

MISSION IN VARIOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

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This paper examines the various mission concepts found in both the Christian Evangelicals and Buddhism. The aim of this investigation is to seek how inter-religious communication or dialogue is possible between these two religions. The first part examines the mission concepts culled from a range of documents of Christian Evangelicals, specifically the Lausanne Covenant (1974) and Manila Manifesto (1989) which both served as the "authoritative" guidance and inspiration to evangelical workers and set the tone for evangelical missions in the future. The second part of this study pulls out certain mission concepts from Buddhism and points out some ambivalence within these concepts by demonstrating both their oppressive and liberating dimensions. The paper concludes with an appraisal of the two religious traditions and draws some insights on possible meeting points for inter-religious dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

Mission (Lt., *missio*, 'sending') is defined as 'the sense of obligation in all religions to share their faith and practice with others, generally by persuasion, occasionally by coercion.'¹ It is based on the idea that each religion professes to have ("some," while others claim "all") knowledge about the way to salvation expressed as "truth claims." The dynamics between mission and the diversity of truth claims in each religion set forth the impetus to convince others of their respective persuasions. This paper will investigate the reality of this dynamism in both Christian Evangelicals and Buddhism by delineating the various mission

¹ John Bowker, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

concepts in both of these traditions. Then, we will investigate how these two models interact or confront each other in a specific context, particularly in Sri Lanka. Along with this problem, we shall also ask how is it possible to create an inter-religious communication or dialogue between these two religions? Will there be possibilities for understanding and cooperation? What are the delicate areas that can ignite or even aggravate rifts or conflicts? Finally, we shall respectfully appraise such confrontation from a Christian theological perspective, bearing in mind the prospects, difficulties, possibilities, and challenges towards an inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue. Let us now examine some mission concepts from the tradition of the Christian Evangelicals.

MISSION ACCORDING TO THE CHRISTIAN EVANGELICALS

Generally speaking, Christian Evangelicals are "Protestant Christians who stress belief in personal conversion and salvation by faith in the atoning death of Christ, and in the bible as the sole authority in matters of faith."² They uphold the importance of preaching over liturgical worship. As we can infer from their name (evangelicals), this group put a strong emphasis on evangelism.³ Evangelism⁴ (Gk.verb, *euanglizein/euangelizesthai*), according to them, is the proclamation of the inauguration of the reign of God in the person and ministry of Jesus and a call to repentance and faith. It may refer to the activities involved in spreading the gospel and the theological reflection of these activities. Its method and style can be mainly described as public preaching of a revivalistic nature to large (often outdoor, radio, or TV) audiences by specially gifted (often itinerant) evangelists. It aims at the exposure of the sinner's rebellion against God's rightful claim on individuals and calls for a "decision for Christ," and manifests itself in a personal spiritual experience of forgiveness and new life. For a convert or a believer, this spiritual experience is considered to be a pivotal date (being born again). The notion of salvation is understood in terms

² Ibid., 326.

³ Ibid.

⁴ David Bosch, "Evangelism, Evangelization," in *Dictionary of Mission*, eds. K. Mueller, et al., (Maryknoll, 1998), 151-154.

of (the guarantee of) future eternal bliss or the "saving of the soul." By communicating the gospel, evangelism envisions to produce converts ("that people shall come to put their trust in God") as a result of their proclamation. The primary objects of evangelism are the people who are no longer Christians (particularly in the West), hence the call for re-Christianization, a new beginning, *re-vocare* the estranged. In contrast to the idea of foreign mission (mission to non-Christians, especially in the Third World), home Mission (evangelism) has to be carried out to every member of the church who, even if baptized, still has to become a believer. Margull distinguishes between "missionary proclamation" (a term he prefers to "evangelism"), which takes place in the west, and "foreign evangelism" or "mission" which is more of "proclaiming the gospel where no church as yet exists, where the Lordship of God has never-yet-historically-been proclaimed, where pagans are the object of concern." Other evangelical circles however criticize this distinction. D. Bosch⁵ clarifies the variance by saying that mission must be construed as the total task God has set the church for the salvation of the world or as the church's ministry of stepping out of itself, into the wider world, in this process crossing geographical, social, political, ethnic, cultural, religious, ideological, and other frontiers or barriers, evangelism, in contrast, may then be regarded as one of several dimensions of the wider mission of the church, indeed the core, heart of the center of mission.⁶

Despite the variety of understanding of mission in evangelical theology, certain common features can be culled. Some of them are: (a) a close relationship to holy scripture, which is regarded as inspired and all-sufficient for life and doctrine; (b) emphasis on the atoning and redemptive work of Christ; (c) emphasis on the necessity of a personal decision of faith [conversion]; and (d) the priority of evangelization and the building up of congregations over all other work (e.g., social justice and interreligious dialogue in the field of mission).⁷

⁵ Ibid., 152.

⁶ One can still argue whether this is an acceptable "interpretation" from the perspective of the Evangelicals or not.

⁷ Klaus Fiedler, "Evangelical Mission Theology 1," in *Dictionary of Mission*, ed. K. Mueller, (Maryknoll, 1998), 144.

Most of the basic convictions on mission among the evangelicals have their roots in faith missions which have strong soteriological groundings based mainly on Calvinism and influenced by Arminianism (i.e., Holiness Movement which emerged from Methodism). Aside from these convictions, the evangelicals believed that the imperative for a worldwide mission implies being able to reach out to people who have not heard the gospel because those who do not believe in Christ are eternally lost and that the actual expectation of the imminent return of Christ, before which event the gospel must be preached to all nations. This sense of urgency makes it possible for this group to absorb millenarian ideas. Most, if not all, evangelicals (e.g., the New Evangelicals) shuns historical-critical criticism as a method of exegesis, scorn liberal theology, the social gospel, liberation theology, and every idea that there are "many and equal ways of salvation." A document called "CIA uses Religion" discloses how this group had been used to quell the militant church in Latin America from the '60s till the present. It has been made as a component of the "Low-Intensity Conflict (LIC)" or the psychological warfare waged by the United States in their comprehensive war against liberation and democratic movements in countries of the south. It is stated in number 11 of the document *Manila Manifesto*, "We affirm that spiritual warfare demands spiritual weapons,⁸ and that we must both preach the word in the power of the Spirit, and pray constantly that we may enter into Christ's victory over the principalities and powers of evil." However, social responsibility has also been affirmed.⁹ It recognizes that evangelism and socio-political involvement are part of the Christian duty and that they are not mutually exclusive (see LC 5).

⁸ Compare with King Asoka's conviction after his conversion to Buddhism. Following the victorious but bloody battle against Kalinga in the 8th year of his reign, Asoka underwent a "conversion" to Buddhism and replaced the policy of conquest by force (*digvijaya*) with one of conquest by righteousness (*dhammavijaya*).

⁹ See Manila Manifesto affirmation numbers 8, 9, 20 in *The Manila Manifesto*, www.lausanne.org; *Lausanne Covenant* (LC) 5, www.lausanne.org.

Moreover, if one tries to decipher the theology behind both the *Lausanne Covenant* and *The Manila Manifesto*, it becomes clear that their position concerning dialogue with other religions is vague and (almost) exclusive. This position is embedded in the documents. Let us cull some of them. In the number 7 affirmation of the *Manila Manifesto*, it states that "other religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God, and that human spirituality if unredeemed by Christ, leads not to God but to judgment, for Christ is the only way." The idea of mission as presence in the world and as dialogue whose purpose is "to listen sensitively in order to understand," is relegated in favor of the idea of mission as a proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view of persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God (see LC 4). This position is anchored on the conviction that "there is only one Savior and only one gospel. (Though) everyone has some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature, but this is not sufficient and cannot guarantee salvation. They reject "as derogatory to Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies (see LC 3). With regards to culture, the evangelicals believe that churches should emerge to be deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Cultures must be reckoned with the scriptures because there is always the element of both beauty or goodness and the "fallen, tainted, and demonic" aspects in every culture. There is no superior culture and hence must be evaluated according to its criteria of truth and righteousness. Mission therefore must seek to transform and enrich culture (see LC10).

On one hand, evangelicalism affirms the mandates of the scriptures and the power of the gospel, but on the other hand, it rejects biblical criticism, which according to them undermines the deity of Christ and the authority of scripture. It also discards evolutionary theory, or a social gospel separated from the life-changing power of the proclaimed gospel. Since it stresses more on personal salvation, it tends to be individualistic. Their social involvement is anchored on concrete personal form rather than on sociopolitical. Local groupings are held to be more important than the church as a whole. Unity is construed in terms of personal (the

common faith is primary while structural unity is secondary), and continuity is based on the same faith and doctrine and not much on the same church structure.

Two main organizations are responsible for defining the missiological agenda of evangelicals, namely: The World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF, 1951) and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE, 1974) or the so-called *Lausanne* movement. These two organizations establish their networks on a global scale. They are primarily North American in background and support yet most of the evangelicals were identified with them. Aside from these two organizations, other pivotal events eventually led to the "globalization" of the evangelical missions. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in Chicago was organized in 1943 paved the way for an international gathering in Boston in 1950. They later became the Commission for the World Evangelical Fellowship (CWEF), and in 1951 (in Zeist, the Netherlands) gave birth to World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF). WEF is an alliance of 60 national and regional evangelical bodies, open to national fellowships of evangelical believers throughout the world. Their work goes around evangelism, bible training, retreats and conferences, scholarship programs to 3rd World students, books for seminaries, etc. They have sponsored conferences on various topics like the Theology of Development (1980), "Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle" (1980), "The Relations of Evangelism and Social Responsibility" (1982), the Church in Response to Human Needs (1983), The Work of the Holy Spirit and Evangelization (1985) and Conversion (1988). At present, there are three main divisions among the Evangelicals: the fundamentalists (polemical against other Christian churches, and anti-intellectualism); the conservative or radical (not polemical, prefers witnessing, involved in liberation movements, and active in the situation of chaos), and the ecumenical evangelicals (groups that emerged after the Manila Conference in 1989).

The evangelical mission theologies are expressed in several declarations like those stipulations during the meetings in Wheaton, Illinois, and in Berlin, both in 1966. The recent most significant statements, however, are found in the *Lausanne Covenant* which was the result of the International Congress on World

Evangelization in 1974. The *Lausanne Covenant*, which was prepared under the leadership of J.R. Scott, tackles sensitive issues like the authority of the Bible, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, the relation between evangelism and dialogue, the relative priority of evangelization and social concern, the centrality of the church in evangelism, the necessity of partnership and cooperation, etc. Moreover, during this congress, the term 'evangelization' was used, thereby establishing a bond between evangelicals concerned with world mission and those primarily involved in evangelism. Billy Graham was personally involved in the organization of this congress. Lausanne, according to him, has to take the leadership role in "restoring world evangelization to its rightful place." This was a reaction to the conciliar ecumenical movement which according to him had departed from its earlier evangelistic vision and commitment after Edinburgh in 1910. The original spirit of the early great movements for evangelism, Graham explains, "they all took their stand on the basis of the scriptures, held a definite view of the need of salvation and the lostness of humans apart from Christ, strongly believed in conversion and were convinced that evangelism was not an option but an imperative." From this meeting, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) was established. Subsequently, the LCWE spearheaded consultations on certain topics like "on homogenous unit principle" in 1977, the "gospel and culture" in 1978, the consultations in Pattaya, Thailand in 1980 on "world evangelization," and other consultations held in England (1980), and USA (1982). In 1989, the LCWE sponsored its Second World Congress on World Evangelization in Manila with the theme "Proclaim Christ until He comes" and "Calling the Whole Church to Take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World." This gathering, which is now known as Lausanne II, resulted in the publication of a document entitled the *Manila Manifesto*. This document is noted to be 'evangelicalism's response to the post-modern missionary paradigm,' with special concern for the challenges of the year 2000 and beyond. The Lausanne Covenant (1974) and Manila Manifesto (1989) served as the "authoritative" guidance and inspiration to evangelical workers and set the tone for evangelical missions in the future. Dialogue with other Christian churches like the Roman Catholic Church

had been initiated. Both see the common dangers posed to Christians throughout the world by the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, the alarming growth of secularism and materialism in the west, the increasing moral chaos in the secular societies, and their common concern for future missions in the third millennium.

**BUDDHISM'S CONCEPT OF MISSION
(QUEST FOR WISDOM AND COMPASSION)**

"Buddhism has been emphatically a missionary religion," K.N. Jayatilleke remarked. The Buddhist's ethos for missions is hinged on the universal mandate that the "dhamma has to be proclaimed to all beings." This is a kind of mission imperative for Buddhists. The general missionary attitude of Buddhism has been characterized as follows: tolerance, liberality, having a high degree of adaptability, and elasticity. Its way of propagation and dissemination to other lands was never through conquest nor migration but mainly through the spread of ideas. Buddhism is noted to adapt itself to each culture of the place where it propagates its faith. They try to translate the text to the vernacular language. Unlike the elitist and exclusive character of the Vedic religions which were limited to the Brahmins, Buddhism aims that everybody knows the liberating message of Buddha.¹⁰ Buddhism sets out to integrate religions and cultures it met, being in turn profoundly affected by them. The term inculturation can aptly characterize the missionary activities of Buddhism. Buddhism manifests a high degree of tolerance to other beliefs from within (believers of other persuasions even the so-called "unorthodox" or "heretical" views within Buddhism), and from without (people of other faiths/religion). It recognizes every form of a rival as a possessor of some degree of truth.

According to K. Jayatilleke, the tolerance in Buddhism can be attributed to the tolerance in Hinduism (e.g., between *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*). Some paradoxical worldviews or cosmological

¹⁰ To the point that sometimes, Ashoka forced the Vedic believers to change religion otherwise will be killed by the soldiers of the emperor.

theories in Hinduism attest to such attitude, for instance: that everything exists (*sabbam atthi*); that nothing exists (*sabbam natthi*); that the world is a unity (*sabbam ekattam*); that the world is a plurality (*sabbam puthattam*). Moreover, he said that the most pertinent basis for tolerance in Buddhism is: the critical yet unperturbed and impartial outlook of Buddha himself, the causal conception of the universe, and the conception of the Buddha as a being who discovers the operation of certain moral and spiritual laws and reveals them to us.¹¹ However, it must also be admitted that there were some dogmatists in the early stage of Buddhism. Some persist in their views by an exclusive claim for truth and those who even claimed to dispense salvation.¹² Buddha, for his part, advocated a critical outlook, recommending that they test the validity of any particular religions or philosophy that appeals to them in the light of their personal experience. He showed them how one should examine things dispassionately without being led by attachment (*chanda*), hatred (*dosa*), ignorance (*moha*), or fear (*bhaya*). The best attitude, when confronted by conflicting ideologies, would be: the right to doubt or feel uncertain, for one has raised a doubt in a situation in which one ought to suspend one's judgment; not to accept anything on the grounds of revelation, tradition or report or because it is a product of mere reasoning or because it is true from a standpoint or because of a superficial assessment of the facts or because it conforms with one's preconceived notions or because it is authoritative or because of the prestige of your teacher. This critical attitude was applied by Buddha himself by referring to his teaching, saying: "just as the experts test gold by burning it, cutting it, and applying it on a touchstone, my statements should be accepted only after critical examination and not out of respect for me."

¹¹ K. Jayatilleke, *The Buddhist Attitude to Other Religions* (London: The Wheel Publication No. 216, 1975), 20-21.

¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

**BUDDHISM'S VALUATION OF TRUTH CLAIMS
BY OTHER RELIGIONS**

For Buddhists, the notion that Buddha is the one who discovers the truth rather than one who has the monopoly of the truth is notably a source of tolerance. It allows other people to discover aspects of the truth or even the whole truth for themselves. Moreover, the idea that the *dhamma* is well-proclaimed (*svakkhato*), produces results without delay in this very life (*sanditthiko akaliko*), invites anyone to verify it for him/herself (*ehipassiko*), leading to the desired goal (*opanayiko*), and to be realized by the wise, and by each person for himself, does not easily prompt the sense of urgency nor a compulsion for convincing others to accept their truth claim. "However, the assertion that the possibility of salvation or spiritual growth outside Buddhism does not mean that Buddhism values all religions alike and considers them equally true." The relativist valuation of religion in early Buddhism does not presuppose nor imply the truth of all religions¹³ or religion-surrogates. Some types of religion are condemned as false and undesirable, while others are satisfactory in as far as they contain the essential core of beliefs and values central to religion, whatever their epistemic foundations may be. Buddhism regards some of the 'religion-surrogates' (e.g., non-theistic worldviews) to be on the same footing as 'practical religions.' Ananda reveals in *Sandaka Sutta* that Buddha taught that there were four 'pseudo-religions,' i.e. materialism,¹⁴ a religious philosophy that recommends an amoral ethic, one which denies free will and moral causation, and asserts that beings are either miraculously saved or doomed, and lastly, deterministic evolutionism. There are also false religions in the world and four

¹³ The word that can approximately refer to the term religion in Buddhism is *dhamma*, aside from *ditthi* (a religio-philosophical theory), or *darsana* (used in Indian thought), *Dhamma-vinaya* (denote both aspects of doctrine and discipline), or *brahma-carya* (literally means, religious life). The latter is used in the Vedic tradition to denote a broader interpretation of the "ideal life." It implies any way of life that was considered to be the ideal as a result of one accepting a certain view of life concerning the nature and destiny of man in the universe.

¹⁴ Materialism is a view on reality of the material world alone and denies survival; while deterministic evolutionism asserts the inevitability of eventual salvation for all.

religions that are unsatisfactory but not necessarily false (those which in some sense recognize the necessity for a concept of survival, moral values, freedom and responsibility, and the non-inevitability of salvation). Buddhism classifies religions accordingly. First, omniscience is claimed for its founder in all his conscious and unconscious periods of existence; secondly, religions based on revelation or tradition; thirdly, a religion founded on logical and metaphysical speculation; and fourthly, one that is merely pragmatic and is based on skeptical or agnostic foundations. These four are considered to be unsatisfactory in so far as they are based on uncertain foundations.¹⁵

Buddhism criticizes the belief in a personal God (*isvara*) like the belief of Makkali Gosala who believed that God predestined everything and that everything is preplanned and takes place in accordance with the fiat of God. Such theistic persuasion is viewed to be lacking man's final responsibility for his actions. Some 'theistic beliefs' however are not criticized. A theistic religion and philosophy which stresses the importance of human freedom, responsibility, and effort, encourage the cultivation of moral and spiritual values and the attainment of moral perfection, and offers the hope of fellowship with God, who is represented as a perfectly moral being, wise and powerful but not omniscient or omnipotent, is commended on pragmatic grounds. To the theists, the Buddha stresses the importance of cultivating selflessness, compassion, and freedom from malice, purity of mind, and self-mastery. Theistic beliefs, if grounded on these virtues and served not as a hindrance but as an incentive for moral and spiritual development, and therefore not discouraged on pragmatic grounds. Addressing the materialists, skeptics, determinists, or indeterminists, who denied survival, freedom, and responsibility, the Buddha uses a "wage argument" to show that on pragmatic grounds, "it is better to base one's life on the assumptions of survival, freedom, and responsibility; for otherwise, whatever happens, we stand to lose whereas on the other alternative we stand to gain."¹⁶ Buddha

¹⁵ K. Jayatilleke, *Facets of Buddhist Thoughts. Collected Essays* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2009), 288.

¹⁶B. Pascal, *Pensées* (1670) quoted by K.N. Jayatilleke in: *Facets of Buddhist Thoughts. Collected Essays* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2009), 294.

commented on the personal theistic view and a theistic materialism saying that "these religious teachers who do not see how these two views arise and cease to be, their good points and their defects and how one transcends them in accordance with the truth, are under the grip of greed, hate, and ignorance, and will not attain final redemption from suffering."

Buddhism has some common ground with some forms of materialism. Let me spell out some of them:

- a) Buddhism requires of man in society the pursuit of one's material as well as spiritual well-being;
- b) Where one's wealth is righteously earned and spent for one's good as well as that of others, without squandering or hoarding it;
- c) The man who is valued is a person who possesses the capacity to acquire wealth that he could not acquire before and also to increase it and at the same time possesses that insight which makes it possible for him to distinguish good and evil;
- d) Buddhism upholds the reality of this world as well as the next, and the Buddha speaks of the happiness of the average man as deriving from economic security, the enjoyment of one's wealth, freedom from debt, and a blameless moral and spiritual life;
- e) Buddhism proclaims the equality of man in the fullest sense of the term;
- f) There was absolute spiritual equality as well for man, for anyone could aspire to become a Brahma or a Buddha;
- g) There are no chosen castes, chosen churches, or chosen individuals;
- h) Buddha taught that the best way to ensure peace and prosperity in one's kingdom is not by wasting the country's resources in performing religious sacrifices but by ensuring full employment and thereby developing the economy (*Digha Nikaya*, 1.135).

These principles show that Buddhism underscores the importance of the material realities of life. Both freedom and economic security are necessary ingredients for man's material and spiritual advancement. And freedom includes the freedom to criticize each other's political or religious philosophies without rancor or hatred in the heart. The truth cannot be forced on others. All one has to do is to help others to discover it, and the greatest help we can give others especially in imparting spiritual truth is to try not to speak out of greed, hatred, and ignorance, but out of unselfishness, wisdom, and compassion.

There are various arguments to claim whether Buddhism is theistic or not, agnostic, materialist, impersonal theist, atheist, etc. Yet none of these labels are sufficient to describe Buddhism, which transcends them all. It is important to distinguish Buddhism from all of them, for the Buddhist attitude to other religions would depend on the view we take of Buddhism itself.

Buddhism regards herself as "a right way of life." It may consider herself as a religion in so far as it asserts survival, moral values, freedom and responsibility, the non-inevitability of salvation and is also verifiably true. It renders a higher reckoning of religions being a "right view of life" because their impulses involve the desire for self-centered gratification, desire for self-centered pursuits and for continued existence in whatsoever form, and illusions. This view on the "right way of life" is comprehensive enough to contain and recognize the basic truths of all higher religions that assert survival, moral recompense, freedom, responsibility, and inevitability of salvation. While these core beliefs are recognizable in many religions, it can be said that these core beliefs are not always present in all their phases of development, and in all their several strands of beliefs which vary from every social context.

THE MISSIONARY ROLE OF THE SANGHA

The term *Sangha* means an assembly or a community. There are two kinds of Sangha, namely: the *Savaka-Sangha* or the community of (noble) disciples, and the *Bhikkhu Sangha* or the community of *Bhikkus* or monks. The former is also called the *Noble*

Sangha while the latter is named conventional *Sangha*. These two kinds of *Sangha* are mutually beneficial and complementary in the realization of Buddhist ideals. Kondanna, one of the ascetics who followed Buddha, pleaded for ordination and was admitted as a *Bhikku*. He is thus considered as Buddha's first disciple and since then came to be known as *Annakondanna*. He is attributed to be the first member of the *Sangha* or the Buddhist Order of monks. And when he gained the "Eye of Truth," he became the first member of the Noble *Sangha*.

During the early years of Buddha's career, the members of the *Sangha* of monks were *Ariya*. Their mission turned only outward to increase the membership in the Noble *Sangha* and to receive those who are willing and prepared into the monastic *Sangha*. When the membership of the *Sangha* blossomed, the monastic *Sangha* functioned more as a center to train the unenlightened members. However, the energy of the leaders in the monastic *Sangha* had to be divided between the inside and the outside monasteries. Later, a small *Sangha* of monks was dispatched to foreign lands or distant places to spread Buddhism. Oftentimes, there was only one monk or a group of two or three was sent out to do this task and the monk had to depend on local men to believe and ordain before a local *Sangha* of monks could be established. The different monastic *Sanghas* in different lands lived and worked in various surroundings and among peoples of different cultures. In time, these communities developed their new roles and traditions based on their local cultures. Despite the differences among the communities, the *Vinaya* keeps all these communities interrelated.

In the reign of King Asoka (310 BCE), nine missions of monks were sent out as *Dhamma* messengers to propagate the *Dhamma* in different countries. One of the groups headed by the reputed daughter of the emperor, Bhikkuni Sanghamitta, went to Sri Lanka for this mission and thereby establishing the Bhikkuni Order in Sri Lanka, complementing the work of her brother Mahina Thera who is himself credited to have introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka. In Thailand, it was Elders Sona and Uttara who came to Suvannabhumi and established Buddhism there.

The *Sangha* community takes the missionary injunction from the words of the Buddha himself who sends out his disciples at that time saying: "Go forth, O Bhikkus, for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, for the good, for the happiness of gods and men." Indeed the purpose of the Buddha is for the well-being of the world. He wants the world to be members of the noble *Sangha*. The idea was to turn the world into a community of noble or truly civilized people. For this reason, the *Sangha* community has been vested with the main function of teaching all people, regardless of caste, class, sex, nationality, the dhamma that will help them in their self-development to become *Ariya* or *Arya* (noble or truly civilized). The monks will lead people in creating the universal community of noble, enlightened, and truly civilized people.

The community of *Sangha* monks or *Bhikkhu-Sangha* has been established, both as the instrument and as the starting point and the stronghold, for working out the idea of instituting the universal *Sangha* of Dhammically civilized people. According to A. Payutto, "the main function of this conventional *Sangha* is to expound the *Dhamma* and spread it far and wide in such a way that the common people may understand and practice it, developing themselves in their progress along the path of being *Ariya* (noble or Dhammically civilized) and thus joining the Noble *Sangha* or civilized world community." The mission of the *Sangha* community is to achieve the supreme goals of Buddhism which is peace and freedom. These noble aims can be achieved if every monk exerts itself unflinchingly to maintain and universalize the Noble *Sangha* of disciples. Peace consists of both external social peace, freedom from strife, dissension, commotion, violence, etc.) and internal peace (inner peace of mind or spiritual peace). On the other hand, freedom consists of a) people ought to enjoy the basic freedom of life in absence of the fundamental insecurities and dangers that threaten their existence, e.g., poverty, diseases, calamities, etc; b) social freedom, i.e., the absence of human oppression and exploitation; c) final freedom of man's inner life, which is freedom from mental suffering and the greed, hatred, and delusion that corrupt the mind and cause people to commit all kinds of evils. It

is the firm foundation on which to work out any plan or project to overcome the basic insecurities and dangers of life. Freedom can also be categorized as physical, social, emotional, and intellectual freedom. The three graded goals must also be taught to people, namely: benefits for the present or temporal welfare like wealth, the sufficiency of food and other necessities of life; benefits for the future or spiritual welfare like devotion to ways of the good, morality, benevolence, wisdom, etc.; and the supreme benefit or the highest good consisting in having a mind that is clean and clear, happy and secure, undefiled by greed, hatred, and delusion. The three phases of good are the good of one's own or one's welfare; the good of others or other's welfare; and the common good or welfare both of oneself and others. In sum, the mission of the *Sangha* of monks is to work for the prevailing of the three graded goals and the three phases of good, for the realization of the three levels of freedom and thus ideal for the establishment and perpetuation of the Noble *Sangha* of disciples.

**OPPRESSIVE AND LIBERATING DIMENSIONS
IN BUDDHIST'S MISSION:**

Oppressive and negative aspects of each religion can also be a source of MISSIONARY motives and activities especially when the selfishness of a certain dominant group influences it and use religion to justify or legitimize themselves. These negative dimensions can be traced in each element of religion (i.e., the way the founders are reported and interpreted, the writing and interpretation of the sacred scriptures, the worship and rituals, the community organization and exercise of authority, and the teachings in general). It is paradoxical to note that though Buddhism had always been portrayed as the religion of peace, one has to acknowledge the reality that Buddhism has also been used by some groups to exploit other peoples. Brian Victoria,¹⁷ in his book entitled "*Zen at War*" (1997) disclosed a Japanese Zen establishment's dedicated support of the imperial war machine from

¹⁷ See the book review made by Josh Baran on Brian D. Victoria, *Zen at War*, (Weatherhill: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), <http://www.darkzen.com/articles/zenholy.html>

the late 1800s through WW II. He chronicled how prominent Zen leaders perverted the Buddhist teaching to encourage blind obedience, mindless killing, and total devotion to the emperor. One Zen master, Shako Soen (1859-1919), who served as a chaplain in the Japanese army in their campaign against the Russians in 1904, wrote: "I wished to inspire our valiant soldiers with the ennobling thoughts of Buddha, to enable them to die on the battlefield with confidence that the task in which they are engaged is great and noble I wish to convince them.... that this war is not a mere slaughter of their fellow-beings, but that they are combating an evil." (Doesn't that sound like Pres. George Bush in his War against Terror)? Again, Soen wrote, "in the present hostilities into which Japan has entered with great reluctance, she pursues no egotistic purpose, but seeks the subjugation of evils hostile to civilization, peace, and enlightenment." Soen even used the phrases "The just war," "war of compassion" fought by bodhisattva soldiers against the enemies of Buddha. Seki Seisetsu, another Zen Master went on national radio just before the fall of Nanking saying: "Showing the utmost loyalty to the emperor is identical with engaging in the religious practice of *Mahayana* Buddhism. This is because *Mahayana* Buddhism is identical with the law of the sovereign." He then called for the "extermination of the red devils (communists) both in Japan and in China. D.T. Suzuki holds that 'religion should, first of all, seek to preserve the existence of the state.' The enemies of the state are considered "unruly heathens" who needed to be tamed and conquered or who would otherwise "interrupt the progress of humanity. He called, 'going to war' as a 'religious conduct.' The Soto Zen School admitted in their official "Statement of Repentance" (992) that "the Soto Zen school as a religious organization supported Japan's acts of aggression in China. Under the pretext of 'overseas missionary activities,' it supported Japanese militarism and even participated actively in that militarism. The infamous Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia that is dominantly a Buddhist state, could unthinkably annihilate millions of fellow Buddhist Cambodians who dissented against the Pol Pot government. The incessant ethnic conflict between the Tamils and the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka is another case in point. T. Balasuriya pointed out that on the side of the Sinhalese, they feel that the cause of the conflict was due to their feeling of isolation in the world in which they have a mission to preserve and propagate

Buddhism in its purest form.¹⁸ There is a sort of subconscious fear of an Indian invasion evoked by the historical memories of Pandya, Chola, Chera, and Kalinga peoples' invasion of their land. These are a few examples to show how religions, like Buddhism, can use their teachings, language, symbols, etc., in a perverted and twisted manner to support nationalism, ethnocentrism, patriarchy, violence, conflicts, etc., and to advance the interest of one group over and against the other. Such aspects of religion tend to devalue some persons, divide people and groups and legitimize privilege.

While we acknowledge the negative or the seamy side of past missionary concepts and activities, we also have to recognize the liberating contributions of the mission in the project of social transformation and total human development. Liberative missionary elements/resources can be culled from the primordial experiences of the founders of religions. This primordial liberative experience, according to T. Balasuriya, is an intuition of the meaning of life, of the nature of its problems, their causes, and the path towards liberation from them. This intuition shows the way towards self-realization and fulfillment - generally in this life and in a future form of existence beyond death. It is other-centered, making for human growth and self-validating. The depth of experience renders to the founders of these religions a strong conviction to live according to its imperatives and are willing to make any sacrifices necessary for this. They communicate their experience to others by their commitment to its message. Those who accept the message do so because of the personality of the founder and the ennobling attraction of the message. From this primordial experience of the founders, the core values of a religious community can be discerned. These core values are the basic or foundational concerns of religion, specially as taught and testified to by the founder and the founding community. For Buddhism, this primordial liberative experience can be identified when the Buddha sets out 'from the palace and chose a life of homelessness. He becomes aware of human suffering and of evil. His struggle against the Evil one, Mara, and attainment of Enlightenment are all significant events of such experience that are wellsprings of

¹⁸ Tissa Balasuriya, "Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and the Responsibility of the Theologian," in *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 236-251.

Buddhism.¹⁹ This primordial experience presents not only an explanation of the past and present but also hope or direction for the future. It indicates how human fulfillment can be realized by following its teachings. It can be a source of a missionary *ethos*. The understanding of the hope for the future may be related to the sense of destiny of a particular people- of a given race, class, or ethnic group. It may then be considered in a sense that is competitive vis-à-vis other group/s. Hence, the sense of destiny while spurning a group to greater activity can lead to competitive conflicts. It would therefore be contradictory to the primordial liberative experience. It is therefore important to take note of what memory of the future motivates particular communities, how far is it transcending the limits of a race, ethnic group, religion or not.

T. Balasuriya spells out some core values in Buddhism which can serve as a common ground for any missionary project or collaborative endeavor towards total human liberation. Balasuriya claimed that Buddhism is a religion of self-sacrificing, self-emptying, and not a self-gratifying or self-seeking religion. The four sublime states of *metta* (loving-kindness); *maitreya* (a melting heart); *karuna* (compassion); *mudita* (gladness at another's well-being); and, *upekkha* (equanimity). The teachings on the 10 Perfections (*Dasa Paramita*) are values that can make others and oneself grow: almsgiving/self-giving; virtuous conduct; renunciation; comprehension; energy; patience; truth; resolve; loving-kindness; and, equanimity. Buddhism teaches one to avoid evils of greed, undue attachment or acquisitiveness, selfishness, anger, jealousy, and delusion. *Ahimsa* (non-violence) is of prime value in conflict management. The principle of cause-effect aids in finding the root causes and prompts one to be conscious of them and spurn them with awareness, knowledge, and wisdom. Buddhism presents a message of universal peace- to all creatures, humans, animals, plants, etc. Buddhism insists on wholeness and the integrity of creation. The most sublime feature of the Buddha's message is its absolute anti-authoritarian attitude. He respects the intrinsic value and integrity of each and every being. In the ultimate sense, no

¹⁹ T. Balasuriya, "Religions and Liberation," in *Buddhist Christian Dialogue*, (1990), 138.

being is intrinsically superior to another in any sense. Everyone is completely capable of attaining the ultimate supreme perfection exactly as the Buddha did. "Everyone is a potential Buddha, not different from the original Buddha in any way."

As one might have noticed already from the arguments above, the ambivalent nature of religions and their missionary ideals portray both the liberating and the oppressing aspects in Buddhism as well as in other religions. The wellspring for a liberating aspiration can be gleaned from the core values, the primordial experiences, and the memory of the future. When the selfish, narrow, triumphalistic, and exclusivistic interest of each group or religion prevails, the result becomes disastrous. This is also true when all these factors color the missionary outlook and activities of every religion. The challenge, however, is to muster and to re-cover these positive aspects to work for a mission that is founded on dialogue and right relationships from within and from without, through an *intra-* and *inter-religious* missionary ethos.

CONFRONTATION OF BOTH MODELS OF MISSION

Aloysius Pieris²⁰ narrates this story about the encounter between Christian missionaries and the Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka:

At that time, some Protestant missionaries were hopping from one monastery to another, speaking about Christ. The Buddhists accepted them, gave them a cup of tea, and smiled. The missionaries left greatly upset because the Buddhists just smiled without accepting Christ. The Buddhists, in turn, and as a token of goodwill, invited the Protestants to one of their ceremonies. The Protestants took this as a diabolical plot to belittle their evangelizing efforts. For them, the hour of darkness had come, and the hour of grace must strike. So, on the day of the ceremony, despite ostentatious assurances that

²⁰ Aloysius Pieris, "Two Encounters in My Theological Journey," in *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 142.

they were guests of honor, the missionaries distributed leaflets rather derogatory to Buddhism, with slurs on the character and person of the Buddha. Since then, no Buddhist monk could ever again bring himself to trust a Christian missionary - or a Christian for that matter.

This anecdote discloses to us a concrete confrontation between these two traditions. If we locate the possible causes of this tension, we can gather several factors that are based on their self-understanding and from the mission concepts derived therein. Firstly, the tension between the paradigm of mission as 'proclamation' in contrast with 'dialogue.' The Evangelicals reject dialogue because for them it is "derogatory to Christ and the gospel." For them, dialogue implies that "Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies." A tinge of triumphalism and Christian superiority underpins this position. An attitude of exclusivity and the "Concept of the Elect" can also be deduced from this claim. Attitudes of these kinds cannot foster dialogue. Moreover, tensions are inevitable and dialogue cannot go any further if one does not recognize the "equality" and the validity of truth claims from other groups or traditions.

The second tension can be located between 'tolerance' and 'dialogue.' Although Buddhism is reputed for its tolerant attitude, we must also note that tolerance doesn't necessarily mean dialogue. It can also be a source of conflict. By tolerating others, you just allow others to live as they want to as long as they don't bring any harm nor interfere to oneself. There is no intra-dialogue and may not create a space for the recognition of the truth claims of others. Moreover, tolerance may imply that one's concern may redound to self-preservation. Hence, the responsibility towards others and society can be downplayed. But on a personal and practical reckoning, as we can glean from this tension in Sri Lanka, the tolerance of Buddhism is more tolerable than the arrogance of the Evangelicals.

The third is the tension between "instrumentalization" and "authentic mission." The distortion of mission and religion, in general, comes in when human factors like greed, power, self-

interest, etc. creep in. This is true to both Buddhism and the Christian Evangelicals. We have already indicated in the discussion earlier how the mission had been used or instrumentalized for the furtherance of the interest of individuals and groups. This dimension becomes a factor why other religions are suspicious of "missionaries." Defining an authentic missionary agenda is crucial in the confrontation of two religious' traditions. A caveat can be said here: "indeed many people are genuinely engaged in the quest for truth. But the danger is, there are many religions and traditions within each religion that are headed by authorities who promise them to teach the truth. Once you agree and try out some authorities, it might mean that you're thrown into prison, incarcerated both spiritually and physically." In this sense, many religions and 'isms' (even 'mission-ism') can be dangerous institutions that are waiting to capture and murder the psyches and even physical lives of innocent human beings. Therefore, religions have become a live danger to humanity today. It is the 'faith' that opens the door to this danger. Once you repose faith in authority, you will even remember to challenge or even question it, because the authorities have brainwashed you so completely that you will no longer exist, i.e., that you lost your freedom and individuality completely. Hence, G. Dharmasiri offers some criteria to discern the profound basis of our truth claims, namely: whether these truths generate wisdom, by opening our minds rather than clamping them down by restricting thinking ability thereby not letting ourselves be used by others as part of their trip, as part of their egomania or group-mania; and secondly, if they generate "compassion," by being consistently moral. These two are the ultimate refuge and salvation of our beleaguered humanity.

The fourth source of tension is caused by an 'exclusivistic' paradigm for a mission. Mission concepts that are anchored on an exclusivistic paradigm can be a source of dialectical tensions among religions. The absolute claim for truth coupled with religious (and human) arrogance are sources of conflicts and confrontations among religions. Paul Knitter proposed that mission should be based on a 'pluralistic-correlational' model than 'exclusivistic.' Although he said that if Christians ground the uniqueness of Christ in the Reign of God and the symbol of his death are

resurrection, exclusivistic, inclusivistic, and pluralistic-correlational modes of relating with other religions are possible. Exclusive in the sense that the faith in Jesus will challenge any religious belief or practice (also within Christianity) that does not promote a this-worldly engagement for love and justice, especially for oppressed persons and the oppressed earth; inclusive in that it will clarify and fulfill the potential of other religions to further what Christians call the Reign of God; pluralistic in that it will recognize and be itself fulfilled by new insights found in other traditions as to how we can enable humanity and the earth to have life and to have it more abundantly.²¹

The fifth source of tension can be located between the "primordial foundational experience" and the "historical contingent experiences." The vocation for mission is derived from the primordial/foundational liberative experience of the founders in every religion. For the Buddhists, their missionary mandate is derived from the teachings of Buddha, while for the Christian Evangelicals, it is derived from Jesus. In time, the foundations of these injunctions are re-interpreted, re-appropriated, and changed, making them at times indistinguishable already from their primordial liberating experience. This is what I would call the historical contingent experiences. Tensions can come in when these historical contingent experiences are universalized and absolutized, and alienated from the present and dynamic historical contingencies. On this score, some authors would suggest that religions must go back to their original liberating experiences. Religions must be *re-founded*. T. Balasuriya already pointed out earlier the importance of going back to the liberating primordial experiences which are sources of core values of a religious community. The dynamic re-appropriation of these core values in every historical epoch cannot help but proclaim the liberating message which is rooted in the primordial experience.

²¹ Paul F. Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 101.

A THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION:

In this section, I will give a short theological evaluation of the confrontation described above.

Let me begin by quoting H. Kraemer: "All prognosis about the future religious and spiritual development of mankind will have to adjust itself to the new fact that all great religions and conceptions of life may become worldwide in their effects. Islam, Buddhism, the great eastern idealistic systems are no longer confined to definite sections and regions of the world. Their latent dynamics, whether spiritual or political, may become world factors." This interesting article written several years back sounded like a prophetic foretelling now as we discern the global interactions of cultures and religions. One of the key factors that paved the way for the "global" scope of religions can certainly be attributed to "the mission." Hence, our concepts of the mission will eventually fashion what the world will be like in the future. But this will not be that easy. Tensions will have to be confronted. As we can gather from the case studies between the two traditions of Christian Evangelicals and Buddhism, some insights about the mission will have to guide us in shaping our world for the future. Let us mention some of these insights:

1. Based on their foundational experiences, religions arise because of the experience and reflection of pain and suffering. The mission is a response on how to overcome them. Hence, to be faithful to the primordial experience of every religion, the mission has to address the problems of suffering and pain in every epoch in history. Mission has to take part in every endeavor for integral liberation in order to overcome suffering and pain. Both Christianity and Buddhism manifest from their core values the need to be engaged in works of justice, liberation, and peace.

2. Our starting point in doing the mission must be the situation of the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, and the deprived sectors of society. This is the frontier area where we can re-enliven the primordial liberative experience. Moreover, it is also a venue for dialogue with other religions. We must note that while

there are liberating aspects in every religion, there are oppressing elements as well. Hence, based on justice and liberation, dialogue allows us to see from our tradition which elements contribute to liberate or oppress others. It can also be the basis to criticize and challenge other traditions. The mission must be able to echo the voice of the powerless.

3. Proclamation is the right of every religion. However, this right must also be accorded to others in freedom and equality.

4. D. Bosch²² brings out the importance of evangelism but cited the following features, which for me are laudable descriptions of how proclamation or evangelism must be understood:

a. It is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to all who do not believe in him, announcing the forgiveness of sins, calling people to repentance and faith, and a new life in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is more than "soul-winning" for the ultimate concern of the latter is only the salvation of souls that must endure when the entire world has perished. Evangelism is concerned with the salvation of people (not just souls) in terms of all their relationships.

b. It is aimed at people being brought into the visible community of believers. It is neither proselytism nor a form of ecclesiastical propaganda and must never be used as its primary objective the enlarging of the membership of a particular church or the promoting of particular doctrines.

c. Evangelism is involving witnessing what God has done, is doing, and will do. Christians actualize this by word and deed, proclamation and presence, explication, and example.

d. Evangelism is an invitation. People are drawn to the gospel because of God's love. It must not be undertaken as coaxing or as a threat. It is neither an offering of psychological panacea for

²² Bosch, "Evangelism...", 153.

people's frustrations and disappointments nor inculcating guilt feelings so that people in despair, as it were may turn to Christ. It is not aimed at scaring people into repentance and conversion with stories about the horror of hell.

e. Evangelism must be contextual. It involves a "dialogue" between the situation in which people find themselves and the evangelist's particular understanding of scripture. It involves not only individuals but also particular communities.

f. Evangelism then can be defined as that dimension and activity of the church's mission which, by word and deed and in the light of particular conditions, offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a radical reorientation of her or his life, which involves, among other things, deliverance from slavery to the world and its powers; embracing Christ as savior and Lord; becoming a living member of his community, the church; being incorporated into his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on the earth; and being integrated into God's purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ.

g. While it is true that evangelism must proclaim that the offer of salvation is a gift with its assurance of eternal bliss, however, we must be wary that if this message gets into the center stage of evangelism, it is degraded to a consumer product. It may foster pious self-centeredness.

5. The mission must be seen within the dynamics of an ad-intra and ad-extra orientation. The mission should create a "space" to deepen, rectify, or broaden one's tradition (ad-intra) while at the same time being able to "go beyond" that space to meet other traditions. It is therefore important to view mission as a "pilgrimage" towards the "way" or the "Path" towards the Ultimate Truth. (Most religions consider themselves as "the way." Early Christian communities consider themselves to be the followers of the Way; Buddha is noted to be the teacher of the Way or the 8-Fold Path). We are "co-pilgrims" with other religious believers in our common journey.

6. Religion has the potential for violence because of its exclusive and absolute truth claims. Based on this, they try to convince others of their truth. However, conflicts are not necessarily caused by religion per se. Various factors take a "religious" disguise in order to promote their interest. Hence, religion has been instrumentalized to cover up certain motives or interests (note how the CIA uses religion and how Zen Buddhism was used during the Japanese wars). The conflict in Sri Lanka for instance, though popularly regarded as a religious conflict between the Hindus and Buddhists, was very much related to its ethnic background and distorted historical memory.

7. Mission has been associated with "historical memory." Christianity has often been associated with the western colonizing power. Hence, Christian missionaries have to reckon with the strong suspicion coming from other religions. Mission has been regarded as a pretext for future colonization. In this situation, the concept of mission as witness or presence is an important paradigm. Moreover, as T. Balasuriya pointed out, the mission involves the healing of past (wrongly constructed) memories. These memories evoke fear of recurrence (that a new invasion is imminent), and the subsequent defenses of self-assertion. These reactions can aptly be called "counter-mission."

8. The mission must include both inculturation and inter-culturation. As we have seen through the endeavors made by the Buddhists and Christian Evangelicals, the mission can be effective or could have a long-term impact if its message had been inculturated into a particular situation. The confrontation of two cultures necessitates a dialogical interplay or an inter-culturation process. This interaction of two cultures involves the dynamic process of actively contributing (either through proclamation, witnessing, presence, or dialogue on various levels) and passively absorbing elements (intra-religious dialogue, inculturation, etc.) from the other cultures or religions.

9. Evangelization in the past was enacted as an adjunct to colonialism serving the interest of the western colonizers. In that

same context, evangelization was demonstrated as a form of cultural imperialism. Mission was shaped in the form of transplantation.²³ Transplantation as a form of evangelization operates within a "sowing" perspective. Fr. Honda Tetsuro, OFM,²⁴ rejects this paradigm by arguing that evangelization must be construed as "reaping" than sowing. Arguing from scriptures²⁵, Julio Labayen pointed out that "at creation, and more so at the Incarnation, the word had already been sown. And it was God - the Creator and Word Incarnate - who sowed the seed that is Himself, the Word of God. In which case, evangelization is not to sow what had already been sown by God Himself. It is rather reaping the harvest from the seed that God sowed and nurtured by his abiding and life-giving presence in his creation which He holds in unity." Mission shifts from inculturation to inter-culturation. Inculturation begins with acknowledging that Christ was already present in the non-Christian cultures. John Taylor²⁶ proffers this basic missionary disposition: "Our first task in approaching, another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes for the ground we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on people's dreams. More seriously still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival. The mission is understood as helping non-Christians to discover the active presence of Christ in their lives." David Bosch²⁷ in his book, *Transforming Mission* pointed out some limitations and ambiguities of this approach. Firstly, the tendency to overstress discontinuity from the past (e.g., theological and ecclesial ancestry). This ambiguity is demonstrated in the tension between IDENTITY and RELEVANCE. Secondly, the tension between universal validity on the one hand, and specific or contingent validity on the other; there is a danger of absolutism and unbridled relativism or the risk of contextualism and absolutism. Another ambiguity is the concept of "reading the signs of the times."

²³ A term used by Frans Wijzen in "Mission: from Inculturation to Interculturation."

²⁴ Quoted by Julio X. Labayen, *Revolution and the Church of the Poor*, (Manila: Socio-Pastoral Institute and Claretian Publications), 123-132.

²⁵ See parables in Mk. 4:3-8; Lk.8:5-8; Mt. 13:3-8

²⁶ John V. Taylor, *Primal Vision*, (SCM Press, 2001), 10.

²⁷ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll: Orbis books, 2011), 455-457.

Is there anyone who has special access to read God's will or presence? The interpretation of the "signs of the times" has relative validity and involves a lot of risks. Moreover, inculturation and contextualization are not only about theory and praxis, but also about *poiesis* (i.e. the imaginative creation or representation of evocative images). David Bosch then proposes an important principle to note, and that is: every *theologia localis* must challenge and *fecundate theologia oecumenica*, and vice versa. Two dialectical principles provide a scheme to limit and at the same time to broaden the process of inculturation: the indigenizing principle, i.e., affirming that the gospel is at home with the culture and vice versa, and the pilgrim principle which warns us that the gospel will put us out of step with society. Inculturation animates, directs, and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it to bring a "new creation," says Pedro Arrupe. This is called the critical function of inculturation, or what Michael Amaladoss calls "double inculturation." Today, as Prof. Wijsen suggests, a shift from "inculturation" to "interculturalization" is proposed to acknowledge the present realities of the mission. It expresses the concept that "the process of inculturation is not simply the interaction between the gospel on the one hand and culture on the other, as if they represent monolithic meaning systems, but between multiple cultural orientations." The central goal of this approach²⁸ is "for the participants in the mission to be able, sincerely ready, and willing to listen to the other."²⁹ Interculturalization involves a reflexive process that R. Panikkar calls the Intra-Religious dialogue.³⁰

10. Mission has to be located within the eschatological vision of God. This vision is enunciated in some scriptural passages such as 1Cor. 15:28 which proclaims that the goal of history is the reconciliation of all things so that God will be all in all, in Col. 1:20 (reconcile all things), Gal. 3:28 (there will be no more Jews nor Greeks), 1 Cor. 12:4-11, Rom. 8:21, Jn. 1:9, 16; 17:21-23; Rev. 21:1-

²⁸ Compare with the aim of cross-cultural theology in Laurenti Magesa, "Mission in the Post-Cold War Era," *Exchange* 30, no.3 (2001): 205-206.

²⁹ See *Ibid.*, 206.

³⁰ See: Raimon Panikkar's book *Intra-Religious Dialogue*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).

5; Eph. 1:10, (to unite all things under Christ), etc. Mission construed as the proclamation of Salvation in the coming of the kingdom is not only an individual event, nor of the soul towards an otherworldly space. Rather, it is the reconciliation and re-integration of the whole of the cosmos. God's salvation has a universal value, not only in space and time but also in its human and cosmic depth. It is only from this perspective that we can appreciate mission as dialogue, presence, proclamation, inculturation, and inter-culturation. A mission will have to be tempered, re-molded, re-founded in the framework of the eschatological foundation - in the 'already' but not 'yet.'

11. In Asia, Dr. Georg Evers³¹ remarked, mission history is a story of failure rather than of success. Despite two thousand years of missionary work in Asian nations, barely 5% of its population belongs only to one of the Christian churches. Evers observed that the Christian missionaries operating at different times, using different methods of presenting the Christian message have not been successful in reaching the great majority of the Asian majority. But my opinion may slightly differ, "it is not that mission has failed. It is because it has not yet been tried."

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³¹ Lecture notes of Dr. Georg Evers, *Church, and Theology in Aisa*, Lecture at Nijmegen, November 7, 2001.