



Lausanne Global Analysis



The Rising Missions Movement in China (the World's New Number 1 Economy) and How to Support It

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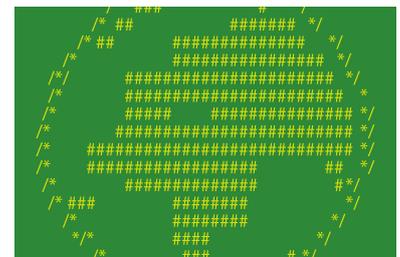
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Welcome to the May issue of Lausanne Global Analysis.

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 an influencer you will be better equipped for the task of global mission. 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 there are two broad themes: mission in East Asia and new approaches to research and planning for mission (timely in view of the Lausanne Researchers' International Network meeting taking place later this month, 23–28 May, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia). Specifically we feature China's rising missions movement; we continue our series of articles on engagement with other faiths by examining Asian Buddhism; and we consider the benefits both of strategic foresight in ministry and of building national church databases for mission.

'The church in China has been maturing in its theological and biblical understanding of the role of the church in world missions', writes David Ro (Director of the J Christy Wilson Center for World Missions at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary). Chinese leaders are taking into account lessons from past difficult experiences, focusing on healthy sending bases and sending structures, unity, and a humbler posture. Whether the political environment tightens or not, the Chinese church will continue with its call. On the basis that 20,000 foreign missionaries have been sent to China in the last 200 years, the *Mission China 2030* challenge is to see at least 20,000 Chinese missionaries overseas by 2030. China's example should inspire church leaders anywhere to come together in unity to accomplish a global mission vision for their country. They also need to be prepared for a Chinese church on a mission with a global reach. 'Through trials and suffering, God has faithfully blessed the church in China so that it may be a blessing to the world', he concludes.

'Christian mission among Buddhists in Asia has traditionally been "very hard", not because of open conflict necessarily, but because of indifference to or misunderstanding of the gospel, or because of the way the gospel has been offered', writes Hugh Kemp (adjunct lecturer in missiology at St John's College, Auckland, New Zealand). Buddhism throws up many challenges but there are a number of ways that Christians can approach Buddhists. When a Christian seeks to engage with Buddhists, it is a common experience to feel overwhelmed. The categories are complex, based on fundamental differences in worldview assumptions, but a respectful conversational approach, seeking to listen well so as to clarify meanings, but also being unapologetic about differences, is a good approach. 'Conversations that may yield fruit

for the gospel could concern praxis, doctrine/theology, authority, the Ideal Person, and spiritual power’, he concludes.

‘If we had simply continued doing what we were doing, taking incremental steps to do it a little better each year, we would probably never have set foot on the moon’, writes Derek Seipp (East Asia Operations Manager for Act Beyond). Yet, this is where most of us find ourselves: looking for steady, incremental improvements. The problem with this kind of thinking is that we look back at what we have done in order to see what is possible in the future. Great horizons always push us to look forward beyond ourselves. Once we understand the desired future, we walk back to the present and figure out how to get there. This kind of thinking results in innovative, paradigm-changing ways of impacting our world. Leaders must seek to understand the most likely environments to emerge in the future. One way to do this is by studying the emerging trends, issues, and choices being made to create forecasts about their future environment. ‘The greater these are understood, the clearer the forecast of the future will be’, he concludes.

‘Church statistics were born the same day the Christian church was born, when the apostles decided to count the new believers who were baptized’, write Dwight Martin and Marten Visser (Directors of GlobalRize). There is now a whole industry of such information. However, because of their global scope, currently available lists do not go down to the level needed for strategic decision-making in missions. In addition, not enough insider information has been used to produce them. *GlobalRize* offers ‘online solutions for the global church’. A primary solution of *GlobalRize* is Harvest, a highly secure cloud-based database and mapping web-application. Harvest has the potential radically to change the face of mission statistics by making an insider perspective on a national church possible for everyone. It is the authors’ conviction that ‘this contributes to the advancement of God’s kingdom in many ways, most notably in showing all the areas in a country where the gospel has not yet reached’.

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.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

David Taylor, Editor
Lausanne Global Analysis

THE RISING MISSIONS MOVEMENT IN CHINA (THE WORLD'S NEW NUMBER 1 ECONOMY) AND HOW TO SUPPORT IT

DAVID RO

Several prominent Chinese leaders from the unregistered churches have been convening in Seoul with global and Korean evangelical leaders to discuss China's future direction in world missions.¹ A *Mission China 2030* vision was launched at the Asian Church Leaders' Forum in 2013.² Last year, China's leading pastors met in Seoul again to strategize on plans to accomplish the vision to raise up a younger generation to: *plant thousands of churches in the cities; reach China's 500 unreached minority people groups; and send out 20,000 overseas missionaries by 2030.*

Lessons learned

The church in China has been maturing in its theological and biblical understanding of the role of the church in world missions. Due to the limitations on the official Three-Self churches, unregistered house churches have taken the lead with hundreds of missionaries sent to Central Asia, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and even northern Africa.

A Back to Jerusalem (B2J) movement, originally begun in the 1920s, was rebirthed in the early 2000s by the ‘Heavenly Man’ Brother Yun and Peter Xu calling for a vision to send 100,000 missionaries to the Middle East.³ Many peasants from rural China responded to the mission call. However, due to the challenges of overseas cross-cultural missions, there was a high drop-out rate among this first wave of missionaries.

Chinese leaders are taking into account lessons from these difficult experiences.

Healthy sending bases and sending structures

Previous attempts relied too heavily on overseas funds, causing dependency issues. Strong healthy churches and sending structures are essential to support and sustain missionaries. The recent Emerging Urban Churches, made up of intellectuals and professionals with global awareness and access to global partnerships, are becoming a strong support base and example for long-term mission sending. Appropriate indigenous mission sending structures and policies are in development to ensure adequate mission training, ministry oversight, financial accountability, and member care.

Unity leads to a healthier church

In the past, local churches kept their distance from each other due to security concerns. However, this unifying global missions vision

has trumped previous fears. The Chinese church is healthier due to mutual sharpening. A unifying *Mission China 2030* brings together rural and urban, young and older generations, and even different theological perspectives across different regions and cities.

CHINESE LEADERS ARE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT LESSONS FROM THESE DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES.

Less triumph, more humility

The hard lessons from the previous B2J have brought about a humbler posture as Chinese church leaders caution against the dangers of triumphant Chinese nationalism. Refraining from using images of China as the last torch-bearer in the Great Commission, they prefer to see China as one among many: mission is from every nation to every nation. Engagement with the global church will be essential for China’s future mission endeavours. While China has something to offer, it comes as a humble newcomer into an existing global mission arena.

Economic milestone

History can attest to national mission movements occurring in periods of geo-political and economic growth, as seen in the rise of the United Kingdom and Europe in the 19th century, the United States in the 20th century, and South Korea in the late 20th century.

On December 4th, 2014, the Chinese economy overtook the US economy to become the largest in the world, and almost nobody noticed.⁴ China's rise indirectly influences the global impact of Chinese Christianity.

We should celebrate China's new status as the largest economy because China's rise is God's overall plan for China to bless the world through his church. A peaceful rise will be welcomed by the world as many Chinese believe in the Christian gospel message of hope, love, and peace.



Key characteristics

China's 'way of the cross'

The gospel from China comes from a church that has gone through suffering. This message of sacrificial living refined by fire reflects the cost of discipleship seen in the early church. Chinese church leaders sense an overall tightening of religious policy on the horizon.⁵ Yet Christianity in China grew fastest during some of the harshest times of persecution. Whether the political environment tightens or not, the Chinese church will continue with its call.

China's radical discipleship to 'go'

Long-term Western missionary sending seems to be in decline as mission sending increases in the majority world. China has much to teach the West. North American popular speakers David Platt and Francis Chan have both been inspired by the radical discipleship of China's house church. China's global missions movement joins Africa and Latin America to remind the global church that the message of radical discipleship must be accompanied with the action to 'go' to the ends of the earth.

China's 'gospel debt' repaid

Former Beijing Pastor Daniel Jin estimates that 20,000 foreign missionaries have been sent to China in the last 200 years. The *Mission China 2030* challenge is to see at least 20,000

Chinese missionaries overseas by the year 2030: ‘We owe a “gospel debt” to the world. Only when our missions sending surpasses what we have received can China be considered truly a mission-sending country.’⁶

Next steps

Urban church planting

Mission sending requires strong and healthy churches to sustain and support. The next ten years have been called the *Golden Era* of urban church planting. One pastor has a vision to plant a church near every subway stop, estimating the establishment of at least 5,000 new churches.

CHINA'S LEADERS ARE SHARING THE MISSION CHINA 2030 VISION AND MOBILIZING A YOUNGER GENERATION TO SACRIFICE.

Minority groups adoption

Missions to unreached people groups within China will be important in preparing for future cross-cultural overseas experience. Another pastor has a vision to mobilize every church in China to adopt one of the 500 in-country people groups by sending short-term teams each year.

Mission mobilization and training

China's leaders are sharing the *Mission China 2030* vision and mobilizing a younger generation to sacrifice. Mission training schools and seminaries are developing mission courses. Missiological books and resources are being translated into Chinese.

Outlook

More hype than reality?

With the current tightening of religious freedoms, some doubt the plausibility of this grand vision. Trumpeting large numbers could trigger fear from the authorities, causing a further tightening.

Interestingly, China's official news mouthpiece the *Global Times* recently expressed concern in an article called ‘Dangerous Mission’. However, the cautious acknowledgement in it of the unregistered churches is seen as a breakthrough by China experts, since the article openly shares the advantages of Chinese missionaries over Western counterparts:

Before, many Chinese churches struggled to survive due to a shortage of money, staff, and resources. A surging Chinese economy has changed all that. An increasing number of house churches in China now have the means to send overseas missionaries. Gao believes that Chinese Christians have ‘natural advantages’ when evangelizing in many parts of the world. ‘Most of the countries in Central and South Asia are friendly to China, which makes it easier for Chinese Christians to preach the gospel in those nations, compared with Western missionaries.’⁷



Can China send 20,000 missionaries in 15 years?

The current number of overseas missionaries sent from China is around 500. While the goal of 20,000 in 15 years seems to be ambitious, one could point to Korea for inspiration. In the 1990s, the Korean church declared a bold vision to send 10,000 missionaries by the year 2000. They miraculously reached their goal in a decade and then doubled to 20,000 missionaries by 2010. Chinese leaders believe their goals to be very attainable with one distinct advantage: China has seven times the Christian population of South Korea.⁸

Potential church growth

Based on current church growth trajectories, Dr Fenggang Yang of Purdue University predicts China's Christian population to grow to 247 million (including Catholics) by 2030, making it the largest Christian nation in the world.⁹ China's church leaders can sense that God is doing something in China today, describing this phenomenon as 'oil gushing out from the ground after long periods of pressure'.

Implications and responses

Higher-level training abroad

Ministries in China should shift from fast-pace growth tactics to long-term strategies of high-level leadership training. Most would agree that the majority of pastoral leadership training should be done in China or preferably in Asia.

However, Chinese with graduate level degrees in missiology and theological education are in demand for hundreds of Chinese seminaries and Bible and mission training schools. Parachuting foreign teachers into China is only a temporary solution further delaying the development of China's own teaching ability.

Large numbers of Chinese professors, theologians, academics, and missiologists are needed for the future indigenous leadership training of local pastors and missionaries. The Korean church in the 1970s and 1980s sent seminarians abroad, preparing for today's 2,000 Korean PhDs in missiology and theological studies.

Hundreds of mainland Chinese are currently studying at seminaries and Bible schools in both Asian and Western countries. Scholarships for these seminarians would be highly strategic. The first Chinese Seminarian Conference in North America brought together mainland Chinese from 13 seminaries last summer. After the conference, almost all the graduates this year have returned to China, reversing the trend of Chinese seminarians staying in the West upon graduation.

Healthy mission sending structures

The early stages of Korean mission movements saw many problems of financial mismanagement, strife among missionaries, controls from the sending churches, and

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top-down leadership on the mission field. This was due to mission policies based on local churches and individual control of the missionaries without healthy mission sending structures, strategies, and policies in place. The training of mission experts outside China for the next decade will be important to develop a healthier missionary sending structure for the church.

The church in China is searching for international partnerships. Expertise in organizational management and culture, governing structures, church and agency systems and policies, financial accountability, ministry competency and oversight, mission statements, vision, and values are much needed to prepare it for mission in a globalized world.

Deep grassroots partnerships

The most effective partnerships are with Chinese leaders at the grassroots level who truly desire deep long-term engagement. Impressive photo ops with officials and speaking at large churches and seminaries rarely result in true partnership on the ground. Some of the best partnerships are low key. Ministries that go deep in the area of expertise with just a few local partners are most valued and respected in the long-term.

Inspiration

China's example should inspire church leaders anywhere to come together in unity to accomplish a global mission vision for their country.

They also need to be prepared for a Chinese church on mission with a global reach. Beijing Zion Church represents a new kind of church emerging from urban China. Launched in 2007, it has a seminary, café, bookstore, social media ministry, and missionaries sent to the Middle East. Senior Pastor Ezra himself is a Peking University graduate with a doctorate in ministry from Fuller Seminary.

While visiting Boston last year, Pastor Ezra shared a vision to reach Harvard and MIT in about seven years. What may win hearts in Boston, the intellectual capital of the world? The gospel message with spiritual vitality of perseverance, hope, courage, and joy in the midst of sacrifice and suffering. Through trials and suffering, God has faithfully blessed the church in China so that it may be a blessing to the world.



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Endnotes

1. Global and Korean leaders included Chris Wright (Langham), Doug Birdsall (former Lausanne Chair), Michael Oh (Lausanne Executive Director/CEO), Luis Bush (Transformation), Gordon Showell-Rogers (WEA), Ka Lun Leung (HK Alliance Seminary), Younghoon Lee (Yoido), Jaehoon Lee (Onnuri), and David Sangbok Kim (Torch Trinity).
2. See '[A Landmark Encounter: The significance of ACLF for the church in China](#)' by Ezra Jin in the November 2013 issue of *Lausanne Global Analysis*.

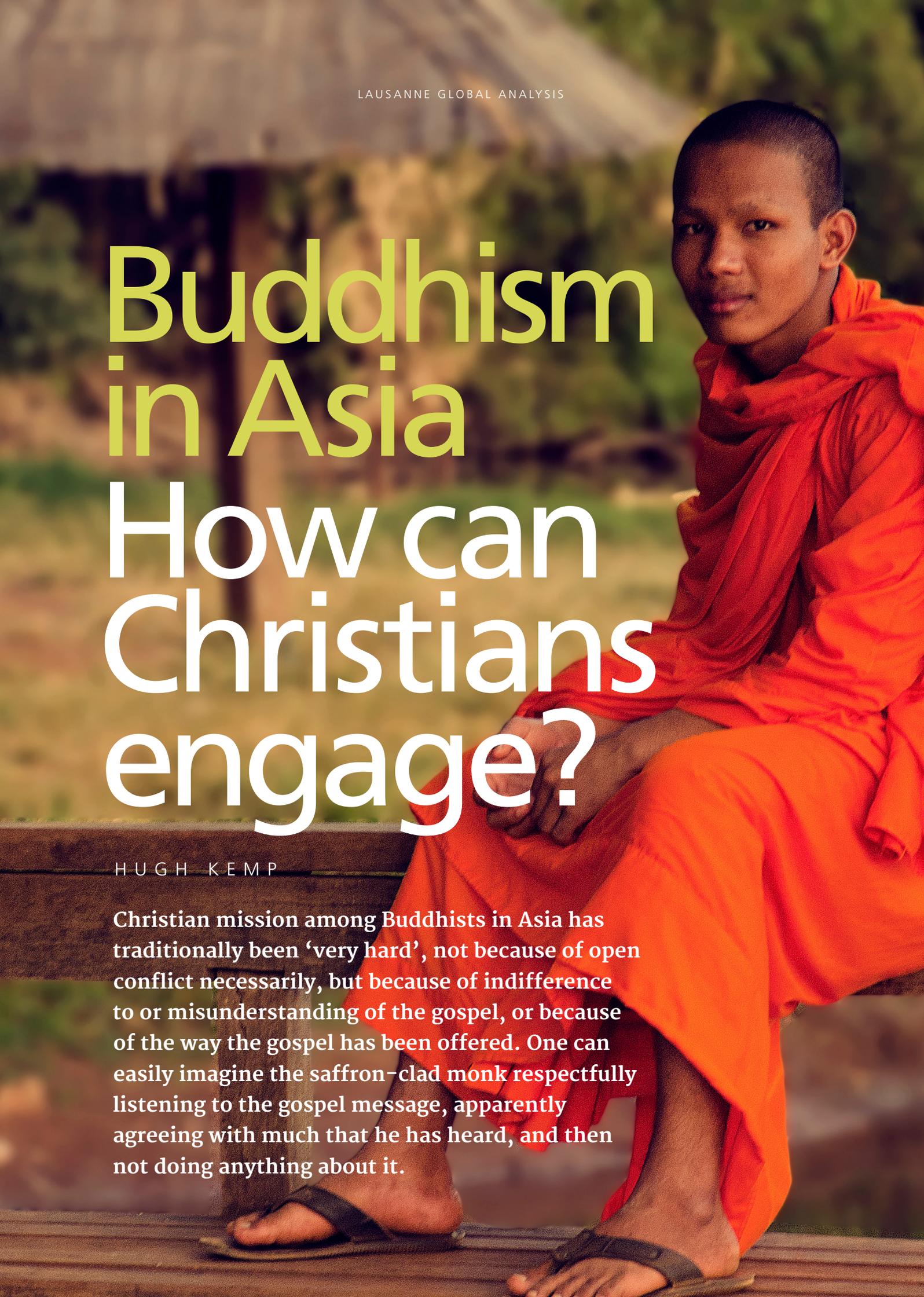
3. 'A Captivating Vision: Why Chinese house churches may just end up fulfilling the Great Commission', an interview with Paul Hattaway, *Christianity Today*, 1 April 2004, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/april/5.84.html>.
 4. Hugo Duncan, David Martosko, 'America usurped: China becomes world's largest economy – putting USA in second place for the first time in 142 years', Mail Online, 9 October 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2785905/China-overtakes-U-S-world-s-largest-economy-IMF-says-economy-worth-17-6trillion-America-falls-second-place-time-1872.html>.
 5. See 'China's Churches: Growing influence and official wariness present twin challenges' by Thomas Harvey, Paul Huoshui, and David Ro in the July 2014 issue of *Lausanne Global Analysis*.
 6. Pastor Daniel Jin at the Asian Church Leaders Forum in Seoul 2013.
 7. Liang Chen, 'Dangerous Mission', *Global Times*, 9 February 2015, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/906820.shtml>.
 8. China's Protestants are estimated to be 59 million according to a more conservative number from the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project. <http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/>.
 9. Tom Philips, 'China on course to become world's "most Christian nation" within 15 years', *The Telegraph*, 19 April 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/10776023/China-on-course-to-become-worlds-most-Christian-nation-within-15-years.html>.
- * *Editor's Note*: Issue cover image on page 1 is modified from 'Shanghai_2013_0233-HDR-Cityscape' by John Chandler (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0). Image on page 6 is modified from 'Xiamen, China panorama' by Robert S Donovan (CC BY-NC 2.0).

Buddhism in Asia

How can Christians engage?

HUGH KEMP

Christian mission among Buddhists in Asia has traditionally been 'very hard', not because of open conflict necessarily, but because of indifference to or misunderstanding of the gospel, or because of the way the gospel has been offered. One can easily imagine the saffron-clad monk respectfully listening to the gospel message, apparently agreeing with much that he has heard, and then not doing anything about it.



Missionaries tell stories of long years and much prayer invested in Christian witness to Buddhists, with little fruit by way of explicit conversions. There are a handful of exceptions: phenomenal church growth in China and Mongolia are two.

Challenges

Buddhism throws up many challenges:

There is *language* which is outside of Christian experience. (What might 'taking refuge in the Three Jewels' mean?)

Words are used differently (*emptiness, self, enlightenment*).

The *texts* are written in Pali, Tibetan, Chinese, and Sanskrit, leading to different spellings of words (*nirvana, nibbana*).

There are *complex words* that are simply difficult to pronounce (try *Ajitasenavyakarananirdesa*) and concepts that are unfathomable (*emptiness, nirvana*).

In some cases, it is best to leave the original words: hence *dhukha, nirvana, dharma, bodhi, samsara* are all now widely used in English (and their equivalents in other European languages), without change or translation.

Approaches

There are a number of ways that Christians could approach Buddhists:

A *textual approach* might ask questions like, Which texts are important? What is the canon? What is the nature of textual authority? What is the key teaching? (Some Buddhist sects gather around one particular text, like the *Lotus Sutra*.)

A *historico-critical approach* might examine historical developments of the texts, the teachings, and the praxis: have they changed as Buddhism has spread?

Phenomenology would look at what Buddhists actually do. What of ritual and festival?

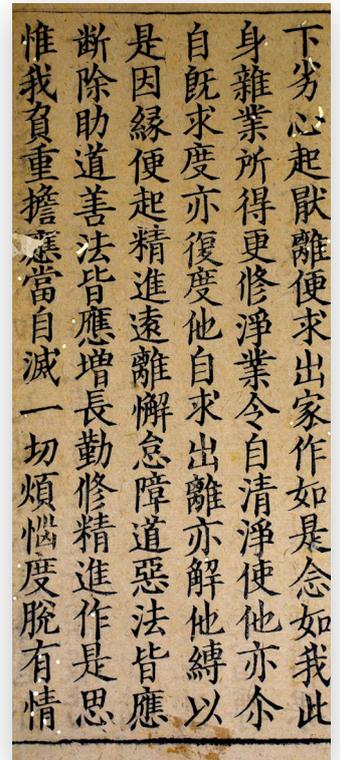
Sociological: How does Buddhism work out in people's lives and their communities? Who is involved? Why? How is leadership played out? Power and social order?

Other approaches might yield different and interesting insights: Political, Anthropological, Feminist, Philosophical, Psychological.

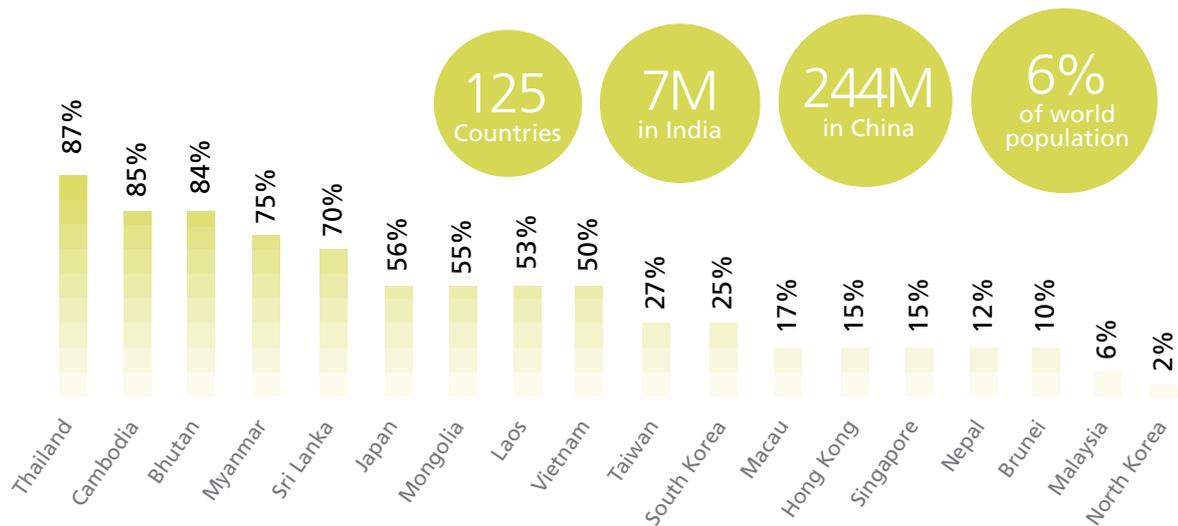
If a Christian engages with a Buddhist, any one of these paths will yield profitable conversation. Christians need to actually talk with Buddhists themselves rather than simply learning about them.¹

Buddhism worldwide

Estimates vary, but there is broad agreement that around 6% of the world's population is Buddhist in some sense (between 350 million and 500 million, and maybe up to 1 billion).² Data can be gathered from censuses, but this only measures a snapshot of self-perception. Buddhism is often mixed with local religions, whether the animism of the hill tribes of Thailand, the original Bön of Tibet, or the Shinto of Japan. Additionally, some countries have Buddhism as the official state religion (Sri Lanka), while for China (by contrast), it is simply unwise, if not impossible, to sift Buddhism from Daoism and Confucianism.



Buddhism in some form is present in over 125 countries. Nevertheless, Asia is its home. A percentage of the population who are Buddhists in each country looks approximately like this: Thailand ~87%; Cambodia ~85%; Bhutan ~84%; Myanmar ~75%; Sri Lanka ~70%; Japan ~56%; Mongolia ~55%; Laos ~53%; Vietnam ~50%; Taiwan ~27%; South Korea ~25%; Macau ~17%; Hong Kong ~15%; Singapore ~15%; Nepal ~12%; Brunei ~10%; Malaysia ~6%; and North Korea ~2%.³ There is also a small but significant population in India (7 million). China, with about 244 million Buddhists, is arguably home of about half the world's Buddhists.⁴ Los Angeles, California, is actually the most diverse Buddhist city in the world, with representation of all Buddhist traditions.



Practice

Buddhism unsurprisingly ‘looks’ different in each of these countries. Buddhism demonstrates quite some variation between schools/traditions. Some are very textual and doctrinal, some ‘use’ doctrine to a point, and then discard it, and others eschew doctrine altogether. The Buddha himself⁵ said that his teaching (the *dharma*) was like a raft used by a person crossing a river. When he had safely reached the other shore, he could discard the raft and continue on his journey.

Many Buddhists approach Buddhism as a practice, rather than a belief. Orthopraxy is often more important than orthodoxy. In early Buddhism, new groups formed due more to issues around monastic discipline, rather than doctrinal heresy. This is in contrast to the first five centuries of Christian history where conflict—and subsequently creeds—were likely to be caused by doctrinal issues.

Buddhism is often more about techniques of doing and ethics for living. The disciple follows a *path* or *way*, using a technique towards an end (awakening/enlightenment), such as meditative practice which is claimed to lead to enlightenment, or taking vows of ordination as a monk or nun.

The main idea is to experience what the teachings and texts are offering. Rupert Gethin sums this up well:

The aim of Buddhism is to put into practice a particular way of living the ‘spiritual life’ (*brahma-cariya*) that involves training in ethical conduct (*sila*)

and meditative and contemplative techniques (*samadhi*) and which culminates in the direct realization of the very knowledge (*prajna*) the Buddha himself reached. Therefore what the Buddha taught is often referred to in the early texts as a system of ‘training’ (*siksa*), and his disciples may be referred to as being ‘in training’ (*saiksa*) . . . Thus in certain important respects the nature of the knowledge that the Buddha was trying to convey to his pupils is more akin to a skill, like knowing how to play a musical instrument, than a piece of information, such as what time the Manchester train leaves tomorrow.⁶

Buddhisms

Therefore, a Christian wishing to talk with a Buddhist in Vietnam will likely have quite a different type of conversation than talking with a Buddhist in Tibet or in Taiwan—or Los Angeles! It may be wiser not to think of a unified religion called Buddhism, but rather to think of *Buddhisms*, a collection of loosely related ideas and practices that is informed by a historical and textual tradition.

Zen Buddhism in Japan and Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet ‘feel’ similar, but look very different. A Nepali villager may never have heard of the *Four Noble Truths of Buddhism*, let alone articulate them. However, if you read them to her, she might say something like, ‘Oh, that’s more or less the way I see the world.’



The three traditions

Historically and doctrinally there are three broad categories of Buddhism: the *Theravadin* tradition (or the ‘tradition of the elders’); the *Mahayana* tradition (‘the greater vehicle’); and the *Vajrayana* (‘the diamond/adamantine’ vehicle). The *Mahayanists* look down on the *Theravadins*, calling them *Hinayanists*, or the ‘lesser vehicle’. Some scholars would place the *Vajrayanists* as a subset of the *Mahayanists*.

These three broad traditions are located geographically:

- *Theravada* (or ‘southern Buddhism’) is of Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Burma.
- *Mahayana* is sometimes called ‘eastern Buddhism’, and includes the Buddhism of China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

- *Vajrayana* is sometimes called northern Buddhism, and includes Tibet, Mongolia, Buriatia, Tuva, Kalmykia (in Eastern Europe), and Shingon Buddhism (Japan).

Each of these three traditions has sub-traditions. For example:

- *Vajrayana* (sometimes called Tibetan Buddhism) is comprised of four groups: the *Nyingma*, the *Kagyū*, the *Sakya*, and the *Gelug* (to which the Dalai Lama belongs).
- *Mahayana* Buddhism includes (among others) *Zen* (and *Ch’an*), *Tien Tai*, and *Pure Land*.
- *Theravadin* Buddhism includes *Thai Forest* and *Insight Meditation*.

In addition, some traditions have experienced renewal and re-focusing, and having been exported to the West, have now returned to their Asian homelands. The *FPMT* (Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition) is one example: it has gone full circle out of Tibet (informed by the *Gelug sect*), into Nepal, then into the West, and now has a centre planted back into a Tibetan-Buddhist context, namely Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Other new sects have been birthed more recently: *Soka Gakkai*, a Japanese ‘Humanist’ Buddhism, has found some momentum in the West for example.

I would recommend a respectful conversational approach, seeking to listen well so as to clarify meanings, but also being unapologetic about differences.

How to engage

When a Christian seeks to engage with Buddhists, it is common experience to feel overwhelmed. The categories are complex, based on fundamental differences in worldview assumptions. Stephen Prothero⁷ rightly notes that Buddhists and Christians see the problem in the world and the answer to that problem from two completely different angles:

For a Buddhist, the fundamental human problem is suffering, and the solution is awakening, then release from *samsara*.

For a Christian, the fundamental problem is usually articulated as sin, and the solution is salvation/freedom in Christ.

I would recommend a respectful conversational approach, seeking to listen well so as to clarify meanings, but also being unapologetic about differences. The following conversations may yield fruit for the gospel:

1. *Praxis*: ‘What do you do?’ Meditation, ritual, and ethics. What spiritual disciplines do I have as a Christian that I can talk about?
2. *Doctrine/Theology*: ‘How do you experience the world around you?’ The nature of reality, the nature of deities, and God. Suffering and evil. Do I know my own faith well, especially some of the deeper issues like why a good God allows evil in the world?

3. *Authority*: ‘What is the nature of the texts in your tradition, and the role of the *guru*/teacher?’ Myths, fables, and wisdom proverbs. What role does the Bible (and the Christian teachers/preachers I listen to) play in my own life, both as an authority, but also as a shaper of my worldview, and my theology?
4. *The ideal person*: ‘What does it mean to be an ideal person?’ The *arhat* (in *Theravadin Buddhism*), the *bodhisattva* (in *Mahayana/Vajrayana*). What does it mean to be ‘made in the image of God’? Am I able, as a Christian to explain the uniqueness of Christ, in both his humanity and divinity? Can I articulate the atonement, resurrection, ascension, and second coming?
5. *Spiritual power*: ‘What/who causes suffering?’ The law of *karma*. Freedom, enlightenment, and salvation. Spiritual beings. Am I sure in my place ‘in Christ’ to be able prayerfully to enter into ‘spiritual conflict’ with the principalities and powers, if appropriate?

Some claim Buddhism has things in common with Christianity: the heaven/paradise in *Pure Land Buddhism* is sometimes posed, or ideas like compassion and peace, which are both expounded repeatedly by the Dalai Lama. However, this is superficial. The *Pure Land* ‘paradise’ is not a reward in itself, but merely a better place to practise the *dharma* (Buddhist teachings) and where one has a better chance of attaining awakening. The Dalai Lama uses the English words *compassion*, *peace*, and *harmony* to translate Tibetan words which contain quite different meanings.

Some Christian converts out of Buddhism have conceptualised Jesus Christ as the ultimate *bodhisattva*, who lays down his own life so that others might be freed from karmic bondage and break out of suffering (*samsara*) into full relationship with God.

If alleged commonalities between Buddhism and Christianity are superficial, Christians involved with mission among Buddhists need also to recognise that, like other religions today, Buddhism is pressured by common global dynamics: it is susceptible to commodification, fundamentalism, and politicization. Sri Lanka and Thailand are examples.

Taking it further

Several evangelical mission agencies prioritise Buddhist people groups, and there are some networks of scholar-practitioners who are thinking and strategizing for work among Buddhists in Asia. A conference held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, each January, brings together Christians to think about mission among Buddhists and share best practices.⁸ In 2012, a workshop/seminar was held in Bangkok, where academic deans from 15 Asian seminaries and Bible colleges met to re-examine college curricula regarding missional engagement with Buddhists. Should the reader wish to explore mission among Buddhists further, please contact the author at h.kemp@xnet.co.nz.



Hugh Kemp is an adjunct lecturer in missiology at St John's College, Auckland, New Zealand. He has been involved in theological education in Mongolia, England, Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

Endnotes

1. *Editor's Note*: See 'Western Buddhism: A new-ish frontier for Christian mission' by Hugh Kemp in the September 2014 issue of *Lausanne Global Analysis*.
 2. The Buddhist website www.buddhanet.net offers between 200 and 500 million. The Pew Forum suggests 488 million.
 3. ARDA (Association of Religion Data Archives), 2010, http://www.thearda.com/QL2010/QuickList_38.asp, accessed 10 December 2014.
 4. However, most (if not all) scholars agree that it is best to think of religion in China as 'the three', that is, an indistinguishable mix of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism.
 5. The Buddha—or 'the awakened one'—was a historical person by the name of Siddhartha Gautama, living in northern India, sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries, BC.
 6. Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 36.
 7. Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World—and Why Their Differences Matter* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010).
 8. This is by invitation only, due to security reasons.
- * *Editor's Note*: Article cover image on page 11 is modified from 'Karma' by Ethan Crowley (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0). Image on page 14 is modified from 'Monks on street' by Charles Roffey (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

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LAUSANNE GLOBAL ANALYSIS

STRATEGIC A NEW HORIZON FOR INNOVATION IN MINISTRY FORESIGHT

DEREK SEIPP

You may not be aware that there is a plan on the horizon to begin colonizing Mars by 2026. SpaceX founder Elon Musk's plan does not stop there. Musk's ultimate goal is to see one million people living on Mars by the end of the century.

Let us consider US President John F Kennedy's speech in 1961, calling for a man to be put on the moon within a decade. In order to put his vision in context, in 1961 there were no personal computers, most commercial aircraft still used propellers, and TV was still predominately black and white. Considering the available technology at the time, Kennedy's horizon was audacious. People thought it just could not be done; yet eight years later, Neil Armstrong descended a ladder and took that famous 'one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind'.

Higher horizons versus incremental steps

If we had simply continued doing what we were doing, taking incremental steps to do it a little better each year, we would probably never have set foot on the moon. Yet this is where most of us find ourselves: looking for steady, incremental improvements. The problem with this kind of thinking is that we look back at what we have done in order to see what is possible in the future. In essence, we look backward in order to look forward.

However, Kennedy did not base the future upon the past. He set an audacious horizon, looking forward, to something far and beyond where we were. It inspired people to reach beyond mere incremental improvements.

Kennedy knew that the knowledge and technology needed did not even exist in 1961. This caused scientists to look forward and explore what technologies would be necessary to accomplish such a radical goal. Once those necessary technologies were identified, scientists began working their way back to the present. This allowed them to create a roadmap starting from the future, which identified each technology that needed to be developed to bring them to their desired destination.

Great horizons always push us to look forward beyond ourselves. Once we understand the desired future, we walk back to the present and figure out how to get there. This kind of thinking results in innovative, paradigm-changing ways of impacting our world.

When we set our sights on higher horizons, it is amazing what can be done. Pyramids are built. Cathedrals are constructed. Brave new worlds are discovered.

Horizons for mission

Bill O'Brien was Vice-President at the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board) when he read an article in 1994 about a physicist at NASA who was setting broader and higher horizons.¹ The article literally changed the course of his career. It described how physicist Dr John Andersen led his team to find a revolutionary new approach to space travel. As a result, they cut the time necessary to fly to Jupiter down from several years to just a couple of months.

'This is what we need in Christian mission', O'Brien excitedly thought.² He contacted Andersen, who was more than happy to lead a group of ministry leaders through a similar process. In 1996, international leaders gathered to discuss the future of Africa in the year 2050. O'Brien said: 'The reason Andersen pushes those horizons out so far is that it helps people engage in the process and stop just extrapolating elements in the present. The second thing is that we need to construct a new framework, not just for fantasizing, but for using critical relevant thinking within that framework.'³



Andersen kept pressing the group to look out further and further to the future, while exploring higher and higher leverage capabilities. Then the group worked backwards to today in order to discuss all the steps necessary to arrive at this new future. O'Brien says the results were revolutionary for everyone involved.

O'Brien was convinced. He began helping other organizations practice this type of thinking. One such project was with World Vision. They explored the possibility that the organization would be forced out of business by 2030. 'It got everybody scared', says O'Brien.⁴ The organization realized just how vulnerable it was to the many changes happening in our world. Many significant changes came out of those meetings.

'This is not a way of creating strategic plans, but it is a way of creating new ways of thinking'—O'Brien⁵

Understanding potential futures

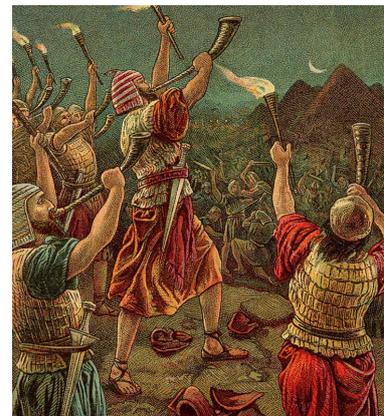
Our world is changing faster than ever before. Entire cultures are changing in the light of globalization, technology, urbanization, and a host of other factors. Unreached people groups are migrating to cities. The number of global languages will likely drop by half. In the face of these radical changes, merely seeking incremental improvements in our ministries will only set us further and further behind.

Forward thinking empowers leaders to explore and understand all the various places the future could take them. They break free from limited thinking patterns holding them back from something greater. As leaders do this, they begin to see themselves differently. They also view the resources at their disposal differently too.

Gideon example

The Bible is full of stories which highlight this type of thinking. Take Gideon, for instance. He limited himself by thinking he was the least family member of the smallest tribe in Israel. Yet God saw Gideon as something else entirely. To enable him to share God's perspective, he needed a radically new horizon. God told Gideon he would rout the entire enemy army; but he would have to do it with just 300 men. Now, it is important to note that God never told Gideon how to do it.

As a result, Gideon deployed 300 soldiers in an innovatively new way. To the old Gideon, hiding in a well and constrained in his thinking, the original vision was as impossible as sending a man to the moon.



Studying trends

A good soccer player knows not to go to the ball, but to get to where the ball is going to be. The same can be said about ministry organizations. As the changes leaders face come faster

and faster, leaders must learn to align their organizations with the future environment before it emerges.

To do so, leaders must seek to understand the most likely environments to emerge in the future.⁶ One way to do this is by studying the emerging trends, issues, and choices being made. As a weatherman creates forecasts by examining how weather changes interact in the environment, leaders can use trends, issues, and choices to create forecasts about their future environment as well.⁷ The greater these are understood, the clearer the forecast of the future will be. And when leaders have a clearer picture of the future, they have a much greater chance of getting to where the ball is going to be.



Mission Society example

O'Brien was asked by The Mission Society to help them address an issue of growing concern. It was their 25th anniversary and a significant gap had developed between their vision and the way their missionaries were being deployed on the ground. They gathered missionaries and leaders from around the globe in Prague in 2008.

'The horizon was 25 years', says Vice-President Jim Ramsay.⁸ They explored what the world would look like far into the future. Ramsay said they realized: 'If we don't change, we won't be addressing the key global issues in 10-15 years . . . the future is going to challenge our structural models as well as our funding models. We have to rethink how we do everything. It's an exciting time, and there is a lot we have to wrestle with. Broad organizational shift is happening as a result of that meeting—its fingerprints are all over many aspects of our organization today.'⁹

The results of that meeting in 2008 are still creating an impact. The organization refined its vision and mission, and then changed its structure and culture as well. They are also realizing the tremendous potential in developing multi-agency collaboration for global partnerships. Other new innovative ideas continue to emerge as individuals continue to align themselves with the future.

'Wisdom is supreme—so acquire wisdom, and whatever you acquire, acquire understanding.'—Proverbs 4:7 (NET).

The chiefs of Issachar

David had been cast out from King Saul's presence into the wilderness. There he gathered to himself the best men of Israel. Among them were great warriors, able to use their weapons with both their right and left hands. In the middle of this great list of warriors is a curious group. The Bible says these 200 chiefs of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do.¹⁰ They understood how the issues and choices would interact to create a future in which David would be king. These warriors' greatest weapons were their minds.

Implications and suggested responses

The Bible commends the chiefs of Issachar for understanding the times and knowing what to do. God is looking for similar men and women today, who are prepared to lead ministries into the future. To get started, leaders should begin engaging their teams in conversations about the future. Here are some initial questions to ask:

What emerging trends, issues, and choices do we see happening in our environment?

How might these combine to change our future environment?

To what new horizon is God calling us?

Is our organization prepared for the future 5, 10, 20 years out?

There is also a small but growing set of books and resources which can fuel these conversations. In 1998 Paul McKaughan, Dellana O'Brien and William (Bill) O'Brien co-authored *Choosing a Future for US Missions*, which is available from the William Carey Library. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Center for the Study of Global Christianity produces many resources highlighting global Christian trends. More often, however, the most innovative ideas arise as we study other disciplines and then seek to apply them in our own areas of expertise.¹¹ Finally, later this year, the William Carey Library is publishing a book by the author of this article specifically designed to help ministry leaders develop a comprehensive framework for analyzing trends, thinking about the future, and setting broad new horizons.

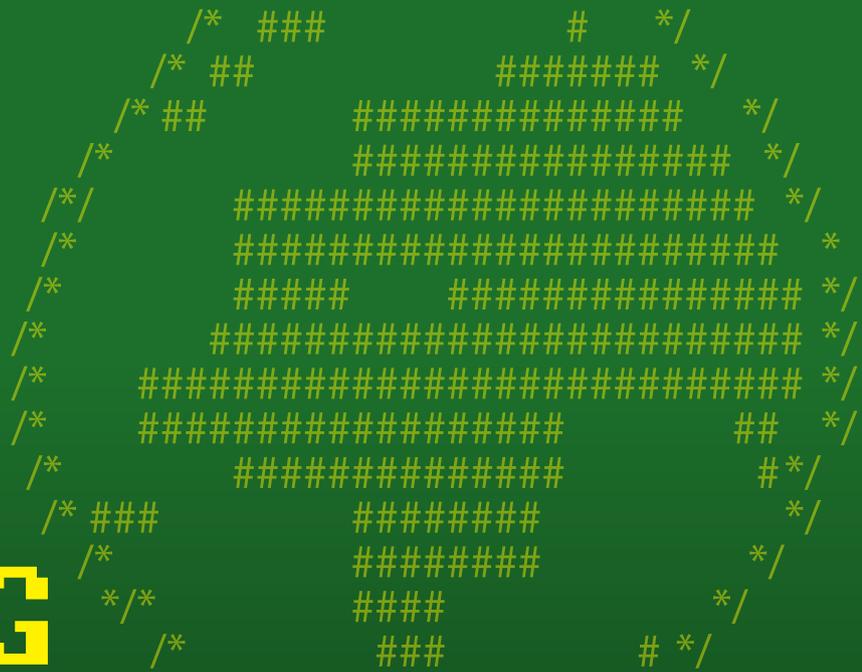


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Endnotes

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2. Bill O'Brien (personal communication, 17 October 2014).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. A Hines and P Bishop, *Thinking about the Future: Guidelines for Strategic Foresight* (Washington, DC: Social Technologies, LCC, 2006).
7. F Polak, *The Image of the Future* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Scientific Pub Co, 1973).
8. Jim Ramsay (personal communication, 17 October 2014).
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* *Editor's Note:* Article cover image on page 18 is modified from 'The ISS with Dragon and the Center of the Milky Way Galaxy' by Ian Norman (CC BY-SA 2.0).



BUILDING A NATIONAL CHURCH DATABASE USEFUL TO ALL

Implications for missions

DWIGHT MARTIN AND MARTEN VISSER

Church statistics were born the same day the Christian church was born, when the apostles decided to count the new believers who were baptized. Protestant missionaries have always been among the most enthusiastic users of statistical information on church membership—or more accurately, on church non-membership.

William Carey was the first missionary to do this when he wrote his famous clarion call for missions, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of Heathens* (1792). This has blossomed into a whole industry of information on the state of the church and the need for missions worldwide. The most well-known examples include *Operation World* (Jason Mandryk) for those interested in missions and the more academic *World Christian Database* (Todd Johnson). Several lists, including *Joshua Project*, specifically seek to list unreached people groups.

Limitations

All these are wonderful tools that the Lord has used to raise prayer and people for missions. However, they all have limitations that diminish their practical use for grassroots ministry. *Operation World* and the *World Christian Database* provide valuable information. However, because of their global scope, they do not go down to the level needed for strategic decision-making in missions. In addition, these lists suffer from a more serious problem: not enough insider information has been used to produce them.

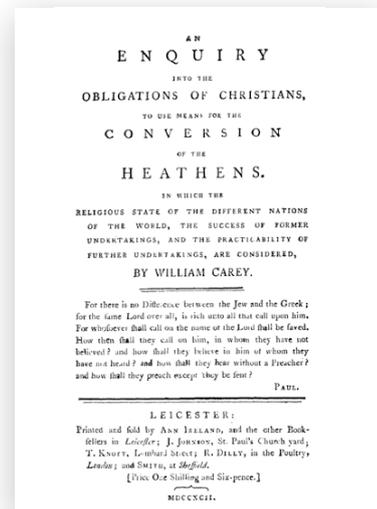
A few years ago one of the authors of this article had an amazing experience at a missions conference in a strategic planning session for global leaders. He discovered he was part of an unreached people group in the Netherlands. He tried to explain that if that ‘people group’ ever had a clear separate identity, that time was at least 400 years in the past. He also told the group that he would be hesitant to tell the churches he preaches in on home assignment, with hundreds of members each, sometimes meeting in church buildings a thousand years old, that they were part of an unreached people group. Nevertheless, a year later his ‘people group’ was still on the list.

The other author of this article has had similar experiences. For example, he has met new missionaries from more than one missions group who have come to Thailand very excited to share the gospel with the Shan people, one of the people groups listed as unengaged. There is no doubt the Shan desperately need the gospel. However, it would have been helpful for those missionaries to realize before they came that the lists were inaccurate. OMF has been evangelising the Shan for over 50 years, and there are Christians and churches among them.

Actionable data

What is happening in mission statistics is wonderful for prayer and for mobilisation. By and large, what is missing are actionable data. To obtain data that informs on-the-ground ministry, another step is needed. If national churches and mission organizations are to use data in developing and implementing their strategies, data needs to be:

- **Reliable.** It should be collected from nationals who know the language and culture and can portray an accurate picture of the local situation.
- **Recent.** The growth of the church is dynamic. Therefore the data needs to be current. Old information is unreliable and can result in bad and often costly decisions.



- *Detailed.* National level information is not enough to develop a strategy for a nation. Provincial or state information is needed at a minimum. District and sub-district is even better. In areas with a strong Christian presence, information at the local or village level is necessary.
- *Reportable.* Gathering accurate data is only the first step. There must be a compelling way to report the data so that it can be effectively utilized.

Insider perspective

The way to do this is to change from gathering statistics for missionaries to gathering data for a nation: national church statistics. An outsider perspective has to be changed to an insider perspective. That is the major challenge facing missionary statistics today. The current databases used in missions are not built for this, and the method by which data is collected does not reflect the value of an insider perspective. Because of the rapid spread of IT capabilities worldwide this now can be done. It is now easier to provide the insider perspective with the voice that it deserves.

In Thailand, the national church, assisted by several missionaries, set out to collect data that would be reliable, recent, detailed, and reportable. And it succeeded! This provided an important impetus to a national plan, supported by almost all denominations, to reach all of Thailand for Christ. Over the course of a decade, an ever-more powerful database was

**An outsider perspective has to be changed to an insider perspective.
That is the major challenge facing missionary statistics today.**

developed. As churches in other countries became aware of the possibilities, they started to express interest in having a database for their own country.

GlobalRize

This led to the establishment of a new organization, *GlobalRize*, offering ‘online solutions for the global church’. A primary solution of GlobalRize is *Harvest*, a database and mapping web-application. Harvest is already being used to map all churches in Thailand and Cambodia; contracts have been signed for Ethiopia and Indonesia; and national churches and organizations from various other countries are looking into the possibilities of starting a Harvest database for their own country—or area, if it is a large nation.

Harvest

Harvest is a highly secure cloud-based database, with maps and reports created in real time. New entries and changes in the database are reflected in the reporting on the same day. Harvest is highly customizable and is multilingual—it uses the written texts of each nation. This gives each organization using the system the freedom to decide what data to collect, what reports and maps to produce, and who receives access to which part of the database.

A dedicated team of software developers continues to add new features to Harvest, while keeping a user-friendly interface. Harvest has a long list of features. The most frequently used are listed here:

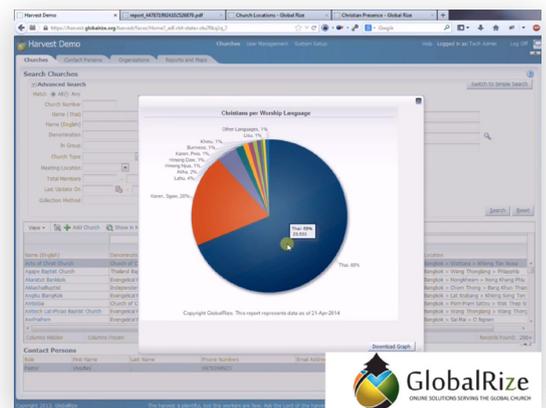
Reports

- Districts or towns without a church, with number of inhabitants
- Provinces or districts with number and percentage of Christians and number of churches
- Mailing labels for any selection of churches through use of filters to select subset
- Denominations with number of members and number of churches
- Churches and Christians per worship language



Maps and graphs

- Christian percentage map, showing the numbers and percentage of Christians per province, district, and town
- Church location map showing the location of each church with address and contact information
- Year churches were started
- Worship language used by each church
- Average church size



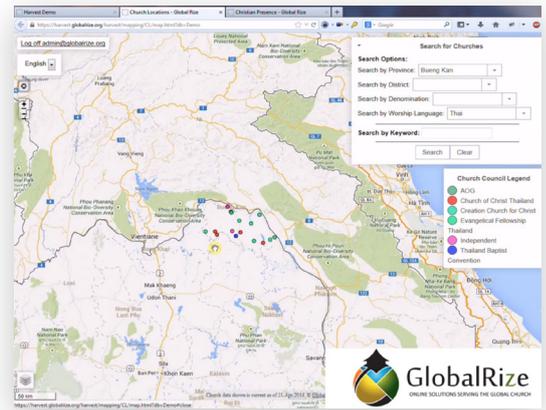
Licenses

- A research license allows extensive searches in the database on any data field
- A denominational license allows a denomination to update data about their own churches
- A group license allows a denomination or organization to add extra data fields which can be used to enter data important for their own purpose and only visible to themselves
- A church license allows an individual church to add extra data fields for their own church (eg on weekly attendance and/or offering)

Name (English)	Denomination	Church Type	Total Members	Worship Language	Location
Andongbong Church	Evangelical Fellowship - Thailand - Korean for Christ Church (KCC)	Church	208	Thai	Wang's Bai-Khai - Bai-Khai
Andongbong Church	Evangelical Fellowship - Thailand - Korean for Christ Church (KCC)	Church	208	Thai	Wang's Bai-Khai - Bai-Khai
Andongbong Church	Evangelical Fellowship - Thailand - Korean for Christ Church (KCC)	Church	208	Thai	Wang's Bai-Khai - Bai-Khai
Andongbong Church	Evangelical Fellowship - Thailand - Korean for Christ Church (KCC)	Church	208	Thai	Wang's Bai-Khai - Bai-Khai
Andongbong Church	Evangelical Fellowship - Thailand - Korean for Christ Church (KCC)	Church	208	Thai	Wang's Bai-Khai - Bai-Khai
Andongbong Church	Evangelical Fellowship - Thailand - Korean for Christ Church (KCC)	Church	208	Thai	Wang's Bai-Khai - Bai-Khai
Andongbong Church	Evangelical Fellowship - Thailand - Korean for Christ Church (KCC)	Church	208	Thai	Wang's Bai-Khai - Bai-Khai
Andongbong Church	Evangelical Fellowship - Thailand - Korean for Christ Church (KCC)	Church	208	Thai	Wang's Bai-Khai - Bai-Khai
Andongbong Church	Evangelical Fellowship - Thailand - Korean for Christ Church (KCC)	Church	208	Thai	Wang's Bai-Khai - Bai-Khai
Andongbong Church	Evangelical Fellowship - Thailand - Korean for Christ Church (KCC)	Church	208	Thai	Wang's Bai-Khai - Bai-Khai

Church directory

- Online directory of churches, grouped by province, language, or denomination
- Contents include church information, pictures, maps, driving directions, etc.
- Accessible to anyone
- Indexed by Google (if Google search is used for a church, that church appears in the search list)



Funding model

The license system is important to determine who gets access to which part of the database, but it also serves another function. Through selling licenses, the organization managing the national database of churches is able to pay for the system.

Rather than *GlobalRize* always looking for donations to fund the project, it has been designed such that those who receive benefit from the database are able to participate in the development and use of *Harvest*. Researchers, denominations, and other types of user must pay a yearly fee to have access to the database. Churches can purchase advertisements that display on the church directory when someone searches for a church in a particular area. There is also the facility to advertise on a national basis.

Implications for missions

Though it is possible to build up a *Harvest* database starting from one denomination, it is not ideal. It is better if an association of denominations takes the lead. The most promising solution is to set up an independent Church Resource Center that builds trust with and is willing to serve all denominations. The *eSTAR Foundation* in Thailand is an example of an existing Church Resource Center.

Harvest has the potential radically to change the face of mission statistics by making an insider perspective on a national church possible for everyone. It is the authors' conviction that this contributes to the advancement of God's kingdom in many ways, most notably in showing all the areas in a country where the gospel has not yet reached.

If you are interested in exploring how *Harvest* could be used in your ministry situation or how to launch a Church Resource Center, please contact one of the authors.

Links

GlobalRize: www.globalrize.org

Christian presence map of Thailand: http://harvest.globalrize.org/thailand/christian_presence/

Harvest Demo: <http://www.globalrize.org/products-services/national-church-database/product-information/demo-video>

eSTAR Foundation: www.estar.ws



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Lausanne Global Analysis

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