The Political Landscape of the Suffering Church

Lessons and Legacies

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November 5, 2012
University of Notre Dame
Is the Blood of the Martyrs the Seed of the Church Today?

• It Depends...

  – On the landscape of the suffering church
  – On political leadership
  – On scholars and intellectuals
  – On the global Church’s response
Elaboration

- Pervasive, relentless, and vicious persecution can marginalize or eradicate Christian witness
  - World as laboratory of highly diverse contexts
- Old ways (persecution) and new methods (cleansing)
- This calls for rigorous scholarship
  - Precision in language – discrimination, persecution, martyr
  - Pew-like initiatives: documenting martyrs with inter-coder reliability
- Requires creative Church response – *solidarity +*
- Needs the best journalism – John Allen
- Demands assertive public policy – Tom Farr
20th Century: Bloodiest for Christians

- Armenian Genocide: Only 300,000 Christians left in Turkey
- Soviet liquidations
- Maoist China’s atrocities
- Middle East Religious Cleansing
- Genocidal campaign by Sudan: Rallied for South
Ecumenism of Martyrdom

- *TERTIO MILLENNIO ADVENIENTE (Toward the Third Millennium), Apostolic Letter of John Paul II, 1994*

- The Pope lauded the Christian witness of Catholics, Protestants & Orthodox believers

- He cited the “ecumenism of Christian martyrdom” and called for documentation and solidarity

- Synecdoche for broader persecution and pressure
  - Need for ecumenism of advocacy
Momentous for Fate of the World

• Christianity as largest religion in the world

• Most globally dispersed

• Persecuted in more diverse contexts

• Linked to Human Freedom
Christianity and Freedom

• Pure Christian Ethic: Theology of human dignity and equality, Imago Dei
• Autonomous civil society -- Libertas ecclesiae
• Limited Government – Loyalty to Authority higher than state. Limit on hegemonic state, Sanneh
• Religious Freedom – conscience cannot be forced
• Engine of Democratization

– Focus of Georgetown University’s Religious Freedom Project
Percentage of **global population** living where levels of restrictions are...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>High or Very High</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year ending MID-2007</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year ending MID-2008</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year ending MID-2009</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year ending MID-2010</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life
*Rising Tide of Restrictions on Religion, September 2012*
## Number of Countries Where Religious Groups Were Harassed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others*</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Others includes Sikhs, members of ancient faiths such as Zoroastrianism, newer faiths such as Baha’i and groups that practice tribal or folk religions.
Number of Countries Where Each Religious Group Was Harassed, mid-2006 to mid-2009

- **TOTAL**
- **GOVERNMENT HARASSMENT**
- **SOCIAL HARASSMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>Government Harassment</th>
<th>Social Harassment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>117</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others*</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landscape of the Suffering Church: Diverse Challenges
Communist Remnant

• China and Vietnam – repressed but thriving
• North Korea – Orwellian persecution
  – North Korea: 2% Christian (400,000)
  – South Korea: 29% Christian (14 million)
• The New Underground
  – Melanie Kirkpatrick, *Escape from North Korea*
  – “Look for a church, a Cross”
  – Martyrdom could be seed if regime collapses
Radical Islamist Pressure

• Intimidate, marginalize, strip of rights
• By state action
  – Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan
• By Social Hostilities
  – Nigeria, Indonesia
• By Both
  – Pakistan
• Failing to challenge is patronizing and undermines Muslim heroes of conscience
Vanishing Christians in the Middle East

• Ancient communities facing extinction or catacomb existence
  – Iraq, Palestine, Algeria, Tunisia, Yemen, Turkey
• Some still have statistically significant minorities but all are in decline
  – Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan
• Irony of emigration
• Harmful for Muslim societies
• Habib Malik: Only vigorous international response can forestall disaster
Ironic Growth in the Gulf

• Gulf Guest Workers
  – Kuwait (14%), Qatar (14%) Saudi Arabia (4.4%), UAR (13%)
  – Different Paths: From Pew Forum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Government Restriction Index</th>
<th>Social Hostilities Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethno-Religious Nationalism

• Exploit ethno-religious identities for political gain
• Stigmatize Christians as alien, impure
• Unleash social hostilities and vigilante action
  
  *India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Turkey*

• Diplomatic response

• Church support: awareness, prayer, material aid
Autocratic Regimes

• Fear independent civil society
• Exploit ethno-religious tensions
• Repress Christian communities and leaders
• Harass human rights movements
  – Burma, Venezuela, Eritrea
Why We Care: Empirical Value of Religious Freedom

• Brian Grim and Roger Finke, *The Price of Freedom Denied*
  – Religious Freedom powerfully contributes to political rights, civil liberties, democratic consolidation, women’s status, economic development, societal peace, and regional stability.

• Liminal Book
  – validates timeless ideal
  – Provides real guidance for religious authorities, political leaders, scholars
Correlation of Religious Freedom with Other Freedoms and Well-being within Countries

- Political freedom: 0.61
- Freedom of the press: 0.61
- Civil liberties: 0.61
- Gender empowerment: 0.48
- Lower % of GDP spent on military: 0.42
- Longevity of democracy: 0.40
- Lower levels of armed conflict: 0.36
- Lower poverty: 0.35
- Higher % of GDP spent on public health: 0.29
- Overall livability: 0.28
- Lower HIV/AIDS: 0.25
- Lower income inequality: 0.25
- More foreign direct investment: 0.20
- Higher earned income for women: 0.16
- Higher earned income for men: 0.16
- Higher GDP: 0.16

Religious Violence Cycle
- Social Restriction of Religious Freedom
- Violence related to Religion
- Governmental Restriction of Religious Freedom

Religious Freedom Cycle
- Religious Freedom
- Positive Contributions of Religion to Society
- Broader Religious Participation

Price of Freedom Denied, Grim & Finke, 2011
Crucible of the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century: 
\textit{Living with our differences in a shrinking world}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Fate of Christianity is pivotal to this challenge
    \begin{itemize}
      \item the leaven and test
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textit{“Where Christians are Dying,”} societies struggle
    \begin{itemize}
      \item Title of new book by Francesca Paci
    \end{itemize}
  \item Religious Freedom must be a priority of all Democracy-loving peoples
    \begin{itemize}
      \item Tony Blair in \textit{The Review of Faith \& International Affairs}
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}
THE REVIEW OF
FAITH &
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
VOLUME 10 | NUMBER 3 | FALL 2012

STRATEGIES OF ADVOCACY FOR
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

TONY BLAIR on religious freedom imperatives
MICHAEL BOURDEAUX on the lessons and legacies of advocacy behind the Iron Curtain
ANGELA WU HOWARD on leveraging law
ZIYA MEERAL on contemporary challenges of advocacy in the field
JUDD BIRDSTALL on the Obama drama
THOMAS FARR on the search for an intellectual consensus on religious freedom
GREG MITCHELL on legislative lobbying
LIORA DANAN on public diplomacy
LEONARD LEO and DON ARGUE on the US Commission on International Religious Freedom
FELICE GAER on Jewish advocacy
STEPHEN COLECCCHI on the US Catholic bishops
ZAINAB AL-SUWAIL on Muslim advocacy and the "Montgomery Method"
CHRIS SEIPLE on a theory of change