea in the 1970-1990s and in China today has drawn the attention of world churches to the Asian church. While the proportion of Christians in the northern hemisphere has shrunk from 80.9% (1910) to 37.9% (2010), the Global South now represents over 60% of the Christian population.

The future leadership of world Christian organizations such as WCC, World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE)¹ are in the hands of Asian, African, and Latin American church leaders. Furthermore, the Catholic Church elected an Argentinian pope, Pope Francis, in early 2013,² and the WEA General Assembly was originally due to be held in Korea in October 2014.

The Korean Church, whether pro-WCC or anti-WCC, certainly had the privilege of meeting many world church leaders. The majority of Christians in Korea who did not know much about the WCC learned more about it through the GA in Busan. This GA will produce many positive and negative consequences in the Korean church.

Disappointing outcome

A well-known ecumenical Tong Hap pastor in Seoul evaluated the WCC GA as a failure for three reasons:

- The Korean Preparation Committee ended up with a large financial debt, because some ecumenical denominations could not produce the funds to cover their promised share.
- Not a single Korean pastor was elected to the WCC Central Committee, denying the Korean church influence within the WCC. The only election of a Korean church leader was as Chair of the Asian WCC Committee.
- The GA did not make any official statement on human rights in North Korea, despite a request by Korean ecumenical church leaders to the WCC Central Committee. In the past, WCC had been very active on human

rights issues around the world. Many Korean Christians were appalled by the silence of WCC on North Korea.

Further disappointment arose over the GA’s official statement in the area of theology. The cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ were omitted in the statement, which defines evangelism as restoring living beings into fullness of life according to the leading of the living God. The WCC did not change its basic theological position in Busan.

In the history of the movement since 1948, the WCC has never experienced such well-organized and vehement opposition.

Deepening divisions

Now, after the WCC GA, the Korean church will most likely be more divided than ever, with the rift between the two largest Presbyterian denominations (Tong Hap and Hap Tong) likely to deepen. The first major division in the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) occurred in 1959, mainly over whether or not to support the WCC. The 10th WCC GA in Busan highlighted the differences between conservatives and liberals, making matters worse.

WEA impact

It was announced on 11 February 2014 that the upcoming WEA General Assembly has been postponed. The statement cited ‘internal divisions among the evangelical community’ in Korea:

- WEA was partnering with the Christian Council of Korea (CCK), the largest evangelical body in Korea comprising conservative denominations.
- CCK is under the control and influence of the conservative Hap Tong denomination, which denounced the WCC GA.
- In March 2013, a split occurred within CCK. A new Korean Churches Association (KCA) controlled by Tong Hap was established,

with many evangelical denominations leaving CCK to join KCA.

WEA leaders had been preparing for their GA in Korea in October in cooperation with CCK. The key question was whether the present CCK leaders were willing to work with all evangelical leaders in Korea, both within and outside the WCC.

Many evangelical pastors of different mainline denominations do not support WCC for theological reasons. A key question was whether WEA and CCK would include these evangelical church leaders in the WEA GA.

Longer-term outlook

The WCC GA has shown that the center of gravity of the ecumenical movement has shifted from declining Western Christendom to the growing churches of the Global South. Many of the growing denominations, such as the Anglican Church in Africa and Tong Hap in Korea, belong to the ecumenical WCC movement. Loss of church membership in the West and increasing financial crisis in Geneva suggest that the WCC leadership needs to return to its original vitality in the 1950s by working closely with the evangelical leaders of the Global South.

Liberal leaders within the WCC have maintained control in the areas of church administration, finance, and seminary education. Amid changing times in church history, evangelical leaders from Asia, Africa, and Latin America need to increase their spiritual influence in these three areas within the WCC.

The deepening divisions among Korean Christians, particularly between CCK and KCA and between Hap Tong and Tong Hap, need to be healed. It will take a miracle for the church to unify on the basis of the biblical and historic faith of Christianity.

The role of The Lausanne Movement will become increasingly important in the future. The LCWE can help bring unity among the evangelical churches within WEA and the evangelical leaders within WCC who are dissatisfied with WCC theology and practices.

Suggested responses

Evangelical leaders in LCWE can work closely with WEA in order to bring cooperation among the evangelical churches around the world. The past three Lausanne Congresses are good examples of gatherings that bring

together all the evangelical church leaders around the world, within and outside WCC, to discuss the task of world evangelization.

One way is to work closely with WEA-related churches through WEA Commissions (Theological, Missions, Women's, Youth, Religious Liberty, and IT). Such cooperation will gain the support of grassroots churches and church leaders that are associated with different national evangelical alliances and fellowships. One area where this has been done is encouraging cooperation among over 1,000 evangelical seminaries in Asia outside the WCC, and then opening doors for them to cooperate with evangelical seminaries within WCC ecumenical denominations.

Evangelical leaders in LCWE can also open their doors to evangelical pastors and churches within WCC, because most churches within the ecumenical movement in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are theologically conservative and are looking for evangelical cooperation:

- Most Global South WCC ecumenical leaders are evangelicals who have observed the downward trend of the WCC movement, particularly in the West, and want to be a part of the worldwide evangelical movement.
- However, it is difficult for them to become members of WEA because their churches are already members of the ecumenical WCC.

The key task for evangelical churches, whether or not they are affiliated with WCC, is to work together for the cause of the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). The whole church must take the whole gospel to the whole world.


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SPORTS MINISTRY AND EVANGELISM

How an incarnational and service emphasis underpins effective evangelism

J Stuart Weir

Rev Samuel Ashe, an 18th century English clergyman, clearly saw the need for interaction between church and sport. He used to spend his Sunday afternoons hiding in the trees by the local sports field. He would bide his time until the football came near him when he would catch the ball and pierce it with a pin.¹ He could then go home pleased to have stopped his parishioners from sinning! Hopefully, in this article we can identify more constructive ways of engaging with the world of sport.

No reasonable person can deny the importance of sport in the modern world:

- The FIFA Football World Cup takes place in Brazil in June-July this year.
- The 2010 World Cup was shown on TV in every single country and territory on earth, with 3.2 billion people around the world, or 46.4% of the global population, watching at least part of it.²

Theological catch-up

Christian ministry to sport largely began in the 1950s but has grown exponentially to the point where there are currently over 50 ministries with a specific engagement with sport in the UK alone. Some form of Christian ministry to sport exists in 180 countries of the world. However, the growth has been spontaneous and often uncoordinated. This process has had certain consequences, for example, in terms of theology.

Jim Mathisen, from Wheaton College, has written, 'The fact that the current [sports ministry] movement still operates in the absence of any clearly articulated theology of sport is troubling . . . no theology or hermeneutics is broadly shared within the movement'.³

While Mathisen's comment remains true in the sense that sports ministry still operates from no generally accepted common theological foundation, more and more material on sport and Christianity is being published at an academically respectable level.⁴

Broad scope

Sports ministry broadly falls into two categories—ministry to sport and ministry through sport:

- Ministry to sport means serving sport in the name of Jesus; sports chaplaincy⁵ is a good example of this. The term 'serving the people of sport' is also used. This is helping the (often) elite sportsperson to practise their sport Christianly as well bringing church to them when competition stops them getting to a local Sunday service.
- Ministry through sport is seeing sport as an evangelistic opportunity. This might involve running sports events with an evangelistic purpose, starting a church sports team to draw in outsiders, operating a fitness centre for the community as part of the church's programme, or distributing leaflets or video material with a gospel message in the language of sport, often using the testimony of high-profile Christian athletes.

Sports ministry works at all levels and age groups. The following vision statement of one UK ministry summarizes well the task that the majority of Christian sports ministry organizations are engaged in:

- **Christians everywhere** living out their faith in sports clubs and teams.

- **Churches** *everywhere* engaging with their local sports communities.
- **Sportspeople** *everywhere* having the opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.⁶

Major event ministry

In recent years, Christians have seen the potential of a major event in their country or city as an opportunity for service and witness. This type of ministry began in the 1990s and has grown significantly over the years, particularly at the Olympics and football World Cups:

- A £2 million campaign around the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics involved over 2,000 volunteers from 40 countries serving on mission teams, the production and sale of 500,000 Christian resources and the distribution of half a million free bottles of water.
- The athlete family homestay programme hosted 280 guests from 20 nations for 2,000 nights of free accommodation.
- Church-organized events attracted over 500,000 people.⁷

Major event ministry has often been very effective but can sometimes lead to problems with the event organizing committee. They may feel that a particular Christian publication conflicts with official publications or could mislead the public into believing that there is an official relationship between the publisher and the organising committee.

A ministry report on a recent major sports event referred to a plan to distribute over 500,000 pieces of spiritual literature with testimonies of faith at three community fan zones in the city. While one may rejoice at this evangelistic enterprise, one might also question how the city authorities view the task of picking up the discarded leaflets and whether the reputation of the Christian community has been enhanced by this exercise—or the reverse.

One may also ask how the organizers of a Christian conference would feel if a commercial or political organization were to leaflet delegates to their event. The potential longer-term effects of a major event

evangelistic bombardment and the effectiveness of, say, handing out ‘tracts’ to people who are just wanting to have a fun day out at a sporting event, need to be considered.

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Sports chaplaincy

The chaplaincy programme at the London Olympics was arguably the most comprehensive ever conducted at an Olympic Games, with 162 chaplains accredited in three separate categories to serve the athletes and others in the Olympic Village, the workforce and volunteers and the media. This was an excellent example of servant-hearted Christians working with the Olympic organizing committee to add value to the event.

The chaplaincy opportunity was created by the foresight of the Bishop of Barking who had created the post of ‘Church of England Olympics Executive Coordinator’ five years previously. The person appointed, Duncan Green, describes his journey of service to the organizing committee in a forthcoming book.⁸

Sports outreach

At the grassroots level, some Christian-based sports outreach projects are being recognised by secular sporting networks as valid forms of engagement through sport to tackle problems in society. A good example is the Ambassadors Fathers’ Football project, which won the Beyond London 2012 Innovation award for reaching out to support poor, marginalised immigrant fathers in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.⁹

When the Africa Cup of Nations was held in Egypt in 2006, the organizing committee was short of volunteers. The Christian community rallied round and recruited the required help. A Christian leader was given the role of Head of Volunteers and a place on the organizing committee.

He said afterwards, 'It was an incredible opportunity that God gave to the sports ministry in Egypt, to be at the heart of such a big sports event. Ninety percent of the people I was working with—volunteers, organizing committee, government—were not Christians. But all of them knew I was from a Christian church. I believe this is real sports ministry—not just working in the church but taking the church outside'.

The London 2012 and Egypt 2006 experiences show how an attitude of servant-hearted support for the organizing committee of a major sports event is often appreciated and can build bridges between the Christian community and the sports administrators.

Disability sport

At the 1992 Paralympics, admission was free, as the organizing committee did not think that anyone would pay to watch disability sport. In 2012 in London the Paralympics were virtually sold out for every event. The quality and the profile of disability sport have increased dramatically over the past few years. However, the Christian community has largely ignored disability sport. In the UK perhaps 2 of the 50 sports ministries explicitly include disability sport within their programme of activities.

If the theological reflection on sport has been sparse, the Christian thinking about disability sport has been almost non-existent. The publication of a book later this year will represent a welcome contribution to the field.¹⁰

Prophetic engagement

Christians have been criticized for failing to have any prophetic engagement with sport. Tom Krattenmaker,¹¹ for example, has lamented the lack of interest in issues like racism, exploitation of women, financial corruption, or excessive violence in sport. When the 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia brought Russia's anti-gay legislation into world spotlight, there seemed to be silence from the Christian sports ministry community.

Theological implications

The increased application of theological reflection to sport is to be welcomed. However, it must be recognized that the process has only just begun:

- Ministry underpinned by a sound theological base will be stronger and hopefully more effective.

If the theological reflection on sport has been sparse, the Christian thinking about disability sport has been almost non-existent.

- Greater theological understanding will help Christians to interact positively with sports' governing bodies and to serve them rather than appearing simply to want to use the sports event for their own purposes.
- It will also help Christians address and give leadership in relation to the ethical issues which pervade sport.
- Ministry which respects the integrity of sport without compromising the integrity of the gospel is likely to reap long-term fruit.

Lessons and suggested responses

The incarnational model emphasis of sports ministry, where Christians enter the world of sportspeople, reflects the Pauline emphasis in I Corinthians 9:19-23 with a playing, participating, and supporting level of involvement that requires a huge commitment in terms of time, vulnerability, and intentionality in relationships. This is a lesson for other spheres of evangelism that can sometimes emphasise a programme/event/'come to us' approach.

Being open to supporting an incarnational approach in evangelism, and in envisioning, equipping, and supporting any sportspeople in the congregation to be the church's evangelists to their sports friends and local sports club, can be an effective strategy to help the church engage with its local sports community. Supporting Christian parents of sporty children as they engage with others around their child's sport, through alternative church meetings and visiting children at their sports activities, for example, is also essential.

Another lesson applicable to other spheres of evangelism is that the serving emphasis within sports evangelism can break down many barriers and open up doors for other evangelism opportunities. Such an approach may not yield short-term results but the long-term favour

that emerges (e.g., through sports chaplaincy) can lead to real growth of influence for the gospel.

Churches should also be open to serve in the community in and through sport, for example, in providing volunteers, coaches, pastoral care, or a meeting place for a local sports club, school, or college. There should be a conscious decision to value and prioritise disability sport more than has happened up to this point.

Seeing sport as a gift from God, valuing it, and seeking to engage with sport as those who care about it, must represent a fundamental part of how Christians see the world of sport in future. Let us get involved in the world of sport and win it for Christ!

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NATIONALISM AND EVANGELICAL MISSION

Issues for evangelical leaders

Darrell Jackson



In 1861, the Rev James Adderley was a British member of Parliament. His prayer for 'national confession' included the line, 'We are truly sorry for all the past sins of this nation. We contemplate in deepest contrition the sins of which we are now guilty'.

Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbot, recently attacked the state-funded broadcaster, ABC, for its coverage of allegations that Australia had been spying on the Indonesian Prime Minister. Abbot complained that the ABC 'instinctively takes everyone's side but Australia's . . . you should not leap to be critical of your own country'. Journalists were left wondering whether their primary loyalty was to accurate reporting of the truth or to the national interest.

The contrast could not be more apparent.

Nationalism dilemma

It is a dilemma that goes to the heart of the current global rising tide of nationalisms and patriotisms. Ulrich Beck describes global trends of this type as 'stowaways', popping up everywhere and anywhere, when least expected. They frequently cause headaches for Christian leaders and pose particular challenges for the church or mission agency leader responsible for managing multi-national teams. This simple observation requires us to understand the scope and significance of nationalism in the context of global mission.

European nationalist surge

The global region that the author knows best, Europe, currently faces the challenges of nationalist parties winning votes in regional, national, and European elections by exploiting popular concerns about immigrants, Muslims, or historical minority groups:

- **Netherlands:** The anti-Islamic *Party for Freedom* (PVV) won 24 seats out of 150 in the 2010 general elections, and until 2012, was a key ally of the minority government. It currently has 4 out of 25 Dutch members of the European Parliament (MEPs).
- **Hungary:** *Jobbik*, established in 2002, has 43 MPs out of 386 and 2 MEPs, making it the third largest party in Hungary. Committed to the protection of Hungarian values and interests, it describes itself, among other things, as a 'radically patriotic Christian party'. Commentators describe it as 'anti-Semitic' and 'neo-Nazi'.
- **Italy:** The *Northern League* (*Lega Nord*) is a separatist and nationalist party that performs strongly in northern Italy. It has 41 elected politicians at various levels of national government and, in 2010, controlled 14 provinces. It currently has 9 out of 73 Italian MEPs.
- **France:** The *National Front* (FN) party, founded in 1972, polled 20% of the vote in local elections in 2010. It has 3 MEPs and 2 members of the National Council. It frequently invokes the memory of Joan of Arc as a unifier of French values and interests.

- **United Kingdom:** The *British National Party* (BNP), founded in 1982, now has two local councillors and 1 MEP. With the rise of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), a less extreme form of nationalist politics has proven popular. It has 9 British MEPs and 220 local councillors.
- **Greece:** The *Popular Orthodox Rally* (LAOS), founded in 2000, has 2 MEPs and controls 121 local councils. LAOS claims an Orthodox Christian religious identity allied with a radically nationalist political identity.
- **Denmark:** Since 2001, the nationalist, left-of-centre *Danish People's Party* (DF) has pursued policies committed to protecting the cultural heritage of Denmark, including the monarchy and the Church of Denmark. Through its 22 MPs, one MEP, and 186 local councillors, it resists the promotion of Denmark as a multi-ethnic society and works to limit immigration and promote the cultural assimilation of migrants.

Nationalist parties from Central Europe have tended to target historical minorities and generally espouse pro-Fascist ideologies, originating in the 1930s. Western European versions tend to target multi-culturalism, immigration, and Muslims in particular.

While populist parties stir up fears, the churches often struggle to express a clear kingdom perspective. While Pope Benedict XVI frequently referred to this as a spiritual crisis of values, there is no united evangelical voice speaking into the economic and political instability. In some instances, the churches find themselves, wittingly or unwittingly, portrayed as patriotic allies in the struggle to stem the influx of non-Christian immigrants.

A round-up of stories in 2013 from the *BBC*, the *New York Times*, *Le Monde*, the *British Guardian*, and Australian newspaper *The Age*, make reference to instances of nationalism in 35 countries and territories around the world.

How are we to think about nationalism?

Early in his own critique of nationalism, Charles Taylor¹ concludes that nationalists, above all else, issue a 'call to difference in the face of homogenizing forces' that are global in nature and which assume that the nation-state is deeply implicated in the global market economy. Gerard

While populist parties stir up fears, the churches often struggle to express a clear kingdom perspective.

Delanty² argues that the success of nationalism lies in its capacity to imagine forms of community that nurture national belonging, intimacy, commonality, independence, and self-determination—those things that are perceived to have been destroyed by nation-states, undermined by political parties, and weakened, we may add, by global bureaucracies.

Global bureaucracies are commonly rooted in forms of trans-sovereignty that embrace the emergence of increasingly efficient trans-national markets and forms of co-operation (including the European Union). Eurosceptic reactions to the EU are typically directed at its bureaucracies—shaped by the legal and treaty framework underpinning its shared political, economic, and cultural life. It is precisely during the period culminating in the signing of the Maastricht treaty in 1992 that many of the far-right and nationalist parties in Europe were founded.

In resisting globalisation, most nationalisms use alternative narratives that are mythological. These can include:

- 'Frontier' myths (common, for example, in the USA);
- 'Sacred origin' myths (such as the primordialist *Magyar* myths of the far-right parties in Hungary);
- 'Heroic' myths (such as the ANZAC mythology that is so important to contemporary Australian identity);
- 'Creation' myths (common among the indigenous peoples of the world); and
- Myths of 'Manifest Destiny' (including, though not limited to, the USA).

Of course, writing in this way will offend some in countries where these myths are credited with greater historical veracity than this article may appear to concede. This fact alone illustrates the power of myths—their capacity for mobilising public opinion, galvanising action, and ultimately motivating nations to collective action.

What are the issues for evangelical leaders?

Firstly, The Lausanne Movement is clearly a global expression of evangelical Christianity, and consequently exhibits some characteristics of other global movements. Lausanne's commitment to a vision of the one worldwide body of Christ, fuelled by passion and enthusiasm, is entirely appropriate and wholly commensurate with a vision of the kingdom of God. Yet, The Lausanne Movement has to balance constantly the national interests and agendas of evangelical groupings with the global agendas urged upon it by the movement's leaders.

Secondly, mission teams currently located in various parts of the world will, for example, have Russian and Ukrainian members. Certainly, Russians and Ukrainians will share some common sympathies regarding the current situation in Ukraine, mostly rooted in a broader vision of the kingdom of God. However, in such situations the wise team leader prepares for heated discussions within the team as fault-lines converge around patriotic or nationalistic feelings:

- These will be conveyed in the sense, felt by both sides, that *my* country normally gets it right, deserves my support, and *my* country's media are probably more accurately telling me the truth.
- The journey from patriotism to nationalism starts when 'my' convictions become absolute, and loyalty to country demands a refusal to question it and efforts to silence the questions of others.

Thirdly, as another example, the bitter dispute between China and Japan, focused on several small islands, threatened to derail an English-language class the author was teaching to students in China in 2013. A loaded question from the student monitor was only defused when the author said that such issues were not widely reported in other countries! The vital national interests of any one country may be rarely reported by the media of other countries; yet it is necessary for the astute cross-cultural Christian worker to be constantly alert to the spectre of nationalism raising its ugly head and threatening to undermine credible witness.

Of course, the curse of nationalism for the faithful follower of Jesus Christ is seen in the extent to which Christianity is mobilised as a unifying source of national identity over and against others. Responsible and astute media commentators will recognise that impact of

Christian identity and allegiance can only ever be to Christ. All other forms of loyalty are temporal and will pass away.

religion on public and political conversation. Without this recognition, it is difficult to form an intelligent view of the current crisis in Ukraine, for example. The arrival of Orthodox Christianity in Kiev and the 'Baptism of the Rus' in 988AD are central to Ukrainian and Russian versions of national identity and continue to play out in the current crisis there.

A biblical perspective

Evangelicals may choose on occasion to express solidarity with their government, and it is not always wrong to do so. However, they are well advised to keep in mind the counsel of British theologian, Esther Reed:

It is not possible to work with an account of . . . nation and nationhood . . . if this means a moral partiality or politics of superiority that would deny to others the same human rights as those of its members, is marked by hostility towards and suspicion of other nations, and condones the violence and destruction that results from these attitudes.³

This perspective reflects a biblical theology of the nations that portrays them as the pinnacle of God's creative acts (Gen 10:32); laments their incredible hubris (Gen 11:4); declares them to be at the centre of God's missionary purposes (Gen 12:2-3); gathers all nations into the body of Christ (Rev 7:9); yet still concludes with an eschatological picture of the nations in submission and under judgement (Rev 19:15). Christian identity and allegiance can only ever be to Christ. All other forms of loyalty are temporal and will pass away, finally exposed as worthless by the Judge of every tribe and every nation.

Suggested responses

We need firstly to repent of any partiality or superiority that we instinctively feel or demonstrate toward co-workers or those among whom we work.

Secondly, we need to work hard at identifying potential sources of nationalist tensions within our own ministry and mission teams. We should be prepared to address

tricky issues that may arise from time to time, prompted by geo-political developments. It is better sensitively to raise these issues within a team and try to handle them in a healthy manner, always striving for the reconciliation secured by Christ through his death and resurrection. The alternative can be a festering resentment.

Thirdly, we should be prepared to offer training to teams sent into areas where they are likely to encounter nationalist tensions. Jesus faced this in his own ministry and responded to a leading question, 'Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar?' with clarity, wisdom, and grace. Our equivalent advice might be to focus training around the notion of 'Give to your nation the loyalty due to it and to God the loyalty due to him'. Christians, however, need constant reminding that loyalty to God is always prior to loyalty to nation. This fact may, at times, require us carefully to re-evaluate how much any country can ultimately expect of a disciple of Jesus, the *Lord of Lords*.

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More than 600 delegates from across the world gathered in Bethlehem in March for Christ at the Checkpoint (CATC) 2014, the third such conference that aims to ask 'What Would Jesus Do?' in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹ Bethlehem Bible College organized the conference, inviting speakers from a wide theological and political range to discuss how evangelical Christians should respond to one of the most politicized conflicts of our time:

- What does it mean to seek Christ's kingdom in a land-driven dispute?
- Does Jesus' call to love our neighbours demand action in response, and if so, what kind of action?
- How are Christians to make peace?

Evangelical shift

These questions not only drove the conference but also captured a current shift in evangelical thinking toward the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Christians have long been among the strongest supporters of Israeli policies, especially in the United States. However, CATC and its attendant controversies highlighted the fact that evangelicals are taking in more and more of the Palestinian narrative and theological perspective, and are seeking a more balanced take on the conflict.¹

A week before the conference, Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor stated that it was an 'attempt to use religious motifs in order to mobilize political propaganda'. Right-leaning media criticisms also spread before the conference even started, with many articles

decrying the decline of support for Israel among evangelicals, especially youth.

Conference director Munther Isaac rejected these accusations in a statement made to *Christianity Today*. 'We were saddened by the comments of Mr Palmor . . . It is unfortunate that an Israeli official would consider a conference that aims to provide a platform for international and local evangelical leaders and theologians to discuss the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as "political propaganda".' He continued: 'We are Palestinian evangelicals, and we believe that we have a perspective that needs to be heard'.

The conflict's realities came through on-field visits to areas in the occupied territories and checkpoints throughout the week, as well as two clashes between Palestinian protestors and Israeli police outside the conference hotel. Heightened violence, with multiple Palestinian deaths that week, as well as increased rocket attacks to and from Gaza, enforced the sense of suffering on both sides.

Messianic Jewish and Palestinian believers need each other. We need practical love, surpassing differences and theology.

Diverse theological beliefs

The conference theme was 'Your Kingdom Come', which meant something different for each attending group, from Palestinian Christians to Messianic Jews, Mennonites to Reformed evangelicals and dispensationalists. The main theological division lay between Christian Zionists, who believe that Jewish return to the Holy Land fulfils biblical prophecy and thus demand Christian commitment to political support for Israel, and those who believe otherwise.

Yet diversity was an asset to CATC, said Bishara Awad, founder of Bethlehem Bible College. 'You may hear theological points of view that are not your own', Awad said at the opening session. 'As you do, ask yourself: does this help the kingdom of God? That is, do these perspectives stand for justice and peace, defend the weak, and help the poor?'

Despite their wide-ranging theological beliefs, CATC attendees united in their commitment to peace. This came through in four conference highlights:

1. Reconciliation

Recognition of different narratives in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is key to reconciliation. Taking in an 'enemy' perspective can be painful, said Musalaha Ministries director Salim Munayer, especially when it invalidates your own sense of identity. Yet the gospel calls precisely for Christians to love their enemies by seeing them as neighbours, brothers, and friends.

'The kingdom of God is not holding a sword against other human beings, but blessing them', Munayer said—an idea that is radically counter to the usual Israeli and Palestinian rejection of the 'other'.

'When Christians pray "deliver us from evil", it's not just evil from others. Many times it's evil that we do', Munayer said, calling for Christians to set an example in humble self-examination. 'We must always ask: are my theology, narrative, and conduct a source of blessing to my enemy? If they're not, that's not the kingdom of God.'

Reconciliation also requires loving one's neighbour despite eschatological differences, as was demonstrated through dialogue between Messianic Jews, Palestinian Christians, and international evangelicals.

Wheaton College theologian Gary Burge and Messianic Jewish leader Daniel Juster delved into the conflict's theological nuances, tackling Zionism, dispensationalism, supersessionism, replacement theology, and how all the above relate to peace, justice, and Jesus. The two disagreed on whether Jews continue to play a special role in God's plan for salvation and on the theology of the land, but agreed on Christ's centrality and the urgent need for Christian fellowship and unity.

Messianic Jewish leader Oded Shoshani also called for oneness among believers in the Holy Land. 'Messianic Jewish and Palestinian believers need each other. We need practical love, surpassing differences and theology', Shoshani said.

2. Peacemaking

Dr Geoff Tunnicliffe, Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance, applauded CATC as a peacemaking effort. Political complexity must not stop evangelicals from pursuing the peace that burns in the heart of God, he said. 'The suffering, grief, and despair of Christians,

Muslims, and Jews here are an affront to humanity and to our God', Tunnicliffe said. 'The prince of peace laid down his life so we could be reconciled to God and to others.'

Evangelicals may disagree on how the world will end, what Jesus' return will look like, or whether the physical Holy Land has anything to do with it, Tunnicliffe said. However, we can agree on Christ's clear directive to love our neighbour, no matter who he may be. 'We as evangelicals have many core beliefs in common. Eschatology is not one of them', he said. 'But for the sake of Christian unity, can we live grace-filled, Christ-honouring ways together while we disagree?'

Eschatological disagreement should not impact Christians' commitment to resist injustice and love even those who hurt us. 'It is a mistake to think that restricting the freedom of some will create stability for others in society', Tunnicliffe said, adding that the peace of Christ is meant to be a blessing for all, not an exclusive few. 'Power secured by oppression and imprisonment of minorities is shaky and unstable power.'

3. Islam

Who is my neighbour? Who is my enemy? These questions guided discussions of not only Israel and Palestine, but also Christianity amid political turmoil and rising Islamism in the Middle East.² The answers were consistent: everyone is my neighbour and no one is my enemy.

'There is no us or them when defining the neighbour', conference director Munther Isaac preached. 'Everyone is a neighbour and we are called to love them as ourselves.'

Palestinian minister Hanna Massad spoke about Rami Ayyad, a believer executed by Gaza militants—just one of many Arab Christians targeted for their faith. 'Christians in the West are supporting an occupation seen as evil and unjust. Some extremists react against that by taking out hostility on innocent Arab Christians', said Joseph Cumming of Yale University.

Yet the speakers called not for resistance or retaliation, but embrace. 'Christ shows us the power of love and forgiveness. Don't let anything to steal peace and joy from your heart', Massad said. Perfect love casts out all fear, Cumming likewise preached. 'If we are focused on our own survival, we won't survive. If we're willing to put survival at risk in order to love our neighbours, that is how we will truly live.'

Christ calls us not to fearful self-pity, said Anglican theologian Colin Chapman, but to bold, vulnerable willingness to reach out and understand. 'If Jesus could change his Jewish followers' attitudes toward Samaritans, could he not change our hearts toward Muslims today?'

Coptic Bishop Angaelos likewise spoke of the Egyptian church's response to persecution. 'We have no enemy in Christianity. Loving our enemy means loving those who consider themselves our enemies. Thus enmity is broken', he said. 'We fight hatred by seeing in every person the image of God. Palestinian, Israeli, Christian or Muslim—at the core, I see and love the image and likeness of God in each person.'

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4. The Palestinian Church

Palestinian Christians founded and currently lead Bethlehem Bible College, which organized CATC. They were the clearest speakers against the Israeli occupation.

'Shared land is one where we are all neighbours and equal. For this to happen, occupation must end', Isaac said.

The difference between their narrative and the mainstream Palestinian one, however, was their call for ending occupation not by conquering the 'other' or by violent means, but by caring for the other.

'The gospel is and should be good news for both Palestinians and Israelis', said Bishara Awad. Justice demands standing up for the weak and oppressed. However, asserting Palestinians' dignity does not detract from Israelis' equal humanity.

'I am not against Jews living in this country. I want Palestinians, Israelis, Jews, Christians, and Muslims to live in this land in peace', said Rev Alex Awad. 'I am

hopeful because I believe in God, who loves the Jews and Palestinians. When I look to God, I know peace is coming.'

Conclusion

CATC sought to 'challenge evangelicals to take responsibility to help resolve the conflicts in Israel-Palestine by engaging with the teaching of Jesus on the kingdom of God'. The time has come for followers of Jesus to take their calling to be peacemakers seriously and engage positively in this part of the world.

Lynne Hybels, co-founder of the Willow Creek Church, spoke in the first two CATC conferences about her discovery of the Palestinian church. She recently said: 'I am still pro-Israel, but I've also become pro-Palestine, pro-peace, and pro-justice and pro-equality for Jews and Arabs living as neighbours in the Holy Land. And the bottom line is always: pro-Jesus!'

If more Christians begin to develop the same attitude, then we will see the hope that is desperately needed in the Middle East.

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