



Lausanne
Global Analysis



Megachurches

and Their Implications for Christian Mission

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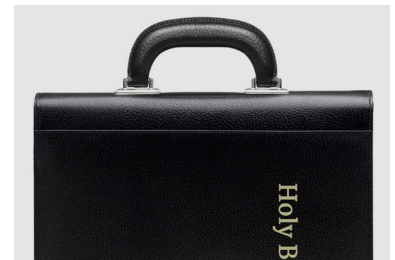
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Welcome to the September issue of Lausanne Global Analysis.

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 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.

We have created a new layout designed for better readability and access in various formats. We welcome your feedback.

In this issue we address the emergence of megachurches as a global phenomenon and their implications as new ecclesial communities for mission. We continue our series of articles on Christian engagement with people of other faiths by looking at Western Buddhism as a new-ish frontier for Christian mission. We analyse the paradox of mission studies in a postmodern world. And we reflect on the beginning and end of Faith and Work as a movement.

'The new megachurches covet numerical growth and proudly cite their numbers as testimonies to spiritual relevance and success in evangelism', writes J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Baeta-Grau Professor of Contemporary African Christianity and Pentecostalism at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana). However, their size has often made administration and accountability difficult, while some megachurch leaders have been victims of their own success with some falling into emotional and moral problems. Examples of successful megachurches abound, but care must be taken not to build a new megachurch theology that suggests that such endeavours are necessarily signs of success in mission. 'Our response must be to thank God when a mega-size church is using its resources to spread the gospel but also to be sensitive to the fact that, in certain contexts, smaller community-based churches may be the ideal', he concludes.

'It was in the 1960s that Buddhism rapidly expanded into the West', writes Hugh Kemp (adjunct lecturer in missiology at St John's College, Auckland, New Zealand). Today, Buddhist entities in the West include teaching/retreat centres, publishing houses, study groups, meditation groups, hospices, bookshops, and training centres representing a plethora of traditions and lineages. Because of its growing profile, it is time for evangelical Christians to take note of Buddhism in the West. Many converts are disillusioned ex-Christians. Western Buddhists share sociological and cultural characteristics with adherents of the New Age, New Religious Movements, and neo-Paganism in the West. They are less concerned with doctrine

and belief, and more interested in ‘practice’. ‘Christians therefore need a “practice” to talk about: disciplines of daily Scripture reading, meditation and prayer, participating in the Eucharist/Lord’s supper’, he concludes.

‘Despite growing biblical, theological, and pragmatic appreciation of the centrality of “mission” for a true evangelical Christianity, many flagship “mission studies” programmes in Bible colleges and seminaries have removed “mission” from their title’, writes Tom Harvey (Academic Dean of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford, UK). Meanwhile mission has moved from the periphery of biblical and theological reflection to the centre. Mission education, especially beyond the West, will emphasise holistic transformation, the biblical and theological centrality of mission, and modes of research that incorporate transformative action, demanding rethinking traditional approaches to education. ‘In this time of significant change in mission education, the contribution of Christian scholars from Asia, Africa, and Latin America as well as from Eastern Europe will provide an invaluable source of knowledge, wisdom, and effective practice’, he concludes.

‘Whatever term you use, God is doing something around the world to set off a Faith and Work movement’, writes Eric Quan (co-founder of Telos Ventures). It is not that Faith and Work has not happened before or that there are no examples of success, but it feels like the beginning stages of a global movement. At present there are many fragmented efforts in Faith and Work. We need to build an ecosystem through bringing everyone (tongue, tribe, and nation) together. However, movements that ultimately succeed at some point have to cease being movements. Jesus sent the apostles to start a movement towards what became the global church. ‘In the longer term, I hope to see things like gospel-centered ventures, Business as Mission, and Faith and Work disappear because the integration of our work into our faith becomes a natural part of what we do and who we are’, he concludes.

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



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

MEGA CHURCHES

and Their Implications for Christian Mission

J KWABENA ASAMOAH-GYADU

This article examines the emergence of megachurches as a global phenomenon and their implications as new ecclesial communities for mission. Megachurches are extraordinarily or abnormally large congregations, mainly belonging to the conservative evangelical or Pentecostal/charismatic streams of Christianity. Historically associated with North America, there are now megachurches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The new megachurch communities are led by charismatic preachers whose ministries by extension also touch hundreds of thousands, even millions, through an array of media programs and resources like books and recorded tapes.

Genuinely mega-sized congregations *consistently* assemble extraordinarily high numbers as single worship communities on *ordinary* or *normal* service days. Consistency is important because some churches attract high numbers only during revivals with popular guest preachers. Real megachurches attract numbers depending on influence of leaders, charisma, dynamism in worship, and the extent to which the religious needs of patrons are met. The testimonies of existing members help to increase the fold.

Signs of success

Those belonging to these streams of Christianity look on megachurches as symbolic illustrations of successful ministry and expansions of God's kingdom. North American megachurch leaders like Creflo Dollar, Joel Osteen, and TD Jakes have inspired many such ministries on other continents. Christians disenchanted with denominationalism and theological liberalism and looking for contemporary and more exciting and spiritually stimulating forms of worship find megachurches attractive options.

These churches often showcase their impressive auditoriums and sophisticated technology-aided forms of worship during religious broadcasts as signs of growth, success, and prosperity. They covet numerical growth and proudly cite their numbers as testimonies to spiritual relevance and success in evangelism, and advertise worship styles that cater to contemporary expectations and needs. Many of such churches therefore tend to be non-denominational in character, a situation that helps to attract denominationally uprooted, upwardly mobile young people and professionals into their folds.

Denominational factors

Mega-size churches can be denominationally affiliated or independent of existing denominations. Thus, although David Yonggi Cho's Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, is part of the Assemblies of God denomination, it is considered a mega-sized church on account of the numbers it normally attracts to its services. Its total congregation of 700,000 worshippers spread over multiple Sunday services makes the Yoido Full Gospel Church one of the largest in the world.

There are cases in which large denominations refuse as a matter of discipleship policy to build mega-size churches:

- Ghana's Church of Pentecost (CoP) is a large classical Pentecostal denomination with many local and international assemblies.
- In spite of its being a large flourishing denomination, the CoP has opted for a community-based church planting approach.
- The local assemblies are not allowed by policy to go beyond specified members.
- Thus CoP can often have multiple assemblies of no more than 500 members within 300 meters of each other in any specific community.

Megachurches' appeal

Mega-sized congregations can develop because of the spiritual gifts of a current leader. In Africa, healing, deliverance, and prophetic gifts tend to be very appealing in this regard. In

the modern West with its public affirmation of moral relativism and privatization of religion, evangelicals gravitate towards such communities because of an emphasis on the fundamentals of Scripture. The megachurch idea is therefore inspired by particular understandings of discipleship and interpretations of what it means to be a community of God.

The contemporary type of Pentecostal Christianity that promotes the megachurch idea is inherently evangelistic because of the relationship between the promise of the Holy Spirit and empowerment for witness on one side and church growth on the other. Those who argue

Care must be taken not to build a new mega-size church theology that suggests that such endeavours are necessarily signs of success in mission.

against it refer to the fact that large congregations make it difficult to operate the four pillars that kept the early church as a dynamic fellowship of believers: study of the Word, fellowship, prayer, and breaking of bread (Acts 2:42-47). Some megachurches get around the problem with home-cell groups, and now, telephone prayer conferences and connecting through social media.

In *Above all Earthly Powers: Christ in a Postmodern World*, David F Wells places the rise of American megachurches within the context of the culture of

postmodernity. Christian communities functioning as seeker churches, according to Wells, recognize that in the postmodern context, they function within a 'marketplace' of choice even in religion, and what we find in this world 'is increasingly a buyer's, not a seller's market'.¹

The rise of megachurches within the postmodern context of the Global South is illustrative of three main developments within world Christianity: (1) The coincidence of the recession of Christian presence in the north with the accession of the faith in non-Western contexts. (2) The erosion of denominational loyalties in religious life in favour of revivalist Christian spirituality. (3) The popularity of the prosperity gospel² within contemporary Pentecostalism on account of the importance of 'size' as a mark of success.

Frustrations and failures

In Ghana, the Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI) not only advertises itself as a 'megachurch', but also its television program, available through digital satellite television, is known as *Mega Word*. In the publication *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, Bishop Dag Heward-Mills of LCI outlines 25 reasons why one must have a megachurch. According to him, pastors must desire to have megachurches because 'that is the most appropriate vision and goal for a pastor' and 'the desire for a megachurch leads you on a journey of church growth'.³

There must obviously be advantages in having a megachurch. However, it is evident from the 25 reasons given by Bishop Heward-Mills, that in addition to the Pentecostal desire to win souls in numbers, many of the reasons simply relate to practical, financial, and other material advantages. This includes being 'properly connected' and raising more financial resources. The impression is created in the list that building a megachurch, once coveted, is bound to happen. It is a teaching that has led to much frustration among sections of the



leadership of independent churches who see lack of growth in numbers as a sign of failure in mission.

The desire by contemporary Pentecostals to build mega-size congregations, we have noted, is not unrelated to their hermeneutics of enlargement and prosperity. In the dominion theology of these churches, pretty much anything that the Christian touches must blossom. The expansion of territory is an important aspect of such hermeneutics. Thus the prayer of Jabez in which he calls on God to ‘enlarge’ his coast is used extensively to underscore the fact that God provides increase for his children including granting them numbers under their pastoral leadership (1 Chron 4:9-10).

There are living testimonies of God using megachurches and their leaders in doing great things in mission. In equal measure though are stories of failure and shame due to the pursuits of religious empire mindsets. The story of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker is fairly well known. They set out to build the largest church, and the ambition led into all kinds of difficulties including moral failures, divorce, and eventually imprisonment. Jim Bakker recalls part of his impossible dream for God that eventually led to his downfall as follows: ‘The Crystal Palace Ministry Center was to be the largest building in the world. Once completed, the auditorium was designed to seat as many as 30,000 people, with electronic, moveable dividers that could be configured for a wide variety of smaller crowds.’⁴

Similar and more grandiose projects have succeeded elsewhere including in Africa and Latin America where we now have contemporary Pentecostal churches seating more than 50,000 people. Two of these are the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Living Faith Church Worldwide, or Winners’ Chapel, both in Nigeria.

Examples of successful mega-sized churches abound and there is no reason to believe that every megachurch has been improperly managed.

Implications

The implications of the megachurch idea for Christian communities around the world are profound. The size of the organizations has often made administration and accountability difficult. A number of leaders of mega-size churches have been victims of their own success with some falling into difficult emotional and moral problems.

In Brazil, which now has some of the largest Pentecostal churches in the world, Paul Freston reports that the rapid numerical growth has brought in its wake scandals, authoritarian leadership, and political favour leading to loss of political neutrality that have affected their image.⁵ There are megachurches that have led to the creation of cult heroes in ministry simply because they have bigger churches than others.

Examples of successful mega-sized churches abound and there is no reason to believe that every megachurch has been improperly managed. The growth of megachurches could be a genuine sign of God's activity in various parts of the world. That many of these churches may be found in the modern West in the midst of Christian recession offers real reasons for hope in the influence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Suggested responses

However, care must be taken not to build a new mega-size church theology that suggests that such endeavours are necessarily signs of success in mission. The management of the organization for maximum influence is what must count.

Our response must be to thank God when a mega-size church is using its resources to spread the gospel but also to be sensitive to the fact that, in certain contexts, smaller community-based churches may be the ideal.

The biblical example of growth in the Acts of the Apostles is that it is the Lord who provides the increase. What is important, whether a congregation is big or small, is to avoid the spirit of competition in mission and provide the appropriate nurture that leads to Christian maturity in incarnational self-giving (Phil 2:1-11).



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Endnotes

1. David F Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs: Christ in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B Eerdmans, 2005), 270.
2. *Editor's Note*: See 'The Prosperity Gospel and Its Challenge to Mission in Our Time' by J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu in the July 2014 issue of *Lausanne Global Analysis* at <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/global-analysis/july-2014.html>.
3. Dag Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow* (Accra: Parchment House Publishers, 2011), 1-19.

4. For the full story see: Jim Bakker, *I Was Wrong: The Untold Story of the Shocking Journey from PTL Power to Prison and Beyond* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996). The quotation is from page 37.
5. Paul Freston, 'The Future of Pentecostalism in Brazil: The Limits of Growth,' in *Global Pentecostalism in the 21st Century*, ed. Robert W Hefner (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 64.

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Western Buddhism

A new-ish frontier
for Christian mission

HUGH KEMP

Estimates of the number of Buddhists in the world vary from 330 million to 1 billion. Most enumerations agree that Buddhists make up around six percent of the world's population. Although much smaller than Christianity, Buddhism has become a global religion.



Buddhism's spread

The terms 'Western Buddhism' and 'global Buddhism' signify Buddhism's spread from its Asian homeland. Siddhartha Gautama, who became 'the Buddha', lived in what is now the border lands of India and Nepal, somewhere between the 6th and 5th century BC. Under the initial patronage of Emperor Ashoka (r. 269-232 BC), Buddhism was able to move south to Ceylon, northwest into Afghanistan, then north to Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan, and southeast into Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

Arrival in the West

Buddhism's substantive arrival in the West commenced in the 1800s. As part of the European colonial enterprise, Buddhist texts were appropriated from Asia for translation and study. Consequently, initial Western understanding of Buddhism was tainted with Orientalism, and often packaged within Theosophy. Ceylonese Buddhist reformer Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933) attended the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. In hindsight some regard Dharmapala as the founder of US Buddhism.

Further contact with Buddhists from Asia by way of immigration (for example, the Japanese to America from the 1850s) or gold rushes in the 19th century (California, Australia, New Zealand) meant that Asian Buddhists themselves became less and less viewed as 'other' by the dominant host culture.

Rapid growth

It was in the 1960s, however, that Buddhism rapidly expanded into the West. This was due in part to the Dalai Lama's exit from Tibet in 1959, and subsequent launch onto the world stage. Concurrently, many Tibetan lamas and refugees took up residence in Western countries and set up teaching centres. Westerners also found Zen Buddhism to have commonalities with the 1960s hippie movement and the ideals of the Beatniks. This first wave was chiefly into the US and then more slowly into Western Europe and other Western nations. Today, Buddhist entities in the West include teaching/retreat centres, publishing houses, study groups, meditation groups, hospices, bookshops, training centres, and the like.

These Buddhist entities find expression in numerous websites representing a plethora of Buddhist traditions and lineages. The World Buddhist Directory (www.buddhanet.info), as one example, invites Buddhist entities to list themselves. For example, at the beginning of 2014, an ad-hoc selection revealed: at least 1,100 Buddhist centres in the US and Canada, including over 430 in California; 64 centres in London; 149 in Switzerland; and 125 in Victoria, Australia.



All these figures were substantially higher than in 2005. Buddhism has also penetrated into South America (including 33 centres in Brazil) and Africa (including 46 in South Africa). In both the US and Australia, some claim Buddhism to be the fastest growing religion.

Definitions

Asian Buddhism and Western Buddhism now look different. There is talk of ‘immigrant Buddhism’ and ‘convert Buddhism’. **Immigrant Buddhism** may be represented by a Chinese temple where recent Chinese immigrants congregate for festivals, weekly ritual, or cultural solace. **Convert Buddhism** may be represented by the refurbished wooden bungalow, or the rented upstairs commercial suite where indigenous local converts meet for meditation and teachings. These converts are often white, middle class, and have disposable income—that is, they are of a particular demographic.

However, such simplistic classifications are problematic. Of these convert Buddhists, commentators suggest further categories:

<p>Old-line Buddhists Descendants of early immigrants</p>	<p>Cradle Buddhists Those raised in a Buddhist family</p>	<p>Occult Buddhists Influenced by Theosophy</p>
<p>Not-just-Buddhists Those with multiple identities</p>	<p>Lukewarm Buddhists Those who practise meditation occasionally</p>	<p>Dharma-hoppers Those who flit between traditions</p>
<p>Night-stand Buddhists Those who commit to no more than having a Buddhist book they are reading ‘on their night-stand’</p>	<p>Boomer Buddhists Reflecting a generational demographic</p>	<p>Convert-Buddhists Those who intentionally choose Buddhism and belong to the ‘new Buddhism’¹</p>

Eclecticism and ambivalence are common. If essentialist, attendance, or dogmatic criteria are excluded, then ‘close-enough-Buddhists’ could suffice as a descriptor for many.

Deeper commitment

This ambiguity of self-definition is offset by a notion of deeper commitment in the ‘taking refuge’ ceremony. This deeper commitment may be into Buddhism per se, or to ordination as a monk or nun. Alternatively it may be made for a period of retreat and seclusion during a particular phase of one’s life:

- A simple formula is ritualised: ‘I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the Dharma; I take refuge in the Sangha’—that is the Buddha, the teachings, and the community.
- This simple formula is undertaken in the West, but ‘conversion’ into Buddhism is not restricted to or by it.

More often than not, self-defined Buddhists in the West align themselves with more than one tradition (within Buddhism), and sometimes with more than one religion. Hence it is not unusual to find a Westerner participating at the local Tibetan Buddhist Centre one night, at Catholic Mass on another, in a long weekend retreat with Zen friends, and in Pagan rituals at the solstice—and then declaring ‘no religion’ on the census form.

Where it took hundreds, perhaps a thousand, years for Buddhism to be established in Asia, Buddhism has bedded down in less than a decade in some Western countries.

Western expressions

In spite of this ambiguity of commitment and practice, distinct lineages and traditions are identifiable. Each of the three broad Buddhist traditions is represented in the West: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana (that is, the Tibetan form). Some of these traditions are intentional ‘plants’ from Asia (*eg* the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, FPMT). Others are distinctly innovative (*eg* the Western Buddhist Order, recently renamed Triratna). Others retain their Asian demographic, but are birthed out of renewal in their countries of origin (*eg* Buddha Light International has Taiwanese roots). Some have been criticized for showing cult-like characteristics (*eg* Soka Gakkai). Some have Westernized, then re-planted themselves back in Asia (*eg* the FPMT has a centre in Mongolia). Some traditions have spread out widely: New Kadampa Tradition has 1,100 centres in 40 countries.

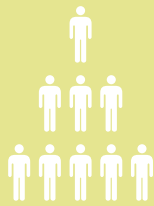
Contours and patterns

Various contours of Western Buddhism are now recognizable. The speed of embrace is unprecedented. Where it took hundreds, perhaps a thousand, years for Buddhism to be established in Asia, Buddhism has bedded down in less than a decade in some Western countries. In contrast to Asia, where distinct cultural Buddhist traditions have dominated one particular country (for example, Zen in Japan), the whole range of Buddhist traditions co-exist in many Western cities. This offers more choice for practitioners, and more overlap amongst the lineages themselves.

Further patterns are identifiable:



Leadership structures are changing: the ordained monk in Asia, trained in years of rigorous doctrine and practice, has been replaced by the scholar lay leader in the West.



Authority structures may differ: Buddhist communities in the West may be more democratic and egalitarian, with women finding a stronger voice. This may also be because the laity are often highly educated.



Promulgation patterns are also different: in the West the media and celebrities promote Buddhism as a psychological tool, or a means to world peace and compassion, or simply as a cool trend.



Material culture is similar, but Western Buddhism is readily commodified within a 'do it yourself' ethos. The very notion of a definable core of belief is anathema to some in the West.

Outlook

Buddhism continues to morph into variable expressions. Engaged Buddhism has gained momentum because of its strong ethical impulse, synchronous with the rise of the Green movement and of social and political consciousness among some Buddhists in the West. Feminist Buddhism, Black Buddhism, and Gay Buddhism are now recognizable. Specific national trends may emerge, such that one could talk about German Buddhism or Australian Buddhism.

Since Buddhism is now uncoupled from its home of Asia, it is now open to the local cultural forces that any religion must face when newly locating in a foreign context. Buddhism is becoming truly global in presence, but at the local level, if its history teaches anything, it will adapt and contextualize.

How much its universal commonalities will be compromised is yet to be determined. What, for example, will Buddhists in Morocco have in common with Gay Buddhists in America? And will either look anything like Buddhism from Asia?

Mission implications

Because of its growing profile, it is time for evangelical Christians to take note of Buddhism in the West, both in its immigrant context, but also its 'convert' expressions. It will continue to grow—Buddhism is a missionary religion. However, the numbers of those identifying solely as Buddhist convert-practitioners will probably plateau in Western countries at about two percent of the population—two decades of census figures in Australia, New Zealand, and Britain indicate this.

Many of these are converts out of original Christian contexts: many are disillusioned ex-Christians, who have either been abused in the church, or found little succor in the church,

or claim Buddhism to be of greater intellectual stimulus or have greater ritual significance. Evangelicals can name Western Buddhism as a new frontier for mission, but it will have intellectual and pastoral challenges that will have to be thought through carefully.

Suggested responses

This conceptualisation can best be informed by conversations, not primarily in the field of Buddhism or world religions, but with missional practitioners working among adherents of the New Age and New Religious Movements in the West. Western Buddhists are less concerned with doctrine and belief, and more interested in ‘practice’—what one does daily in religion.

Christians therefore need a ‘practice’ to talk about: disciplines of daily Scripture reading, meditation and prayer, participating in the Eucharist/Lord’s supper. The actual doing of these is open for rich conversation. While many evangelicals are wary of ritual, it is precisely ritual that often attracts Western Buddhists. Belonging in a community of ritual may well lead then to believing²: there is an implicit call here for Christians to be missional, in visible profile, hospitality, and conversation. In addition, participating for a season in a Western Buddhist community can lead to rich conversations about Jesus.

Christians need a ‘practice’ to talk about: disciplines of daily Scripture reading, meditation and prayer, participating in the Eucharist/Lord’s supper. The actual doing of these is open for rich conversation.

Western Buddhists often simply reject institutional church—many are ex-Christians, who have been damaged by the church. This rejection, along with their sociological and cultural characteristics is in common with practitioners of the New Age, New Religious Movements, and neo-Paganism: all tend to embrace eclectic beliefs, practice, and identity formation.

An authentic, curious, and loving interest in them as persons leads to robust, yet often warm conversation. Whether visiting a New Kadampa temple, having lunch with a Zen group, or engaging with people on the High Street of Glastonbury, England, people have noted that ‘you are the first real Christian we’ve ever met’.

Reflection on missional engagement with Western Buddhists continues within Issue Group 16 of the Pattaya 2004 Lausanne forum. This has found expression in Lausanne Occasional Paper 45 ‘Religious and Non-Religious Spirituality in the Western World (“New Age”)', which is a good place to start one’s journey toward a missional engagement with Western Buddhists.³



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. Thomas Tweed, 'Night-Stand Buddhists and Other Creatures: Sympathizers, Adherents, and the Study of Religion' in *American Buddhism: Methods and Findings in Recent Scholarship*, ed. Duncan Ryuken Williams and Christopher S (United Kingdom: Curzon Press, 1999). And: James W Coleman, *The New Buddhism: The Western Transformation of an Ancient Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
2. G Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
3. *Editor's Note*: This document is available as a PDF download at <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lops/860-lop-45.html>.

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LAUSANNE GLOBAL ANALYSIS



Mission Studies in a Postmodern World

A PECULIAR PARADOX

THOMAS HARVEY

When it comes to 'mission studies', evangelicals are confronted with a peculiar paradox. Despite growing biblical, theological, and pragmatic appreciation of the centrality of 'mission' for a true evangelical Christianity, many flagship 'mission studies' programmes in Bible colleges and seminaries have removed 'mission' from their title.

Behind this quixotic prominence and elision of mission lie three streams of influence: **the dramatic rise of Christianity in the Global South and East; growing biblical and theological emphasis upon the centrality of mission; and growing awareness of and interest in mission studies as an active agent to bring about holistic transformation.**

The rise of Christianity in the Global South and East

The growth of global Christianity is making headlines. On 25 April 2014, the *London Daily Telegraph* reported: ‘China on course to become “world’s most Christian nation” within 15 years’. Such news would appear to validate the success of two millennia of Catholic and Protestant mission. Indeed, schools of mission at Fuller, Asbury, Trinity Deerfield, Gordon-Conwell, and other evangelical seminaries have become magnet schools for evangelical church leaders and mission scholars from the Global South and East. These leaders and scholars from Asia, Africa, and Latin America recognise that their churches, once the object of mission, are now at the leading edge of missions and church growth worldwide.

In turn, these global leaders have brought fresh insight, perspective, and innovation to mission studies and theological reflection. A key emphasis has been ‘holistic transformation’, which advocates a full-orbed embrace of mission not limited to evangelism, church planting, or mercy ministries to those in need, but mission that also addresses challenges in education, economics, development, politics, nation-building, justice, peace, and reconciliation.

A significant rebranding of mission is not that surprising and has led to former ‘schools of mission’ changing their autograph to ‘schools of intercultural studies’.

Nonetheless, this rise in global Christianity and engagement with a wider public sphere have come with recognition that the term ‘mission’ is tainted in lands subjected to imperial and colonial Western domination, manipulation, and coercion. Thus a significant rebranding of mission is not that surprising and has led to former ‘schools of mission’ changing their autograph to ‘schools of intercultural studies’.

Meanwhile, mission agencies have sought to shed their Western colonial ‘mission’ skins by adopting acronyms such as CMS for Church Mission Society, SIM for Sudan Interior Mission, or OCMS for Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. This has had the added benefit in a post-colonial world where the title ‘mission’ or ‘missionary’ can bar entry or complicate visa applications.

Centrality of mission

Yet, even as the term ‘mission’ has been being scraped off mission agency logos, mission now graces prominent biblical and theological tomes. Books such as Christopher Wright’s *The Mission of God’s People* have drawn mission from the periphery of biblical and theological



reflection to the centre and added weight to emphases on holistic mission. As Wright argues, a sound biblical theology views ‘the whole world as the goal of God’s Mission’.

Accordingly, the nature of God, creation, Christ, and redemption are only understood in light of the ‘Mission of God’ that in turn informs the church of its identity and true vocation. Sound ministry is thus not constrained within the walls of the church but oriented towards to the world and engaged in all aspects of life. Theologically, this has led to emphasis upon the ‘kingdom’ or ‘reign’ of God. This reign of God is neither transcendent nor otherworldly, but the action of God through his people in their present circumstance. Nonetheless, appeal to this reign is neither a call to a naïve triumphalism nor an imposed Christendom, but rather a winsome alternative to banal secularism with its attendant relativism.

Mission as an agent of transformation

Into this brew of global Christianity and biblical theological ‘mission’ reflection has been poured keen interest in mission as action:

- Christian leaders and missionaries in the Global South and East have grown impatient with traditional modes of inquiry as they grapple with issues from effective evangelism to economic injustice.
- As agents of transformation, they are embracing new modes of research that transform their work and worlds into laboratories of holistic mission.

Traditionally mission studies have emphasised mission history, cultural anthropology, social sciences, or missiology. Today mission study is beginning to incorporate ‘Action Research’ and ‘Practitioner Research’. Though once relegated to the pursuit of ‘professional degrees’ such as the Doctor of Ministry, today, research in action is available at the MA or PhD degree level:

- Such research goes beyond observation and analysis of a disinterested mission scholar, to experiment with action occurring within mission by the actors themselves to help bring about effective change.
- These approaches provide not only useful research for mission practitioners, but they have immediate impact on mission and practical engagement.

Though these approaches have met resistance both in theological institutions and secular universities, on the whole, practitioner methodologies are gaining significant converts and supporters within the academy and in institutions and agencies that seek to utilize sound research to improve what they actually do.

Outlook

The growing significance of action and practitioner research in mission is timely given the attention to ‘impact’ by higher education authorities when it comes to determining research funding. Mission research that is directly involved in action and impact has currency in the postmodern academies of Europe and North America. Certainly, this should not lessen the value of the traditional disciplines of mission history, cultural anthropology, linguistics, social sciences, and biblical/theological studies in intercultural studies programmes.

Nonetheless, wise institutions will supplement traditional mission studies with new emphases upon action and pragmatic engagement. This is particularly true in secular universities in the UK and USA, where there is increasing pressure to fold Bible, theology, and mission faculties into secular history departments that are themselves under pressure given limited funding. Collaborating with newer modes of research in action and practice will nourish and benefit traditional modes of mission inquiry and vice versa, thus providing crucial justifications for each in an increasingly hostile university milieu.

The changing understanding of mission, mission engagement, and mission education will significantly change curricula at evangelical Bible colleges and seminaries:

Both evangelical and more traditional seminaries will need to develop their faculty and curricula to reflect the full-orbed emphases of holistic mission and its attendant public engagement.



Faculty in theology, Bible, history, and cultural anthropology that at times have shied away from immediate engagement in favour of more passive reflection will find themselves increasingly in conversation with practitioners in mission who will seek their insight into ongoing pragmatic engagement in the public square.



This will require an ability to move beyond specialisation to enter into wider conversations beyond the narrow confines of departments to fashion effective cross-disciplinary research that is collaborative and mutually beneficial.

This is particularly true of those in traditional disciplines such as biblical studies, theology, and history in secular universities. The combination of declining funding and emphasis upon disciplines that ‘make a difference’ is already threatening history and theology departments, let alone specialities such as ‘mission history’. Being able to justify mission history by showing its relevance to ongoing activity in Christian mission and that

impact upon wider society seems prudent, given the current financial pressures upon the academy.

Wider implications

Mission education, especially beyond the West, will emphasise holistic transformation, the biblical and theological centrality of mission, and modes of research that incorporate transformative action. Unlike Western societies that have grown steadily more secular over the past century, the growing churches of the majority world do not separate religion and the state. This will have both positive and negative effects upon missions and evangelism as demand grows to establish not only Christian states, but also Islamic, Jewish, or Hindu ones.

Nonetheless, whether in the minority or the majority, increased interest in local and global mission will have social, political, developmental, national, and international implications. As a key agent in this unfolding reality, the church will strive not only to understand its changing identity, message, and mission, but also to use that knowledge for more effective action to work for the reign of God.

Collaborating with newer modes of research in action and practice will nourish and benefit traditional modes of mission inquiry and vice versa, thus providing crucial justifications for each in an increasingly hostile university milieu.

Emphasis upon mission and holistic transformation will also demand rethinking traditional approaches to education. The modern university has in large measure developed in light of the need to specialise in order to grapple with the ever-increasing complexity of knowledge. Certainly that will continue. Nonetheless, emphasis upon holistic transformation represents a countervailing pressure to develop interdisciplinary research and collaboration.

Though some may see this as an unnecessary muddling of disciplines, in terms of mission and Christian engagement it represents a tremendous opportunity:

- Too often Christianity and its relevance have been restricted to the academic ghettos of Bible, theology, religion, and history departments. In turn, research and analysis within these confines is too easily ignored in that it is viewed as having little relevance to the wider university or society at large.
- On the other hand, global Christianity can hardly be ignored and its significance is legion.

The *Telegraph* article on the growth of Christianity in China¹ drew an immediate retort from the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Just as the Party in China is cognisant of the impact of global Christianity and mission, so are most places of the world

beyond the West. Nonetheless, where is that impact best understood? In a secular religion, history, or social science department, or in research institutions that have the resources and expertise of global Christian scholars embedded within mission and ministry globally?

Responses

In this time of significant change in mission education, the contribution of Christian scholars from Asia, Africa, and Latin America as well as from Eastern Europe will provide an invaluable source of knowledge, wisdom, and effective practice. Research centres that wish to tap this well of expertise must move now to ensure their contribution. Pursuit of this global diversity, however, must go beyond the merely cosmetic, multi-cultural, politically correct inclusion rampant in Western universities to ensure a global diversity that is part of the deep structure of the whole research institution from its governance, to its faculty, and to its students.



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Endnotes

1. *Editor's Note:* See references in '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* at <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/global-analysis/july-2014.html>.

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LAUSANNE GLOBAL ANALYSIS

‘The faithful Christian cannot separate his life into sacred and secular, worship and work. As Christians we are called to do all things to the glory of God, including—perhaps especially—our work.’ — Ravi Zacharias

The Death of Faith and Work

A personal reflection on the
beginning and end of a movement

ERIC QUAN



What is happening?

Whatever term is used, God is doing something around the world to set off a Faith and Work movement. Some call it Faith and Work, others Business as Mission, or Kingdom Entrepreneurship, or Missional Business, or Gospel-centered Ventures—the term we use at Telos for God-centered startups.¹

It is not that Faith and Work has not happened before or that there are no examples of success, but it feels like the beginning stages of a global movement, not just isolated pockets of activity. That movement finds expression in ventures such as: the aforementioned Center for Faith and Work (www.faithandwork.org); BAM Global Congress (www.bamthinktank.org);² Praxis Labs (www.praxislabs.org); Sovereign's Capital (www.sovereignscapital.com); and Daniel Company (www.dcoedge.com); as well as the many startups, mature companies, and practitioners around the world.

While the terms I mentioned above have their differences, that discussion is for another time. This article focuses on a high-level view of the entire Faith and Work category, seeking to discern what might be coming and how we can align our efforts with what God is already doing.

Why is it happening?

This is more of an anecdotal guess on my part than a well-supported conclusion, but it seems that this Faith and Work movement parallels the broader missional community movement's reaction to several decades of more 'accessible' and 'seeker-friendly' Christianity, at least in the West.

There seems to be a growing group of 'innovators' and 'early adopters'³ who really want to fully live out the gospel in every aspect of their lives—and work is a big part of it.

Why is it important?

At the risk of over-simplifying, this is important in my view because God thinks it is important.

In Genesis 2:2, God finished his work (creation) and rested from it, in doing so, modelling work for us. Soon after in Genesis 2:15, God put man in the Garden of Eden to work and care for it. So God worked, and in his image we work. And whatever we do, including and perhaps most especially work, as Ravi Zacharias points out above, we must do for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).

Accordingly it stands to reason that, because God is ultimately glorified through our given core purpose of discipleship and sharing his love with others, faith and work is really about fulfilling the Great Commission. That is why it is so important.

What will happen next and why?

Two of my former professors at UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business, Mark Coopersmith and John Danner, are currently working on a project called "The Other 'F' Word."⁴ While

Just getting this movement off the ground can be considered a success in itself, but I think we will see more failure along the way.

most research and literature focuses on successful startups, they are looking at and learning from those that failed.

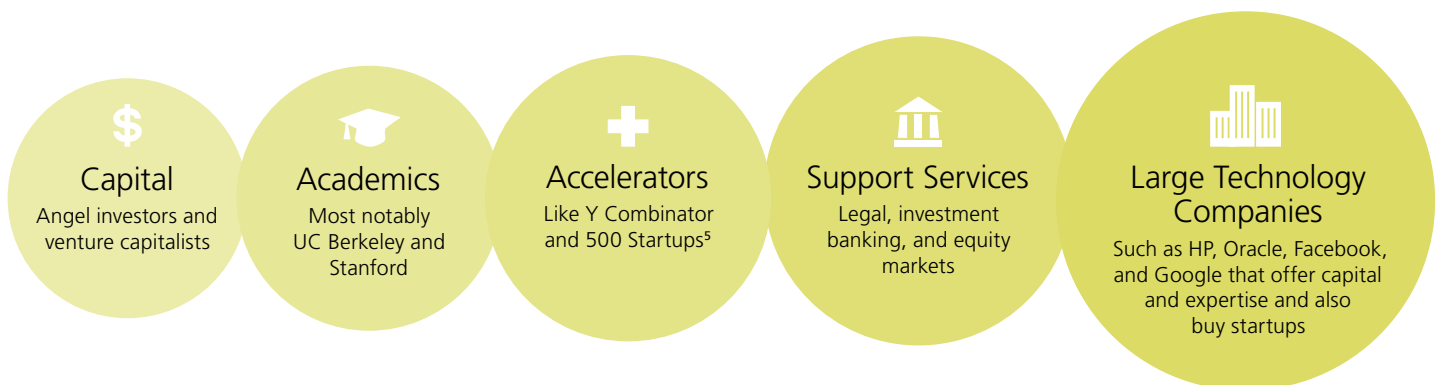
For example, in Silicon Valley, it took over a decade of varying degrees of failure in handhelds and tablets before Apple hit lasting success with the iPad—Go, Palm, Handspring, and even Apple themselves (with the Newton) all eventually failed. There is no reason to think that the Faith and Work movement will avoid this type of failure. God does not promise that we will not fail; his promise is that we can endure it (1 Cor 10:13).

Just getting this movement off the ground can be considered a success in itself, but I think we will see more failure along the way. This is not unlike our own personal faith journeys, where sin leads to inevitable failure—out of which also comes unfailing redemption. We will see startups collapse, companies close their doors, and investors lose money. Through each of these experiences, we will learn to trust God more; grow; and eventually start seeing more and more successes because we will increasingly learn to allow God to lead.

What is the longer-term outlook?

In Silicon Valley where my co-founder at Telos Ventures and I are based, there is a mature ecosystem supporting startup ventures that is unparalleled in the world.

The necessary parts of this intricate and integrated ecosystem include:



At present there are many fragmented efforts in Faith and Work. As has happened in the Silicon Valley, we need to build an ecosystem through bringing everyone (tongue, tribe, and nation) together.

However, movements that ultimately succeed at some point have to cease being movements. For example, what started with a handful of maverick business innovators at Fairchild Semiconductor and Venrock Associates in the late 1950s has turned into the global center of business and innovation, Silicon Valley.⁶ And Jesus sent the apostles to start a movement toward what became the global church.

In the longer term, I hope to see things like gospel-centered ventures, Business as Mission (BAM), and Faith and Work disappear because the integration of our work into our faith becomes a natural part of what we do and who we are.

There can be no false sacred/secular divide. For this movement to die and no longer just be a movement, we have to bring all aspects of our life, and therefore work, to Christ.

How will this affect our operations?

The Faith and Work movement should change how we minister and disciple: Congregants will want to serve in a different way. They will look at their businesses and workplaces not only as mission fields but also as vehicles for their own spiritual growth. Are our pastors ready for this? They will need to learn a new language and add new competencies. Seminaries and other resources will have to prepare our leaders to equip others for this new ministry context.

Missionaries will want to go into the field in a different way: Business, as opposed to fundraising, will gain more traction—and not only as a way to raise support but also as a platform for sharing the gospel. In his recent study *Does Donor Support Help or Hinder Business as Mission Practitioners? An Empirical Assessment*,⁷ Professor Steve Rundle of Biola University concludes that missionaries who enter the field using business as mission are more successful overall in both business and ministry than those who only raise support and do not generate income from work. The question arises whether sending agencies are ready for this. We have to ensure that they are able to support this new generation of BAM missionaries.

But perhaps the most important change is that our organizations have to develop more of a Kingdom mindset. To build an ecosystem, we have to work together: coordinating, collaborating, creating common language, and possibly consolidating individual efforts. In practice, many of us are too internally focused on survival and growth. However, for the movement to ultimately succeed, we need to break down barriers and start communicating and cooperating across and among all of us.

There will need to be professional, financial, and personal sacrifice: executives will have to risk their professional reputations, entrepreneurs to risk funding, and investors to risk losing capital in order for us to move toward putting the Kingdom first.

What should we do?

We need to practise obedience, sacrifice, and love.

Obedience—The Great Commission commands us to make disciples through teaching others to obey everything that God commanded: to love him, to love our neighbors, and to love each other. We spend over half of our waking hours at work. This begs the question that if we are not making disciples there, where are we doing it? We have to be obedient to Jesus' commands—and we must do so where we spend more time than anywhere else. It is not a matter of if; it is a matter of how. We must live out our faith at work.⁸

Sacrifice—In several of the Gospels, Jesus said that whoever finds their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for his sake will find it. We must be willing to walk away, as the disciples did, from the things of this world and hand all of ourselves over to Jesus.

There will need to be professional, financial, and personal sacrifice: executives will have to risk their professional reputations, entrepreneurs to risk funding, and investors to risk losing capital in order for us to move toward putting the Kingdom first. As we saw with the Pharisees, there will be those who surprisingly (to us) might not be willing initially to join the movement. Integrating work with our faith is not easy, but it is necessary. What is the sacrifice God is calling you personally to make?

Love—We can do anything, but if we do not have love, we are nothing (1 Cor 13). Our ability to love comes because God loves us first (1 Jn 4). True Faith and Work cannot fundamentally exist without love. So we must understand and embrace how much God truly loves us, not just in order to do something, but more importantly to be someone, in him.

So in conclusion, let us start this movement together . . . and then kill it.



Eric Quan is co-founder, along with David Kim, of Telos Ventures, a gospel-centered community, accelerator, consultancy, co-working space, and early-stage venture fund, serving entrepreneurs based in Silicon Valley, California.

Endnotes

1. With acknowledgement to our friends at Redeemer Presbyterian Church's Center for Faith and Work in New York City for the term.
2. *Editor's Note*: See 'Business as Mission: Building a movement that can bring lasting societal transformation' by Mats Tunehag in the November 2013 issue of *Lausanne Global Analysis* at <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/global-analysis/november-2013.html>.
3. Geoffrey Moore's 'Crossing the Chasm' refers to the innovation adoption curve (bell curve), which starts with 'innovators' (in the smallest number) followed by 'early adopters' in greater numbers. It is somewhere in this part of the curve where an innovation must 'cross the chasm' to gain widespread adoption from the next levels of 'early majority,' 'late majority,' and 'laggards.'
4. <http://newsroom.haas.berkeley.edu/article/haas-faculty-speak-entrepreneurship-cross-country-roadshow>
5. Accelerators are firms that bring in entrepreneurs and startups, and surround them with resources, mentors, and office space. Companies generally give up around six percent of their equity and get about 25,000 USD in capital as well as an opportunity to learn, grow, and compete for more funds.
6. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venture_capital
7. <http://www.omsc.org/searchibmr/index.php?> (search for Steve Rundle under author). His talk at the BAM Global Congress is at <http://crowell.biola.edu/blog/2013/dec/11/do-economic-incentives-help-or-hinder-business-mission-practitioners/>.
8. *Editor's Note*: See 'Mission in the Workplace: Encouraging access and transformation through workplace ministry' by Will Messenger in the June 2013 issue of *Lausanne Global Analysis* at <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/global-analysis/june-2013.html>.

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