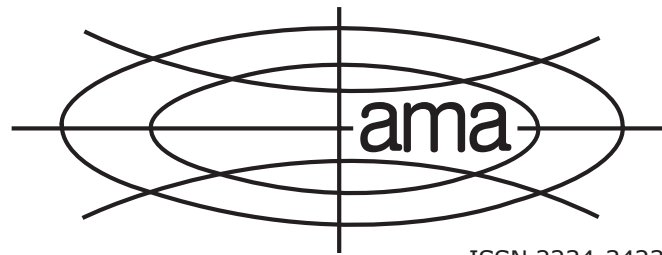




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REPORT ON ASIAN SOCIETY OF MISSIOLOGY FORUM

Timothy K. Park

It is an accepted fact that the world today is different from that of the past. The tide of change is sweeping the 21st century. Before our very eyes are rapid technological development, cultural, economic and political upheavals, globalization, international and domestic insecurity, religious polarization, spiritual renaissance, moral revolution, among many others. Thirty-five years ago, the internet became a reality and the world was virtually connected via the so-called digital highway also known as information technology. The world is now virtually at our fingertips. Geographical distance is bridged. Knowledge is widely accessible. But this is not all. More are yet to come.

The world has changed and is still changing. How do we, as Christians, cope with this inevitable reality? The Great Commission of Christ is yet to be fulfilled. The timeless message of salvation and transformation is yet to be heard by innumerable mass of people in all four corners of the world. The essential truth is unchanging but the form and methods must be relevant to the changing times. The post 9/11 has completely changed the landscape of the world in terms of peace and security, travel, international relations and most especially for us, the Christian global mission. As a result, the Christian mission enterprise needs to rethink and adopt relevant measures to effectively carry out the Great Commission.

This challenge is before us, mission practitioners and missiologists, who were gathered at the Strategic Mission Forum of Asian Society of Missiology (ASM). The theme of this biennial gathering was "Discern what is good" which is adopted from what our Lord Jesus Christ said to the disciples as a command and challenge to be wise in changing times. The aim of the Forum was to help us better understand the changing world and to be at the cutting edge of mission.

In the Forum, our distinguished speakers representing different cultures and fields of expertise stimulated us with well-researched presentations on various situations and strategies of mission.

I would like to acknowledge our hosts, SaRang Community Church for opening to us their hearts and facilities to make this Forum a success. I also thank the ACTS for co-sponsoring this important event. I acknowledged our speakers and respondents who took time to write their papers to be presented. My appreciation goes to the officers of ASM for their hard work in organizing the Forum and to the volunteers for helping make every aspect of gathering organized and efficiently executed.

As President Emeritus of ASM, I am happy to report to all the readers of Asian Missions Advance on the Third International Forum of ASM. God bless you all.

Timothy K. Park
Head Chairman, AMA

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HINDUISM: MISSION STRATEGY

Susanta Patra

Hinduism, the word having its roots in Indus (the river), refers to the religion and philosophies that were prospering in the land around and beyond the river Indus. Hinduism is now spreading rapidly throughout the world though it has been practiced intently in the Indian subcontinent. The Hindu leaders proudly declare that their discipline of not having a founder but in existence from the time past reveals their worth. It was the people from outside who discovered this practice called it by this name 'Hinduism'.

Originally the names that were used to refer to this discipline are SANATANA dharma (meaning eternal discipline) and Vaidika dharma (meaning discipline of Vedas). If the religions practiced in the subcontinent are referred to as Hinduism it would mean a broad umbrella, which includes the Jainism, Buddhism and various other religions that took birth in this land and then spread out to other parts. These religions share many of the common roots with the Sanatana dharma. Hinduism being an open framework, these philosophies and customs are closely associated with the main streams. Hence it may not be wrong all together to call them so. But for a devotee generally Hinduism would mean the core Hindu discipline.

The Gayatri Mantra: 'OM, Bhur bhuvah svah, Tat Savitur varenyam, Bhargo devasya dhimahi, Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat' consists of twenty-four syllables - three lines of eight syllables each. The basic translation of the mantra is: Oh God, the Protector, the basis of all life, Who is self-existent, Who is free from all pains and Whose contact frees the soul from all troubles, Who pervades the Universe and sustains all, the Creator and Energizer of the whole Universe, the Giver of happiness, Who is worthy of acceptance, the most excellent, Who is Pure and the Purifier of all, let us embrace that very God, so that He may direct our mental faculties in the right direction.

According to D. S. Sharma writer of the book 'What is Hinduism?' - "Hinduism is more a federation of religions than a single religion with a definite creed."

HISTORICAL HINDUISM

The Early Origin of Historical Hinduism goes back to the year 2000 - 600 BC when the Vedic form of Hindu religion was in practice. This Vedic form Hinduism simply mean that these Hindu followed & practice the four types of Veda rigorously. These four forms are: Rig Veda - Hymn of Praise, Sam Veda - Chanting of Hymns, Yajur Veda - Sacrifices and Athurva Veda - Spells and magic. The teachings during this period were specific:

- That there are 33 gods and 3 worlds. There are 11 gods for each world.
- That there can be no icon or idol. Idolatry was treated as sinful.
- That their Nature is personified and therefore worshipped sincerely.
- That the Sacrifices has to be offered to please their gods

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- That one can be identified as a Hindu by the belief in an impersonal absolute Brahman (meaning Creator, Supreme god or Greater than the greatest) who is consisting of three parts: Brahman - Atman (Jiva), Karma - Samsara cycle and Liberation - Moksha.

Some of the General Characteristics of this form of Hinduism are; 'Unity in diversity', 'Accommodating New ideas - absorbing & assimilating new ideas', 'No founder and no organization,' Religious Tolerance' and 'Mystical about the other world'.

The Historical Hinduism took different shapes & turns during the above period. One of such shapes were called the period of 'The History (Epics) 200 B. C. - 300 AD', when 'Ramayana - the story of the prince who lost his kingdom', 'Mahabharat - the story of the princes who lost their kingdom', 'Bhagabat Gita - inserted in Mahabharat in 2nd century AD' and 'The concept of Avatars - divination of Rama and Krishna'.

The next was called the period of 'The Puranas 300 AD - 1200 AD'. During this period, the historical Hinduism, when the belief of 330 million of gods and goddesses; mythological accounts of 'Shiva', 'Vishnu', 'Shakti'; the doctrines of 'Avatars' meaning incarnations; the 'Temple and Idol Worship'; 'Festivals' based on Lunar Calendar; Animation ceremony; Offering of 16 gifts and relinquishing ceremony were introduced.

During this period, 'The Bhakti Tradition' was also introduced by several Hindu religious teachers like Nanak, Namadeva, Vallabha, Chaitanya, Ramanuja and Tukaram etc. These religious teachers began to give the greatest stress on the teaching of the importance of God's grace; the grace that purifies the mind and frees the devotees from sin; moral obligation on the part of devotee resulting to humility, prayer and fulfilling the religious duties. The most popular movements during this period were the 'Ram Bhakti' and 'Krishna Bhakti' movement. However the people at home or in the practice of religion polytheism and superstition were often mixed with Bhakti (devotion). Loving devotion to the Ista Devata - the personal God and Songs, Bhajans, Repetition of names and teachings of Gurus are given more importance in these religious movements. Moreover these religious reformers began to emphasize that every holy man is an embodiment of divine Avatar (Revelation).

The next is the 'Modern Age' which is believed to be from 1757 till the current date. During this period, several Reformation Movements took its shape. Some of the important ones were 'Brahma Samaj', 'Arya Samaj', 'Ramakrishna Mission' etc. These movements lay emphasis on the cultural dependence referring to the freedom from western culture that over ruled us. Several disciplines in the religion were introduced by the Mission. However it also gave birth to a 'Guru Cult' where people began to put their trust more on these gurus for their identity, security and leadership. This guru cult led to the birth of Hindu Militancy.



PHILOSOPHICAL HINDUISM

The innate curiosity of most of the Hindus has been urging him to delve into the mysteries of the universe and self. Hence Hindus pose questions' like: 'Who created this universe? Who am I? Where did I come from? Where do I go after death?' The relentless search for an answer to these basic questions has led them to the origin and evolution of philosophical Hinduism. In this context, there are three popular schools of thought: Dvaita: Dualism, Advaita: Non-dualism and Visishtadvaita: Modified dualism. There are six schools of orthodox Hindu philosophy and they are Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta.

The Philosophical Hindus claim the authority of Vedas (Religious Books in Hinduism), Upanishads (expounding the Vedas in predominantly mystical and monistic terms), Scriptures (Sacred Books) and Ananta Param Brahman (Eternally Abiding Soul). There are four Vedas: Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. The 'Vedas' endows with the teaching of the 'Forgiveness and Mercy pleaded for sins' and 'Sacrifices that washes away Sins'. The 'Brahmans' demands the 'Ritualistic Sacramental'. However it places a great fear of making ritual mistakes and such mistakes can cause danger to life of the devotee. The 'Upanishad' means 'brahma-knowledge' by which ignorance is annihilated. This knowledge is in received through the discovering the Concept of God - Nirguna Brahman and finding out of Brahman (Eternal Soul) atman (Human Soul) relationship.

Both Mahabharat & Gita teaches that 'Atma' cannot be burnt by fire or destroyed by weapon. Human beings are just instruments of God's design and the worship of one highest God who is the source of all.

According to Vedanta (Sankara - 9th century AD), Vedanta represents the richest metaphysical and spiritual quest for a Hindu. There is an intense longing for God who will be near them. A Hindu's own identity is related to impersonal Absolute. Advaita is a salvation philosophy (darshana) which focuses on helping people to learn that there is only one ultimate reality: Brahman. The word advaita refers to the denial of dualism. The earliest known authority for this sort of teaching comes from the 7th century, Gaudapada, but the most important authority is Shankara. It has become the most influential school in Hinduism and has even gained some followers outside of India. It contains Satyam Brahman - Brahman alone is real and the world is false - Maya (illusion). The world is the illusory manifestation of Brahman. It refers to 'Brhman as Nirguna - impersonal' and follows strict monism - 'I am Brahman'. No idolatry is taught in such teachings. One can emancipate from ignorance by means of 'gnana marga' - knowledge. In essence, Man is essentially divine and is entangled in 'Sangsar' without recognizing his true identity. One who is with the divine reality and salvation is only self-realization.

POPULAR HINDUISM

This Hinduism is known to be at the lowest level but large percentage of Hindus is known to be popular. The Popular Hindu comprise of 13% in the world and 83% of Indian Hindu population. It is a conglomeration of religious practices. The popular Hindus follow the aspect

of animism in the worship of nature, spirit, demon and deceased. They are not dogmatic in their beliefs. They suffer greatly of fear complex and are knowledgeable of the power of nature. They practice worship of their ancestors and blood sacrifice to quench the thirst of their gods and for some cleansing of their sins. They revere the Brahmin priest and worship cow.

The popular Hindu follows the law of Karma. The law of action is associated with the doctrine of Sangsar (cycle of birth) and therefore, the strong emphasis given in the 'Karma Marga' i.e. Salvation is by works.

The popular Hindus believe in the innumerable existence of gods and goddesses and strive to please each of them. They donate to the doctrine of 'Iswar' being the Supreme ruler & controller of the universe and 'Right' triumphing over the evil.

Hinduism is complex in all its forms, formulas and often contradicting. Therefore it is impossible to find a proper definition to Hinduism. However let me define Hinduism which would help us to have some kind of understanding on the basis of the person inside. I believe with all these complexities, the person inside is the one who needs the Gospel. The Gospel transforms the person inside.

Indian Religion is a coherent system of beliefs and practices based on supernatural beings, forces, places or entities, resulting in behavior and welfare varying from different degrees and is reflected in private & public lives. There are three units in this definition.

1. Beliefs and Practices: Indian religion & religiosity is known by the people's beliefs & practices. Sometimes beliefs direct their practices yet other times practices reveal what they believe.

- Philosophic Beliefs and Practices - These are the ones who can philosophy anything & everything like 'the Existence of God as absolute or non-absolute or even both', 'Sin as maya or illusion', 'Salvation requires good Karma or coming out of the cycle of life' etc.
- Religious Beliefs and Practices - These are the ones who follow every ritual promptly because of a sense of fear.
- Popular Beliefs and Practices - These are the ones that are open to new ideas. They love to taste, learn and experience something new.
- Mystic Beliefs and Practices - These are the ones who follow after the millions of GURUs for mystical experience. To them 'GU' is darkness and 'RU' is the light. They believe that their GURUs will bring them from darkness to light.
- Secular Beliefs and Practices - These are the ones who believe that their religiosity will not bring food to their tables. Hence they are ready to practice double standard life style. As on when it is required, we shall call on our deities for help. Some of them practice communism and religion at the same time.
- Sectarian Beliefs and Practices - In Hinduism, there are countless of sects. These sects varies within the same religion. Hence their beliefs & practices create conflicts and these conflicts create the sectarian identity.
- Animistic Beliefs and Practices - These are the ones who believe that their deities are super-sensuous but can be represented in matter. Hence their deities can exercise control over the natural world, human welfare, and human destiny.



2. **Syncretistic Character:** Hinduism would not be complete without any syncretistic make up. Hindus represent thousands of superstitions. In Hinduism, there are numerous 'Myths' (Myth is a story that seeks to explain a strange phenomenon).

For example; Hindus have 'Ten Mythological Avatars (Incarnation)'. They are; Matsya or Fish Avatar, Kurma or Tortoise, Varaha or Wild Boar, Narasimha or Half Lion - Half Man, Vamana or the Dwarf like Man, Parasurama, Sri Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki.

The most saddening aspect of all these is that these show the way for our people to Deceptions and Bondages. Therefore the Indian 'Rishi' (Seer) had 3 prayers.

- 1st Prayer is for TRUTH - "asato ma satgamaya" - From unreal, lead me to the truth.
- 2nd Prayer is for LIGHT - "tamasoma Jyotirgamaya" - From darkness, lead me to the light.
- 3rd Prayer is for IMMORTALITY - "mrtiyorma amrtamgamaya" - From death, lead me to immortality.

3. **Unfinished Task:** We could have finished the task of discipling our nation had we been little more creative. However the mission is still POSSIBLE. There are several factors to the unfinished task that can be achieved.

- Inadequate Understanding of who a Hindu or Sikh or Jain or Buddhist is? Just to say that the person is a Hindu or Sikh or Jain or Buddhist mean nothing today irrespective of religious lifestyle. Indian religiosity can be multi-dimensional. A person's inner man does not depend on the religious outward identity. However some of these would help us to discover who the person is in the inside. Some of those dimensions are; Ritualistic, Experimental, Doctrinal, Ethical, Social & Institutional, Material and Mythical.
- Inadequate Strategies in reaching the religious people of India. We Indians love short-cuts. We love to follow the old missional modus operandi like 'Reach the reachable' or 'Win the winnable'. We are still comfortable with the old methods or approaches taught to us hundreds of years ago. Our pre-made notion is that everyone is a sinner going to hell. Therefore we just have to attack the people with the sin approach. Without any understanding of the Task Field or the challenges ahead, we move in to evangelize & disciple our nation.
- Inadequate Outlook in the area of the gigantic task of bringing 1.2 billion people to the saving knowledge of Christ and discipling them to be a witness. We do win souls but fail to make them soul-winners. Our church planting movements have become 'miles wide but inch deep'. Many have succeeded greatly because they have followed properly the SATURATION PRAYER BEFORE VENTURING OUT (Mathew 12:29, Mark 3:27); PEOPLE' RESEARCH TO IDENTIFY THE DEEPEST SPIRITUAL NEEDS & WORLD VIEWS (Acts 17:17-21), INDIGENEOUS APPROACHES (Acts 17: 22-28) and TRAINED & FOCUSED TASK FORCE TO REAP THE HARVEST.
- Inadequate mindset is another area where we need to correct ourselves. It seems we are always in a hurry, we want results, we want to please our donors

and our minds are not pre-occupied with long & lasting results. The less important usually take the most important role in our mission endeavors. We need to have a shift from the old paradigm to the new.

4. **Strategic Approach:** Over the years, the Indian Mission is reaching out to numerous Hindus in India and beyond. Those who have come to faith have come because of an effective approach used to reach out them. However the following are a glimpse of simple but missional way of reaching out of Hindu.

- GOD: A Hindu thinks about God. Therefore talking about God systematically and thereby creating a true understanding of God is the key.

A Hindu thinks of God in two ways;

- a) An Absolute Brahman - only reality with all multiplicity & distinction
- b) A Relative God - who claims the undivided devotion of man and is supposed to be worshiped under three forms - Shiva, Sakti and Vishnu.

Give a Hindu a clear picture of the God of the universe that you believe. Three in One! Absolute reality - creator yet revealed in the form of man Jesus - Tell about the historical Jesus.

- MAN: A Hindu thinks that human life is submitted to the law of retribution and rebirth. Man wanders from life to life, carrying with him the consequences of the actions of his previous existence and condemned to the bondage of the body as long as complete purification is not achieved.

Teach from the Bible that the man is created in the image of God with a purpose and that there is only one life, then death and then judgment. Man is very precious to God. Share the creation of man, fall of man and the transformation that is possible & needed in a man through a redeemer.

- SIN: Every Hindu will have his/her own understanding of Sin. Find out his perception of sin - emphasize the existence of sin and what damage sin does to a person. Explain to him from life's testimony how powerful it is to confess one's sin and get the remission of sins from God. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.

- LIBERATION: A Hindu believes that the true liberation is escaping from the cycle of rebirth. Three ways the liberation is propounded: the way of knowledge by which man realizes his unity with the absolute, the way of devotion by which man with the divine grace regains his original purification and the way of ritual works by which man purifies his activity and orientates it towards the true goal of human liberation.

5. **Powerful Models:** The interesting aspect of these models is that all of these begin with sharing of the Gospel and end with discipleship that leads to multiplication.

- 'One on One' model - It is effective because of the aspect of personal touch in it. This is simple and every Great Commission Christian must be involved in it.
- 'Marketplace' model - This is to witness in our workplace. It is believed today in India that every Christian is a missionary in their workplace, society and family. Hence more & more are getting involved in sharing the Gospel and bringing colleagues,



neighbors, friends and family to the saving knowledge of Christ.

- 'Friendship' model - This is a model that it is powerful in the urban areas. In this a Christian starts friendship with a specific person, sincerely maintains the friendship and does everything possible to show the Agape love which is completely foreign to the other person. Many Christian families organize special parties (like Birthday, Wedding Anniversary, Easter, Christmas etc.) and consciously invite non-Christian families to their homes for the occasion in order to share their faith in a meaningful way.
- 'Literature' model - India lacks appropriate Christian literature today to cater to the needs of Hindu masses. In one hand, we are the largest English speaking nation and more people are educated today than ever before. The love for literature was there before and is still growing. The evangelism through literature has not lost its hold. Appropriate Gospel books, journals, tracts and literature has been effective. More & more writers & producers are bringing out need based literatures. Such literatures which are focused to be thought provoking, convincing to the souls and enlightening to the mind & heart are being produced & distributed in India daily.
- 'Orallity' model - Generally, this is for people who are physically challenged. Special Braille literature for the blind, evangelism through dance & drama, 'Jesus' film movie and gospel CD & cassette have been effective in reaching the Hindu masses. Another important phenomenon is that more and more common people are getting attracted to mass media like film, television & radio programs, internet and other forms of Orallity.
- 'Apologetic' model - Our Christians in India are getting better in learning their apologetics and confronting with people of other faith. Through various trainings, we have learned to win the hearts of people by providing proper understanding of life, sin, faith and salvation.
- 'Creative' model - More and more creative models are being discovered by our people today. However these creative methods are applicable to certain groups of people and could not be copied to reach out to others. They are; reaching out to the Call Center Employees, IT professionals, Indian Elites, etc.
- 'Small Group' model - Due to the growing opposition to the Gospel, reaching out to the masses effectively through crusade model is fading away. Our people are now focusing on smaller groups where they can reach the hearts of the people directly.
- 'Socio-cultural' model - This model is different from place to place, region to region and culture to culture. For example; in some of the areas in northern India where Bhajans (Singing) are the attraction, the Gospel is presented through Bhajans. Another interesting model is called 'Langer' in Punjab where people are invited to a simple meal. After the meal they anticipate a meeting where something new would be told to them.
- 'Holistic' model - India is getting tighter due to opposition, militancy and persecution. Our people

are using the holistic care methods more. The Gospel is being shared through medical aid, educational assistance, self-help projects and emergency reliefs.

CONCLUSION

From Kashmir on the north, Gujarat on the West, Arunachal Pradesh in the East and Kanyakumari, Lakshadweep & Andaman Nicobar Island in the South, Indian mission history is unique. For the last 64 years, Indian missionaries have experienced different forms of changes. There were many new initiatives formed. The results were witnessed in multiplication of disciples, churches and missions & missionary movements. It is believed that every day a good number give their hearts to Jesus Christ. But then in a country of billions, a few hundreds coming to Christ is insignificant.

- Indigenous approaches & strategies based on people's research.
- More Christians are witnessing today than ever before. It is due to constant motivational initiatives like "Market place" mission, Tent-making mission etc.
- Greater desire for relationship & networking.
- Stronger opposition and threats by the anti-Christian elements.
- Emergence of non-formal missionary trainings that focuses on the effectiveness & creative approaches.
- Giving birth to many new missions, missionary churches and mission movements.
- More cross section of people are being reached like the middle class, the influentials of the country/state/city, film industry, politicians, many hidden groups of people in the country like eunuchs, disabled, and prostitutes.
- Intensive prayer movements that has changed history in different parts.

Hence the best is yet to come! The vision of John will be fulfilled. Billions of Hindus will be found before the throne.

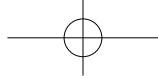
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HINDUISM: MISSION STRATEGY

Response to Susanta Patra

Joseph Ounho Cho

Firstly, I am very thankful to the presenter because he proposed a very insightful paper. I believe, his presentation of Hindu mission strategy gives much contribution to the missionaries and Christian missionary scholars who are working and researching for establishing a mission strategy for evangelizing the Hindus.

Rev. Susanta Patra initially presented the origin of Hinduism and he referred that Hinduism, the word having its roots in Indus (the river), refers to the religion and philosophies that were prospering in the land around and beyond the river Indus. So, I agree to his statement and want to refine the meaning of Hindu more concretely.

Actually Hindu is derived from the Sanskrit word , Shindu, that means Indus river. The Arians who became later the masters of Indian continent when they invaded from Persia to India, they passed over Shindu (Indus River), conquered the region and settled there. So Hindus are the residents who live in India and Hinduism is their religion. He also tells, Hinduism is now spreading rapidly throughout the world though it has been practiced intently in the Indian subcontinent. But, Hinduism, in my opinion, mostly spreads over especially in south Asian countries that are adjacent to India, like Nepal, the Hindi kingdom, Sri Lanka, some parts of Pakistan where Hindu minorities are living, and other countries where Indians went and stayed. Hinduism is the 2nd largest religion in the world that should be evangelized which extends to approximately 90 million in its population. So it could be called a world religion. And the presenter continually presents that Hinduism means a broad umbrella, which includes Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism that took birth in this land and then were dispersed to the other parts of the world. In this argument I disagree with him because it is not a widely and commonly shared opinion of most Hindus, but very few Hindus share with it, especially Hindu fundamentalists or nationalists. They argue that the land of India belongs only to the Hindus and believers of those religions like Jainism , Sikhism, and Buddhism have very similar elements of beliefs with Hinduism. They call it as Hindutava. But ,in a strict sense, Hinduism is very different from Hindutava especially on doctrines. Actually, the Hindu nationalists argue that India is the kingdom of Hindus and these similar religions, called Hindutava were also born in Indian soil. But India does not belong to Muslims and Christians who were from the outside,

So, they think that Hindutava should establish the kingdom Hindustan, and dispel all outsiders out of the land. Owing to it, nowadays in India the persecutions of Christians by Hindu nationalists have been brought out on many occasions, because of conversions of Hindus to Christianity.

The presenter also explains Hinduism according to its historical development. He divided the history into 4

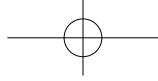
ages. They are called Vedic (2000-600 B.C), Epic(200B. C-300A.D), Puranas(300A.D -1200A.D), and modern ages(1757-till date). Then, he especially suggests that each age has some Characteristics. Yes, I totally agree what he presented in his papers. But here I would like to expound some of the important characteristics of Hinduism in each age in more details. They are as follows: in Vedic age the very important Hindu beliefs are formed. They are the beliefs of Brahma as the supreme god, creator ,but he is the impersonal god, an immovable mover who never moves himself but he lets others move. Atma (Jiva, Soul), the spirit of human being, that can be unified with Brahma and becomes in the end, in the same state with god in its ultimate being. And karma , according to which, individual reaps the results of his good and bad actions through a series of lifetime Samsara , according to which, the continuing cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth, Moksha or mukti, liberation from suffering and from the compulsion to rebirth, which is attainable through elimination of passions and through knowledge of reality, and finally union with God. In a real sense, these are central doctrines that remained unchanged in Hinduism.

In the Epic age, two representative Hindu Epics were shaped. They were the Ramayana and Bhagabat Gita. First, Ramayana is focused on the serving of Ram, as a god-king, and, Ram is still considered as a great god among Hindus.

And second, 'Bhagabat Gita, concentrates on the serving of Krishna as a god, even now Krishna is also regarded as a great god among Hindus. Really, these two gods are Avatars (descent of deity, reincarnation) of god Vishnu ,who is regarded as one of three major gods , a sustainer of universe in Hinduism. And in the age of Puranas, the Bhakti tradition that is centered on bhakti ,means love and dedication to god for salvation . It was initially considered unorthodox, as it rebelled against Caste distinctions and disregarded Brahmanic rituals, which according to Bhakti saints were not necessary for salvation. In the course of time, however, owing to its immense popularity among the masses (and even royal patronage) it became 'orthodox' and continues to be one of the most important modes of religious expression in modern India).

In the modern age, Brahma Samaj was started by Ram Mohan Roy in 1828. Later on another revivalist movement was Arya Samaj founded by Dayananda Saraswati in 1875 . Brahma Samaj tried to combine a Unitarian form of Christianity with the Brahmin concept of the supreme personal Gd.

From the Brahma Samaj springs Brahmoism that objects to Hindu idolatry and Caste system . And Ariya Samaj which believes in the infallible authority of the Vedas and opposed idol worship in Hinduism. Both of them gave rise to the reformation movement in Hinduism. And especially Ram Mohan Roy was much influenced by William Carey. The Rama Krishna mission was



founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897. It is centered on the new Hinduism which points that all the religions and truths are brought about to the one universe. It tries to go beyond and harmonize all religions and denominations, creeds and castes then, contributes to reliefs of refugees, and social welfare of society. It spreads all over the world. it was the first mission oriented society in Hinduism in its stance. In a real sense they gave rise to reformation movement in Hinduism. We can also think that Hindu renaissance was initiated by them in the modern age. But regrettably Brahmo Samaj and Ariya Samaj provided foundational principles for Hindu nationalists who persecute the Christian converts from Hinduism.

After Rev. Susanta Patra pointed out the history of Hinduism, furthermore he presented the philosophical Hinduism. He urges that philosophical Hinduism examines the mysteries of the universe, self and god in detail. For that purpose, he suggested 3 popular philosophical thoughts in Vedanta school. Vedanta means the end part of veda, that is, Upanishad which is the scripture that contains Hindu Philosophy and meditations. So, Vedanta philosophical school studied Upanishad philosophy. And in the Vedanta school there were three major philosophical thoughts that were elucidated according to three philosophers' (Adi Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhwāchārya) thinking. They are Advaita: Non- dualism that was expounded by Adi Shankara and Visishtadvaita: Modified dualism that was proclaimed by Ramanuja and Dvaita: Dualism was declared by Madhwacharya, especially, concerning the theology of God(Brahma) and the Self of man(Atma), I think, the thoughts of Vedanta school is the most popular among Hindu philosophy. So, here I would like to explain them. Firstly, the Advaita thought is arguing that God and Self of man were the same in their essence. But because man is living in the world of Maya(illusion), the Self would have not known his original state owing to ignorance. But when he can realize that he is god himself that is called as Self-realization by gaining spiritual knowledge and in reality according to this teaching, he could be a god. And the state at which the Self of man was reached is expressed like this: 'Ah Brahma!', means I am Brahma(Hindu supreme god). And in a real sense, when man realizes he is god himself, he can get the salvation (Moksha) and be free from the state of ignorance and rebirth cycle.

Another concept that is named as Visishtadvaita is different from that of Advaita. It tells god and the Self of man are different from each other in their essence. So, Man can reach almost the similar state of god but he never can be a god. And Dvaita tells that god and the Self of man are totally different in essence. so, the Self of man never can be like a god, man is man only, god is merely god. But, in most of cases, the concept of Advaita is widely accepted by the Hindus. Most Hindus think that Atma (theSelf) is Brahma (Hindu god), in other words, Man is equal to god in essence. so man can be a god, that's their argument.

Nowadays the New Age Movement accepts the concept of Advaita philosophy which declares God and man as the same in their essence. And it also argues that Man can be a god because god and man are the same in essence. This sort of thinking is very dangerous and also it threatens Christianity and Christian Mission.

Rev. Patra, presented the belief and practices of Hinduism. They are composed of 7 streams. They are philosophical Beliefs and Practices, Religious Beliefs and Practices, Popular Beliefs and Practices, Mystic Beliefs and Practices, Secular Beliefs and Practices, Sectarian Beliefs and Practices and lastly, Animistic Beliefs and Practices.

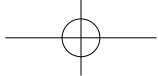
I think, his presentation of this subject is very suitable covering all the beliefs and practices of all Hindu religious traditions.

And he also expounded the characters of Hinduism. They are defined as follows: syncretism and myths. Yes, I also agree with his opinion. In actual sense, Hinduism have 333 million gods and goddesses. So, Hindus serve at least 4-5 gods individually. Personally, I have lived and ministered in India for more than 14 years. So, I have seen many times how Hindus had pictures of images of Hindu gods and goddesses and Jesus at the same places in stores, houses and worshipped them at the same time. Even new comers have come and worshipped in the service at church, regularly But when I visited their houses, I saw, they still keep and serve Hindu gods whom they have worshipped in the past. So I really felt that since they still have syncretism, it must take time for them to be true Christians.

I think, syncretism in Hinduism is the most difficult barrier that we should overcome for the mission of India. Rev. Patra also suggests another character of Hinduism that is myths. Actually, Hinduism is a mystical religion. Myth is not based on history and factual event. It is like a dream, not a real one, stories which are made of imaginations of man. So, in my opinion since it is mystical, there is no truth in Hinduism. He suggests as the example of myth, Avatar (reincarnation). With 10 Avatars, if we see, Vishnu reincarnated in the forms of man and animal and fish as a god to save man in different ages and places and cases. That is so mystical.

Rev. Susanta Patra also included in his presentation that the great commission for unreached people groups in India is still an unfinished task. And the reason why the unreached people groups, especially Hindus that extends to nearly 85% of total Indian population, are not still totally evangelized are as follows according to him: Inadequate Understanding, Inadequate Strategies, Inadequate Outlook, and Inadequate Mindset. He also suggested the solutions for them, namely: to overcome the inadequate outlook and work effectively for Hindus, He strongly proposes the example of Indian indigenous missionaries in IMA in church planting ministry. According to his words, they have been working through the SATURATION PRAYER BEFORE VENTURING OUT (Mathew 12:29, Mark 3:27); PEOPLE'S RESEARCH TO IDENTIFY THE DEEPEST SPIRITUAL NEEDS & WORLD VIEWS (Acts 17:17-21), INDIGENEOUS APPROACHES (Acts 17: 22-28) and TRAINED & FOCUSED TASK FORCE TO REAP THE HARVEST, then the ministry will be effective and successful. I think, these strategies are very suitable and powerful if applied to church planting ministry in creative access areas where so many unreached people groups live.

It was Rev. Patra's suggestion that we should have a strategic mission approach to Hindus. I think, he is right in emphasizing that we must deeply study and understand the Hindu perspectives of god, man



and liberation from sin, because Hindu's view is very different from that of Christians concerning these subjects. Then, we must approach them and teach them the biblical and evangelical understanding of the true triune God and Man, and the liberation from Sin.

Henceforth, his suggestions for powerful models of evangelism and making disciples of Hindus which leads to multiplication are as follows: 'One on One model'; 'Marketplace model'; 'Friendship' model; 'Literature' model and; 'Orality' model. Others are 'Apologetic' model, 'Creative' model, 'Small Group' model, 'Socio-cultural' model, and 'Holistic' model. I think, he suggested multifaceted, diversified, synthetic and indigenous, and very workable approach models for evangelizing and making disciples of Hindus.

In conclusion, I would like to give one suggestion for Hindu mission. Actually my suggestion is based on Rev. Patra's presentation. I want to stress a kind of indigenous and contextual way to approach Hinduism. I think, when we minister to Hindus, it would be better to set aside our patterns of worship and western church traditions and adapt ourselves to Indian indigenous ways for evangelizing and making disciples. Many times, we Mission leaders and missionaries just think that we should gather together in the church building and sing our traditional hymns and plant our own church system and organization according to church tradition in the mission fields. But, in Hindu mission field our church tradition and worshipping patterns are not important because they have their own ways of worshipping and assembly. The Hindus mostly gather

together in house churches and have their traditional Gospel songs according to their musical instruments.

So, I think the most important thing we should do in the Hindu mission field is to teach true and biblical faith in Indian indigenous way. We should teach the Hindus that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, the Life (John 14: 6). To evangelize all the Hindu unreached people groups and make them turn to God's bosom, we must strenuously preach and teach the true faith of the triune God to them. That is our mission. And for that work, it is desirable for our Korean missionaries and IMA TO BECOME UNITED AND WORK TOGETHER IN THE MISSION FIELD. When we are united, harmonized and working together in Him for the unreached people groups we can accomplish the unfinished task soon. Thank you very much. Blessings in the Lord!



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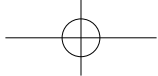
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THE ADAPTATION OF BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY TO ASIAN SOIL

Chansamone Saiyasak

THE CURRENT STATUS OF BUDDHISM

At the beginning of the millennium, Buddhism has become widely known and followed throughout Asia and in numerous countries outside of Asia. In the last decade, the world has seen an unparalleled interest in Buddhism—with Buddhist groups, meditation centers and educational research institutes mushrooming across the globe in an unprecedented way. At the same time, Christianity is making some progress in non-Christian lands, particularly in China.¹

In Asia, with the exception of China, Buddhism has been introduced from the top down, with kings and rulers adopting Buddhism and then inviting monks to establish the Indian-origin religion as the state religion. Philip Jenkins, Professor of Humanities at Pennsylvania State University, describes the powerful impact of Christianity on Asia.² But the impact and significance of Christianity waned and moved the West—to Europe and the United States—and never regained its impact. Jenkins emphasizes the top-down impact of Christianity in Asia. From the opposite perspective is an American Sociologist Rodney Stark, who explains the rapid expansion of Christianity, particularly in the West, by its bottom-up approach.³

Buddhism, with its heartland in Southeast Asia, is the majority religion of eight Asian nations—Thailand (95%), Cambodia (90%), Myanmar (88%), Bhutan (75%), Sri Lanka (70%), Tibet (65%), Laos (60%), and Vietnam (55%). Being one of the “big three” missionary religions, along with Christianity and Islam, Buddhism now claims 6 percent (376 million) of the world’s population⁴ and 18 to 41 percent of the over 4 billion Asians.⁵ Although it ranks as the fifth largest religion in Asia, its influence on the Asian continent is considerable, having by far the most popular and largest religion within Asia.⁶ Christianity, on the other hand, accounts for 8.5 percent of Asia’s total population⁷ and predominates only in two Southeast Asian nations, the Philippines and East Timor, where over 85 percent of the population is Catholic.⁸

1 Dyron B. Daugherty, *The Changing World of Christianity: The Global History of a Borderless Religion* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 19.

2 Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died* (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2008).

3 Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1996).

4 “Major Religions of the World Ranked by Number of Adherents,” Adherents.com, http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html (accessed August 11, 2011).

5 Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, “Buddhism by Country,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_by_country (accessed August 11, 2011).

6 Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, “Religions in Asia,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Asia (accessed August 28, 2011).

7 Sebastian C. H. Kim, “Christianity in Asia, 1919-2010,” in *Atlas of Global Christianity*, ed. Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 136.

8 Peter C. Phan, “The Church in Asian Perspective,” in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. Gerard Mannion

Of the three main forms of Buddhism, THERAVADA (Hinayana or “Lesser Vehicle”) is practiced today in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and part of Vietnam, while MAHAYANA (“Great Vehicle”) is practiced in China, Japan, Korea and most of Vietnam. However, the VAJRAYANA (Tibetan or “Diamond Vehicle”) is followed mainly in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia, Kalmykia, areas of India, and, to a limited extent, in China and Japan.

In comparison to Christianity, Buddhism has maintained strong status in Asia due to its strong appeal to the Asian minds and psyche. Its integrated approach as well as its identification with the historical-cultural and national struggles of numerous Asian nations has earned Buddhism a place in the socio-political, economic, governing and religious life of these nations. However, Christianity is highly influential in the fields of education, health care and social services.

SEVEN FACTORS AFFECTING BUDDHISM’S ACCEPTANCE AND INDIGENIZATION ON ASIAN SOIL

Significant to Buddhism as a religion being accepted and indigenized in Asia are seven factors, which mainly characterized how the Buddhist religion spread. These determinants account for Buddhism’s successful expansion in Asia.

Manner of Expansion

Beginning in the third century B.C. with Emperor Asoka’s sending out Buddhist monks as missionaries to the northwest of India (present day Pakistan and Afghanistan), which later became a center of Buddhist learning. Therefore, Buddhism spread throughout Asia through trade relationships. Merchants who adopted this religion supported the establishment of monasteries along the trade routes, notably the Silk Route. Monks often accompanied merchants and provided spiritual support on their trips.⁹ Local rulers often invited monks from the merchants’ regions as teachers or advisors, and eventually adopted the Buddhist religion. While Buddhism spread rapidly throughout South Asia, Central Asia and East Asia. Southeast Asia experienced slow growth, according to Paul Hockings, a cultural anthropologist at the University of Illinois in Chicago.¹⁰

In the last half of the century (1950s and onward), a notable spread of VAJRAYAN BUDDHISM occurred as a result of the Tibetans fleeing the holocaust in which Chinese Communists invaded Tibet and tried to extinguish its religion. A large number of Tibetan Buddhists, including the Dalai Lama, went into exile to

and Lewis S. Mudge (New York: Routledge, 2008), 276.

9 “The Buddhist World: Buddhism in East Asia - China, Korea, and Japan,” Buddhnet, <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/east-asia.htm> (accessed August 12, 2011).

10 Paul Hockings, *Buddhist*, 2011, <http://www.everyculture.com/East-Southeast-Asia/Buddhist.html> (accessed August 12, 2011).



India, Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim and the United States. In addition, THERAVADA BUDDHISM has experienced considerable expansion in recent years due to the political instability of Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Myanmar, thus creating an influx of Buddhist immigrants from these countries to major U.S. cities where they have established their temples.¹¹

With the turn of the millennium, Buddhism has experienced a rise of interest and growth globally. For example, the 2005 Swedish government indicated that 60 percent of Swedish high school students favored Buddhism as their choice of religion. In the Netherlands, the number of Buddhists grew 1,500 percent (16,000 to more than 250,000) in just over a decade (1998 to 2009). In seven years (2001 to 2008), Buddhist adherents rose 68 percent (5.5 million to 8 million) in Taiwan and 1 to 3 percent (35 million) in India.¹² Seven factors influenced this expansion are: integration, historical-cultural roots, nationalism, royal patronage, ancestral honoring, and corporate solidarity.

Integration Approach

The expansion of Buddhism throughout most of Asia was peaceful. The Buddhist pioneer missionaries did not stress conversion or "ask others to denounce and give up their own religion and convert to a new one."¹³ Instead, they offered solutions to problems of unhappiness and suffering of the people. They did not forcefully pressure the locals to convert, but made Buddha's teaching available and allowed the people to choose for themselves. In addition, throughout its long history of expansion in many diverse localities and cultures, no trace of its attempt to impose uniform views was found.¹⁴ A well-known British scholar on Buddhism, Alexander Berzin, wrote:

To each new culture it reached, the Buddhist methods and styles were modified to fit the local mentality, without compromising the essential points of wisdom and compassion. Buddhism, however, never developed a hierarchy of religious authority with a supreme head. Each country to which it spread developed its own forms, its own religious structure and its own spiritual head.¹⁵

A Thai Buddhist scholar, Sunthorn Plamintr, argues that Buddhism's ability for accommodation and subsequent transformation of indigenous beliefs and practices was an important factor underlying the Thai acceptance of Buddhism.¹⁶ As a result, in Thailand (which is 95% Buddhist), Buddhism became so integrated with Thai life that the two are practically inseparable, with Buddhist influence being detected in Thai lifestyle, mannerisms, traditions, characters, arts, architecture, language and

¹¹ Robert K. Gunn, "American Buddhism," <http://www.uccrcv.org/American%20Buddhism.pdf> (August 11, 2011).

¹² The Dhamma Encyclopedia, "The Appeal of Buddhism," http://www.dhammadownload.com/index.php?title=The_appeal_of_Buddhism (accessed August 12, 2011).

¹³ Alexander Berzin, *Buddhism and Its Impact on Asia* (Cairo: Cairo University, Center for Asian Studies, 1996), Asian Monographs, no. 8.

¹⁴ Serinity Young, *Dreaming in the Lotus: Buddhist Dream Narrative, Imagery & Practice* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 1999), 17.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Sunthorn Plamintr, "Buddhism and Thai Society," in *Getting to Know Buddhism*, <http://www.buddhanet.net/cmdmsg/getting.htm> (accessed 12 August 2011).

all other aspects of the Thai culture and value system. The same can be said of Myanmar (88% Buddhist), where its culture is deeply rooted in the Buddhist faith,¹⁷ and China where Buddhism is indistinguishable, in many ways, from Taoism. In Sri Lanka, it merged with Hinduism.¹⁸

Therefore, popular religious views fused Buddhist and indigenous religious beliefs in all the countries where Buddhism spread. Rather than abolishing old religions and values, Buddhism adapted to and adopted local deities. Because of its policy of incorporation and integration, Buddhism became indigenous to the soils of Asia. A British anthropologist of the University of London, Brian Morris, observed: "People in many parts of Asia have always recognized themselves as Buddhists long before Europeans arrived on the scene in Asia."¹⁹

Asian Historical-Cultural Roots

Asia is the cradle of all world religions, including Buddhism and Christianity. However, excluding the Middle Eastern countries where Orthodox Christianity has for centuries remained, Christianity left Asia very early and was never accepted back, except as a stranger and intruder, due to the perception that it was the religion and tool for conquest of the colonizers. When one of the Asian countries, the Philippines, developed a Christian majority, it was forced to cut off its Asian roots, leaving the Philippine church like most Christian communities scattered in the Asian diaspora.²⁰ Buddhism became accepted, indigenized into the Asian landscape, and part of the Asian mindset due to its Asian historical-cultural roots.

Since the earliest time, diverse forms of Buddhism have been deeply rooted throughout Asia. Its sacred dwellings of traditional spirits and indigenous deities were often incorporated into the Buddhist cosmology and became important pilgrimage sites.²¹ Donald K. Swearer, distinguished visiting Professor of Buddhist Studies at Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University, accurately pointed out: "It must be kept in mind, furthermore, that the forms of Buddhism and Hinduism that took root in Sri Lanka and in insular and mainland Southeast Asia, grew in diverse cultural soils already enriched by various indigenous belief systems from the Sinhalese, Burmese, Thai, Lao and Khmer."²²

National Identity and Nationalism

A German Scholar on Asian Studies of the University of Bonn, Klaus Sagaster, wrote: "The contemporary problems hardly form a real danger for Buddhism in Mongolia. The religion is so deeply rooted in the hearts of the Mongols that neither physical force nor intellectual doubt can seriously harm it. Just as before,

¹⁷ Balbir B. Bhasin, *Doing Business in the ASEAN Countries*, in *International Business Collection*, ed. S. Tamer Cavusgil et al (New York: Business Expert Press, 2011), 97.

¹⁸ Moni Lai Sorz, *Dancing with Dragons: Chopsticks People Revealed for Global Business* (Victoria, Australia: Global Business Strategies - Ren Division, 1999), 34.

¹⁹ Brian Morris, *Religion and Anthropology: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

²⁰ Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 74.

²¹ Stanley J. Tambiah, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.)

²² Donald K. Swearer, *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*, 2nd ed. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), x.



the Buddha remains one of the two pillars on which the Mongolian identity rests.²³ In Sri Lanka, Buddhism not only has deep roots in its history, but it is also closely aligned with its national identity. Regarding Cambodia, a religious scholar of the University College of St. Martin, Lancaster, stated: "Peasant protest movements against the tightening colonial grip escalated in the 1920s, many embracing millennial elements derived from Buddhism."²⁴ These protects with their links to Buddhism led to Cambodia's independence from France in 1953.

Similar sentiments also gripped Vietnam: "During the colonial era, Vietnamese intellectuals turned to Buddhism in search of a national identity."²⁵ In Myanmar, Buddhism is so identified with national identity throughout the twentieth century; the slogan "to be Burmese is to be Buddhist" has often been invoked. Since Myanmar's independence from Great Britain in 1984, Buddhism has been a rallying point for resistance against the colonial state and its successors.²⁶ Although in the Communist country of Laos was against Buddhism, closing temples and arresting priests, today it publicly supports Buddhism as central to its national identity. The ruler of the Thai Kingdom "went as far as to suggest that those members of Thai society who abandoned the Buddhist faith were not really Thai,"²⁷ making the national identity contingent upon one's profession of religion. Thus, across Southeast Asia and many other Asian countries, Buddhism became identified with the struggles for national identity against colonial and other oppressive powers.

Royal Patronage

From the onset, Buddhism received royal patronage in countries to which it spread. During its first Buddhist missionary efforts on the island of Sri Lanka around 240 B.C., Sri Lankan King Devanampiyatissa, a Buddhist convert, became the first to patronize Buddhism and donated a track of land in order to assure that the Buddha's Way would take root in Sri Lankan soil.²⁸ Later, Buddhism became deeply rooted in the country. Today, 70 percent of Sri Lanka's population is Buddhist, placing it among the top five countries with the highest percentage of Buddhists. Other nations that also gave royal patronage also include such nations as Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. This history of royal patronage reinforces the profound degree to which Buddhism is part of the hidden, yet profoundly significant, personal honor code of the peoples in many nations of Asia.

23 Klaus Sagaster, "The History of Buddhism Among the Mongols," in *The Spread of Buddhism*, ed. Ann Heirman and Stephan Peter Bumbacher (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2007), 426.

24 Ian Harris, ed. "Buddhism in Extremis: The Case of Cambodia," in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 57.

25 Jan Dodd and Mark Lewis, *The Rough Guide to Vietnam* (London: Rough Guides Ltd, 2009), 512.

26 Juliane Schober, "Buddhism, Violence, and the State in Burma (Myanmar) and Sri Lanka," in *Religion and Conflict in South and Southeast Asia: Disrupting Violence*, ed. Linnell Elizabeth Cady and Sheldon W. Simon (New York: Routledge, 2007), 55.

27 Michael K. Jerryson, *Buddhist Fury: Religion and Violence in Southern Thailand* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 58.

28 John Snelling, *The Buddhist Handbook: A Complete Guide to Buddhist Schools, Teaching, Practice, and History* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditional International, 1998), 106, 226.

Ancestral Honoring

Buddhist teachings enforce regular merit-making rituals which serve to declare one's loyalty, honor, and identification with his or her ancestors and their teachings, thus avoiding the social shame that stems from any lack of public declaration to the Buddhist faith.²⁹ In August 2006, a Buddhist chief of Nathan village in Ubonratchatani province of Thailand expressed, "Even if the majority of my community converts to Christianity, I will remain as a Buddhist because I do not want to disappoint and disgrace my ancestors who had formerly chosen Buddhism for me."³⁰

Corporate Solidarity

Another prominent Asian traditional value shared across all peoples of Asia is corporate solidarity. Many of the Buddhist rituals associated with merit making are "collective rituals," providing occasions for advancing corporate solidarity.³¹ As an integrative force and authority in social and cultural life, Buddhist monks promote national and community solidarity and regulate social life. Sociologists Vinita Atmiyanandana and John J. Lawler observe that Thailand--like the rest of Asia--scores high on the collective and power distance dimensions such as a "vertical-collectivist" culture, which is characterized by deference to authority and a sense of group cohesiveness dictated by community, as well as Buddhist and animistic religious leaders.³² In Thailand, the social solidarity of Buddhism is so strong that the national identity of the people comes from Buddhism. To be Thai means to be Buddhist.³³ Thus, due to Buddhism's strong emphasis on honoring ancestors and social/corporate solidarity, Asian countries have adopted the Buddhist faith as their own. To the ordinary Thai individual, family, community and nation, Buddhism is at the very core of their personal honor and identity.

SUMMARY COMPARISON OF BUDDHISM'S AND CHRISTIANITY'S ADAPTATION TO ASIAN SOIL

Buddhism has been accepted, indigenized and taken deep in Asian cultures due to these seven factors; however, Christianity has not been successful in its appeal to the Asian mindset.

- Asians have perceived Christianity as a Western invasion and continued to reject it (as opposed to Buddhism where the local and national rulers invited monks to spread Buddhism and officially adopted the Buddhist religion).
- While Buddhism accommodated indigenous religions and cultural values, Christianity demanded

29 Sukanya Sridadee, Teacher of Mercy Christian School, interview by author, 16 August 2011, Ubonratchatani, Thailand.

30 Chansamone Saiyasak, "A Study of the Belief Systems and Decision Making of the Isan People of Northeast Thailand with a View Towards Making Use of These Insights in Christian Evangelism" (Ph. D. diss., Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, 2007), 80.

31 Charles F. Keyes, *The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia*, paperback reprint edition (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 165.

32 Vinita Atmiyanandana and John J. Lawler, "Culture and Management in Thailand," in *Culture and Management in Asia*, ed. Malcolm Warner (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 233.

33 Paul Hattaway, *Peoples of the Buddhist World: A Christian Prayer Diary* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2004), 204.



that its converts eradicate traditional religious and cultural values, thus alienating new converts from their support systems and living in social dishonor and shame.

- Buddhism thrived in the diverse cultural soils of Asia; simultaneously Christianity was denouncing and removing them, replacing them with imported soil that was not conducive to growth. Consequently, Christianity continually struggles to take root in Asia.
- Buddhism identified with the quest for national identity and became a rallying point for those struggling for independence from Western colonial powers; Christianity, meanwhile, was perceived as an instrument for colonial control. Therefore, Asian societies have a mistrust of Asian churches.
- Buddhism received initial royal sponsorship from national rulers of Asian countries, with the exception of China. Conversely, Christianity forced its way into most of the regions, only to find itself being embraced by people at the lowest levels of society who had far less honor at stake at the point of conversion.
- As Buddhism respectfully recognized Asia's highest traditional, cultural value, ancestral honoring, and sought to preserve it, Christianity condemned the practice, presuming it to be evil.
- Whereas Buddhism promoted social and corporate solidarity in areas where it spread, many Asians believe that Christianity lacks solidarity because it does not have national Christian figure with a central authority to unite Christians in the nation. Recently, Christianity is even viewed as creating disruptions or divisions. According to Chaire Boobyer, freelance world traveler, writer and editor, "It's illegal for foreigners to proselytize in Laos; persons found guilty can be subject to arrest and deportation for 'creating social divisions.'"³⁴

Consequently, Buddhism's aptitude for adapting to the environment of religious, cultural and ethnic pluralism of Asia paved the way for its acceptance and deep growth in Asian soils. In the meantime, Christianity continues to struggle to find its place in the Buddhist heartlands.

STATUS OF CHRISTIANITY'S ADAPTATION TO BUDDHIST ASIAN CONTEXT

The interwoven nature of Asia's religions and cultures poses greater difficulties for Christians to understand and witness to those of the Buddhist faith than for Christians in other parts of the globe. A world-renowned Asian Lutheran theologian, J. Paul Rajashekar, attributed Western missionary indoctrination as the cause of Asian Christians rejecting the religious and spiritual heritage of their native cultures, causing them to be strangers to their own culture and context.³⁵ In the pioneer stages of the missionary enterprise in Thailand, new converts of Protestant and Catholic faith were strictly prohibited

³⁴ Claire Boobyer, Andrew Spooner and Jack O'Tailan, *Footprint Vietnam, Cambodia & Laos*, 2nd ed. (Bath, U.K.: Footprint Handbooks, 2008), 527.

³⁵ J. Paul Rajashekar, "Lutheranism in Asia and the Indian Subcontinent," in *The Future of Lutheranism in a Global Context*, ed. Arland D. Jacobson and James Aageson (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 70.

from keeping any element of Thai culture, presumably preventing a contamination of Christianity by paganism. Sociologist Erik Cohen of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem writes: "The use of Thai instruments and tunes in Christian churches was strictly forbidden, for fear that they might unwittingly produce among Thai converts some associations with their previous religion."³⁶

According to Rajashekar, "It is easy for Western missionaries to denounce beliefs of Asian religions, such as veneration of ancestors or filial piety, but for Asian Christians such a rejection is nearly impossible, living as they are in the midst of non-Christian neighbors."³⁷ Exclusive loyalty to one religious faith seems to have been a problem for Asians. Millions of Christians in Asia are "unbaptized believers" or "churchless Christians," that is, Christians by conviction without public affiliation with the organized church. Nonetheless, as a product of Western Christianity and its mission, Christian churches in Asia of almost all confessions have found themselves with uncomfortable and exclusive attitudes toward religions and cultures of Asia.³⁸

Hence, the Asian churches, characterized by the foreign message and forms planted by the Western missionary movement, continue to struggle with new foreign identity and non-Asian roots. An expert in interreligious dialogue, Hans Ucko, agrees:

Becoming Christian in Asia meant changing identity, being in a way taken out of one's own culture...In becoming Christians, Asian Christians were thus regarded as estranged from their own people, since Christianity, as received and practiced, could not be separated from Western civilization and culture.³⁹

In Indonesia, Christians in the Bali Church became disaffected from their Balinese culture, left their Balinese identity and assumed the identity offered them by the Dutch Christian tradition. An Indonesian missiologist, Wayan Mastra, noted that the alienation of the Balinese Christians from their own culture hinders the gospel from spreading into the Balinese context.⁴⁰

Having been alienated from their cultural roots and influenced by the non-integrative mentality of the Western missionaries, the majority of contemporary Christians in Asia face further alienation due to their non-integrative approach to Asian Buddhist contexts. Erik Cohen appraises the adaptability of Thai Christians:

In contrast to the generally tolerant attitude toward and even encouragement by many contemporary Christian clergymen and missionaries in the introduction of indigenous forms of worship into Christian ritual, the majority of them refuse to adopt the conception and beliefs which support these in popular Buddhism. However tolerant in other respects, such "transpositions" of Buddhist meanings upon Christian practices are unacceptable to

³⁶ Erik Cohen, "Christianity and Indigenization: Contrasting Process of Religious Adaptation in Thailand," in *Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity*, ed. Steven Kaplan (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 38.

³⁷ Rajashekar, 70.

³⁸ Hans Ucko, *The People and the People of God: Minjung and Dalit Theology in Interaction with Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (Munster: Lit-Verlag, 2002), 130.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Chris Sugden, *Seeking the Asian Face of Jesus* (Irvine, CA: Regnum Books International, 2002), 146.



the churches and the great majority of their representatives, since such a process is seen essentially as the opposite of Christianization—it indigenizes Christianity, rather than Christianizes Thai culture; such indigenization is rejected by the churches, and by the majority of the members of the clergy.⁴¹

THE CHALLENGE FOR ASIAN CHRISTIANITY IN THE BUDDHIST HEARTLANDS

By all indications, Asia will remain a non-Christian continent, Christians will constitute as a religious minority, and churches in Asia will face difficult challenges. By 2025, there will be 456 million Buddhist members in Asia, mostly in China.⁴² Thirty-four percent of Asia would then be Christian. However, the most immediate challenge involves Christianity's ability to contextualize, adapt and indigenize more fully in Asian soils, rooting and forming a distinctly Asian identity. A church historian at the Biblical Graduate School of Theology in Singapore, writes: "Contextualisation-which enables Asian Christians, on the one hand, to 'feel at home' while, on the other hand, avoiding syncretism—is the key to the emergence of a vibrant indigenous faith."⁴³ An Anglican Malaysian scholar, Albert Sundararaj Walters, asserts, "The challenge remains for the churches to relate themselves more fully to the local soil—to get down to the rice-roots level of Asian civilization."⁴⁴ Anthony Rogers, a prominent Christian leader of Malaysia, suggests that "the Church needs to rediscover the Asian roots of Christianity."⁴⁵

THE WAY FORWARD FOR CHRISTIANITY'S EXPANSION ACROSS BUDDHIST ASIA

The future success of the expansion of the Christian faith in the context of Buddhist Asia is contingent on how well the Asian churches address the following six major issues that are factors in Christianity's acceptance and adaptation into the everyday religious experience of Asian Buddhist and animistic peoples. While the following issues will address past weaknesses of the work of Christian missions in Asia, they will steer Asian churches toward acceptance and growth across Asia.

Rooting Christianity in Asian Soils

All across Asia, churches have labored tirelessly to plant the Christian faith as received from Western missionaries. Meanwhile, they have largely neglected the importance of rooting that faith in Asian soils; the result is that Christianity, though born in Asia, is still being regarded as a foreign intruder. Rooting the faith in Asian soils will erase that misconception, thus allowing the plant of the Christian faith to adapt and become

indigenous in the Asian environment. Based in Hong Kong, the leader of the Protestant Chinese churches, Kan Baoping, states: "If we Asian Christians do not take root in our own cultures, we will not only be detaching ourselves from our cultural roots and become cultural parasites but also fail to be effective in evangelism, theological education and leadership formation."⁴⁶ By rediscovering the Asian roots of Christianity and firmly planting the faith deeply in Asian soils, Christianity will be incarnated and accepted as one of Asia's very own.

Cultivating National Christian Identity

From the Asian perspective, conversion to the Christian faith has entailed a rejection of one's belief, culture and traditions, while embracing another set of beliefs and their affiliated culture. Becoming a Christian in Asia has meant changing identity. Consequently, without national identity, the Asian church does not easily expand due to estrangement from people whom it attempts to evangelize.

Hence, the Asian church must establish its national identity with an authentically Asian face, while maintaining its identification with the message and teachings of Jesus.⁴⁷ Cohen highlighted the "crucial dilemma facing Christian missionaries in Thailand: how to adapt Christianity to the Thai context, so as to divest it of its foreign character and enable Thai converts to preserve their national identity, while at the same time safeguarding the purity of the Christian message."⁴⁸

Many Asian church leaders believe that Asian Christian identity must be carved out of local cultural and traditional material.⁴⁹ This national identity should not be an extension of Western Christendom but authentic contextual expressions of the Asian peoples. A Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference cautioned several decades ago, "If the Asian churches do not discover their own identity, they will have no future."⁵⁰ Thus, the efforts to expand the Christian faith in Buddhist Asia should not neglect the importance of cultivating local and national identity for assuring effective contextualization, adaptation and indigenization.

Fostering a Sense of Belonging

Since Christianity could not be separated from Western culture, Asians who have converted to the Christian faith are regarded as strangers by their own people. Cut off from their Asian roots and deprived of cultural and national identity, Asian Christians have lost a sense of belonging. This poses a problem for Asian Christians since Asian cultures and peoples are characterized by a strong sense of group cohesiveness and inclusion.

A sense of belonging has been a key factor in the success of the spread of Christianity in global regions where the Christian faith was a minority. L. Michael White, Professor of Classics and Director of the Religious Studies Program of the University of Texas at Austin attributes the rapid rise of Christianity in the second and third centuries amid the national policy to eradicate

41 Erik Cohen, 47.

42 Rajashekar, 75.

43 Violet James, "Christianity in South-eastern Asia, 1910-2010," in *Atlas of Global Christianity*, ed. Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 146.

44 Albert Sundararaj Walters, *We Believe in One God? Reflections on the Trinity in the Malaysian Context* (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2002), 54.

45 Peter G. Riddell, "Contextualizing the Faith," in *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social, and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century*, ed. Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies), 180.

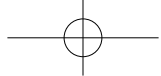
46 Kan Baoping, "Partnership of Asian Churches in the Twenty-First Century: Theological Education and Asian Culture," in *Church Partnerships in Asia: A Singapore Conversation*, ed. Michael Nai-Chiu Poon (Singapore: Trinity Theological College, 2011), 180.

47 Peter C. Phan, 277.

48 Cohen, 38.

49 Ucko, 131.

50 Peter C. Phan, 286.



Christianity from the Roman Empire to Christianity's ability to create a sense of belonging for its members: "What Christians offer probably as well as or better than anybody else in the Roman world is a sense of belonging."⁵¹ Thus, the minority Asian churches have a good chance of expanding the Christian faith in predominantly Buddhist countries of Asia as long as they can create a strong sense of belonging for those who turn to Christianity.

Working Along the Line of Trust Relationships

Across Asia where Buddhism is now the chosen religion, trust relationships, social solidarity and harmony, and ancestral honoring are among the highly estimated values for determining social interactions. Peoples of Asia's regions transfer religious values and heritage along the line of relationships that are based on trust. This presents a problem for Asian Christian converts, who are recipients of religious values passed to them mostly from strangers. Consequently, these converts become estranged by their own families, relatives, and communities, where trust relationships are essential. Socially and culturally the new converts are disconnected from their network of trust relationships and are perceived as traitors.⁵² The spread of the Christian faith is therefore hindered from flowing along the line of these natural trust relationships.

Paramount to achieving the growth of the Christian faith among Buddhist Asians is Christianity's aptitude for affirming the cultural and traditional values of the Asian peoples, while maintaining a distinctly Christian message. Preserving the cultures of honor (notably honoring of the ancestors, parents, and elders) as well as group solidarity and harmony is crucial for maintaining the line of trust relationships where the Christian faith can naturally flow. Also, as Christianity becomes rooted in Asian soils and Asian Christian identity is satisfactorily developed, more trust for the Christian faith will be accorded.

Developing Vibrant Christian Communities

Despite the fact that the Christian faith has been in Buddhist Asia for many years, Christianity's primary success has been among the peoples who are marginalized or minorities in societies with tribal backgrounds. Meanwhile, those belonging to established religions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam, remain unresponsive to the message of Christianity. Truly the demonstration of God's power over sickness and evil spirits coupled with the desire for belonging and national identity are appealing factors for the tribal groups' conversion to Christianity. At the same time, another major factor owes to the cultural values of honor and security that are connected to the group. Being a member of a community of faith—where mutual economic and social support is a tangible reality—can be a major factor Buddhist Asians' decision to convert to the Christian faith. Peter C. Phan points out that "developing a church as a communion of communities" is essential to shaping an authentic Asian face to Christianity.⁵³ The Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church held in

⁵¹ L. Michael White, "A Sense of Belonging," *Frontline* (April 1998), <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/why/appeal.html> (accessed 23 August 2011).

⁵² Saiyasak, 229.

⁵³ Peter C. Phan, 285.

Hong Kong in 1977 echoed this same challenge: "...the decisive new phenomenon for Christianity in Asia will be the emergence of genuine Christian communities in Asia—Asian in their way of thinking, praying, living, communicating their own Christ-experience to others."⁵⁴ Even Todd M. Johnson, Director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, alluded to the necessity of permanent self-perpetuating Christian communities among Buddhist peoples as evidence that gospel penetration has successfully occurred among Asian Buddhists.⁵⁵

John H. Morison, Professor of New Testament Studies and Winn Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Harvard Divinity School, affirmed that the success of the early Christian mission movements was grounded in the establishment of a new community where mutual social support is available for members. Referring to the creation of a new Christianity, Morison stated, "I think that this was probably in the long run an enormously important factor for the success of the Christian mission."⁵⁶ Thus, vibrant living communities of faith are essentials for the successful spread of the Christian faith in Buddhist Asia.

Enlarging the Kingdom of God

As the Asian church attempts to contextualize, adapt, and indigenize the message of Christ in Buddhist Asian soils, it must be cognizant that it actively participates in expanding the reign of God, invading the realm of Satan to deliver people from their bondage of darkness. As the Asian church spreads the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout Buddhist Asia, it engages in a conflict between the kingdom of God and the power of darkness. The conflict has both present and future implications. George E. Ladd, New Testament biblical theologian at Fuller Theological Seminary, argues:

The mission of the Church is not only that of employing the keys of the kingdom to open to both Jew and Gentile the door into the eternal life which is the gift of God's Kingdom; it is also the instrument of God's dynamic rule in the world to oppose evil and the powers of Satan in every form of their manifestation.⁵⁷

The church as the "community of the Kingdom of God"⁵⁸ must deny itself, be rid of its own cultural and traditional stains, take up the cross, and follow Christ, in order to participate in advancing God's kingdom in Buddhist Asia. Peter C. Phan accurately asserts:

It is only by bearing witness to the reign of God and serving it among the Asian peoples that the church will truly become Asian, not by expanding its membership and socio-political

⁵⁴ James H. Kroeger, "LOCAL CHURCH, DIALOGUE AND CONVERSION," 2003, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, <http://www.uca-news.com/html/fabc-papers/fabc-107.htm> (accessed 12 August 2011).

⁵⁵ Todd A. Johnson, and Bobby Jangsun Ryu, "Christian Opportunities in the Changing Demographic Context of Global Buddhism," in *Sharing Jesus Effectively in the Buddhist World*, ed. David Lim and Steve Spaulding (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library Publishers, 2005), 47.

⁵⁶ John H. Morison, "Welfare Institutions," *Frontline* (April 1998), <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/why/appeal.html> (accessed August 23, 2011).

⁵⁷ George E. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 121.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*



influence. To be truly the church, the Asian church must, paradoxically, 'empty' itself in the service of a higher reality, namely, the kingdom of God and cease to exist for its own sake.⁵⁹

Until Asian churches and Christian missionaries are willing to do whatever it takes to root the gospel in Asian soils, cultivating national identity, nurturing a sense of belonging, building trust relationships, establishing living communities of faith and truthfully and humbly advancing God's kingdom in sacrifice and self-denial, Christianity will continue to remain a stranger and intruder to Buddhist Asia.

As a young boy (age 7), the author left Laos as an animist, and became a Buddhist-animist in Thailand. His religious affiliation gave him social status in the Thai community. However, he later became a Christian in the United States. His change in religion brought shame to his parents among the Asian community. As a young man (age 26) in 1992, he returned to visit his Brahmin priest grandfather in Laos, who eagerly received him. However, because of the values he adopted from Western-influenced Christianity, the author refused to participate in the socially and culturally expected ceremony (*baisee sukhun*) of welcoming back a grandson and reestablishing a geographically broken relationship. The relationship between the two was not restored. On the contrary, the author's visit brought shame to both his grandfather and him, further deepening the rift in their broken relationship.

SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO RESTORE HONOR

- **Education and benevolence:** The author's achievements in his own educational endeavors, having earned two doctorates, as well as his attempts in social and community projects benefiting the communities to which he had brought shame, greatly helped to restore his father's honor and paved the way, in 1992, for his father's eventual decision to convert to the Christian faith. The author and his father remain "familiar" strangers to the Lao social and cultural communities due to their religious affiliation and identity with Christianity. However, due to the author's sacrificial and benevolent actions, the dishonor and shame have largely been removed.
- **Recovering a traditional honor ritual:** In 2008 the author and his wife (Pon) reintroduced an old purification ritual of honoring (*hotnam dumhua*), which had been forgotten by non-Christian younger generations of non-Christian Laotians. Christian communities in Laos abstained from the practice, believing it to be inconsistent with Christian teaching. In an effort to restore honor with his grandfather and other family members, the author requested of the family to recover this practice. The purification ceremony was performed publicly among relatives, community members—as well as the author's uncle, a provincial deputy police chief who was suspicious of Christianity. As a result, it significantly restored the grandfather's honor and it reduced the shame resulting from the perception that Christianity was destructive to the highly esteemed values of the society. Shortly thereafter, the author's grandfather and grandmother made

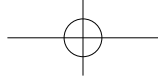
decisions to convert to the Christian faith. As for the highly suspicious uncle, his attitude changed from that of foe to friend. He asked that Bible reading and prayer be led publicly among his family members, military officials, and community members. During a subsequent illness, this uncle requested of the author a prayer of salvation. The author had the honor of leading his uncle to become a believer in Jesus Christ.

Integrating the Christian message and adapting it to traditional and cultural values of Lao Buddhist society made Christianity more understood—recovering honor for all involved while reducing dishonor and shame. Christianity is taking root in Asian soil and developing an identity with an Asian face.

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⁵⁹ Peter C. Phan, 278.



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THE ADAPTATION OF BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY TO ASIAN SOILS

Response to Chansamone Saiyasak

Chester Choi

As many prominent missiologists and church historians in the West have rightly observed, we are living in an epoch where Eurocentric Christendom has been drastically replaced by polycentric World Christianity. Living in an unprecedented global culture today in which "Christendom as a historical reality is finished" (Shenk 1999:188), Christians from all global regions, East, West, South, and North, should find a new way to present Christianity to the world - one that is better than portrayed by Eurocentric Christendom. In this regard, churches in the world must own the Christian responsibility for this critical task. It is essential that the major world churches consider the development of effective missionary approaches, especially in relation to the Buddhist world.

In regards to the current challenge given to the majority Christians, I think that Dr. Chansamone Saiyasak's paper "the Adaptation of Buddhism and Christianity to Asian Soils" can give applicable insights for bridging the Gospel to the Asian Buddhists.

1. According to his insight, Buddhism in comparison to Christianity has a stronger appeal to the Asian minds and psyche. Its integral approach and identification with the historical, cultural and national struggles of numerous Asian nations have earned Buddhism a place in the sociopolitical, economic, governing and religious life of the nations. However, as a product of Western Christianity and its mission, Christian churches in Asia of almost all confessions have found themselves with uncomfortable and exclusive attitudes toward Asian religions and cultures. As Christianity cannot be separated from Western civilization and culture, Asian Christians continue to struggle with new foreign identity and non-Asian roots. Even though Christianity in Asia is growing and emergent, Asia will continue to remain as a non-Christian continent and Christians will constitute as a religious minority, and churches in Asia will face difficult obstacles due to their foreignness.

The challenge for Asian Christianity in the Buddhist heartland is how Asian Christianity is able to contextualize, adapt, and indigenize more fully in Asian soils, rooting and forming a distinctly Asian identity. The urgent necessity of Asian churches is to rediscover the Asian roots of Christianity. The presenter suggests six major issues for Christianity's expansion across Buddhist Asia.

- Rooting Christianity in Asian Soils
- Cultivating National Christian Identity
- Fostering a Sense of Belonging
- Working Along the line of Trust Relationships
- Developing Vibrant Christian Communities
- Enlarging the Kingdom of God

In his conclusion, integrating the Christian message

and adapting it to traditional and cultural values of ethnic Buddhist society allow Christianity to be easily understood. In conclusion, Christianity would be planted in Asian soil and would develop an identity with an Asian face.

2. I would like to add some suggestions for Christianity's expansion across Buddhist Asia. It is not a new insight to say that there was a shift in the Christian center of gravity from the West to the non-Western world during the 20th century. Andrew Walls explains that the emergence of a new center of Christian gravity resulted from the crossing of Christianity across the cultural frontiers, which in turn allowed the formation of new ways to express the Christian faith. It means that the geographical expansion of Christianity in the last century was not accompanied by the expansion of theology that would represent a local understanding of Christianity and direct a new way of being a Christian. It is meant to highlight the current situation in which the theologies produced in the West dictate the goals, tasks and methods of Christian studies and evangelism in the non-Western world, and to emphasize the necessity for local Christians to initiate a re-orientation of the way we conduct theological studies and evangelism in locality.

We cannot deny that together with the delivery of Christian faith to Asia by Western missionaries, the transmission of Western theology was both natural and inevitable. The new converts in Asia needed guidance and instruction for a proper practice of the new religion from those who brought it. However, We cannot avoid some hindrance from the Eurocentric Christendom missions. The influx of Western theologies en masse suppresses the creativity of Asian Christians. Western methods for theological studies are imposed. The massive presence of Western theologies resulted in the imposition of Western methods, not providing the room to develop an Asian style of doing theology. Asian Christians were not given the chance to look for a way to utilize the traditional Asian methods in the Christian studies and evangelism. Another negative side of this massive presence of Western theologies is the monopoly of theological discourse by those theologians trained in the Western methods.

As mentioned above, we cannot delete Western theology in Asia, but we should re-configure it to be in harmony with the ethos of Asian Christians and to be in contact with Asian realities. Western theology in Asia needs to be re-configured as a spiritual theology, a missiological theology, and a non-dualistic theology.

3. Dr. Haw Yung's contextual ideas to implant Christianity rooted into the Asian soils. The Christian Scriptures read by Asian Eyes: Theology of mission needs to be formed in relation to the Asian settings and the Christian Scriptures as they are read with Asian eyes.

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It is in the interplay between the Asian settings and the Asian reading of the Scriptures that Asian Christian identity is formed. He affirms the need to develop an Asian Christian hermeneutic and suggest that Asian Christians must begin to learn read and understand the Bible from within their own contexts.

Developing Kingdom identity as the Asian Christian Identity: Christians have a basic theological identity as children of God and at the same time a cultural identity that depends on their social setting. The dual identity of Christians is formed by their Christian and sociocultural backgrounds. Out of this dual identity Christians need to deal with the pressures of being Christian in Asian societies whilst at the same time being committed to those societies in a wholehearted way. The concept of the Kingdom of God needs Christian communities as Kingdom Community in Asia to build their identity around the values of the Kingdom of God as well as the values that are derived from their own nation and culture. Each local Kingdom community in Asia needs to develop leadership, pastoral structures, and pastoral practices which are shaped by Asian Christian identity.

Re-evaluating spiritual realities and the impact of cultural realities: Western-derived theologies, even when they address Asian settings, do not and cannot engage the Asian world of demonic spirits, astrology, and the occult, as well as the wholism of Asian worldviews. As a result, it fails to speak with power. Sometimes missionaries from western cultures have a tendency of rejecting non-Christian religions as wholly demonic as well as much of non-Christian cultures on the same grounds by association. This distorts Asian forms of Christian faith and inhibits the formation of a genuinely Asian Christian identity. As the presenter assumes that paramount to achieving the growth of the Christian faith among Buddhist Asians is Christianity's aptitude for affirming the cultural and traditional values of Asian people, we need to consider the use of "Christian functional substitutes" as these apply to issues like ancestral veneration, funerals, traditional honor rituals and cultural festivals.

Engaging appropriately in Asian social contexts: The concept of "transformation" or wholism helps Asian churches to relate with the world of economics, politics, and social change. Social witness and engagement is expressed in a distinctive Christian adoption of values and through a life lived out in a society that shows these values in practice. Sometimes a picture of churches is preoccupied with wealth and moneymaking, bounding up with the prosperity gospel. In Asian social setting, the challenge of poverty is a reminder to evangelicals of the need to be engaged in society. It challenges us to take contextual discipleship in Asia mission. An appropriate ethical stance includes lifestyle choices, such as the use of personal resources and the commitment to being involved in mission in deeper way.

A number of significant realities in Asian context draw our attention to the emergence of contextualized mission and evangelism. Contextualization requires an awareness of religious customs, religious issues, and religious and cultural festivals. Contextualization extends to the apologetic work of the church, which needs greater attention in many Buddhist Asian societies. In responding to all these issues, we need to hold the Bible firmly in one hand (Word), the other hand should

be stretched out to hold on to the community where we live and work (Context). We must seek to build an Asian Christian identity that takes seriously their Christian identity, shaped by the Bible, and their identity in an appropriate tension that will be able to create a genuine Asian Christian identity that will bear witness to the gospel of the Kingdom as a gift for Asia.

4. Alex Smith's practical suggestions for presenting the gospel to the Asian Buddhists.

Here are various approaches he suggests in presenting Christ to Buddhists.

- The Apologetic Approach
- The Point-of-Contact Approach
- The Shame Approach
- The 'Scratch Where It Itches' Approach
- The Power Encounter Approach

Even though different approaches are considerable in reaching out to the Buddhist Groups, he emphasizes that a burden to pray for them is not only significant, but also a strategic challenge. Three basic applications call believers to pray, adapt and witness.

Concentrated prayer: The spiritual conflict demands concentrated prayer to break the controlling forces of darkness in the heavenlies. God has and will answer prayers, but the demonic forces may hinder and frustrate His answers being appropriated at times (Dan. 9:3-4, 17-23). Pray to God to break down these powers and to free Buddhist hearts to hear the Word of God through the Holy Spirit.

Socio-cultural clash: This solid social coherence comes largely from religious thinking. To be Thai in most people's mind means to be Buddhist. To turn from becoming a Buddhist is like becoming a traitor to one's own nation. However, natural disasters and human crises will be the instruments that prepare hearts to seek a Creator God. There are signs of such changes at work today.

Dynamic encounter: The bold, though humble, confrontation of the Gospel with Buddhism is required. A dynamic encounter of the living Lord in contrast to the sleeping Buddha is needed. Let those prophetic advocates arise, like Elijah, to demonstrate power encounters. Many lessons are to be learned. More will be gained through sympathetic appreciation of the people than by cold logic. A cultural sensitivity should be wielded to incarnational evangelism based on a deep biblical foundation. This requires a person-centered approach while maintaining a truth-centered Gospel. To find the best evangelistic approaches to each Buddhist population, much research and careful experimentation should be implemented speedily.

All these call today's theologians in Asia to a new practical task of dealing with various grassroots issues in communication so that large pockets of Buddhist population can and will be won to Jesus Christ, and become functional members in His Church now and in the decades ahead.

5. A Buddhist scholar's observation on Buddhism. Buddhism has impacted strong influences in Asia as Christianity has done in the West. In the same manner, Buddhism has encountered some hindrances



as Christianity did. The observations from a Buddhist insider can give us other insights for bridging Christianity to Asian soil.

Ethnic Identity: Even though Buddhism was not a religion exclusively belonging to a particular country or race, it has become almost synonymous with the same race like Sinhalese, Burmese, and Thais. In Sri Lanka, this identity of Buddhism with the Sinhalese race has made it difficult for the Sinhalese race to act in accordance with the noble principles enshrined in Buddhism such as indifference equanimity, compassion and impartiality in conflict situations with other races. This situation is not only contrary to the principles of Buddhism, but also gives it a distorted look. It has also contributed to depriving Buddhism of its capacity to win over the other races towards it.

Caste: Buddhism is a religion that vehemently rejects caste discrimination. But in Sri Lanka it has evolved to be a religion that approves such difference, consequently losing its ability to treat all Sinhalese Buddhism as equal. Consequently, Buddhism that at one time stood for the unity and cohesion of the Sinhalese race has become a source of division among the same race. This factor too, has an impact on the trend towards people giving up Buddhism and converting to other religions.

Buddhist Renaissance Movement: Hindu and Muslim renaissance movements in India took the form of reformative movements aimed at changing their outdated rituals and reforming them to suit the conditions of the modern world. But in Sri Lanka, the Buddhist renaissance movement assumed the role of fighting against the external rivals rather than becoming a movement aimed at reforming the internal drawbacks and deficiencies. This limitation inherent in the Buddhist renaissance movement in Sri Lanka, has adversely affected the social mobilization of Buddhism as well as the political ideology of the country.

Adaptation: The difference in the cultures represented by Buddhism and Christianity has affected the disputes and conflicts that arose between the adherents of those the two religions. Buddhism represents the eastern culture while Christianity represents that of the west. It is much easier for the Christian to change over to English language than the Buddhists on account of their close connection with the western culture. It is also convenient for them to adapt to the milieu of western values. The cultural gap that exists between the two religions has ostensibly given a quasi-privileged look to the adherents of Christianity that the Buddhists do not have.

Confusion: There is a confusion extended in the way the Buddhists of Sri Lanka have understood Buddhism. Buddhism is primarily a religion aimed at clergy and not the lay people. Buddhist sutras could be treated as moral teachings extolling the importance of ascetic life. Only a few discourse of the Buddha (Sutras) are dedicated for lay people. According to Buddhism it is the bhikkus who should consider life as a phenomenon of dhukka and not the lay people. But in Sri Lanka the situation that prevails is the opposite and more lay people have inclined to perceive life as dukkha than bhikkus. This attitude is also a hindrance to the progress of the country.

RESPONDING CONCLUSION: A NEW CALL

Christianity is in the process of becoming again what it was in its origin – a non-Western religion. The cultural and demographic composition of the Christian Church has been transformed. As a result, the Christianity of the 21st century will be judged by the Christianity of the Majority world. Africa, Asia, and Latin America will increasingly have to be the powerhouse of Christian thought. In this new era though there remains the need for Jesus, the message of the gospel, and the person of Christ. The means and methodology of communicating the gospel must change to meet the needs of Asian Buddhist People. Currently, we have a cultural task for transmitting the gospel to the Buddhists: Christ is to penetrate the traditions and thought patterns of Asian Buddhists. And Christ is to break into Asian Buddhist society.

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MISSIONS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD A DECADE AFTER 9/11

Dudley Woodberry

On September 11, 2001, my wife and I were in Peshawar, Pakistan, at the time Osama bin Laden's major conduit to the outside world. We were two blocks from the hospital and recruiting center of the Taliban, at the home of our son who directs a Christian sponsored aviation and communication organization that served the needs of Afghans in remote villages. As we gathered with others to say farewell to a pilot, another pilot said he had just heard on BBC that a plane had flown into the World Trade Center in New York. Checking our computers we saw a little pictures of a building with a quarter inch of flame—one that radiated heat and light up to the present time by ushering in the worst of times and the best of times in Christian mission to Muslims.¹

THE SPECTRUM OF RESPONSES AMONG MUSLIMS

In the context of Muslim hatred, we were surrounded by Muslim neighbors and complete strangers who expressed their sympathy. But the polarity between militant and peaceful Muslims became most apparent exactly one year later on September 22, 2002, when my wife and I were returning to Peshawar and from there to Kabul.

Before sunrise, we flew down the western edge of Iran, the place that not only gave birth to the Khomeini revolution but some of the most beautiful poetry about Jesus (e.g., "Seek healing from the Christ, for he from ... every fault can set you free": Jami, 15th century). The predawn prayers for God's glory and mercy recited by the Muslim passengers on the flight echoed the prayers the hijackers had uttered to steel their nerves.

During a layover in Dubai, we visited the reception room in the former mud house of the ruling family, where thousands of cups of Arabic coffee had been served with traditional Muslim hospitality. At the madrasah next door, students had been taught rabbinic-like values such as obedience, justice, and honor, not the hate of the Taliban. On the final leg of the flight, the old man beside me rocked back and forth in his seat, chanting prayers for protection similar in many ways to those a Jew or Christian might recite. Finally, as we landed in Peshawar, the call to prayer floated from many mosques, representing the variety of Muslims—some militant, some peaceful.

THE SPECTRUM OF RESPONSES AMONG CHRISTIANS

We have seen a comparable polarity of responses in

1. This article includes some material also found in my "Flames of Love: How a terrorist attack reshaped efforts to reach Muslims" in *Christianity Today*, 55 no.9 (Sept. 2011) 32-36, since I received both assignments on a similar topic at the same time.

the Christian community, which in turn has affected missionaries and supporting churches. On the one hand some Christian leaders called Islam an evil religion. On the other hand many Christians began to meet with Muslims to develop relationships and understanding.

At Fuller Theological Seminary we began to meet with local Muslims and others in academic institutions to work toward peace-building without giving up mutual respectful witness.

A spectrum of views also developed in literature. In theology it runs the gamut from apologetics (e.g. Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam* 2nd ed., 2002) to bridging (e.g., Kenneth Cragg, *A Certain Sympathy of Scriptures*, 2004). In writings on prophecy, we have seen conflicting interpretations of the roles of Israel and Islam in the end times (e.g., Colin Chapman's *Whose Promised Land?* 2002) vs. Mark Hitchcock, *The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel*, 2002). In spiritual encounter the approaches range from confrontational (e.g., Grant Jeffrey's *War on Terror*, 2003) to reconciling (e.g., Christine Mallouhi, *Waging Peace on Islam*, 2002). In terms of evangelism and church planting, some Christians argue that new followers of Jesus may retain their Muslim social identity, and others argue for a complete break with Islam (see John and Ann Travis with Phil Parshall, "Factors that Influence the Identity that Jesus Followers Choose" in Woodberry, ed. *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices and Emerging Issues*. 2nd ed. 2011, 185-194).

THE WORST OF TIMES: GREATER RESISTANCE

Of course, the roots of Muslim resistance to Christianity reach back to some of the earliest encounters between Muslims and Christians. But in the last century, they grew as Islamists groups, like the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaat-i-Islamiah reacted to the secular and Christian culture introduced by European colonizers and missionaries. I met with leaders of the outlawed Brotherhood in Egypt in the late 1970s, and it was evident that while some were peaceful and some were militant, their initial enemy was secular Islam. By 9/11 some offshoots began focusing on the "far enemy"—the economic, military, and political centers in New York and Washington. The subsequent televised pictures of non-Muslim bombs dropping on Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan increased further Muslim hostility to the "crusading West."

Across the Muslim world we can give accounts of Muslims who followed Jesus being killed by their own families or imprisoned because of "apostasy laws" and, if released, killed on the streets. And there are accounts of expatriate Christian aid workers killed such as the 10 in Afghanistan last year—two of them long-time friends of mine. In Pakistan this past year both the Muslim Governor of the Punjab and the Christian Minister of



Minority Affairs were murdered for opposing the law against apostasy. Such acts are monitored by groups such as Middle East Concern, Smyrna Ministries and the Barnabas Fund.

Even the Iraq War to get rid of Saddam Hussein removed a tyrant who protected Christian minorities. And the “Arab Spring” with its promise of democracy and freedom removed an autocrat like Hosni Mubarak in Egypt who also protected Christians and, at the time of this writing, is working to get rid of a tyrant Bashar al-Assad, whose government includes and protects Christians. As the continued destruction of churches and killing of Christians after the Egyptian revolution has shown, greater freedom to the masses and a weakening of the police has led to continued or increased opposition to Christians.

THE BEST OF TIMES: GREATER RECEPTIVITY

A complement to the resistance to Christians is that the more rigid or militant forms of Islam often increase receptivity to the gospel among the disillusioned. This happened during the Khomeini Shiite revolution in Iran in 1979 (12 years before 9/11) and the Sunni Taliban takeover in Afghanistan that facilitated 9/11. In fact Iran and Afghanistan reveal a broader pattern. Wherever Muslim governments have adopted a militant type of Islam and/or tried to impose a form of Sharia law – and where there has been a local example of an alternate, friendly Christian presence – Muslims have been attracted to the gospel. But subsequent persecution often follows.

The receptivity has been particularly noticeable when there has been hostility between Muslim factions. This was evident after the 1971 war between East and West Pakistan that led to the creation of Bangladesh when many followed Jesus. In Afghanistan after the mujahideen factions drove out the Soviets in 1989, they began to fight each other until the Taliban gained control most of the country in 1996. Many Afghanis became refugees in Pakistan where a significant number became Christians.

Other factors leading to receptivity were natural disasters of flooding in Bangladesh where Christians bailed out cups of cold water or drought in the Sahil in Africa where Christians gave cups of cold water both in Christ’s name. Migrations because of war, natural disasters, or urbanization all led to receptivity. In fact more Muslims have followed Christ in the last 40 years than in all the previous years.

It is too early to know the various implications of the “Arab spring,” which like 9/11 started with a fire—the attempted self-immolation of a Tunisian fruit vendor. After his cart of fruit was taken and he was slapped by a police woman. The stated goals of many of the young people who spread the revolution were democratic states with religious freedom. To the extent that these goals are attained it can give greater freedom for Christian witness and for Muslims to respond publicly. If, however, well organized Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood or the Salafi through the ballot box bring in Sharia law, without protection for minority rights, religious freedom may be curtailed. Nevertheless, even in this latter case, recent experience has shown that the strict imposition

of a form of Sharia law leads to greater receptivity to the gospel as has been noted.

DEVELOPMENTS IN MISSION

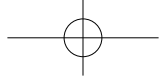
The most significant mission development since 9/11 has been the increased number of students who want to become missionaries to Islam. The first class I taught on Islam after 9/11 has 100 more students than normal. This interest built on the focus of AD 2000 and Beyond and the Lausanne Movement on the “10/40 Window,” the section of the world that includes the major non-Christian religions. It also grew out of interest in Muslims raised by the Khomeini Revolution in Iran in 1979. This was especially evident in the growth of organizations like Frontiers, which works only in Muslim areas, and Pioneers with a significant number of personnel in Muslim areas. This growth was also true in Asian, African, and Latin American missions—in this case also being facilitated by the fact that a majority of Christians are now in the Global South or East.

The tragedy of 9/11 has raised a number of new issues, and the ever present possibility of terrorism has forced missionaries to Muslims to consider anew the role of suffering in discipleship. Security training for mission personnel, such as what to do when personnel are kidnapped, is now part of missionary preparation. To avoid attracting attention and thus unnecessary hostility against missionaries to Muslims, names of specific people, places, countries, and organizations are now largely left out of presentations like this when they are put in print.

At the same time for the sake of integrity in the Communications Age, Christian workers are striving to make their ministries and identities more transparent. Following the example of Paul who combined being a genuine tentmaker with being a witness, they seek to have an integrated identity.

Terrorism also raises the question of appropriate forms of witness in some Muslim contexts. Two young women, going against the broader mission consensus at a time of tense government relations, went ahead and entered homes with Bibles and the Jesus film in hand. This led not only to their subsequent imprisonment, but to the expulsion of all known Christian workers in Afghanistan a week before 9/11. But it seems that God in his providence, used this to get those expelled out of harm’s way in the subsequent bombing and fighting there. Also, as a result of terrorism, many mission organizations are reluctant to deploy missionaries with children to such dangerous areas.

Corresponding to broader trends, many missions to Muslims have formed worldwide networks to identify Muslim people groups who have yet to hear or respond to the gospel. These new networks also have started sharing research, personnel and resources. The above-mentioned book *From Seed to Fruit*, with its resource CD inside, is the product of such a network. It surveys current trends in the Muslim world, and in the CD notes the extent to which Muslim people groups are engaged with the gospel so that the unengaged can be adopted by mission agencies, and it indicates the practices that actual practitioners have found most fruitful in planting churches and the issues that have arisen.



The decade since 9/11 started with flames of anger at the World Trade Center. It ended with flames of frustration as a Tunisian fruit vendor burned himself after being humiliated by the authorities—a flame that ignited the “Arab spring.” These are the flames that the world saw, but other events were also happening.

Among the events that led to 9/11 was the fighting between the mujahideem militias after they had driven the Soviets out of Afghanistan. Then followed the rise of the Taliban to restore law and order. The result was that thousands of refugees fled to Peshawar, where they were kept in camps. Conditions in one of them outside of town was particularly bad. Since the children ran around in bare feet in intense heat and cold, a Christian organization brought in hundreds of sandals for the kids, but decided they would not just give them the sandals but would wash their feet first. To do this they enlisted as many Christians as possible, including our daughter-in-law, who carefully washed their filthy feet, put medication on their sores, and prayed silently for them before giving them the sandals.

Some months later a primary school teacher in the area asked her children who the best Muslims were. A girl put up her hand and said, “the kafirs” (disbelievers). After the teacher got over cardiac arrest, she asked, “Why?”

The girl replied, “The Muslim mujahideem killed my father, but the kafirs washed my feet.” Ultimately the future of mission to Muslims will be affected less by the flames of 9/11 or even the flames that started the “Arab Spring,” but by the inner flames that are ignited if we so follow our Lord, who modeled the basin and the towel, that our Muslim friends echo the words of the men in Emmaus, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”



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Dr. Woodberry served as Dean of the School of World Mission, now the School of Intercultural Studies, from 1992 to 1999. He also served as a teacher in Pakistan and a pastor in Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, and has ministered in at least 35 predominantly Muslim nations around the world.

EAST-WEST CENTER FOR MISSIONS

Research & Development

<http://www.ewcmrd.org>

The East-West Center for Missionary Research and Development (EWCmrd) was created under the auspices of Asia Missions Association (AMA) in order to train missionary candidates from Asian countries. The mission leadership in Asian countries have been confronted with two contradictory phenomena in contemporary mission theory: (1) a strong missionary impulse among the evangelical churches of the Third World; and (2) a wide spread ambiguity of theology of mission. This ambiguity has caused a confusion of missionary concept for the younger churches, as well as between them and western sister churches. Unless this confusion can be clarified, it becomes more difficult for Third World churches to multiply missionary mobilization on a scale sufficient to reach the whole world for Christ.

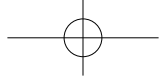
The first confusion has to do with the missionary role of the local church: Is it just a secondary job to be performed out of the surplus resources of large and mature churches, or is it an integral part of the life of all churches, even small and younger churches? AMA believes that, from the very beginning of its existence, the local church must be encouraged to practice both near-neighbor evangelism, and world-wide, cross-cultural mission. Thus, the evangelistic structure and the missionary structure must coexist simultaneously. Establishing a mission-minded church must take preference over a focus just on the local or denominational church.

Secondly, there is a confusion caused by the assumption that traditional theological education alone is sufficient for missionary endeavor. Cross-cultural missionaries must be trained in terms of ethno-cultural and linguistic realities. We suggest that missiological training for all missionary personnel is absolutely essential. Furthermore, local church pastors must also be equipped with a modern philosophy of mission, its strategy and cross-cultural nature, in order that these pastors can be good supporters of missions.

Thirdly, there is confusion which results from the generalization of the term “Mission” as if whatever a church does is mission work. Local churches must not neglect or avoid their responsibility to send out missionaries.

Lastly, a very dangerous confusion is caused by the antagonism against Western mission agencies and also by the concept of “Moratorium”. Many Third World churches are often emotionally involved in this pattern of thinking. We must be humbled in the face of the Great Commission of our Lord, because that commission is global. Third World churches must expect to learn from the experience of Western mission agencies, from both their successes and failures. We must examine these in order to develop an effective Third World missionary matrix. We need to select that which is the best, that which has been proven effective.

It is essential that East and West stand together as mature partners in a joint effort to go into all the world to proclaim the Gospel to every creature.



ASIAN MISSION AND SOCIALISM

Philo Kim

IS CHRISTIANITY POSSIBLE IN SOCIALIST STATES?

I recently published an article on the Christian families in North Korea. In that article, I tried to trace how the Christian families had been purged and reemerged in socialist North Korea for the past several decades. I reexamined the hypothesis that religious activity in North Korea serves solely as a means for the state to attract foreign currency or to display conditions of religious freedom to the outside world. I do not deny that the management and organization of religion in North Korea occurs according to state mobilization. And I tried to show how the state mobilization of religion is actually carried out and who is involved in these efforts. Based on detailed analysis of North Korean defectors, I have found that major participants in both the formal and informal spheres of Christian churches are those of old time Christian families.

Several years ago, I had performed a research of United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), for which I interviewed 80 North Korean defectors who are used to be religious practitioners or those involved in the religious activities. From the research, I have found that old time Christian believers are still alive in North Korea and they have played a key role in forming the North Korean church. And I have also found that many Christian families had been driven to northeast region, the most remote place to be thought in North Korea several decades ago, which they can hardly return back. But nowadays the region became the forefront to easily cross border to China, so that many Christian families could have left for their own future. What an irony the history is!

SOCIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Socialism has been defined as the system run by communist party and planned economy. The leadership of the communist party is quite authoritarian and it is sort of a tradition-oriented society, and that they like to do activities as a group rather than as individuals. And the state strongly opposes religion, western religion in particular. Socialists and Communists tried to expel religion in socialist society blaming it as 'opium of the people'. According to Karl Marx, religion is an opium of the people in the sense that it makes people not to pay attention on their dire situation in this world, but divert it to the life after death, so it paralyzes people's consciousness. Ludwig Feuerbach also criticized religion in "the Essence of Christianity" that religion is a system of thoughts on deity man created in the wrong way in the process of cultural development.

Based upon this official doctrine, religion in socialist societies has been regarded as "anti-revolutionary element" that weakens revolutionary consciousness of the people so as to destroy the socialist system itself. Religion is also regarded as "revolutionary and unscientific world-view," like in North Korea, so that it

restrains religious activities.

However, the authority in communist states cannot deny and admit the presence of religion in reality, so they tried to mobilize the religious people toward the goal of socialist construction. Socialist states usually stipulate the freedom of religion in their constitution, but in very limited terms and for special purposes. We usually call it "the strategy of united front," which mobilizes the people to support the state in socialist construction.

In the former Soviet Union, the freedom of religion was stipulated in the constitution, so that the existence of religion was allowed, even though it was tightly controlled by the communist state. In many communist states in East Europe such as Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslavia, and East Germany, churches were allowed to exist by the states. Of course, it was done only for the purpose of supporting the socialist state.

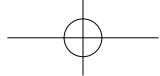
Church was also survived from the suppression of socialist state in East Germany. No other civil society organizations outside the official communist mass organizations were allowed - except for the Churches in Europe. This is the reason why the Churches and in particular the work with the youth were seen as a potential threat to communist education. It was the only place where people could breathe freely. It was kind of a place where bubble people lived in, where they found refuge and where they could talk and discuss all questions about life without indoctrination.¹

However, communist states in Asia had seen that religious organizations played a critical role in the process of collapse in communist states, so that they are very cautious of allowing religious activities. Socialism still exists in Asia, China, Vietnam, North Korea, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar. Most of these communist countries are very much reluctant to accept Christianity. How should we understand the current situation of Christian mission in these socialist countries?

STATE AND RELIGION IN ASIAN SOCIALISM

First of all, we need to understand the relationship between the state and the church in the socialist countries. Usually, this is the typical situation of the relationship; that is, it makes the church coalesce into the state under the United Front. But on the other hand, it wants to strengthen the struggle against religion in order to reduce the religious terrain, for the long run through the anti-religious propaganda. They believed that will destroy religion in the end through the political study of materialism and socialism. The religious policy itself contain the inherent discord so that the conflict can occur whenever the United Front's range and the political line are changed. This is the character of "the socialist religious geomorphology" which is different from the capitalist's.

¹ Lars Hansel, "Unification of Germany in 1990: An East German's Perspective," paper presented at the conference (June 23rd, 2010, Seoul).



With this religious policy, the state suggested "the anti-imperialism and patriotism" as the common ground for the dialectic articulation of state and church. The state asked the church to cut off the former relationship with the imperialist and to reform the structure in order to exist and develop under the socialist regime. And communist states demanded the church to practice the love for motherland participating actively in the socialist construction with fellow countrymen. When the church accepts the request of the state, it can exist and develop in the society. But when the church does not want to accept those things, it is clear that the church must be destroyed through the suppression of the state.

It is notable that the ideology of "anti-imperialism" is the main content of the "anti-religious propaganda," in the earlier religious policy in socialist countries as in North Korea and China. This is possible because of the historical character of Christianity in those states. Due to the experience of Korean War, for example, North Korea and China also considered the religion, especially Christianity as "foreign religion" or "the symbol of imperialism". Therefore, "anti-imperialism" became an important part for the state to attack the church in socialist states. It is true of North Korea and China, and I guess it would be also true of Vietnam. It is because of the historical character that the church could accept the "anti-imperialism" task which the state requested.

In China, in the early period of communist revolution, religious activities were banned. But after 1976, the ban was lifted off, and religious activities were allowed by the state based on the principle of "Three-Self." The religious policy of China was carried out as a part of the United Front. Even though socialism and religion are basically contradictive and mutually exclusive, both can work together as a part of people's coalition for the national revival and socialist construction. Therefore, as the State execute the policy of separation of state and church and the policy of religious freedom under the United Front, the church can be recognized and developed officially. And the state can ask the church to support socialism and the political line of communist China and to participate in socialist construction with other people.²

Let me explain this more in detail with the experience in North Korea. In the 1960s after the War, North Korean communist state attempted anti-religious education in all parts of society intensively. The state intervened in the whole process of house church's development with the strong power. And from the time that the socialist regime entered the stable stage relatively after 1972, the house church leaned toward the politic intensively as "the ideological and political study" was strengthened in the anti-religious policy. The theology, the religious belief also was changed in that whole process, so it became different from the traditional Western theology. This change of theology resulted from the articulation between the theistic religious belief and the Enlightenment's humanism and materialistic atheism as the church adjust to the socialist regime.

It must be pointed out that the coalition of state and church was possible because there were already church leaders who were willing to support socialism as the

² Kyung Sook Yoon, "The development and character of Christian Church in the Socialist State China – Focusing on the Protestant Three-Self Church (1949-1958)," Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Sociology, Seoul National University, 2003.

alternative to reconstruct and modernize North Korea at that time. That is, the liberal Christian leaders were formed in the church, who had the social gospel ideas to emphasize the social reform rather than the spiritual salvation of a person and accepted socialism positively through the help of Christian leaders abroad, especially those in the United States. Therefore, I may say that the house church in North Korea and the Three-Self Church in China were built through this process that is, to accept the policy of state and participates in the socialist construction. Therefore, it became the North Korean church which was able to exist in the socialist regime carrying out the atheistic religious policy. That, of course, is not the western style church. It was formed by the result from the change and reform to survive as a church in the unprecedented socialist regime.

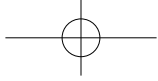
HOW COULD WE APPROACH TO SOCIALIST STATES FOR MISSION?:

Case of South Korea's Northern Mission.

The Church in South Korea started the North Korean mission in the early 1970s, following after the historic July 4th Communiqué that was concluded between North and South Korea for the first time since the Korean division. Before the year 1972, the South Korean church had been dominated by the atmosphere of communism as Satan's. Since then, a few Christian leaders in South Korea became concerned with unification and dialogue with North Korea. The Liberal camp tried to contact the Christian leaders in North Korea though in very cautious way. In the 1980s, a group of overseas Christian leaders had attempted to meet some North Korean church leaders in Vienna (Nov. 1981), Helsinki (Dec. 1982, Dec. 1984), and Tojanso (Oct. 1984). Then finally, the Church leaders from both Koreas succeeded in meeting in Glion, Swizaland in September 1986, for the very first time since the division of Korean Church.

The Conservative camp, however, attempted direct missionary works through radios and pamphlets. Churches made separate missionary organizations to initiate the tasks, since the climate in the churches could not allow them to implement North Korean mission directly. The Association of North Korean Mission was established in 1977, which was renamed as Christian Association of North Korean Mission in 1984. The Cornerstone Ministries Int'l was launched in 1985, and the CCK (The Christian Council of Korea) was set up in 1989. These missionary organizations do not recognize the church and Christian associations in North Korea as a partner of cooperation. Instead they wish to evangelize North Korea directly. Therefore, they tried to make connection with underground churches in North Korea by mobilizing all the possible means, so as to deliver Bibles and leaflets directly into the North.

After 1989, with the advancement of inter-Korean relations, it has arisen great concerns about the unification and North Korean mission among South Korean churches. The Liberal movement died down because the law of inter-Korean exchange and cooperation allow conservative Christian community to participate in the Northern mission. Furthermore, conservative churches actively took part in humanitarian assistance to North Korea since mid-1990s. After 2000, several religious denominations in South Korea rushed



into dialogue with the North Korean church. The Korean Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Tong-hap group), and General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hap-dong group) began exchange with Christian Federation of North Korea. The recognition of North Korean church by South Korean official denominations opened a new era of inter-Korean church cooperation.

The new trend in missionary activities toward North Korea is the growing movement of Christian NGOs to provide North Korea with humanitarian assistance. Out of 54 such NGOs provide humanitarian assistance to North Korea, more than half of those are based on Christian belief. North-South Sharing Movement, Good Neighbors, World Vision, Korean Foundation for World Aid, Eugene Bell Foundation, Korea Food for the Hungry International, and Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC) are among those prominent NGOs. They have carried out humanitarian aid for missionary purpose. They promoted food and medical supplies, the construction of hospitals and schools, and aid for kindergartens and orphanages. They contribute a lot to the appeasement of hostile attitude toward Christianity in North Korea.

The Contacts and exchanges between inter-Korean churches surely produced much understanding and fellowship between the two sides. It is an encouraging aspect, for example, that the word of what they call "mission through social service" is now officially used by the church in North Korea. Mentioning the word of "mission" was impossible at all ten years ago, but we are now able to use the terminology in North Korea. Many possible ways of cooperation are being discussed between churches of the North and the South.

HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE SOCIALIST STATES INTERNALLY?:

Situation of North Korean Church

In 1945, churches were growing faster in the North than in the South. It is a modest estimation that there are 300 thousand Christians with 3,000 churches in the North while, 120 thousand Christians with less than 1,000 churches in the South. The North Korean official source describes that the number of Protestant believers were 200 thousand with 2,000 churches and 53 thousand Catholics in 1949. The Communist regime had been severely hostile to religious activities with regarding that "religion is the opiate of the masses." After suffering huge losses during the war, the North Korean people developed hostile attitude toward the United States and Christianity, because they regarded Christianity as the religion of America. Ordinary people in North Korea have the image that Christianity is a wicked superstition which dare to kill people by taking their blood.

For the past 60 years, the number of Christian believers decreased sharply. According to an official explanation of North Korea, there are only 12,300 Protestants, and 800 Catholics presently. There are two Protestant churches, Bongsoo and Chilgol churches, built in 1988 and 1992 respectively. It also built Jangchoong Catholic church in 1988, and then an orthodox church in 2006. In the revised constitution in 1992, it has stipulated the "freedom of faith" but it has been limited to the building of religious sanctuary and to the allowance of religious

rituals. The Christian Federation has 20 ministers and claims to run 513 house churches. The Catholic Association is said to run two assembly sites. And there are also Pyongyang Theological Seminary operated by the Central Committee of Korean Christian Federation.

After the Korean War, and in particular the severe persecution of religion in 1958, Christian communities of North Korea experienced a collapse in organization, having to subsist in the form of individual practice or small-scale gatherings among family and relatives. In the years following 1972, some of these "Christian families" were mobilized by the state as officially recognized organizations. The 1980s saw a revitalization of state-sponsored religious activity and the separate family worship services in accordance with external publicity purposes as well as the domestic social needs. Afterwards, following the food crisis of 1995, Christian participation became concentrated in the activity of so-called "underground churches." As a result, "Christian families" in North Korea today can be found existing in one of the following three modes: first, as very loosely formed communities centered on the individual or relations among family and relatives; second, as active members of state-sponsored Christian organizations; or third, in pursuit of organized religious activity in the context of underground churches.

There are three groups of churches formed in North Korea. The first group is an official church. An official Christian organization began to work since 1972, then it set up official churches in 1988. People criticize that those official churches are "false" churches. But it is not true. They are not "false" churches. They are "mobilized" churches. The important thing to remember here is that the North Korean authority established the official churches by mobilizing basically those descendants of old generation Christians. The North Korean official church including house churches are controlled by the Communist Party. I have visited one house church and I have known a couple of people who had attended Bongsoo and Chilgol churches for several years. From the communication between them, I am certain that the church attenders in the official churches are Christians through their families, so that some of them are nominal Christians, and many of them do not have much knowledge on Christianity. But, we should think that it is not easy for them to live as Christian in the current situation. We don't have to exclude them from Christian community at all. Rather, we should pray for them to endure the situation

The Second group is, we call underground churches. Sources from South Korean missionary organizations estimate hundreds or thousands active underground Christians. But, I have discovered that many of these underground churches are controlled by North Korean intelligence agency. Since 1997 when secretary Hwang Jang Yup defected, the North Korean authority made up an operation team of infiltrating the defectors' community in China as a branch of Military Protection Headquarters. In some cases, the intelligence agency organizes and operates underground churches by themselves. And in other cases, they infiltrate into the meetings and groups of underground churches that they have information. But I don't know how widely they are exposed to the intelligence control network. Intelligence agency is still searching for any private meetings related



to Christian faith, and they sometimes execute those who make social problems.

The third group is the old generation Christians mentioned earlier. They are not solid group. It is rather like a family gathering. It is a very loose gathering. We don't know what had happened to the old generation believers clearly. There is no accurate information on the past Christian history, but we only vaguely know that most Christians suffered severe persecution after the war in North Korea. They suffered Great Persecution in 1958. Some of them were executed, others were deported to the remote places, mostly to the northeast region. However, I am certain that old generation Christians still exist throughout the country. Christians have been discriminated as "reactionaries" and living extremely poor life. It is fortunate for me to have met at least 20 of the descendants of old generation Christians. I personally have great compassion to those old generation Christians in North Korea. This led me to start a research work called "Project Stump" in 2003. This project's aim is trace the fate of those Christian families in the North. We should do research to light up what had happened to those families. This is the group which is likely to absorb the gospel easily more than others in North Korea.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO FOR A MISSION TO SOCIALIST STATES?

Spirituality of Reconciliation

There are much misunderstanding and poor communication among Christians regarding Socialism and Christianity. Therefore, we need to enhance more understanding of the history of Christian churches in Asia. We need to consider their "anti-imperialist" nature of Christian belief, because the socialist states had experiences of fighting against the "imperialists" which in most cases are Christian countries. In that sense, the socialist states felt that they fought against Christian forces. Therefore, they had lots of antagonism against imperialism.

In North Korea, for example, the socialist state has educated their people with a missionary story. One missionary made an unpardonable atrocities against a boy who picked up an apple in the missionary's fruit garden. The missionary wrote a "thief" in the boy's forehead with a hydrochloric acid, which is a very dangerous chemical. This incident was a real story that took place in Pyongyang in 1925. And also, North Korea has an enormous antagonism towards US imperialism which has been formed due to Korean war. At least 1.2 million people in North Korea were killed during the war whereas 850 thousand people were killed in the South. North Korean thought that the killings were made by the United States, which is a Christian state. On the other hand, many North Korean Christians had to flee to the South due to persecution by the Communist state of the North. Furthermore, North Koreans had lots of anger against US imperialism for the massive starvation in the mid-1990s. They have believed that the massive starvation was caused by the blockade of the US and it is still going on. Therefore, the economic hardship consolidates anti-US sentiment. We need to reconcile the antagonistic emotions between socialist states and Christian community.

Theology of Peace

We need a theology which applies the Words to socialist situations For the Korean case, I would call it "evangelical unification theology" or "a new unification theology." It doesn't matter whatever we call it. What matters is that we need an interpretation and application of the Bible to overcome the socialist ideologies. It needs to apply to the divided situation in the case of Korean division and the prospect of their re-unification. South Korean churches have a strong negative sentiment for the vocabulary of "unification theology," because the term has been advocated by few liberal churches in South Korea. As a result, most churches have remained in silence. A few years ago, I performed a research regarding this issue, and it was a shock to me that only a few pastors preach a sermon on the topic of the Korean division issue. It is a serious problem for most preachers not to say anything about the peninsular division and unification. But the situation was totally different forty years ago when I was young. At that time, even a Sunday school teacher told us that Japanese colonial control in Korea was compared to the Israeli colonial experience in Egypt. And Korean unification was compared to the Israeli entering Canaan. But there is no more such an attempt.

Are we able to overcome communist ideology or socialist ideology with the Bible? It was a quite shock that there are almost no preachings on reconciliation, forgiveness, charity or compassion between the two Koreas. Rather, many churches are at the front line of condemning North Korean leaders expressing anger and resentment. This is a serious problem in South Korean churches nowadays. Church preaches forgiveness to neighbors, but not to communists. Church preaches reconciliation between brothers and sisters, but not to Northern communists. South Korean churches are very weak in application and contextualization of the Words. South Korean churches are not seriously concerned about solving the Korean issue. Nationalism is a disturbing issue. People in North Korea especially have a strongly negative sentiment against the United States. On the contrary, South Korean churches are too much "Americanized." Most examples for model Christian pastors take in their sermons are those from the US and Western countries. For more than hundred years of Korean Protestant history, there was no sincere model of Korean Christian preached in the pastors' sermons. This is a serious problem for Korean church. I do not know how to find a solution for this problem, but in order to make a breakthrough we should make an effort of strengthening Korean examples. One way is to develop model figures who lived faithful lives, so that North Koreans can accept Christian faith in their social context. Rev. Son Yang Won and Joo Ki Chul, Elder Cho Man Sik, and Deacon Kim Koo are good examples. In case of Korea, we need to develop how to relate nationalism with the mission for North Korea.

Sacrifice and Humanitarian Assistance

Humanitarian assistance is the best way to make a mutual understanding and open its mind. We need to develop concrete projects we can perform. By developing the program of contacts and dialogues, we should increase the chance to communicate with each other. Many communication channels have been established with socialist states through humanitarian assistance, such as building pharmaceutical factories, noodle factories, and bakeries, supplying necessities



to hospitals, schools, and orphanage, supporting stock farms, constructing houses in countryside, and so on.

We should sow seeds of reconciliation, seeds of forgiveness, and seeds of sharing. We should go on a visit to the socialist nations and make friends. This is a real reconciliation every Christian should do. I strongly recommend you go visit socialist countries and see and pray for them. What can we do to have these visions realized? Not really great things, but rather only small things like a mustard seed, we can plant and move mountains. For North Korean mission, for example, South Korean churches should negotiate with North Korea counterparts in order to particularly secure the route for reaching the Asian continent. When South Korea embraces and tolerates North Korea, the roads to the world shall open. This is the principle that the Bible tells us. Therefore, for the realization of our vision, we need to sow a seed of tears, a seed for weeping.

Family reunion is also a humanitarian agenda in this region. There are many refugees and migrants across the socialist countries. Twenty three thousand North Koreans defected to South Korea in the past years. About 30 thousand are living in China, and several thousands are spread all over the world, in Asia, Europe, South America and the United States. We need to solve the humanitarian issues of these families. We need to give help for the separated family members. For both North and South Korea, ten million family members have been separated without knowing their whereabouts or even their life or death. The Korean division has created two different social and political entity on the Korean peninsula, although they have the same ethnic origins. We have to remember that we (the South and the North) are of same ethnic group, but different nationalities who belong to different political systems. We have to understand the dual feelings of enmity and family that the Korean people have.

Concerns for Cultural Exchange and Promoting Communication

We need to have more concern for cultural exchange and to promote communication with socialist states in Asia. Socialist states are very cautious to exchange in cultural aspect, considering that the capitalist culture might inflow democratic values and moral decadence. However, South Korean culture, the so-called Korean wave has become dominant a phenomena in this region of Asia. Most of Korean communities in China and Russia let alone Japan and the United States, enjoy the Korean wave. Therefore, we need to promote cultural exchange furthermore in order to make favorable atmosphere for religious exchange.

For the mission to socialist states, we need to consider the political process in this region. There has been serious attempt to promote Asian community building beyond ideological system. China had been playing leading role in a Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and others would like to play major roles by developing the East Asian Summit (EAS) as a community body in this region. Toward this end, we need to promote the human security agenda for missionary purpose. In the post modern world, we need to cope with numerous risks to avoid endangering human security. Human security comprises access to food, health, and education, stopping violent dispute and massacres, manage climate

change, and refugee crisis. These are common issues that both socialist nations and liberal states could share with. Toward this vision and goal of achieving human security, every states in this region would agree for cooperation. We need to cope with natural disasters together. As we have seen in Japan, we need to cooperate to prevent nuclear catastrophe as well.

I know that the International Human Security Network has been formed worldwide in 1999. In the region of Asia, we also need to establish a humanitarian cooperation network in order to promote communication and understanding among the nations. I think that the community building in Northeast Asia could begin with this human security network in this region. And toward this goal, we need to continue contacts and exchanges among these states. More knowledge communities and civil societies should be promoted to participate, and I am quite sure that we are able to work on that for the purpose of mission.

Research and Education

We need an education and research to prepare for the mission to socialist states. For that, we need to mobilize human resources. We need to develop measures to mobilize human resources. We need to create a voluntary association to manage any crisis during the communication process with socialist states. For the purpose of this preparation, especially for North Korea, we launched a Christian think tank, called Korea Peace Institute (KPI) two years ago in Seoul.

We need research because we have to understand the political characteristics of socialist states and the relation of church with the state. We should also carry out a research of exploring culture and possible ways to help evangelization in socialist countries. In case of the North Korean mission, I would like to stress the importance of a further study on "Juche Thought" which dominate the values of North Korean people. And we need to study materialism, cultural ideology and political leadership (Dangoon and the thought of monolithic leadership in North Korea), which may impede evangelism in socialist states.

Based upon the study, we need to devise effective methods of evangelizing the socialist countries. We need to develop a so called "missionary dialogue," which means discourse to make conversation on religion and faith in the context of socialist environment. We need to do research on the history of the churches in socialist nations. We need to find how to respect the political system and the human rights of the citizens at the same time in the process of cooperating with brothers and sisters in socialist states.



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21ST CENTURY CHALLENGE IN MISSION LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Bong Rin Ro

The General Assembly of the Korea Presbyterian Church which met in September 1912 decided to send three missionaries to Shang Tong Province in China. One hundred years later the Korean Church has sent out more than 22,000 missionaries to 169 countries.¹ This rapidly growing missionary movement in the Korean Church has made an indelible chapter in the history of world missions. I am sure that the western mission leaders were not aware of the fact that a small nation of Korea sent out her own missionaries to China only two years after the first International Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910.

The world situation 100 years ago was quite different from what it is today, for the world has changed greatly in so many areas of our lives. From the beginning of the 21st C. especially the growing number of churches in Asia and Africa have experienced persecution and suffering from the terrorists' attacks against Christianity. Many Christians in Islamic, Hindu, and communist nations are living in discrimination, fear, and danger which have caused prayer and concern of many Christians around the world.

Therefore, one of the important issues which the Asian Church is facing today is the leadership training of pastors, missionaries, theologians, and the discipleship training of the laity of the church. While working in theological education for 30 years in Asia through Asia Theological Association and WEA Theological Commission, I had many opportunities to visit some 200 theological schools throughout Asia. The church situation in each country is very unique according to its own historical background; therefore, the method of leadership training in each country has to be carefully studied and selected to produce the best results for each national church.

In this paper Asia includes Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia. Asia contains over 43 nations from Japan to the Middle East with many races, cultures, and religions. In fact, Asia which cannot be adequately defined is just a conglomeration of many peoples. During my time working for ATA, Asia covered the nations from Japan to Pakistan, but ATA also extended its ministry to Central Asia and the Middle East.

This paper starts with changing situations of Asia from the early years of ATA in the 1970s and 1980s up to the present situation of the 21st C. Leadership training has also developed remarkably during the past 40 years. Asia can be divided into three categories according to religious freedom or lack of it. Leadership training must be carefully evaluated in order to produce the best method of training for each category of nations. Finally, we will list the 10 most² important factors in leadership training in Asia under, "10 Commandments in Leadership Training in Asia in the 21st C."

¹ "Centennial Celebration of the Korean Missions in 2012," The Korean Christian Press, July 16, 2011, p. 14.

² Mindy Belz, "A 'Global Crisis'," WORLD (March 26, 2011,) 40.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN A CHANGING WORLD (1970-2000)

When the Asia Theological Association (ATA) was started in 1970 in Singapore, the situation of theological education in Asia was quite different from what it is today. Asia has been rapidly changing in all areas of life for the last three decades. By looking at changing trends of the Asian society, we can also see the changing patterns of evangelical theological education.

A. Political Changes

Since World War II most Asian nations except Japan and Thailand received their political independence from the Western and Japanese colonial powers. The popular sentiment of Asians during 1970s and 1980s was to recover their national identity and revive their traditional cultures and religions. The western powers of Pax Britanica and Pax Americana still played a large role in Asian politics, and western missionaries particularly from America with their mission dollars played significant roles in the Asian Church and theological education.

Today, most Asian nations have consolidated their political powers under Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Communism and have rejected western influences including Christianity. Consequently, approximately 70% of Asian nations have adopted a hostile policy to their national churches and particularly to foreign missionary activities in their countries.³

These political changes enhance the national church to adopt new strategies to train its spiritual leaders.

B. Economic Development

Besides the Pacific Rim countries (Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore), most Asian nations were labeled economically as "developing nations" which meant that most theological seminaries in Asia were financially dependent upon western mission dollars. There was a saying in Asia in 1970s and 1980s, "If an American missionary brings \$10,000, he can start a seminary."⁴

When I served as the ATA Accreditation Secretary from 1975-1990, our Visitation Evaluation Team had evaluated 67 theological seminaries in Asia and discovered that most of these evangelical seminaries were heavily dependent on western mission dollars.

Today, the rapid economic development of Asian nations through the development of global economy has freed the Asian Church from their financial dependence upon the West. When I gave theological lectures in Jogjakarta, Indonesia in 2008 and in Bangalore, India in 2009, I could observe the remarkable economic development of these countries. This means that the Asian Church would be

³ Bong Rin Ro, Ken Gnanakan, Joseph Shao. New Era, New Vision: Celebrating 40 Years of the Asia Theological Association (Quezon City, Philippines: ATA, 2010), p.40.

⁴ Ibid., p. 23. Ministry in Context: Third Mandate Programme of Theological Education Fund (1970-1977) (Bromley, Great Britain: New Life Press, 1972), pp. 17-18.



able to launch its theological education programs more freely without financial dependence on other developed nations.

C. Social and Educational Changes

The rapid urbanization of Asian nations and the rapid population increase of the younger generation have changed the social structure of each nation. Mission strategy has shifted its emphasis from rural areas to urban cities, and the younger generation Christians began to fill new urban churches. The younger generation in urban cities is more open to the Gospel.

Modern computer technology has changed the society and educational method. This means that the Asian Church has to find new ways of training leadership of the church not only through the traditional seminary education but also through the internet and distance education.

D. Religious Resurgence and Christian Persecution

There was a strong resurgence of traditional religions and cultures according to many Asian government policies during 1970s and 1980s against the influences of long western colonialism.

Each nation wanted to find its own national identity from foreign domination. At the same time, the Eastern philosophy and religious beliefs have penetrated into the western culture through many Asian immigrants to the west and through many westerners visiting Asian nations; consequently, many westerners have accepted Eastern religions, particularly the Hindu and Buddhist philosophies.

While the West has been losing the Christian foundation and has become very secular, the Eastern religions of Islam and Hinduism in the Middle East and Asia are becoming more radical and hostile to other religions, especially to Christianity. Today, Christians in Islamic, Hindu, and atheistic communist nations are experiencing mounting persecution and discrimination which is somewhat similar to the persecution of the Catacomb Christianity of the Early Church.

E. Changes in Theological Education

Evangelical Theological Education:

When ATA started in 1970 in Singapore, the standard of evangelical theological education was low. It was also very fragmented due to western missionary influences. Most of the evangelical seminaries in Asia in the 1970s offered the BA level education; there were very few M.Div. level evangelical seminaries in Asia, except in Korea.

On the other hand, the main line ecumenical denominational seminaries in 1970s were well developed. The Theological Education Fund which was the theological arm of World Council of Churches had the Third Mandate Period with the theme of "Theology of Contextualization" and spent \$3,300,000 to train theological professors in the Third World in western liberal seminaries and built theological libraries with 30,000-40,000 theological books.⁵ The Southeast Asia Graduate School of Theology of the Association of Theological Education in Southeast Asia and the Board of Theological Education related Serampore College accredited seminaries in India offered the post-graduate

⁵ Ibid., pp. 50-51. Asia Theological News, IV:2 (Taiwan: ATA, 1978), 23; V:1 (1979), 22.

Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees.⁶

Today, evangelical theological education has developed rapidly throughout Asia. There are several graduate level seminaries in almost every country of Asia. At the 40th anniversary meeting of ATA in Hong Kong in August 2-6, 2010, more than 220 theologians from different parts of Asia attended, and most of them were Asians. During my time for ATA one third to one half of the participants of theological consultations were western missionaries. The Asian Church including theological education has certainly become mature during the last 20 years.

Shortage of Pastors and Theologians:

At the time of tremendous church growth throughout Asia, there was a dire shortage of pastors and theological lecturers. For example, a large Batak Lutheran denomination in North Sumatra, Indonesia in 1982 which had 600 churches with 117,000 members had only 68 ordained pastors and 23 evangelists. The Church of Christ in Thailand, the largest denomination in the nation, had 80 pastors for 263 churches. Eighty percent of these Thai churches were located in the rural areas, and 80% of these churches did not have pastors.⁷

The "brain drain" of well-trained Asian pastors to immigrate to the "paradise Western nations" was very serious. The National Youth Commission in Taiwan showed that 86% of 80,000 students who studied overseas from 1950 to 1983 failed to return to Taiwan. The US Consulate in Madras, India announced that the brain drain of Indian theological students was 90%.⁸ It was a paradox to observe that while the Asian pastors were immigrating to the West, western missionaries were coming to Asia to evangelize Asia. Therefore, ATA emphasized the concept of "Train Asians in Asia" in order to produce more Christian workers in quality and in quantity through Asia Graduate School of Theology. From 1970 to 1990 our main concern was to stop "brain drain" of Asian church leaders to the west to meet the demands of rapidly growing churches in Asia. Therefore, ATA emphasized the concept of "Train Asians in Asia" to produce more church leaders in Asia and to decrease our dependence to western seminaries to train Asians. Consequently, ATA started the Asia Graduate School of theology in 1985.⁹

Today, the Asian Church still needs many pastors and theologians for different reasons, often for the survival of the national church. In the increasing hostile situation against the Christian Church in many nations of Asia, the indigenization of the Christian church is very necessary. In order to achieve this purpose the national leadership training has become the foremost important issue of the Christian Church.

Theological Issues:

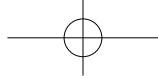
WCC has emphasized liberation theology, religious dialogue, and contextual theology through different names of contextual "Asian Theology." Some of important Asian contextual theologies were Kazuo Kitamori's "Pain of God Theology", Kozuke Koyama's

⁶ Ibid., p. 49.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 49-50.

⁸ Bong Rin Ro, "Train Asians in Asia: A New Mission Strategy," Asian Perspective no. 35 (Taiwan: ATA, 1987), p. 19.

⁹ Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur, eds., "Contextualization: Asian Theology," The Bible and Theology in Asia Contexts (Taiwan: ATA, 1984), pp. 68-74.



"Waterbuffalo Theology," Song Chen-Shen's "Third Eye Theology," Kim Yong-Bok' "Minjung Theology," Lee Jong-Young's "Ying Yang Theology," and Stanley Samartha's "Unbound Christ Theology."¹⁰

On the other hand, ATA had held several theological consultations on the themes of "Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts," "God in Asian Contexts," "Salvation in Asian Contexts," "Christian Alternative to Ancestral Practices," and "The Uniqueness of Christ" against liberal theology and religious syncretism.¹¹ Theological battles are still going on in Asia in different areas.

Today, the theological trend of more evangelical leaders is to emphasize Christian social concerns, particularly noted at the Lausanne III Conference in Capetown, South Africa. Some missiologists expressed their concerns over the theological issue of putting Christian social concern equal to the spiritual conversion of the heathen. Today, there is also an increasing interest in new theologies such as "Theology of Marketplace," "Theology of Suffering," "Theology of Church and State," "Theology of Survival," and "Theology of Globalization."

NEW TRENDS FOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

A number of new trends in the 21st C. which are affecting leadership training today are mentioned in the previous part of this paper. These new trends can be summarized.

- The increasing hostility and persecution of many Asian nations toward Christianity including theological education has raised much concern among the Christians around the world. Many articles, books, and DVDs have been produced on Christian persecutions in recent years including two Christian magazines: "The Voice of the Christian Martyrs" and "International Christian Concern." The discrimination and persecution of the 55 Islam nations in Asian, Middle East and North Africa against the Christian Church has been well reported through mass media. Many Christians in the radical Islamic nations are afraid of having Sunday morning worship service at their churches because of the radical Muslims' terroristic attacks. Christians in Hindu nations of India and Nepal are also the target of the radical Hindus. The radical Hindu organizations such as Rashtriya Swyamsevaksangh and Vishwa Hindu Parishad have stirred up the radical Hindus to attack Christians in India. The Christian churches in Buddhist nations, particularly Myanmar and Sri Lanka are also experiencing different degrees of persecution. Many Christians in communist nations of China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Laos have suffered persecution. One notorious event in China in 2011 was the attempt to close down a large house church, Shouwang Church, during the Easter season. The Christians of this church were not allowed to have their worship service at their church and were denied to have their Easter Sunday Service even at a park, because the Chinese communist government was trying to stop the growth of the

10 Bong Rin Ro, ed. Christian Alternatives to Ancestor Practices. Taiwan: ATA, 1985; Bong Rin Ro and Mark C. Albrecht, eds., God in Asian Contexts. Taiwan: ATA, 1988.; Tissa Weerasingha. The Cross and the Bo Tree: Communicating the Gospel to Buddhists. Taiwan: ATA, 1989.

11 Ro, Gnanakan, Shao, pp. 49-59.

urban house church movement throughout China.

- The rapid growth of evangelical theological education in Asia with its M.Div., Th.M., and Ph.D. programs for the last 30 years through ATA and other evangelical denominations provides channels for the future development of leadership training within the country or in other countries of Asia. The Asia Graduate School of Theology which ATA inaugurated in June, 1984 has produced scores of theological lecturers through the AGST-Philippines, AGST-Japan, AGST-Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, AGST-India, AGST-Indonesia.¹² Many of the theological seminaries especially in Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Taiwan are also accredited by the national Ministry of Education as well as the Asian accrediting agencies such as ATA, ATESEA, and Serampore College. The Asian Church does not have to depend on western seminaries to train Asian leaders.
- Theological maturity has developed in the Asian Church with thousands of Asian theologians who were trained both in Asia and the west. These Asian theologians are teaching at more than 1,300 theological institutions throughout Asia.¹³ In Korea there are more than 2,000 Korean theologians who hold the Ph.D. level doctors' degrees. In fact, it is not easy for a Korean theologian who holds a Ph.D. degree in theology to find a full-time teaching position within Korea.

There are more Christian and theological books available in the Asian Church which are either written by Asians or translated from the English language. For instance, it is amazing to visit the Word of Life bookstores in Seoul and see thousands of Christian books in the Korean language. Many Christian books including theological ones are available in other major Asian languages such as Japanese, Chinese, and Indonesian. These Christian books and other Christian literature in each country in Asia deal with crucial theological issues of the national churches. The ATA's project of producing the 65 volumes of Asian Bible Commentaries for the last 10 years has already published more than 25 commentaries of the Bible.

- The ecumenical movement of WCC has declined because of its financial difficulty for the last 10 years due to the continual decline of the mainline denominations in the West, especially Germany, United Kingdom, and United States of America. When these affluent western churches declined, the financial subsidy of WCC in Geneva to the mainline denominational seminaries in Asia declined; consequently, these ecumenical seminaries also face financial difficulties and do not have the same impact upon the national church in Asia as before. On the other hand, the evangelical churches and theological education have developed throughout Asia and have steadily increased their influences upon the Asian Church. Now, the opportunity for the Asian Church has arrived to train spiritual leaders of the national church.

With the sharp decline of western Christianity and

12 Bong Rin Ro. 1995 World Directory of Theological Schools. Seoul: WEA Theological Commission, 1995.

13 "World Christian Population: 256,950,000 (9 Year Increase)," The Korean Christian Press, November 10, 2010, p.6.



of western missionary activities in Asia, there has been a rapid rise of Christianity in the Two Thirds World. John Nevius' "Three Self Mission Principles," have been faithfully applied in many countries in Asia and have produced rapid church growth. Thus, the impact of global Christianity has shifted from the Global North to the Global South. In the middle of 1970s the Christian population between the western nations and the Third World nations was evenly divided, but today the Asia, Africa, and South America has 79% of the total world Christian population.¹⁴

Today, the rapidly growing missionary movement in the Asian Church is another surprising factor. Besides the Korean Church sending more than 22,000 missionaries working in 169 countries, Dr. Susanta Patra, General Secretary of Indian Missions Association, reported at the recent Asian Society of Missiology Strategy Forum in Korea that there are 55,000 Indian missionaries, most of whom are working within India.¹⁵ Many other Asian missionaries from the Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan are working along with western missionaries to bring the Gospel to Asians. In fact, in the mission fields Asian missionaries who have no colonial connotation are often accepted by the nationals better than western missionaries.

- The scope of training students in modern secular education has been widened, and modern technology has developed the cyber computer education. Theological education has also developed distance education through the internet and other forms, particularly for the training of lay Christians. Millions of people move around to other countries every year for business, government work, study, and migration, and the Asian Church must find ways of training these mobile Christians with the Word of God. Today's seminary education is not confined to the walls of residential seminaries.

Dr. Bruce Nicholls, a veteran missionary from New Zealand who served in India for more than 35 years and now is ATA's publication coordinator, proposed the "AGST Extension University" to the ATA Executive Committee in Manila, February 2012. He describes the purpose of this Extension Open University,

To provide continuing education and upgrading of skills for those whom returning to full time residential study is no longer an option due to employment responsibilities, family needs, or financial constraints. Open universities are now functioning in many countries and have been given equal status with residential universities.

CATEGORIES OF ASIAN NATIONS ACCORDING TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Each Asian nation is unique with its historical background, and the development of the national church and theological education is also unique. The government control of religions including Christianity has to be carefully considered, because different degrees

¹⁴ Dr. Timothy Park of Korea and Dr. Susanta Patra of India reported verbally at the ASM Strategy Forum in Korea, October 25-28, 2011.

¹⁵ Bruce Nicholls, "AGST Extension (Open) University Proposal," October 19, 2011, pp. 1-4.

of religious freedom exist in different countries. Most Asian countries can be divided into three main categories according to the religious freedom.

A. Nations with Religious Freedom (Category A Nations)

In the Category A Nations in Asia the government allows religious freedom to theological seminaries to develop their own programs with little or few regulations.

- South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Cambodia

B. Nations with Religious Persecution (Category B Nations)

In the Category B Nations there is a severe religious persecution with terrorists' threat and violence against the church. The present religious persecution is a repetition of the "Catacomb Christianity" in the Early Christian Church

- Islamic nations: most Middle Eastern nations
 - Central Asian nations (7 Stan nations): especially Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan
 - North African nations (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan)
- Communist nations: China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos

C. Nations with Partial Religious Freedom & Persecution (Category C Nations)

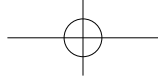
In the Category C Nations the government religious policy is basically against Christianity but allows religious freedom in different degrees according to different countries.

- Islamic nations: Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Philippines (Mindanao Province)
- Hindu nations: India, Nepal
- Buddhist nations: Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Bhutan

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN ASIA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

In the light of many changes in the Asian contexts the Asian Church must consider the following ten important factors for effective leadership training.

- The basic missions strategy of the Korean Church for world evangelization is to create a spiritual renewal movement in each country through the unique spiritual elements of the Korean Church by emphasizing the concept of "Christianization of the nation."
- For the rapid church growth with theological education in many nations in Asia, the Asian Church must put its top priority in producing more full-time Christian workers, missionaries, and theological professors through "Training Asians in Asia."
- For the training of Christian laity the Asian Church must continue to develop TEE and other forms of distant education through the internet. For example, "The Discipleship Training Program" of Sarang Community Church in Seoul, Korea has been widely used throughout the world to train lay people.
- For the globalization age of the 21st C. the Asian Church must develop a global theological education which includes a two-fold ministry of leadership training. First, prominent theological seminaries



and Christian colleges in each country should be encouraged to start leadership training programs for international students as exemplified in Asian Center for Theological Studies and Missions and Torch Trinity Graduate University in Seoul, Korea. Second, these seminaries should also develop leadership theological education programs for their compatriots living in foreign countries. For examples, ACTS has 190 theological students overseas who are mainly Korean missionaries. Chong Shin Presbyterian Seminary (Hap Tong) has 70 graduate students overseas.

- For the churches in the persecuted areas (Category B Nations) theological seminaries must put their top priority to develop TEE and distant education to train lay leaders of the church. These seminaries must work closely together with other seminaries in other countries and foreign missionaries who are residing in their countries in order to find new ways of training leadership of the church.
- ATA would develop the AGST University in order to produce Asian theologians on the post-M.Div. level training programs in quality and in quantity. The present AGST programs in the Philippines, Japan, Singapore/Malaysia/Thailand, and the future AGST programs in Indonesia, Korea, and Chinese would continue to produce more theological lecturers for over 1,300 theological schools in Asia.
- Theological education in China for the next 20 years is extremely important. Twenty-one Three Self Church seminaries and hundreds of house church Bible institutes and seminaries must find ways to train Chinese pastors and theologians for the next 10 years in other Asian countries such as Korea, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and Taiwan. The tremendous shortage of theological professors in both Three-Self Church and House Churches in particular is very much disturbing. Chinese theological students should be also sent to other seminaries in North America, Europe, and Australia/New Zealand. Train as many as possible overseas for the preparation of the time when religious freedom would be granted by the Chinese government. The overseas Chinese churches in Asia, North America, Europe, and Australia/New Zealand should aid the leadership training of the Chinese Church today.
- Asian Society of Missiology and ATA must work together to influence theological seminaries to put mission courses in the theological curriculum as required courses in order to integrate theological education and missions. This emphasis of missions in the theological curriculum must be inculcated into other theological organizations such as the Evangelical Theological Society in each country and the International Council of Evangelical Theological Education which consists of seven continental evangelical accreditation associations in six continents including ATA in Asia.
- Encourage evangelical theological institutions in Asia to acquire ATA accreditation to improve the quality of theological education and to foster mutual cooperation among evangelical seminaries throughout Asia. Encourage Asian seminaries to participate in other ATA programs such as AGST,

textbook production, and publication. Some seminaries which are accredited by both ATA and the Ministry of Education have a tendency of ignoring the ministry of ATA. For example, the nine theological seminaries in Korea which received ATA accreditation as well as the government accreditation need to participate more actively in the ministry of ATA, not only for the accreditation and recognition within Asia but also for the purpose of missionary influence to other nations in Asia in the area of theological education.

- Asian theological education must be missiological in its objective in order to promote the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, "Asian Missions" must be the heart of theological education in every Asian theological institution in order to reach more than 4 billion non-Christian population with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is often said, "As the seminary goes, so goes the church." When the seminary becomes mission-minded and produces mission-minded pastors, their local churches become mission-minded churches.

CONCLUSION

I am both a pessimist and an optimist in the future development of leadership training in Asian contexts. Two giant oppositions to the future development of the Asian Church bring spiritual concern to many Asian Christians. First, the increasing radical political opposition and terrorists' attacks particularly from Islam against Christians in Category B and C Nations to the point of extermination are occurring in Asia today. Nobody knows how the Al Queda terrorists will attack churches in Islamic countries. Second, the Christian Church (younger generation) in the highly economically developed nations of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore with their religious freedom is facing secularism, materialism, and humanism within the church as well as outside the church.

I have an optimistic viewpoint for the future outlook of Christianity as well as theological education in Asia. God has raised more Christian leaders and strengthened theological education for the last 40 years. As I compare evangelical theological education in Asia in 1970s with that of 2011, my heart is rejoicing to see what God has done for the Asian Church. Although there will be continuous obstacles and oppositions against Christianity, God will uphold the Asian Church for further growth and leadership training. Tertullian of Carthage in the 3rd C. said on his martyrdom, "The blood of the martyr is the seed of the church." In the midst of suffering and persecution of Christians in the Early Church, the Early Church continued to grow to conquer the Roman world with the Gospel.



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