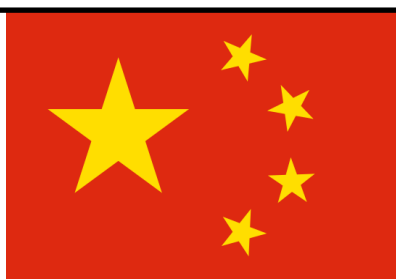
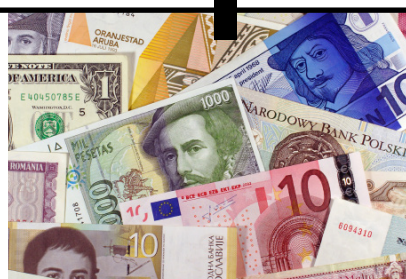
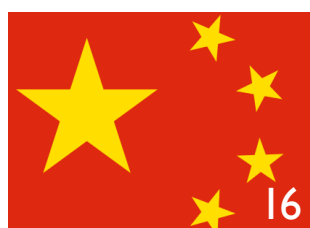
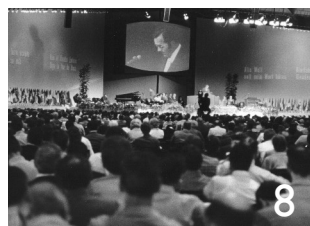


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Lausanne
GLOBAL ANALYSIS

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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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Further information about The Lausanne Movement may be found at www.lausanne.org.

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ISSUE OVERVIEW

David Taylor, Editor,
Lausanne Global Analysis



Welcome to the July 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 the legacy of Lausanne 1974 after 40 years. We also analyse the prosperity gospel, an issue that has emerged more recently, which was not on the missiological radar screen as a major challenge to world evangelization (although the call to a simple lifestyle in *The Lausanne Covenant* may have hinted that the issue was on the horizon). Our articles on evangelical responses to Hinduism and current issues facing churches in China highlight challenges faced by the church in the two largest countries on earth, together comprising one-third of the world's population. Yet, in spite of the pressures, in both places the church is growing, in contrast to the Middle East where the visible church is shrinking rapidly, as our final article on regional Christian demographics highlights. However, even there, signs of hope are present.

Billy Graham once said that perhaps the most significant contribution in his ministry was the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization and the resulting Lausanne Movement. 'This year we commemorate the 40th anniversary of that epoch-making congress, which was in my view the most significant world mission gathering in the Christian era', writes S. Douglas (Doug) Birdsall (Honorary Chairman of The Lausanne Movement). Three great contributions of global significance emanated from the first Lausanne Congress: *The Lausanne Covenant*, holistic mission, and the new missiological paradigm of unreached people groups. Lausanne '74 also gave birth to a global movement. 'This is a gift from God through the magnanimous spirit of people like Graham and [John] Stott . . . I trust that the

next generation will be informed and inspired by what happened 40 years ago in Lausanne', he concludes.

'The prosperity gospel teaches that believers in Jesus Christ, as part of their heritage from God in this life, are entitled to certain spiritual and physical blessings by right', writes Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Baeta-Grau Professor of Contemporary African Christianity and Pentecostalism at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana). What raises concerns among evangelical Christians in particular is the emphasis of this gospel on material things as prime indicators of faithful Christianity. The prosperity gospel also finds it difficult to deal with pain and disappointment. The propagation of the prosperity message raises a major challenge for Christian mission in our time, especially because many upwardly mobile young people are attracted to its promises. 'Current missionary enterprise and theological study must continue to articulate solid responses to a gospel that sounds fascinating but is alien to the values upheld by the Lord of mission, Jesus Christ', he concludes.

Recent incidents in Wenzhou and Beijing among other factors have stoked fears of a government campaign against both legal and illegal churches. 'These incidents reflect the changing nature of Chinese churches—and China itself—and how this impacts the relationship of churches and state in China', write Thomas Harvey (Academic Dean of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford, UK), Paul Huoshui (a specialist on religion and politics in China, affiliated with the Center for the Study of Law and Religion, Emory Law School), and David Ro (Director of the Christy Wilson Center for World Missions at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary). For example, Christians now represent powerful business and social interests in the growing mega-cities of China. The recent incidents 'reflect a growing wariness of Christianity by government leaders, although not so far the nationwide crackdown that some have predicted', they conclude.

Hinduism claims over 900 million followers worldwide, making it the third largest world religion. The vast majority, over 827 million, live in India. The gospel has

contributed to the welfare and holistic development of many marginalised communities among Hindus. 'In many places, however, the bearers of the Good News have failed to incarnate the gospel in such a way that the community had the opportunity to investigate the Good News authentically', writes Rabbi Jayakaran (Chairperson and Managing Trustee of PeaceMakers, India). We are sometimes unable to separate it from Western cultural wrappings and often a young person is told that family and community practices are evil and s/he has to choose between family and faith. 'We need to make ourselves vulnerable by daring to unpack [the gospel] and offer it to communities to inspect, alter, accept, or reject', he concludes.

'In recent history, one of the most profound changes in the global religious landscape has been the unrelenting proportional decline of historic Christian communities in

the Middle East', writes Gina Zurlo (Assistant Director at the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, USA). Christians from these historic communities are now present all over the world, and Christians from all over the world are increasingly drawn to the Middle East. The dual migration trends of Christians to and from the region present a unique challenge for supporting Christians in the Middle East as minority communities under intense social and political pressure. 'All Christians have a renewed responsibility to promote dialogue and cooperation across religious differences in light of the changing religious landscape of the Middle East', she 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 September.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LAUSANNE '74: STEWARDING THE LEGACY

S Douglas Birdsall

When Billy Graham was interviewed for *Newsweek* magazine in 2006, he was asked what he thought was the most enduring impact of his remarkable sixty-year global ministry. To the surprise of the interviewer, he responded that perhaps his most significant contribution was the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization and the resulting Lausanne Movement. This year we commemorate the 40th anniversary of that epoch-making congress, which was, in my view, the most significant world mission gathering in the Christian era.

Lausanne '74 took place at a time of monumental shifts in global Christianity. Graham was the visionary and catalyst. Without his convening power, the Congress would not have happened. John Stott and Graham emerged as the two great figures of the Congress. They embodied its ethos as a gathering for “reflective-practitioners”; articulated the vision, calling “the Whole Church to take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World”; and shaped the “spirit of Lausanne,” which Graham described as a spirit of “humility, friendship, study, prayer, partnership, and hope.”

Three great contributions of global significance emanated from the first Lausanne Congress: *The Lausanne Covenant*, holistic mission, and the new missiological paradigm of unreached people groups. Lausanne '74 also gave birth to a global movement. It created a new sense of unity and energy for global evangelicalism, and it ushered in a new epoch in world evangelization. Graham brought the evangelical world together in Lausanne. The streams that found confluence in Lausanne gave it force and depth and also created crosscurrents and carved new channels, creating movements within a movement.

Since the onset of the 21st century, conditions have been disposed toward the vision and values of The Lausanne Movement with its commitment to serious biblical study and profound theological reflection as the basis for strategic mission engagement. Lausanne advocates the conviction that all theological reflection must be missiologically expressed, and all mission action must be theologically grounded. The two are inseparable if mission is to be authentic.

Such is the legacy of a congress convened forty years ago. No global congress before or since has had the depth of impact or the breadth of influence of this historic gathering. This is a gift from God through the magnanimous spirit of people like Graham and Stott. It is therefore imperative that the spirit of and knowledge of Lausanne be passed on to the next generation. Indeed those who will best guide us into the future are those with the most comprehensive understanding of the past.

Just as Graham and leaders of his generation learned from and drew inspiration from the Edinburgh Conference, I trust that the next generation will be informed and inspired by what happened forty years ago at Lausanne '74.

THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL AND ITS CHALLENGE TO MISSION IN OUR TIME

J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu

What has come to be known as the prosperity gospel is mainly associated with contemporary Pentecostal teachings. Contemporary Pentecostals are distinguished from classical Pentecostals by their emphasis on the prosperity gospel with its focus on material things as indicators of divine favor.

Today many other churches also preach variations of material prosperity, especially in Africa. There are aspects of it that focus on hard work and self-improvement, but by and large, the prosperity gospel promotes materialism rather the sort of fruitfulness described in Psalm 1 as the lot of those who walk in the counsel of the Lord. The prosperity gospel is based on certain selected portions of Scripture. The favored passages include: Deuteronomy 28:1-14, Galatians 3:14, and 3 John 2.

The prosperity gospel simply teaches that believers in Jesus Christ, as part of their heritage from God in this life, are entitled to certain spiritual and physical blessings by right. This teaching has in Africa led to young people terminating employment prematurely to start their own businesses, and young pastors seceding to start their own ministries. There have been some successes but the casualties have also been quite high.

What raises concerns among evangelical Christians in particular is the emphasis of this gospel on material things as prime indicators of faithful Christianity. This message has attracted concerns because of its proof-texting hermeneutics—holding a position on issues and looking for biblical passages to justify it regardless of context—that leads to the neglect of fundamental Christian themes such as a sound theology of the cross.

The appeal to Scripture explains why the prosperity gospel is sometimes referred to as biblical prosperity. Its problem is not with using Scripture to empower hearers to believe God and do something about their circumstances in life. Indeed, there are parts of this message that may be considered empowering, but they pale into insignificance compared to the heretical aspects that present luxurious and extravagant living as the right of faithful Christians. Even more disturbing is when, in outlining the principles of prosperity, Jesus Christ is cited as having lived a materialistic lifestyle by the choices he made in life.

The prosperity gospel finds it difficult to deal with pain and disappointment. It leaves many church members without testimony because their material circumstances do not reflect the blessing of a God who is there to privilege his children by favoring and prospering them as long as they pay their tithes and offerings.

The dynamism of new evangelical movements such as contemporary Pentecostalism have attracted a significant following in Africa. This means generations of young Christians are growing up with a prosperity mindset that suggests that we can bypass the challenges of everyday life if we apply principles of prosperity.

In responding, care must be taken not to demonize wealth and material blessings. There are communities in Africa in which, by coming to Christ, people have been helped to save money for constructive purposes. It is materialism that needs to be condemned and not the material blessings obtained through hard work.

The propagation of the prosperity message raises a major challenge for Christian mission in our time, especially because many upwardly mobile young people are attracted to its promises. Current missionary enterprise and theological study must continue to articulate solid responses to a gospel that sounds fascinating but is alien to the values upheld by the Lord of mission, Jesus Christ.

CHINA'S CHURCHES: GROWING INFLUENCE AND OFFICIAL WARINESS PRESENT TWIN CHALLENGES

Thomas Harvey, Paul Huoshui, David Ro

A standoff between parishioners of the Sanjiang Church and the provincial government in Wenzhou recently ended in the government bulldozing a 4,000-seat megachurch for violation of building codes. In Beijing, eight members of the independent and unregistered Shouwang Church were detained by the Public Security Bureau. These events among other factors seem to point to the emergence of a campaign to limit Christianity's growth and influence.

Easily missed, however, is the connection between these incidents and the changing nature of Chinese churches—and China itself—and how this impacts the relationship of churches and state in China. The destruction of the church in Wenzhou, for example, belies the notion that Christianity in China is poor, powerless, and hard-put. Wenzhou is one of China's "boom towns," economically and spiritually. Today, Christians in Wenzhou gather in well-appointed worship centers seating thousands of worshippers. Christians now represent powerful business and social interests in the growing mega-cities of China.

Certainly, the growing size and social stature of Christianity discomfits some high officials. Given the mixed and muddled responses coming from different layers of government officials, it would appear that there remains some disagreement as to how to respond to the changing situation. Nonetheless, it does appear that the tearing down of church buildings and crosses comes with the sanction of the central government. As such, they reflect a growing wariness of Christianity by government leaders.

Were the government to launch a nationwide campaign against Christianity, it would most likely fail, exacerbate internal dissension, and alienate key constituencies in China itself. Internationally it would damage key relationships.

The churches of China will continue to grow and exert greater influence upon all levels of society. In terms of the state, one would assume that more moderate policies will prevail over time.

One would hope that there would be some self-reflection and even self-criticism by Chinese church leaders, given these setbacks. Triumphalism that seeks to

proffer Christianity through appeals to grand buildings and accumulation of power, wealth, and influence rather than humility and the cross will ultimately fail.

Christians globally should express concern over recent incidents and urge moderation toward churches in China, whether registered or unregistered. To overcome the wariness of public officials, they should also urge Christians in China to work for the common good and take personal and public stands against corruption.

It is also important to realize that the relationship between the churches, society, and the state has changed radically over the past twenty years and that our antiquated notions of the house churches of China are outdated. Further, just as China has grown in significance as a leader in international politics and business, its significance in global church leadership is beginning to take shape. Thus, just as the size, strength, and influence of the Chinese church has captured the attention of the Chinese government, so it should capture the attention of the global church.

DELIVERING THE GOOD NEWS TO HINDUS: HOW TO AVOID THE PACKAGE BEING LOST, STOLEN, OR DAMAGED

Rabbi Jayakaran

Hinduism claims over 900 million followers worldwide, making it the third largest world religion after Christianity and Islam. The vast majority, over 827 million, live in India.

The gospel has contributed to the welfare and holistic development of marginalised communities, spread of education and health, and growth of Christ-worshipping communities among Hindus. In many places, however, the bearers of the Good News have failed to incarnate the gospel in such a way that the community had the opportunity to investigate the Good News authentically.

Today when we offer the Good News to communities within the Hindu world we are unable to separate it from Western cultural wrappings. Hence what we offer is rejected because the Good News is either lost or damaged under the wrappings of an alien culture, or stolen so that all that we actually deliver is the wrapping.

Unfortunately we are more comfortable with Western symbols and rituals. We hold on to them as biblical commandments and have less tolerance for Hindu cultural expressions of faith. Hindu communities are

based on very close-knit families and communities. Often a young person is told that family and community practices are evil and to be shunned, and s/he has to choose between family and faith. Their lives are torn on issues of culture not Christ. The fear of being uprooted from family is one of the hindrances to people from Hindu backgrounds following Jesus.

The emphasis on cultural conversion rather than true, inner spiritual transformation has damaged the gospel. We have transported the gospel with all its cultural wrapping and expected an ancient civilisation, with a deep God consciousness and philosophical and theological grounding, to throw out its identity, culture, and values and take our package in. We need to make ourselves vulnerable by daring to unpack it and offer it to communities to inspect, alter, accept, or reject.

As we extend this grace to them prayerfully, we can be assured that the gospel too will inspect and transform them, their culture, and communities in a unique way that we may not expect. Deep relationships characterised by unconditional acceptance, genuine concern, and non-judgmental attitudes will draw people to take a closer look at the Good News.

The way forward is the way of dialogue, where we are primarily willing to listen, learn, humble ourselves, and be available, and from that place to put forth our lives and words to be contemplated by our Hindu friends. Our involvement in dialogue and mission is an adventure, anticipating surprises as the Spirit guides us into fuller understanding. The beauty of the gospel is that it comes in fresh ways to each situation, as we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us.

The amazing character of the Hindu world is that most people deeply believe in God and are trying to connect with him, know him, please him, and receive his help. God is committed to reach out to Hindus in spite of the mistakes we as his followers have made in our missionary endeavours. Like a master weaver, he is able to weave great designs if we are willing to give the control back to him, make ourselves vulnerable, get out of our comfort zones, and let him correct us, teach us, and keep us humble.

EMIGRATION OF CHRISTIANS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOME IMPLICATIONS

Gina A Zurlo

In recent history, one of the most profound changes in the global religious landscape has been the unrelenting proportional decline of historic Christian communities in the Middle East. The demographic situation of Christians in the Middle East has changed dramatically over the past 100 years, with two dynamics occurring simultaneously: emigration, where historic Christian communities are leaving the region primarily for Europe, North America, and Australia; and immigration, where Christian guest workers from outside the region are arriving to work mainly in oil-rich Muslim-majority countries. Another immigration-related trend in the Middle East is the arrival of missionaries into the region, primarily Protestants and Independents.

Between 1910 and 2010, nine Middle Eastern countries experienced significant declines in the Christian percentages of their populations: Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian territories, Syria, and Turkey, largely due to lower birth rates and emigration due to war, conflict, and persecution. At the same time, six Middle Eastern countries have had massive influxes of Christians, most notably since 1970—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These Christians are mostly migrants from the Philippines, South Korea, and other countries working in

oil production, construction, domestic tasks, and other jobs in the service industry.

Christians from these historic communities are now present all over the world, and Christians from all over the world are increasingly drawn to the Middle East. The dual migration trends of Christians to and from the region present a unique challenge for supporting Christians in the Middle East as minority communities under intense social and political pressure.

The expansion of Christianity to the Global South can be viewed as a positive development for Christians under siege in the region, especially in light of the post-colonial break between “Western” and “Christian.” The world is currently more attuned to the plight of Christians in the Middle East. Some of their pressing concerns can be addressed by advocating for freedom for all religious minorities in countries experiencing high social and/or governmental restrictions.

Christians from the Middle East in diaspora have new opportunities to engage in interfaith dialogue with people of other religions in a way that is often not possible in their home countries due to tense relationships between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Adherents of these religions are better able to work together from afar to promote peace in their region. All Christians have a renewed responsibility to promote dialogue and cooperation across religious differences in light of the changing religious landscape of the Middle East.

LAUSANNE '74

Stewarding the legacy

S Douglas Birdsall



When Billy Graham was interviewed for *Newsweek* magazine in 2006, he was asked what he thought was the most enduring impact of his remarkable sixty-year global ministry. To the surprise of the interviewer, he responded that perhaps his most significant contribution was the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization and the resulting Lausanne Movement.¹

Though Graham, the most visible and influential evangelical leader of the 20th century, had preached to huge crowds around the world and had impacted millions through his broadcasts, books, movies, conferences, etc., he had a growing appreciation for the significance of what took place in Lausanne, Switzerland, in July 1974.

This year we commemorate the 40th anniversary of that epoch-making congress, which was, in my view, the most significant world mission gathering in the Christian era. This article will explore its legacy by identifying seven factors that contributed to its global impact.

1. Historical context

In July 1974, 2,700 Christian leaders from nearly 150 countries met under the theme ‘Let the Earth Hear His Voice’ to consider the challenges and opportunities of world evangelization. *TIME* magazine referred to Lausanne '74 as “a formidable forum, possibly the widest ranging meeting of Christians ever held.”

Such a gathering could not have taken place earlier. The historic Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910 brought together some 1,200 mission leaders, 90 percent of whom were from Europe and North America. This reflected the reality that the vast majority of Christians at that time were in the Northern Hemisphere. Mission was understood largely in terms of “from the West to the Rest.”

However, by 1974, thanks in no small part to the impulses and missionary initiatives of Edinburgh 1910, the church had experienced tremendous growth in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Furthermore by 1974, new political, economic, and ideological realities created the global context in which a congress like Lausanne '74 was possible—and essential. Lausanne '74 thus took place at a time of monumental shifts in global Christianity.

2. Leadership of global stature

Graham was the visionary and catalyst for Lausanne '74. Without his convening power, the Congress would not have happened. Though he was the central figure, he enlisted a company of leaders with exception ability, including Bishop Jack Dain and Dr. John Stott. The latter was invited to serve as a Bible expositor and as the chief architect of the Congress document, *The Lausanne Covenant*.

Stott was initially disinclined to participate, but his role would prove to be most significant. He and Graham emerged as the two great figures of the Congress:

- Their respective statures as the world’s most trusted pastor/theologian and the most loved and respected evangelist/statesman would prove to embody the ethos of the Congress as a gathering for “reflective-practitioners.”
- Graham and Stott articulated the vision, calling “the Whole Church to take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World.”
- They also shaped the “spirit of Lausanne,” which Graham described as a spirit of “humility, friendship, study, prayer, partnership, and hope.”

Whereas the participants at Edinburgh 1910 had been almost exclusively missionary leaders, Lausanne '74 was broadened to include pastors, church leaders, and scholars, as well as leaders from business, government, and the media.

3. The Lausanne Covenant

Three great contributions of global significance emanated from the first Lausanne Congress. The greatest of these was *The Lausanne Covenant* whose primary architect was Stott. It is widely considered the most significant missions document produced in the Protestant era, and is recognized as the most concise and commanding expression of evangelicalism. As such, it served as a uniting force and mobilizing impetus for world evangelization in the post-congress era.

Graham was the visionary and catalyst for Lausanne '74. Without his convening power, the Congress would not have happened.

4. Holistic mission

In reaction to the prominence given to the “Social Gospel” in the early and mid twentieth century by the World Council of Churches (WCC), evangelicals had neglected their historic commitment to the social implications of the gospel. That changed dramatically at Lausanne and in the years to follow through the work of Samuel Escobar and Rene Padilla, brilliant, young Latin American theologians and student workers.

In article five of the covenant, *Christian Social Responsibility*, Stott captures the essence of the prophetic words of Escobar and Padilla:

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression . . . We express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism,

nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty . . .

Forty years on, the thinking and engagement of evangelicals has changed dramatically as evidenced by the growth of ministries like World Vision International and International Justice Mission.

5. Unreached people groups

The third great contribution was the discovery and introduction of a new missiological paradigm. Prior to 1974, mission and church leaders commonly thought in categories of sending missionaries to the 150-plus countries of the world. Because it was believed that churches had been established in nearly every country, some were calling for a moratorium on missions. However, Dr. Ralph Winter challenged this understanding by introducing the concept of nations as ethno-linguistic people groups. He estimated that there were some 16,000 *nations* representing over 1.5 billion people who had no access to the witness of the gospel.

The result was not a moratorium, but rather a whole new movement with growing momentum for missions. This new paradigm would come to impact virtually every evangelical mission society, seminary, and mission-sending church in the world.

6. The Lausanne Movement

Perhaps the most unanticipated result of the Congress was the naissance of The Lausanne Movement itself. Graham had not envisioned this. However, in the final year of preparation for Lausanne '74, it was evident that exciting new ideas were being developed as scholars, leaders, and practitioners from north and south, east and west were discovering one another. This found expression in a groundswell of support for an ongoing entity.

Since Lausanne '74, The Lausanne Movement has convened two further global congresses on world evangelization:

- The second congress, held in Manila in 1989 under the theme “Proclaim Christ Until He Comes,” produced *The Manila Manifesto*.
- The third, Cape Town 2010, convened under the theme “Christ Our Reconciler,” produced *The Cape Town Commitment*.

In addition, The Lausanne Movement has convened nearly thirty global working consultations. These smaller consultations, together with two larger Lausanne Forums on World Evangelization, have produced 65 Lausanne Occasional Papers. Lausanne has also convened two global younger leaders' gatherings. A third is planned for 2016.

Commenting on Lausanne '74 and the ensuing Lausanne Movement, Stott wrote, "Many a conference has resembled a fireworks display. It has made a loud noise and illuminated the night sky for a few brief brilliant seconds. What is exciting about Lausanne is that its fire continues to spark off other fires."

This new paradigm would come to impact virtually every evangelical mission society, seminary, and mission-sending church in the world.

7. Movements within the movement

Lausanne '74 gave birth to a global movement. It created a new sense of unity and energy for global evangelicalism, and it ushered a new epoch in world evangelization.

Seven distinct streams flowed into the Congress, each with its own history, ethos, expectations, and aspirations:

- Nearly 40 percent of participants were from church bodies related to the WCC. These were evangelically minded leaders who found a new home in Lausanne after the International Missions Council (IMC) from Edinburgh 1910 had seemingly lost its way and been absorbed into the WCC. They were attracted to the intellectual vigor and theological orthodoxy of Lausanne.
- World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), now the World Evangelical Alliance, had a presence.
- Student movements such as Campus Crusade for Christ, Navigators, and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) were

disposed toward a meaningful engagement with culture.

- Emerging leaders from the Global South brought dynamism and creativity to world missions that would foreshadow the seismic shifts taking place in global Christianity.
- Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Missions and the expanding Church Growth Movement brought a new dimension of sociological and anthropological research and quantitative analysis.
- Para-church ministries present were often founded and/or led by visionary activists and entrepreneurs whose growing influence and ability to raise money signaled a shift of influence from established denominational channels.
- Graham and the global influence of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) represented the seventh stream.

Graham brought the evangelical world together in Lausanne. The streams that found confluence in Lausanne gave it force and depth.

These same forces also created crosscurrents and carved new channels, creating movements within a movement:

- Many leaders from the majority world who identified with the need for holistic ministry formed the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFEMIT).
- Those who identified with the Fuller School of World Missions and the Church Growth Movement formed the AD 2000 Movement.
- The WEF leadership responded to the emergence of a new global movement through the development of a WEF Missions Commission.

Graham himself was ambivalent about the nature of the movement and chose to keep his singular emphasis on evangelism. He put his energy on future global gatherings into the Amsterdam conferences for itinerant evangelists. Para-church leaders frequently shifted their engagement from Lausanne to Amsterdam to AD 2000 and its various iterations. However, leaders of the student movements, particularly IFES, along with evangelically minded leaders within established

churches, found resonance with Lausanne and provided a stability of service and leadership for it.

A legacy of theological reflection

The Lausanne Movement entered into a less visible and dynamic state following Manila. Much of the energy at the end of the second millennium was captured by enthusiasm for completing the task by the year 2000. However, the ambitious goals were not realized. The preoccupation with pragmatism and quantifiable results provided awareness of the need for more comprehensive theological reflection.

At the onset of the 21st century, conditions were disposed toward the vision and values of The Lausanne Movement with its commitment to serious biblical study and profound theological reflection as the basis for strategic mission engagement. Lausanne advocates the conviction that all theological reflection must be missiologically expressed, and all mission action must be theologically grounded. The two are inseparable if mission is to be authentic.

Lausanne '74 represented the *naissance* of The Lausanne Movement. Cape Town 2010 symbolized its *renaissance*: 4,200 participants from 198 countries, now related to 12 regional expressions and 36 issue networks, all committed to the foundational vision.

Such is the legacy of a congress convened forty years ago. No global congress before or since has had the depth of impact or the breadth of influence of this historic gathering. This is a gift from God through the magnanimous spirit of people like Graham and Stott.

Passing it on

It is therefore imperative that the spirit of and knowledge of Lausanne be passed on to the next generation. Indeed

those who will best guide us into the future are those with the most comprehensive understanding of the past.

Exceptional curricular resources have been developed by Lausanne leaders over the last forty years. These are designed for use in local churches, colleges, and seminaries, and for personal study:

- Materials developed for study of The Cape Town Commitment are noteworthy, particularly those [developed for seminaries by Dr. Darrell Bock](#) and those [written for churches by Rev. Dr. Matt Ristuccia and Rev. Dr. Sara Singleton](#).
- The [Lausanne Occasional Papers](#) provide wisdom from some of the church's best minds on some of our most intractable challenges.

Just as Graham and leaders of his generation learned from and drew inspiration from the Edinburgh Conference, I trust that the next generation will be informed and inspired by what happened forty years ago at Lausanne '74.

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THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL AND ITS CHALLENGE TO MISSION IN OUR TIME

J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu

What has come to be known as the prosperity gospel is mainly associated with contemporary Pentecostal teachings. Contemporary Pentecostals are distinguished from classical Pentecostals by their emphasis on the prosperity gospel with its focus on material things as indicators of divine favor:

- Today many other churches also preach variations of material prosperity, especially in non-Western contexts such as Africa.
- There are aspects of it that focus on hard work and self-improvement, but by and large, the prosperity gospel promotes materialism rather than the sort of fruitfulness described in Psalm 1 as the lot of those who walk in the counsel of the Lord.
- The prosperity gospel is based on certain selected portions of Scripture. The favored passages include: Deuteronomy 28:1-14, Galatians 3:14, and 3 John 2.

Concerns

The prosperity gospel simply teaches that believers in Jesus Christ, as part of their heritage from God in this life, are entitled to certain spiritual and physical blessings by right. Deuteronomy 28:13a for example says: “The Lord will make you the head and not the tail.” Whatever this may have meant to Israel at the time, it is interpreted to mean that, wherever a Christian finds himself, he must be the person in charge.

This teaching has in Africa led to young people terminating employment prematurely to start their own businesses, and young pastors seceding to start their

own ministries. There have been some successes but the casualties have also been quite high.

What raises concerns among evangelical Christians in particular is the emphasis of this gospel on material things as prime indicators of faithful Christianity. This message, which is now proclaimed in churches and through media ministries, has attracted concerns because of its proof-texting hermeneutics—holding a position on issues and looking for biblical passages to justify it regardless of context—that leads to the neglect of fundamental Christian themes such as a sound theology of the cross.

Prosperity principles

This prosperity gospel is based on principles including the positive confession of faith and the faithful payments of tithes and offerings:

- The payments of tithes and offerings and giving of material gifts to Christian leaders in anticipation of returns from God is also known as the principle of sowing and reaping.
- It is believed that both positive confessions and Christian giving are things that a person sows for which the appropriate bountiful returns must be expected from God.

Advocates of it teach that the Christian’s physical body must be completely immune to sickness. However, if sickness occurs, victims must know that they have the power simply to curse the affliction into disappearance. That is the substance of the teaching of Bishop David O. Oyedepo, the African founder of the contemporary Pentecostal church, Living Faith Church Worldwide or Winners’ Chapel. In his book *The Healing Balm* he states:

*Abundance without health equals lack! Because whatever wealth you are able to amass is eventually eaten up by sickness! . . . Every born again child of God has a covenant of divine health with the Father. He couldn't have said, 'I am the Lord that healeth thee' if he had not made provision for your health. There is a place where you can stand in God and never get sick again! There is a realm you get to, where you can no longer be sick or oppressed. It is a realm where the divine nature on your inside is so stirred up that you become immune to sickness and disease.'*¹

Another Ghanaian prosperity preacher, Nicholas Duncan-Williams of the Action Chapel International in Ghana, writes:

*Succeeding in life starts with Christ. Do not let your circumstances, where you come from and what people say you are, stop you from becoming what God has purposed for you. By the finger of God I rose above what was a hopeless situation of life. You can also have a story to tell if you will believe God's words in this book.'*²

The appeal to Scripture explains why the prosperity gospel is sometimes referred to as biblical prosperity. Its problem is not with using Scripture to empower hearers to believe God and do something about their circumstances in life. Indeed, there are parts of this message that may be considered empowering, but they pale into insignificance compared to the heretical aspects that present luxurious and extravagant living as the *right* of faithful Christians. Even more disturbing is when, in outlining the principles of prosperity, Jesus Christ is cited as having lived a materialistic lifestyle by the choices he made in life.

Shortfalls

The interpretation of tithes and offerings as possessing magical formulae to make God act, irrespective of his will, is theologically questionable. Jim Bakker of the *PTL Club and Heritage USA*, a former ardent proponent of prosperity, has since the 1990s denounced the materialistic focus of the prosperity gospel. He wrote a book instructively titled *I Was Wrong* following his incarceration for fraud. Subsequently he wrote *Prosperity and the Coming Apocalypse*, in which he critically assesses prosperity theology, again seeing its core teachings as being at variance with the true gospel.³

A careful study of the prosperity gospel shows that it uses the Bible and the lifestyles of its exponents to

idolize power and pride; popularity and success; and wealth and greed.⁴ Perhaps one way to see the dangers of these idols is to understand how Jesus denounced these options when the devil presented them to him at his temptation.

The prosperity gospel simply teaches that believers in Jesus Christ, as part of their heritage from God in this life, are entitled to certain spiritual and physical blessings by right.

Critiques

The prosperity gospel finds it difficult to deal with pain and disappointment. It leaves many church members without testimony because their material circumstances do not reflect the blessing of a God who is there to privilege his children by favoring and prospering them as long as they pay their tithes and offerings.

In the quest for the abundant life that Jesus promises, it is not wrong to use the resources that God provides in the struggle against evil. God's reign in Jesus Christ does not promise eschatological hope to the neglect of existential or this-worldly blessings.

Thus Femi Adeleye serves us well with his submission that the prosperity gospel:

- distorts the mission of Jesus as primarily to save from sin;
- fails to see that all forms of giving to God are primarily acts of worship;
- distorts the person of Christ by presenting him as materialistic; and
- lacks an explanation for sufferings and pains.⁵

In Africa there is a strong belief in the power of supernatural evil. At prayer meetings, people are taught to invoke curses upon their enemies—perceived and imaginary—simply because the prosperity they have been taught would come sometimes eludes them. Further, the emphasis on material prosperity as a sign of Christian faithfulness leads to a tendency to look on

the materially poor as people without a firm testimony of divine blessing.

I find a response in the words of David Bosch that the missionary nature of the ministry of Jesus launches an all-out attack on evil in all its manifestations. God's reign arrives wherever Jesus overcomes the power of evil. Then, as now, evil took many forms: pain, sickness, death, demon-possession, personal sin, and immorality, the loveless self-righteousness of those who claim to know God, special class privileges, the brokenness of human relationships. Jesus is, however, saying that if human distress took many forms, the power of God does likewise. For, according to Bosch:

*The assault of God's reign on evil is particularly manifest in Jesus' healing miracles, most notably in his exorcisms. It is in the demon-possessed, so Jesus' contemporaries believed, that Satan was able to prove beyond dispute that he was lord of this world. So if Jesus, "by the finger of God" ... drives out demons, "then the reign of God has come upon you."*⁶

On the whole, the images of prosperity touted by the new Pentecostals heavily favor the wealthy or those already on their way up. Jesus dealt decisively with human distress and the evil powers that brought it about. However, cursing or asking God to destroy actual human enemies, as those looking for prosperity are taught to do, amounts to a search for vengeance that both Jesus Christ and Paul warned against (Romans 12:1-21).

The prosperity gospel finds it difficult to deal with pain and disappointment.

Implications and responses

The dynamism of new evangelical movements such as contemporary Pentecostalism have attracted a significant following in Africa. This means generations of young Christians are growing up with a prosperity mindset that suggests that we can bypass the challenges of everyday life if we apply principles of prosperity.

In responding, care must be taken not to demonize wealth and material blessings. There are communities in

Africa in which, by coming to Christ, people have been helped to save money for constructive purposes, with families rebuilt and resources no longer wasted on wild living. It is materialism that needs to be condemned and not the material blessings obtained through hard work.

In responding to materialism in Africa, where poverty is palpable among many Christian communities, the leadership of the evangelical movement needs to draw attention to basic biblical truths:

- There is such a thing as godly prosperity within Christianity and it means far more than material blessings.
- Christian giving—in tithes, offerings, or gifts to others—must be understood in terms of Christian worship. We respond to God in worship for what he has done for us in Christ and trust him for his grace. Giving must not be treated in a formulaic manner in which we seek to bend God's will toward others.
- Based on what Jesus did on the cross, the appropriate response to hurt from one's enemies is to extend forgiveness and not to resort to imprecatory prayers. Jesus' own response to hatred was "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

God wants his children to prosper and enjoy his creation. In the Old Testament in particular, wealth is a blessing from God—and those who have it are not only expected to acknowledge him as the source, but also to take care of the poor.

The biggest problem of today's prosperity preachers is their hermeneutics. Their proof-texting leads to the idea that Jesus wore designer robes because his robe was seamless and that the donkey on which he rode to Jerusalem was the most luxurious vehicle of his day. The reliance on proof-texting hermeneutics has not allowed critical engagement with passages in which Jesus and the Bible call for forgiveness and prayer for enemies rather than their destruction.

The propagation of the prosperity message raises a major challenge for Christian mission in our time, especially because many upwardly mobile young people are attracted to its promises. Current missionary enterprise and theological study must continue to articulate solid responses to a gospel that sounds fascinating but is alien to the values upheld by the Lord of mission, Jesus Christ.⁷

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CHINA'S CHURCHES

Growing influence and official wariness present twin challenges

Thomas Harvey, Paul Huoshui, David Ro



The growing influence of Christianity in China and reports of a government crackdown on churches have captured international attention. Much to the chagrin of Chinese officials, the *London Daily Telegraph* recently claimed that China would become the most populous Christian country in a mere 15 years. A week later, a standoff between parishioners of the Sanjiang Church in Wenzhou and the provincial government ended in the bulldozing of a 4,000-seat mega-church. In Beijing, members of the Shouwang Church were detained by the Public Security Bureau. Unfolding in little over a month, these events have stoked fears of a government campaign against both legal and illegal churches.

Sanjiang Church

The flashpoint in Wenzhou was the status of the Sanjiang Church:

- In September 2013, the Wenzhou government website declared the Sanjiang Church a “model project.”
- Later, the eight-story structure troubled provincial officials who ordered the church to reduce its size or be demolished.

The order to demolish the church quickly took on global significance as international news agencies interviewed church members camped out in the church to prevent its destruction. They accused the Provincial Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Secretary of ordering an “illegal demolition” of a duly registered government church. Members were coaxed out of the church on the promise of negotiations—following which the church was seized and summarily demolished. Meanwhile, other churches in Zhejiang Province have been ordered to take away their crosses or notified that they will be demolished.

Fears of a wider campaign to counter the growing influence of Christianity in China were backed up by

an internal Zhejiang provincial document. To diminish Christianity’s public profile, it calls for the removing of “excessive religious sites” and “overly popular” religious practices of Christians through appeal to “building codes.” “The priority is to remove crosses at religious activity sites on both sides of expressways, national highways and provincial highways,” according to the document. “Over time and in batches, bring down the crosses from the rooftops to the facade of the buildings.”¹

Shouwang Church

In Beijing, suppression of the unregistered Shouwang Church has increased. Shouwang, whose pastor has been under house arrest since 2011, has seen its members arrested and detained for up to seven days to prevent them from holding indoor or outdoor gatherings.

What makes Shouwang’s situation unique is the church’s open pursuit of the “right” to worship beyond government-sanctioned registered churches:

- In the past, “illegal” house churches have been content to meet secretly to avoid government attention and interference.
- Shouwang Church, however, has openly applied for purchase of indoor facilities for worship and responded to government refusal to grant permission to purchase worship facilities with outdoor worship services in Beijing in defiance of government edicts and threats of arrest.

Inside sources say that a Beijing city official linked with Zhou Yongkang, former Secretary of the Central Political and Legislative Committee overseeing China’s security apparatus and law enforcement institutions, is behind the crackdown. Zhou has been subject to an investigation on corruption charges as part of President Xi Jinping’s campaign against CCP corruption. Thus, the recent crackdown on Shouwang and Beijing dissidents

appears to be a move to prove the loyalty of this Beijing city official to Xi.

Church and state

These incidents reflect the changing nature of Chinese churches—and China itself—and how this impacts the relationship of churches and state in China.

Sanjiang's demolition belies the notion that Christianity in China is poor, powerless, and hard-put:

- Wenzhou is one of China's "boom towns," economically and spiritually.
- Christians represent powerful business and social interests in the growing mega-cities of China.
- In the past, small groups of believers huddled in clandestine house meetings or in government-approved and monitored churches.
- Today Christians in Wenzhou gather in well-appointed worship centers seating thousands of worshippers.
- Their members are technologically savvy and with the press of a button can summon international news agencies to monitor government moves to curb nascent Christian congregations.

Uneven responses

Certainly, the growing size and social stature of Christianity discomfits some high officials. Grand complexes are significant culturally and politically in China. Gleaming sanctuaries project the growing social and political power of Christians and churches in society. This explains the uneasy and uneven responses of government officials to these churches in urban centers:

- For some, the churches and their members represent key constituents who can contribute to wider society.
- For others, they represent a powerful ideological challenge in a nation that is officially atheist and Marxist.
- Thus, the building of these churches is fraught with disagreements between contending officials at the local, provincial, and national levels.

Accordingly, the demolition of Sanjiang Church and the arrest of Shouwang Church members are far more complex than a mere Marxist reflex against Christianity. Given the mixed and muddled responses coming from different layers of government officials, it would appear that there is some disagreement as to how the CCP should respond to the changing situation.

Some argue that these incidents are the beginning of a national campaign to stymie the growth of Christianity in China and to test its popular strength. A recent *New York Times* article examines an internal government document that "makes it clear the demolitions are part of a strategy to reduce Christianity's public profile." On the other hand, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, in response to the wave of church demolitions, has openly rejected accusations of a renewed campaign against Christianity as a "misunderstanding."

To diminish Christianity's public profile, it calls for the removing of "excessive religious sites" and "overly popular" religious practices of Christians through appeal to "building codes."

This uncertainty would explain the fact that, in spite of the recent crackdown in Wenzhou and Beijing, churches across China continue their regular activities without interference.

Nonetheless, it does appear that the tearing down of church buildings and crosses comes with the sanction of the central government. As such, they reflect a growing wariness of Christianity by government leaders, although not so far the nationwide crackdown that some have predicted.

Crackdown consequences

It is hard to say what the central government will do next. Were they to launch a nationwide campaign against Christianity, it would most likely have negative consequences, both nationally and internationally. Such a campaign would most likely fail, exacerbate internal dissension, and alienate key constituencies in China itself:

- Christians are not now all uneducated and relatively powerless rural believers or pockets of clandestine urban groups meeting in houses.
- They now represent successful businessmen and academics, and have even percolated into high government positions.
- They are persons of influence and respected in their professional and personal circles.

Thus, after 25 years of failed attempts to stymie the growth of Christianity, it would appear wishful thinking to imagine that a new campaign would succeed where so many have failed in the past.

Internationally such a campaign would damage China's relationships with Europe and North America. Perhaps even of greater significance is the damage a crackdown would have on its relationships in Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Global South:

- South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines all have significant Christian populations, many of whom hold positions of influence and power.
- A harsh nationwide campaign on the scale of that against the Falun Gong sect would complicate international relations with China's neighbors already fraught with tension over border issues and control of controversial territories in the region.
- Relations with Africa and Latin America would be damaged, bearing in mind Africa's 400 million Christians and Latin America's 90% Christian population.

Outlook

The churches of China will continue to grow and exert greater influence upon all levels of society. This will cause social tension, not only with the CCP but also with other religious and ideological groups. Thus, Christians should be attentive to social backlash, especially if the church appears to be triumphalist and dismissive of other Chinese religions, ideologies, traditions, and sensitivities.

Earlier optimism about an open hand toward Christianity during President Xi's term does not appear likely to be borne out any time soon. Preferential treatment will be given toward Buddhism and Chinese traditional religions.

The surge of nationalism and the growing perception of 'infiltrating forces' from the West will likely increase restrictions on the church in the near future.

However, one would assume that more moderate policies will prevail over time:

- The presence of Christians in the highest circles of society means that even leading CCP officials have Christian acquaintances, Christians working for them or even family members who are either secretly or openly Christians.
- Once faith becomes personal it gets harder to move against it. In China, if it comes to a choice between fidelity to Party and fidelity to family, family usually wins out, and it is unlikely that even the most zealous party members would sacrifice family members upon ideological altars.

The demolition of Sanjiang Church and the arrest of Shouwang Church members are far more complex than a mere Marxist reflex against Christianity.

Suggested responses within China

One would hope that there would be some self-reflection and even self-criticism by Chinese church leaders, given these setbacks. Triumphalism that seeks to proffer Christianity through appeals to grand buildings and accumulation of power, wealth, and influence rather than humility and the cross will ultimately fail.

One leading Chinese scholar² argues that official change in the government's attitude lies in the faithful response of the church to persecution:

If local churches hold onto their faith stance, and would grow in the midst of persecutions, the government would change its policy toward Christianity... The government does not have a well-planned strategy.

Whether a church building would be torn down depends on the attitude of this local church and the response of believers in this region.

This scholar believes that the time is right for the formation of a Christian think-tank in China to address theology, church growth, and social engagement, and to unify the churches facing persecution. He notes that attention should be paid to spiritual matters and world missions and not merely to the grandeur of church buildings: “a church with only a building, yet with no spiritual vibrancy has no future.”

Global evangelical responses

Recent incidents call for Christian organizations to urge tolerance and moderation on the Chinese government in relation to Christians and churches in China. They should also urge Christians in China to work for the common good and take personal and public stands against corruption.

It is important to recognize that the churches of China are not only growing in size, but in maturity. There should be recognition by global church leaders, especially those in the West, that the churches and church leadership of China have a depth of experience, wisdom, and insight that will help them weather setbacks such as these. Historically, persecution of the churches in China has only served to purify and strengthen the resolve of Christian leaders and church members.

It is also important to realise that the relationship between the churches, society, and the state has changed radically over the past twenty years and that our traditional notions of the house churches of China are outdated. Further, just as China has grown in significance as a leader in international politics and business, its significance in global church leadership is beginning to take shape. Thus, just as the size, strength, and influence of the Chinese church has captured the attention of the Chinese government, so it should capture the attention of the global church.³

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DELIVERING THE GOOD NEWS TO HINDUS

How to avoid the package being lost, stolen, or damaged

Rabbi Jayakaran

Hinduism claims over 900 million followers worldwide, making it the third largest world religion after Christianity and Islam. The vast majority, over 827 million, live in India.¹ This is a hugely diverse group, but it is imperative for the bearers of the gospel ('Good News') of Christ to engage with individuals, groups, and communities within it. According to Boyd,² 'The task of presenting the gospel in India is then of quite exceptional importance'.

Delivering the gospel

It is the choice of every person to accept or reject the Good News presented to them. Nonetheless, it is our responsibility as the bearers of the gospel to present it to our Hindu friends in such a way that it does not get lost, stolen, or damaged before they have had a chance to honestly inspect it and decide.

Tradition says the gospel's encounter with the Hindu world began with Apostle Thomas bringing it to the southern shores of India. Since then, the Good News has brought hope and comfort to many Hindus, but it has not authentically reached most of them. How are we doing in delivering the Good News to this generation?

Delivery over the ages

Protestant Christian mission in India broadly comprised three waves:³

- **The foreign cross-cultural era** during the colonial period (1706-1946) saw the setting up of many mission compounds, educational and health institutions, and churches. They brought Western education and emancipation to women and children and development and dignity to the 'outcasts' of the caste system.

After independence, many of these agencies were handed over to Indian leaders and the foreign presence drastically reduced.

- **Indian cross-cultural mission movements (1947-1990)** started from the late 1960s in south India and elsewhere with the specific focus of taking the gospel to the unreached in north and central India. The Adivasis and Dalits and other marginalised communities were reached by these missionaries with the gospel, which they embraced as a source of empowerment and freedom. As these movements established small worshipping communities, another shift occurred.
- **Local, indigenous movements** and personnel have been developing since the 1990s. This third wave is due to factors like globalisation, the rise of Hindutva, and also the growth of local churches around the country.

Stolen, lost, or damaged packages

The gospel has contributed to the welfare and holistic development of marginalised communities, spread of education and health, and growth of Christ-worshipping communities among Hindus. In many places, however, the bearers of the Good News have failed to incarnate the gospel in such a way that the community had the opportunity to investigate the Good News authentically and that it could thus take root and bear fruit within that particular cultural context.

Today when we offer the Good News to communities within the Hindu world we are unable to separate it

from Western cultural wrappings. Hence what we offer is rejected because the Good News is either lost or damaged under the wrappings of an alien culture, or stolen so that all that we actually deliver is the wrapping.

Unfortunately we are more comfortable with Western symbols and rituals. We hold on to them as biblical commandments and have less tolerance for Hindu cultural expressions of faith. For example:

- Our wedding rituals, clothes, festivals, and worship are often neither biblical nor indigenous, but just transported from other cultures. As a result we prevent our Hindu friends from being able to even taste and touch the Good News.
- Asking Hindu women to give up wearing 'Bindis',⁴ which are cultural symbols of being married, or encouraging vegetarians to eat meat once they join the worshipping community can cause great divisions.

Family versus faith

Hindu communities are based on very close-knit families and communities. A young person may show interest in the gospel and even accept it, but s/he does not cease to be a member of his/her family and community. Often the young person is told that family and community practices are evil and to be shunned, and s/he has to choose between family and faith. Their lives are torn on issues of culture not Christ.

A young person was told he should not bow down to anyone other than Christ; therefore he had to give up the cultural expectation of bowing down to elders in his family and community as a mark of respect (equivalent to shaking hands or addressing someone as 'sir'). He was ostracised as they saw him as disrespectful and rebellious as a result of his Christian encounter. However, the worst tragedy is that the whole community now sees the Good News as bad news and rejects it as something that makes their young people disrespectful—and this cultural practice is in line with the biblical principle to honour our father and mother!

The fear of being uprooted from family is one of the hindrances to people from Hindu backgrounds following Jesus. The emphasis on cultural conversion rather than true, inner spiritual transformation has damaged the gospel. This is not to deny the genuine struggle of

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followers of Christ forced to choose between family and faith and facing persecution for the sake of their faith. However, our fear of syncretism and of compromising biblical standards can make us cowards. So instead of boldly offering the gospel and allowing it to engage and transform the culture, we have offered 'pre-cooked' churches where we stay within our comfortable boundaries.

Living it out

While clear teaching is important, it is more important that we apply and live out those amazing doctrines and Scripture on a daily basis. When our lives are far from our preaching, it alienates our audience.

We Christians have sometimes ghettoised, directly contradicting the command of Jesus to be salt and light in the world. Christians have become another caste, whether through self-marginalisation with a self-righteous attitude, or marginalisation by caste Hindus who may treat Christians as outcasts.

We have transported the gospel with all its cultural wrapping and expected an ancient civilisation, with a deep God consciousness and philosophical and theological grounding, to throw out its identity, culture, and values, and take our package in. We need to make ourselves vulnerable by daring to unpack it and offer it to communities to inspect, alter, accept, or reject. As we extend this grace to them prayerfully, we can be assured that the gospel too will inspect and transform them, their culture, and communities in a unique way that we may not expect.

Delivering the packages safely

At a funeral service for an old Christian lady, I met one of many Hindu women that she had befriended. She had so deeply impacted their lives that several of them had committed to follow Jesus, and more, like the one I met,

are on their journey. We can learn much from this lady that affects our missiology and theology.

While critically learning from the past, we need to take responsibility for our actions and seek the Lord. We need to unlearn our prejudices and relearn what the Holy Spirit is teaching us. Let us confess our failure to follow Jesus. If we Indian Christians live our lives without pretence and with sincere love, our community will see, know, and explore Jesus. Deep relationships characterised by unconditional acceptance, genuine concern, and non-judgemental attitudes will draw people to take a closer look at the Good News.

Dialogue of love with Hindus

Incarnating the Good News into cultures is an area of much debate. The fear of syncretism and the need for contextualisation have constantly challenged Christian mission. The way forward is the way of dialogue, where we are primarily willing to listen, learn, humble ourselves, and be available, and from that place to put forth our lives and words to be contemplated by our Hindu friends:

- Dialogue⁵ does not undermine proclamation or the necessity of an invitation to Christian transformation.
- It is the modality in which the process of becoming a local church takes place⁶ rather than a separate activity.
- It is not a substitute for proclamation or evangelisation, but the most effective way of proclamation.⁷

Our involvement in dialogue and mission is an adventure, anticipating surprises as the Spirit guides us into fuller understanding. Dialogue involves choosing humility—a bold humility or a humble boldness.⁸ There is great potential in this dialogue⁹ as people embrace Christ while continuing to affirm their cultural heritage.

It does not compromise the uniqueness and lordship of Christ. If we go in with the attitude of humble boldness, we can expect the Spirit's work in this dialogical process to produce transformation, which is God's work. As Paul says, in 1 Cor 3:5-7, the Lord has assigned to each his task, but only God makes things grow.

It is not a ploy to catch people in the Christian net.¹⁰ Rather it is an openness to listen and learn in a non-

threatening manner, while allowing others to see who our God is and what he has done and is doing, without being judgmental, insensitive, or patronising.

We Christians have sometimes ghettoised, directly contradicting the command of Jesus to be salt and light in the world.

Implications and response

Christian faith never exists except as translated into a culture. The early church was born in a cross-cultural milieu and the emphasis was on local church rather than the universal church. All this changed with Constantine, and mission became a movement from a 'superior' culture to 'inferior' culture. Christian mission thereafter pre-supposed the disintegration of the cultures which it penetrated.¹¹

To understand the Good News, people have to hear it in their own language (Acts 2:8), and the divine message is conveyed through human channels (2 Cor 4:7).¹² It is not sufficient to indigenise clerical dress, church architecture, or music, but the very heart of the culture needs to be embraced and transformed by the gospel.¹³

One example is that of Thomas Thangaraj of India, who uses the Hindu concept of Guru as a Christological model.¹⁴ Such inculturation models are useful. Nevertheless, they do not suit all Hindus nor are they right in all situations.

The beauty of the gospel is that it comes in fresh ways to each situation, as we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us. The Holy Spirit is the prime agent of the proclamation of the Good News in Asia. This emphasis on the Holy Spirit gives freedom to carry out inculturation, and the Spirit's presence ensures that dialogue unfolds in truth, honesty, humility, and respect.¹⁵ The challenge is for us to be sensitive to the Spirit and be aware that the 'gospel dignifies every culture as a valid vehicle for God's revelation and no culture is more sacred or exclusive for God's use'.¹⁶

The amazing character of the Hindu world is that most people deeply believe in God and are trying to connect with him, know him, please him, and receive

his help. God is committed to reach out to Hindus in spite of the mistakes we as his followers have made in our missionary endeavours. Like a master weaver, he is able to weave great designs if we are willing to give the control back to him, make ourselves vulnerable, get out of our comfort zones, and let him correct us, teach us, and keep us humble.

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EMIGRATION OF CHRISTIANS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOME IMPLICATIONS

Gina A Zurlo

In recent history, one of the most profound changes in the global religious landscape has been the unrelenting proportional decline of historic Christian communities in the Middle East:

- In 1910, Christians represented 13.6% of the Middle East's population.
- In 2010, Christians were only 4.2% of the region.
- By 2025, it is expected Christians will constitute 3.6%.

There are three major expressions of Christianity in the Middle East: historic churches (Orthodox and Roman Catholic), modern missionary churches (Protestant and Independent), and immigrant churches (many traditions).

Two dynamics

The demographic situation of Christians in the Middle East is quite unique and has changed dramatically over the past 100 years, with two dynamics occurring simultaneously:

- Emigration, where historic Christian communities are leaving the region primarily for Europe, North America, and Australia; and
- Immigration, where Christian guest workers from outside the region are arriving to work mainly in oil-rich Muslim-majority countries.

Another immigration-related trend in the Middle East is the arrival of missionaries into the region, primarily Protestants and Independents.

Between 1910 and 2010, nine Middle Eastern countries experienced significant declines in the Christian percentages of their populations: Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian territories, Syria, and Turkey.

Two primary reasons have driven these declines:

- Lower birth rates; and
- Emigration due to war, conflict, and persecution.¹

At the same time, six Middle Eastern countries have had massive influxes of Christians, most notably since 1970—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These Christians are mostly migrants from the Philippines, South Korea, and other countries working in oil production, construction, domestic tasks, and other jobs in the service industry.

Denominations

Orthodox Christians are the largest major Christian tradition in the Middle East. The countries with the most Orthodox Christians are Egypt (Coptic), Cyprus (Greek), and Syria (Armenian, Greek, and Syrian). Emigration, however, has profoundly affected the Orthodox churches, with their share of the regional population falling from 11.8% in 1910 to only 2.7% in 2010, and likely continuing to 2.2% by 2025. At the same time, Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Independents have increased their proportions of the region's Christian population. One reason for this increase is large numbers of Roman Catholic guest workers (such as Filipinos) in countries like Saudi Arabia.

Implications

These, and other, trends point to an uncertain future for Christians in the Middle East. Christians from these historic communities are now present all over the world, and Christians from all over the world are increasingly drawn to the Middle East. The dual migration trends of Christians to and from the region present a unique challenge for supporting Christians in the Middle East as minority communities under intense social and political pressure.

The expansion of Christianity to the Global South can be viewed as a positive development for Christians under siege in the region, especially in light of the post-colonial break between “Western” and “Christian.” The world is currently more attuned to the plight of Christians in the Middle East. Some of their pressing concerns can be addressed by advocating for freedom for all religious minorities in countries experiencing high social and/or governmental restrictions.

Christians from the Middle East in diaspora have new opportunities to engage in interfaith dialogue with people of other religions in a way that is often not possible in their home countries due to tense relationships between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Adherents of

these religions are better able to work together from afar to promote peace in their region. All Christians have a renewed responsibility to promote dialogue and cooperation across religious differences in light of the changing religious landscape of the Middle East.

This brief overview has been excerpted from Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, “Ongoing Exodus: Tracking Emigration of Christians from the Middle East,” Harvard Journal of Middle Eastern Politics and Policy, Spring 2014.

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1. *Editor’s Note:* See article by Wafik Wahba, ‘Turmoil in the Middle East: Implications for Christians there and globally’, in the [November 2013 issue of Lausanne Global Analysis](#).



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