

God Means Business!

An Introduction to
Business as Mission, BAM

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CONTENT

1. BAM is a paradigm	4
2. BAM is rooted in Scripture	5
3. BAM is being a follower of Jesus	5
4. BAM is rooted in history	5
5. BAM is a relevant response to world needs	6
6. BAM is a key strategy in combating human trafficking	6
7. BAM is a centrifugal force	7
8. BAM is holistic transformation of individuals & societies	8
9. Business as Mission pursues profit	8
10. BAM is not Business for Mission	9
11. Business as Mission does not condone non-businesses and non-missions	9
12. BAM is different from but related to tentmaking	9
13. BAM has another acronym and an ultimate bottom line	9
Appendix: Business as Mission Manifesto	10

Introduction

Business as Mission, BAM, is a relatively new term but is based on Biblical concepts. Other expressions often used include 'transformational business', 'great commission companies' and 'kingdom business. The BAM concept is holistic in nature, believing that God has the power to transform people and communities; spiritually, economically, socially and environmentally. The dichotomy between sacred and secular is not Biblical, but this false dichotomy has deeply affected our views on work, business, church and missions. BAM is a part of a wider global movement, recognizing and responding to God's call to take the whole gospel to the whole man in the whole world. The applications of BAM may vary from country to country and from business to business.

1. BAM is a paradigm

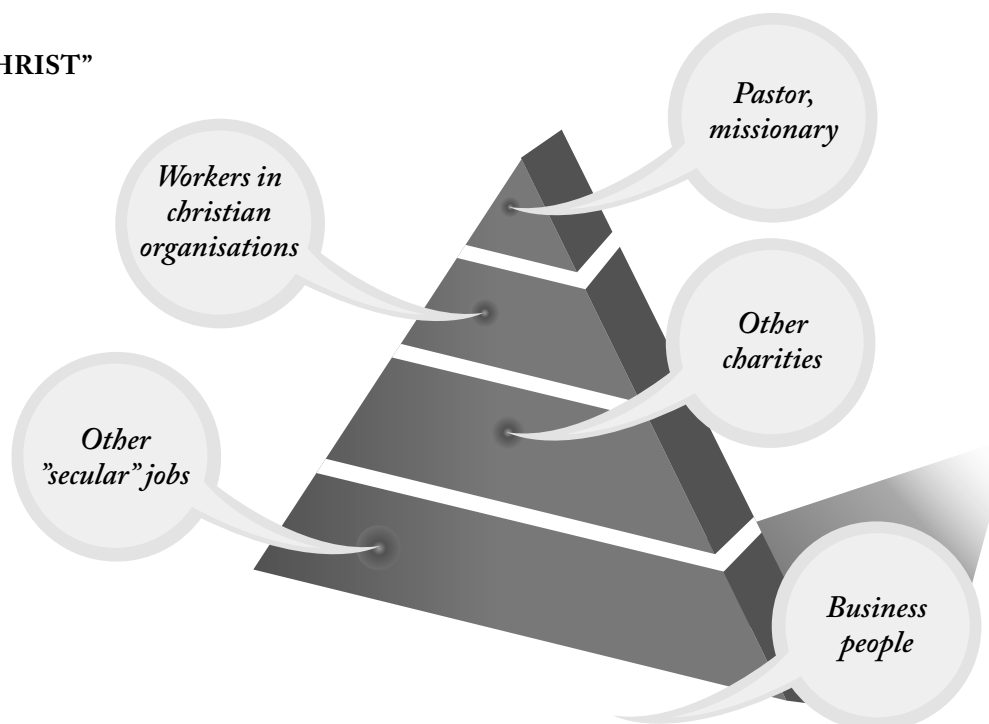
The dichotomy (divide) between sacred and secular, between spiritual and physical realms, is not Biblical but stems from Greek Gnostic philosophy. It has been deemed to be a heresy by the Church. Nevertheless it still permeates our thinking, our theology and our mission strategy.

GREEK GNOSTIC DICHOTOMY

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| • Good | • Bad |
| Spiritual | Physical |
| Sacred | Secular |
| Clergy | Laity |

This has also resulted in a flawed view of the church and its members – “the pyramid of Christ”; instead of the Biblical concept of the Body of Christ. We tend to encourage climbing the pyramid where “serving God full time” reaches its climax on the top. This non-biblical view is very common and influences most churches on all continents. The Greek Gnostic thinking values people with “spiritual vocations” and looks down upon people dealing with business. To be a pastor is often seen as a higher calling, a spiritual ministry, we even use the term “full time ministry”. So if one really wants to serve God one should aim at climbing the pyramid, towards the “higher callings”, to be involved in full time ministry. Thus business people are often viewed as not serving God but rather dealing with Mammon. However, absolution can be granted if money is given to the church and to missions.

”PYRAMID OF CHRIST”



The church and its mission work still suffer from the self-imposed dichotomy between spiritual and secular, and the distinction made between clerical and lay ministries. Sometimes, Christians have denigrated them or held the view that their work is irredeemably secular or only vouchsafed them approval if they gave their money to spiritual works through the church or a mission agency. But as God calls and equips people to be Bible translators or evangelists, he also calls and equips people to do business in order to serve him and other people. Christians in business need to be affirmed and challenged: God has given them unique gifts, vocations and experiences to meet great needs and opportunities.

Business as Mission recognizes the Body of Christ. We need to tear down the “Pyramid of Christ” which permeates so much of our thinking, language and actions. If God has called you to business, don't lower yourself to become a pastor! Your business calling is your highest calling. And if you are called to be a pastor that is your highest calling. There is no pyramid to climb, but there is a world to serve!

2. BAM is rooted in Scripture

God is the original Entrepreneur, who started with an idea and created an infinite number of good things. We are created in God's image to be creative and to create good things as well. God told Adam & Eve to "till the garden", thus to be involved in a value adding process and to live in trustful relationships. Thus business is rooted in God's character and who we are created to be. The central business activity of providing meaningful and sustainable employment is a demonstration of justice and love, grounded in the character of God. In history there are many examples of God-fearing men and women who have loved God and served people through business. Abraham was a successful businessman. Jesus worked in a small family business for many years. The honorable woman in Proverbs 31 is a businesswoman.

Unemployment is a consequence of the fall, but it is not a sin to be unemployed. However, it denies a person to be what God has intended for all of us to be: creative, able to add value to products and services, and able to support ourselves and others. Giving people employment for the individual and common good is a righteous action; it is in fact helping people to grow in the image of God.

God prepared for a restoration of creation, including work and creativity, through Jesus Christ. We are called to play a role in God's restoration process by helping to restore the inherent dignity and value of work.

Work is something that is simultaneously both **deeply divine** and **deeply human**. God took pleasure in the physical aspect of His creation. We too can delight in creating useful and excellent products and services.

3. BAM is being a follower of Jesus

What does Jesus say are the key characteristics of true followers of Him? They help the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick and those in prison. (Matthew 25) What is a major underlying cause to malnourishment and starvation, homelessness, disease and limited access to medical treatment, as well as to debt and crime? Unemployment! Providing people with jobs is alleviating and preventing these dire conditions. One may paraphrase Jesus' words in Matthew 25: "I was jobless and you gave me a job!" Entrepreneurs have a special calling to serve in the market place, by doing business "as unto the Lord".

We are to mirror Jesus' life and mission, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20.21). It is a mission in which evangelism and social responsibility go hand in hand. God is concerned about us as human beings within our social and environmental contexts. Jesus' ministry is clearly one of both preaching and demonstrating God's Kingdom (Isaiah 58.6-7; Luke 7.22).

Most people who came to Jesus did so with emotional, physical and social needs, and Jesus constantly and consistently met such needs. Nicodemus, an intellectual who had "spiritual" questions, was an exception, not the rule. Importantly, Jesus never said to those who came to him with various needs, problems and questions: "You have the wrong need!"

Jesus stated that healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the grieving, etc, were manifestations of God's Kingdom. He even taught us to pray: May your Kingdom come. **BAM is about being an answer to Christ's prayer** – in and through business – so that physical, social, emotional, economical and spiritual needs may be addressed and met.

What is Good News to the unemployed? We mustn't try to be "more spiritual" than Jesus; he spent the bulk of his ministry meeting needs in the "secular" realm. He never apologized for spending so much time and effort dealing with ordinary human needs.

4. BAM is rooted in history

There are many historical examples of Christians doing business in such a way that people and societies have been transformed and God glorified. During its first 400 years of existence the Church grew to become a major influence in the world, thanks in part to people who lived their faith in the market-place. Lydia was a businesswoman who lived out her faith by sharing the Good News (Acts 16.15). We should learn from mission pioneers like the Nestorians who conducted business along the Silk Road and the Moravian entrepreneurs who had a far-reaching impact.

Hans Nielsen Hauge was born in the late 1700's in a poor, underdeveloped agricultural society. There was no democracy and limited religious freedom. When Hauge was 25 years old he had an encounter with God. Hauge's life motto became: Love God and fellow men. He traveled extensively throughout Norway and did what we in modern day terminology would call church planting and business as mission.

He started 30 businesses, including fishing industries, brickyards, spinning mills, shipping yards, salt & mineral mines, paper mills, and printing plants. He was an entrepreneur and a catalyst. Many others were inspired to read the Bible, to meet with other believers for prayer and fellowship, and various businesses were started and developed.

Even secular historians today acknowledge Hauge's legacy and contribution to the development of modern Norway. He is sometimes called "the Father of democracy in Norway". He facilitated equality between men & women and his work led to a spiritual awakening and an entrepreneurship movement. Hauge's legacy is thus one of spiritual, economical and social transformation. His life and work illustrates some of the BAM goals, principles and outcomes.

5. BAM is a relevant response to world needs

The Biblical mandate is clear: the whole Gospel to all peoples and nations, preaching and demonstrating God's Kingdom. We are to work towards spiritual, social and economical transformation of people and societies – to God's glory. What are some of the major needs around the world? If we are to make a market analysis – what do we find?

Five things correlate and stand out:

1. Most unreached peoples are found in the Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist world. Most of them live in the so called 10/40-Window. These are areas and people groups where the name of Jesus is rarely heard, or if heard – seldom understood.
2. Here you will also find a large majority of the world's poorest of the poor.
3. These countries also often have unemployment rates ranging from 30, 50 to 70 percent.
4. Often 50 percent or so of the population is young, under 15 – 20 years of age.
5. These areas are high risk areas for human trafficking

Where you find the poverty stricken, you'll frequently see unemployment ranging from 30 to 80 percent. Looking ahead, hundreds of million of young people are coming into the market place looking for jobs.

The name of Jesus is rarely heard in these regions. The rampant unemployment makes people vulnerable to human trafficking; little prospect of decent jobs creates high risk environments for trafficking and prostitution. These evils and dire needs correlate. We can never have long term, sustainable and relevant solutions unless we address economic issues and business development. BAM gives an extraordinary opportunity to demonstrate the love of God among **the least, the lost and the lowliest**.

If we want to be followers of Jesus we cannot – and must not – overlook the dire need for jobs among the poor and unreached. This challenge is huge and increasing: some estimates indicate that up to two billion young people will start looking for jobs in the next 20 years.

It is not enough to think just in terms of job creation. Nor is it sufficient to just think in terms of church planting. If church planting and growth is our sole definition of success, Rwanda was the ultimate success story in the 20th century. It went from 0 to 90 percent of population being members in various churches in 100 years. But in 1994 we witnessed genocide in this small central African country – one million people killed in a few weeks. Rwanda obviously had people in church, but not church in people; i.e. the Gospel had not truly transformed ethnic relations.

6. BAM is a key strategy in combating human trafficking

Trafficking in persons is a form of modern-day slavery and it is illegal. Trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, harboring or receipt of persons - by traffickers - who use threat, force, coercion, abduction and deception to generate profit. Trafficked persons most often end up in sexual exploitation but also in forced labor. Victims are often transported across international borders, but most are trafficked within the borders of their own country. They are often held in captivity, denied the right to leave, forced to work, and have their wages confiscated. Most trafficking victims are women and children who often are slaves in the sex industry. Millions of people are bought, sold, held against their will in slave like conditions – even today.

One may summarize trafficking – its cause, cure and positive change agents - as follows:

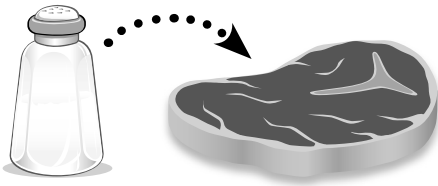
- **Cause:** unemployment, insufficient income, no prospect of jobs at home
- **Cure:** job creation, real jobs, viable, sustainable & profitable businesses
- **Calling:** God calls and equips people to do 'Kingdom business' – to restore human dignity and uphold human rights and effectively combat trafficking

Business can deal with a root cause of trafficking by developing businesses intentionally and pro-actively in areas with high unemployment and high trafficking risks. BAM is thus a key to prevention.

But BAM is also a key in restoration of these victims. Because we need to be able to answer the question: out of trafficking (most often sex industry) into what? We need to provide jobs and environments with dignity that can be a part of a holistic transformation of individuals; socially, economically and spiritually.

7. BAM is a centrifugal force

We need to go on Christ's command and address real needs as well as deploy business people to their calling among all peoples of the earth. To do this we need to be less centripetal and more centrifugal. Centripetal is a force moving inwards, towards the center. Centrifugal is moving out from the centre. Let me use an analogy. When we cook we take the saltshaker and pour salt over the meat.



As absurd as it may seem, there is supposedly another way of cooking.

One could try to squeeze the meat through the small holes into the saltshaker and thus make the meat salty.



We as Christians are called to be salt. Let the saltshaker represent the church and the meat represent the world – to which Christ sends us.



Church arena



Market place

Unfortunately we are too often preoccupied with trying to get people to the church building and to be involved in some program – often held in the very same building. Many churches have a very centripetal focus. It is as if we are trying to “squeeze the meat into the saltshaker”. We ought to be more centrifugal, consider how we can be salt in the marketplace, how we can pray for Christians who own and operate businesses. The church should be thankful for having “salty members” out there – in the business world. People with a calling to business are a hybrid – as it were – of a businessman and a missionary: a **“bizzionario”**.



Church arena

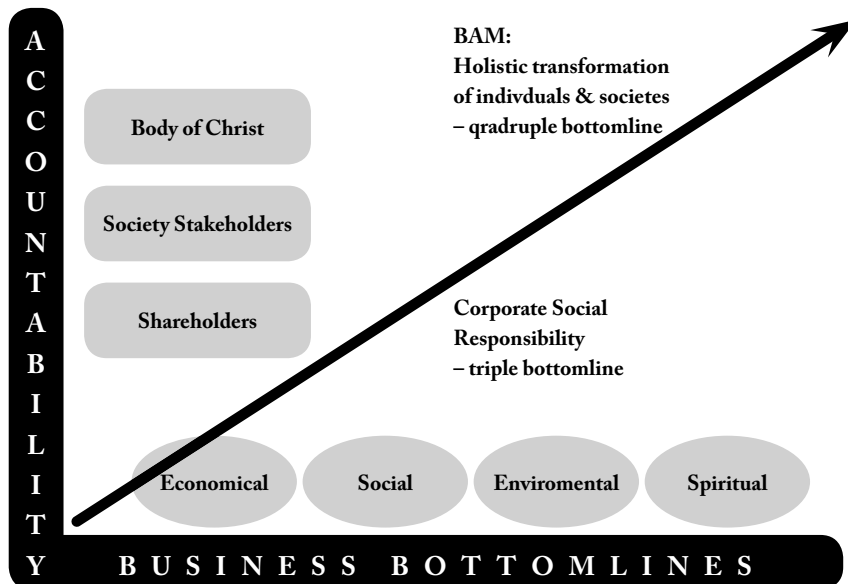


Bizzionaries



Market place

8. BAM is holistic transformation of individuals & societies



The graph shows a continuum: from a limited paradigm where profit for shareholders is the primary purpose of business, to a broader paradigm with other stakeholders and bottom lines. Corporate Social Responsibility considers social and environmental impact of business and also recognizes society at large. The BAM paradigm includes all four bottom lines and also engages the Body of Christ among the accountability entities.

Business as Mission is about real, viable, sustainable and profitable businesses; with a Kingdom of God purpose, perspective and impact; leading to transformation of people and societies spiritually, economically, socially and environmentally – to the greater glory of God.

9. Business as Mission pursues profit

We are to demonstrate the Kingdom of God through the church and in the market place. Churches and Christian NGO's are non-profit entities, businesses need a profit. There are both commonalities and differences related to these:

Churches/NGOs

- Glorify God
- Serve people
- Meet various needs
- Not for profit

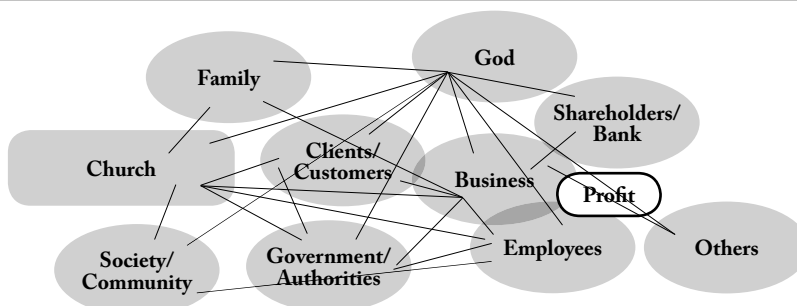
Businesses

- Glorify God
- Serve people
- Meet various needs
- For profit, but not exclusively

Business must be financially sustainable, producing goods or services that people are willing to pay for. Sustainability implies that the activity is profitable. Profits are an essential element of all businesses, in all cultures. Without profit the business cannot survive and fulfill its purpose. Accordingly, with Business as Mission - businesses are real businesses that genuinely exist to generate wealth and profits. Business as mission does not view profits as inherently evil, bad or unbiblical. Quite the contrary, profits are good, desired and beneficial to God and His purpose, as long as they are not oppressive, or derived from cheating on customers or selling products and service that do not honor Christ and His gospel.

A Christian businessman has obligations not only to family and church, but also to shareholders, government (taxes), clients, the environment, employees, and others. If a profit is made – which is a must if the business is to be viable and sustainable – the profit is not for the church to claim. The business owner / operator has a web of accountable relationships which includes but goes beyond the church.

BAM: A web of accountability



10. BAM is not Business for Mission

BAM is not a fundraising strategy. It is not an alternative and new way to financially support traditional Christian ministries. We are all called to give and be generous, regardless of profession or level of income. But we do not become teachers, surgeons, housewives, CEO's or farmers, just in order to be able to give money to a charitable cause. None of us would like to be operated on by a surgeon whose only ambition is to make money to give to the church! Instead we expect he has the right skills and drive to operate with excellence, doing his job with full professional integrity. We have all been given gifts and talents; we are all to be good stewards of these gifts, acting responsibly and caring for others, whether family members, friends, employees, customers, poor and needy in other countries. The same applies to Christians in business: serve God and people with professionalism, excellence and integrity.

11. Business as Mission does not condone non-businesses and non-missions

BAM is real business, not Christian charity in a business disguise. But it is more than just business. Two approaches to business that do not come within the scope of 'business as mission' by any definition are: (1) Fake businesses that are not actually functioning businesses, but exist solely to provide visas for missionaries to enter countries otherwise closed to them. (2) Businesses that purport to have Christian motivations but which operate only for private economic advantage and not for the kingdom of God. Neither do we mean businesses run by Christians with no clear and defined kingdom strategy in place.

12. BAM is different from but related to tentmaking

The term tentmaking is linked to the apostle Paul who made tents – had a "secular" job and thus supported himself and at the same time worked in "the ministry". (The terms, their use and implications, often reinforce the sacred – secular divide that is contrary to the Biblical holistic concept) In mission circles tentmaking often means someone taking up a job with a company in a foreign country, and that gives opportunities to share Christ with colleagues and others. It is a good and valid concept but is not to be confused with BAM, albeit some overlap exists and they have complementary emphases.

COMPLEMENTARY EMPHASES OF BAM & TENTMAKING

BAM

1. Job makers
2. Entrepreneurs; owners & operators
3. Business development (SMEs)
4. Personal & societal transformation through business

Tentmaking

1. Job takers
2. All kind of workers & professionals
3. Work in general
4. To witness and be a testimony at work and through work

13. BAM has another acronym and an ultimate bottom line

AMDG – Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam: For the Greater Glory of God

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Lausanne Senior Associate - Business as Mission
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THE BUSINESS AS MISSION MANIFESTO

The Lausanne (LCWE) 2004 Forum Business as Mission Issue Group worked for a year, addressing issues relating to God's purposes for work and business, the role of business people in church and missions, the needs of the world and the potential response of business. The group consisted of more than 70 people from all continents. Most came from a business background but there were also church and mission leaders, educators, theologians, lawyers and researchers. The collaboration process included 60 papers, 25 cases studies, several national and regional Business as Mission consultations and email-based discussions, culminating in a week of face to face dialogue and work. These are **some** of our observations.

AFFIRMATIONS

We believe that **God** has created all men & women in His image with the ability to be creative, creating good things for themselves and for others - this includes business.

We believe in following in the footsteps of **Jesus**, who constantly and consistently met the needs of the people he encountered, thus demonstrating the love of God and the rule of His kingdom.

We believe that the **Holy Spirit** empowers all members of the **Body of Christ** to serve, to meet the real spiritual and physical needs of others, demonstrating the kingdom of God.

We believe that God has called and equipped business people to make a **Kingdom** difference in and through their businesses.

We believe that the **Gospel** has the power to transform individuals, communities and societies. Christians in business should therefore be a part of this holistic transformation through business.

We recognise the fact that poverty and unemployment are often rampant in areas where the name of Jesus is rarely heard and understood.

We recognise both the dire need for and the importance of business development. However it is more than just business per se. **Business as Mission** is about business with a Kingdom of God perspective, purpose and impact.

We recognise that there is a need for job creation and for multiplication of businesses all over the world, aiming at the quadruple bottom line: spiritual, economical, social and environmental transformation.

We recognise the fact that the church has a huge and largely untapped resource in the Christian business community to meet needs of the world – in and through business - and bring glory to God in the market place and beyond.

RECOMMENDATION

We call upon the Church world wide to identify, affirm, pray for, commission and release business people and entrepreneurs to exercise their gifts and calling as business people in the world – among all peoples and to the ends of the earth.

We call upon business people globally to receive this affirmation and to consider how their gifts and experience might be used to help meet the world's most pressing spiritual and physical needs through Business as Mission.

CONCLUSION

The real bottom line of Business as Mission is

AMDG - ad maiorem Dei gloriam – for the greater glory of God

Business as Mission Issue Group

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