

# Holistic Mission in the Context of Asia

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## Introduction

Let me begin with a story of a Thai boy, which appeared in the quarterly journal, *Mission Frontiers* (September-October 2005).

Consider the story of Chai, a Buddhist from Thailand. "Thailand has not become a Christian country, because in the eyes of Thai, to become a Christian means you can no longer be Thai. That's because in Thailand 'Christian' equals 'foreigner.'" So When Chai gave his life to Jesus, he began referring to himself as a "Child of God" and a "new Buddhist." He then related a subsequent incident in which he had a conversation with a Buddhist monk on a train. "After I listened to his story, I told him that he was missing one thing in life. He asked me what that was and I told him it was Jesus." Chai continued to tell us the story in which the monk not only gave his life to Christ, but also invited Chai to come to his Buddhist temple to share about Jesus. Then Chai said, "At the beginning of our conversation the monk asked me, 'Are you a Christian?' and I said 'No.' I explained that Christianity and Jesus are two different things. Salvation is in Jesus, not in Christianity. If I had said I was a 'Christian,' the conversation would have ended at the point." But it didn't end. And the monk now walks with Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

This story has clearly indicated that proselytism is totally different from "following Jesus Christ." Likewise, the meaning of conversion that we usually read in the Bible is also different from Christianization. Christianization is similar to proselytism while conversion means following Christ as Chai has followed him. While Christianization is cheap mission, conversion, or following Christ, is costly and life giving mission.

In this paper, I would like to point out the following facts so that we will know more about the context of Asia, and thereby we will realize how much holistic mission is needed in the Asian context:

1. Most of Asian people are living in poor and corrupt societies.
2. The church mission in Asia so far is not very successful.
3. Neither Christianization nor proselytism, but holistic mission, is in line with the teaching of Jesus Christ.
4. Today, like ecumenical theologians, evangelical theologians have strongly defended holistic mission in their missiologies.

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<sup>2</sup> Frank Decker, "When Christian Does Not Translate," in *Mission Frontiers: The Bulletin of the U.S. Center for World Mission*, Vol. 27, No. 5, Ralph D. Winter, ed. (September-October 2005), 8.

Before I make my points, here is a brief definition of Proselytism and Conversion.

## **Proselytism and Conversion**

In 1622, a Roman Catholic organization, Sacra Congregatio de Propasanda Fidei, was founded. It was clearly stated that the focus of the organization would be on non-Catholics, not on non-Christians. Until 1830 its spotlight was on Protestants in Europe. Today, in proselytism, any person who is not a church member is perceived as a prospect to be won. Whether intended or not, this mentality suggests that it is not by grace, but by becoming adherent of one denomination that people will be saved.

David J. Bosch, in his book, *Transforming Mission*, says that proselytism is very similar to church extension. In this program, he says, "Evangelism became the expansion of the church through increased membership. Conversion was a numerical affair. Success in evangelism was measured by counting the numbers of baptism, of confessions, and of communions."<sup>3</sup> He goes on to say that the focus of evangelism should not be on the church but on the irrupting reign of God. According to him,

Conversion is not the joining of a community in order to procure 'eternal salvation.' It is, rather, a change in allegiance in which Christ is accepted as Lord and center of one's life. A Christian is not simply somebody who stands a better chance of being 'saved,' but a person who accepts the responsibility to serve God in the life and promote God's reign in all its forms. Conversion involves personal cleansing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewal in order to become a participant in the mighty works of God.<sup>4</sup>

## **What is Holistic Mission?**

From my study of World Mission, I simply understand that holistic mission is sharing the Gospel in the context of ministering to the total needs of a person. A more comprehensive definition of holistic mission was given by CCA in the *Concept Paper* for this consultation-dialogue on Holistic Mission in the Context of Asian Plurality:

Holistic Mission is:

1. Attending to the needs of the total person;
2. Affirming the divine image within them;
3. Opposing the forces that distort that divine image; and
4. Assisting the flowering or blooming of that divine image into its fullness.

In Luke 10:57-62, Jesus Christ encountered three persons through whom Jesus gave us hints for the meaning of following Christ. The first person revealed that he wanted to follow Christ, but after Jesus warned that Christ had no place to lay his head, we hear nothing of his reaction. The second person was asked to follow Jesus, but his priority was not to follow Christ. The third person wanted to follow Christ, but he could not detach from his physical binding with his family. Jesus said this kind of person is not "fit for the service

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<sup>3</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 415.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

in the Kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Following Christ is the God-given mission for us, which is costly and dangerous, but a good opportunity for the Christian.<sup>5</sup> It is neither Christianization nor proselytism. If our mission was proselytism, Jesus would request the above persons to convert to Judaism because at that time Jesus was regarded as a leader who believed in Judaism. We do not see in the Bible that these persons followed him, due to the costly nature of following Jesus Christ.

The practice of Christianization or proselytization is an easy task, but following Christ is a difficult job, a dangerous job. Following-Christ-mission is proclaiming, sharing, and living out the good news of fullness of life for all the children in the household of God. This is our God-given mission (*missio Dei*), the path that we are supposed to follow as Christians who are followers of Jesus Christ.

### **Asian Context: Poor and Corrupt Society**

Having been in a rotten economic situation in Myanmar for more than 30 years now, the young Buddhist monks in Myanmar could no longer tolerate the economic crisis and, therefore, they staged public demonstrations against the government policy in September 2007. Though it was begun in a small town in Upper Burma, the climax of the demonstration was in Rangoon where about 100,000 people participated with the monks in the demonstrations. The protest was initiated and organized by young Buddhist monks. The images of the corrupt Myanmar government had been watched by the world community when the Myanmar government cracked down the demonstration, killing at least 32 people, including Buddhist monks who peacefully demonstrated against the economic policy of the country. The world could not believe that the Myanmar government would be as cruel as they had seen the killing through public media.

In its 2007 Corruption Perspective Index which was released in September 26, 2007, the Corruption Watch Dog Organization ranked Myanmar the most corrupt country in the world, tied with Somalia. Their rank number is 179, the highest in the world. Laos was ranked 168, Cambodia 162, Indonesia 143, and Philippines 131. We should not forget that we are living in corrupt Asian societies.

Per Capita Income Around the World was also released last year using the Atlas method. Ethiopia is the poorest country in the world, ranked as number 208, and its per capita income is US\$90. The following are some Asian countries and their ranks and per capita income.<sup>6</sup>

<i>Country</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Per Capita Income US\$</i>
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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> The statistics can be seen at [www.success-and-culture.net](http://www.success-and-culture.net)

Cambodia	183	310
Laos PDR	179	320
Bangladesh	174	400
Vietnam	164	480
Indonesia	146	810
Philippines	135	1080
Thailand	104	2190

Myanmar's per capita income could not be ranked because the government statistics are deemed not reliable. Yet, it is estimated to be US\$300, lower than that of Cambodia. My point is: we are living in very poor communities.

### Asian Context: The Poor Return of Christian Mission

Needless to say, Asia is a continent of cultural and religious pluralism. The major oriental religions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam, are deeply rooted in our belief, our culture, our worldview, and our life. As Indonesia is the second largest Islamic country, Buddhism is the dominant religion in Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. Malaysia is a Muslim country. Although it is believed that the Jesuit missionary arrived in China in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, Buddhism is still predominant religion in East Asian countries. Let me give you a rough comparison of the presence of Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and Hinduism in some Asian countries, according to *Operation World, 1993*:

Country	Buddhists	Christians	Hindus	Muslims
India	0.7%	2.61%	78.8%	12%
Indonesia	1%	12.5%	1.9%	87%
Malaysia	7%	8.6%	6%	55%
Thai	93%	1%	(not included)	4%
Myanmar	87%	6.5%	0.5%	3.8%
Cambodia	87%	6.38%	(9% Marxists)	2.9%
Laos	58%	1.5%	(33% Animists)	1%
Bangladesh	0.6%	0.44%	11.7%	87%
China	3%	6%	(2%)	2%
	(59.1% Atheist or Communist)		(27% Chinese Religion)	

Legend has told us that the *Mar Thoma* Church in India was founded by the Apostle Thomas in the first century. But the Christian population in India is only 2.6% of the whole population. It is said that the Nestorian missionary *Alopen* arrived in China in AD 635. Therefore, we can say that while the Christian presence in China has been for more than 13 centuries, the Christian population in China is only 6%. The *Barnabite* missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church arrived in Myanmar in 1722, which means that the Christian presence in Myanmar is almost 300 years old; yet the Christian population in Myanmar is only 6.5%. The question is: what wrong with our mission?

I don't think that God's mission is wrong. But our way and method of doing God's mission may be wrong. Our traditional way of evangelism may be wrong. Due to our wrong method of evangelism, Christianity has been regarded as strange in some Asian

countries so that to become a Christian means to abandon one's citizenship or to become a foreigner. It is true to say that compared to our labors and toils rendered for the cause of mission, our mission for more than 13 centuries in Asia is not, thus far, very successful. Since we are living in a new millennium, we have to find out new ways and means which will be relevant with the teaching of Jesus Christ and with the present Asian context. That is why holistic mission has appeared conspicuously.

### **New Testament Perspective of Holistic Mission**

In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus Christ proclaimed that he was anointed to:

1. preach good news to the poor
2. proclaim release to the captive
3. recover the sight of the blind
4. set at liberty those who are oppressed
5. proclaim the year of the Lord's favor

According to this biblical text, the reason for his coming is to do a holistic mission. The Spirit anointed him to attend to the needs of the total person (to recover the sight of the blind), to affirm the divine image within the person (good news to the poor), to oppose the forces that distort that divine image (to proclaim release to the captive), to assist the blooming of that divine image into its fullness (to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor). If we take the meaning of this text seriously, and if we are seriously thinking to follow Jesus Christ in our mission, there is no choice but to do the job that Jesus also did in his life as we found in Luke 4:18-19.

The idea of the household of God, the whole inhabited world (*oikoumene*) is found many times in the Gospel of John. In chapter 17 alone, the word *oikoumene* has been found at least 19 times. The most prominent verse of this chapter is 18, "As you had sent us into the world, I send them into the world." It is usually said that John 3:6 does not say, "For God so loved the Christians," but "For God so loved the world." And one of the most quoted verses of John is 10:10, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." We all know that having life abundantly cannot be separated from the holistic mission that we are talking about.

In the Lord's Prayer of Matthew 6:10, Jesus teaches us to pray, "Your Kingdom come." Biblical scholars have told us that the word kingdom in this prayer is a translation of Greek word "*basileia*," which is not easy to define because Jesus speaks of it mainly in parables. One thing we know from this prayer is that *basileia* (God's reign) is not just for the future, but to be established in this world. By reading about the ministry of Jesus in the Gospel, we see that Jesus' Ministry is like God's reign (*basileia*) ministry. *Basileia* arrives wherever Jesus overcomes the power of evil. Many forms of evil presence such as pain, sickness, death, demon possession, personal sin and immorality have been treated by Jesus Christ so that *basileia* will come on earth. (In Matthew Chapter 8, Jesus heals many sick people and demon possessed-man. In Luke 7:11-16 Jesus raises a dead boy.) As Jacques Mathhey said, "mission in the perspective of God's reign includes putting poor, neglected, and despised people on their feet again as having recovered before God and people their full

humanity”<sup>7</sup>

The study of New Testament perspective on holistic mission may not be satisfactory without mentioning the parable of the judgment of the nations in Matthew 25:31-46. When the sheep who would inherit the Kingdom of God asked when did they see him hungry, thirsty, naked, or a stranger, the master replied, “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt. 25:40). According to this parable, those who will inherit the kingdom of God are they who did holistic mission to the least and the poorest people of the world.

The seven woes that Jesus said in Mt. 23 are also related to holistic mission, especially verses 23-24 when Jesus says, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and the Pharisees, you give a tenth of your spices . . . . But you have neglected the most important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. . . You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.” In our mission and evangelism project, it is certainly possible to neglect justice and mercy while we are satisfied only with the numbers of the converts. It is also possible that we neglect the suffering of the people while we are satisfied with the progress of our church planting projects. We must not forget that holistic mission is the way Jesus did his ministry in Galilee.

Besides, we must take into account that human being is a unity of body, soul, and spirit, which is inseparable. Therefore, we cannot properly help a person by taking care of only one type of his or her needs (e.g. spiritual need) while disregarding his or her other needs (material or bodily needs). This concept is in line with the teaching in James 2:15-17: “Suppose your brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

From this perspective, holistic mission is mission oriented towards the satisfaction of basic human needs, including the need for God, but also the need for food, love, housing, clothes, physical mental health and a sense of human dignity. Love for God is inseparable from love for neighbor (Mt. 22:40). To talk about “holistic mission” is to talk about mission oriented towards the formation of God-fearing persons who see themselves as stewards of creation and do not live for themselves but for others.

### **Theological Perspective of Holistic Mission**

Today, both evangelical and conciliar missiologists have agreed that words and deeds should be combined in the practice of mission. Yet, during the 1970s, some evangelical theologians were not in favor of holistic mission. They would give priority to the saving of the soul rather than to the saving of the body as Donald A. McGavran stated:

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Bosch in *Transforming Mission*, 34.

Remember our Lord's statement in Matthew 10:28 "Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell". The body is important. The Lord Jesus healed and fed bodies, but He clearly taught and demonstrated that the soul is more important.<sup>8</sup>

In the back cover of the book, *World Council of Churches and the Demise of Evangelism*, written by Harvey T. Hoelestra, the publisher commends the book by saying the following sentimental words against the holistic mission concept of the World Council of Churches:

Though founded upon a passion for the three billion un-reached peoples, the World Council of Churches through years of coffee, communism, and compromise has washed away the Great Commission in favor of a new jargon (holistic mission). Now, 'New Mission' redefines missionary as Marxist. Clearly, the lamb has changed into a lion. "Reform it," urges Hoelestra.<sup>9</sup>

McGavran's arguments on the biblical basis of traditional evangelism are as follows:

In framing the doctrine of holistic evangelism, we take seriously our Lord's words in Mark 8:36, "what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" When to these words we add those recorded in Mark 9:43-48, it becomes clear that no this-worldly good can compare with eternal salvation. Many other biblical passages make it clear that these worldly improvements in and of themselves are in no sense of salvation.<sup>10</sup>

This evangelical understanding of traditional evangelism has been gradually changed since 1974 when the International Congress of World Evangelization held its meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland. For example, Lausanne covenant paragraph 5 declared: "the salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without work is dead."<sup>11</sup>

A stronger voice on holistic mission from evangelical theologians has been heard from the document, "Theological Implications of Radical Discipleship":

There is no biblical dictionary between the word spoken and the word made flesh in the lives of God's people. The Christian community must express the gospel in its life as the new society, in its sacrificial service of others as a genuine expression of God's love, in its prophetic exposing and opposing of all demonic forces that

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<sup>8</sup> Arthur F. Glasser and Donald A. McGavran, *Contemporary Theologies of Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983), 28.

<sup>9</sup> Published by Tyndale House Publishers Inc. Wheaton, Illinois in 1979. Hoelestra's approach of holistic mission can be found in pages 107-109 in this book.

<sup>10</sup> *Contemporary Theologies of Mission*, 28.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by John Stott in *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 24.

deny the Lordship of Christ and keep men less than human; in its pursuit of real justice for all men; in its responsible and caring trusteeship in God's creation and its resources.<sup>12</sup>

The formation of Micah Network has been an obvious illustration of the process of change in perspective on holistic mission among evangelical theologians. In 2001, the Micah Network held International Conference in Oxford England and declared:

If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing, and saying are at the heart of our integral task.<sup>13</sup>

Today evangelical theologians strongly defend that holistic mission is indispensable to God's mission, saying that the Church is called to be the replacement of Jesus in a given community, doing what he would do, going where he would go, and teaching what he would teach.<sup>14</sup>

As we all know, on the other hand, ecumenical theologians have strongly defended the need for holistic mission in the Church from the outset of the formation of the WCC. One of the most quoted sayings on holistic mission was from W.A Visser t'Hooft in the opening speech at the Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches, in 1968.

A Christianity which has lost its vertical dimension has lost its salt and is not only insipid in itself, but useless for the world. But a Christianity which would use the vertical preoccupation as a means to escape from its responsibility for and in the common life of man is a denial of the incarnation, of God's love for the world manifested in Christ.<sup>15</sup>

The theme of the Bangkok Assembly of the CWME (1973) was "Salvation Today". It is said that many of the two-thirds world theologians had a chance to speak out in this assembly. As it was planned, the theme, "salvation today" was comprehensively discussed, and the report of Bangkok Assembly was mostly concerned with holistic mission. Citing the messianic manifesto of Jesus at Nazareth (Luke 4:18), the report said:

The salvation which Christ brought, and in which we participate, offers a comprehensive wholeness in this divided life... It is a salvation of the soul and the body, of the individual and the society, mankind and the "groaning creation."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> J.D. Douglas, ed. *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne Switzerland* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publication), 1294.

<sup>13</sup> [www.micahnetwork.org](http://www.micahnetwork.org)

<sup>14</sup> C. Rene Padilla, "Holistic Mission," in *Holistic Mission Occasional Paper*, No. 33, LCWE, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Norman Goodall, ed., *The Uppsala 68 Report* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), 317.

<sup>16</sup> James A. Scherer, *Gospel, Church and Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 227. Scherer quoted the above quotation from WCC Reports on the Bangkok Assembly, 1973.

Phillip Porter remarked that the goal of mission is to unite all things in Christ:

God has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, things in heaven, and things on earth." (Eph. 1:9-10) This plan is the basic end goal of mission for the whole creation; to it the Church as the Body of Christ is called to be the vehicle of the fullness of God, who fills all in all (Eph. 1:22-23).<sup>17</sup>

The idea of holistic mission is similar to the idea of seeing people through the eyes of Jesus Christ. When Jesus saw a man, he did not see only his spiritual life, but he tried to see his whole life. When he saw the men with leprosy, he not only cleaned them from leprosy, he made them go to the priests and show them that they were clean (Luke 17:11-14). It means that Jesus saw them not only in their physical illness, but also in their political life of imprisonment due to their illness. Jesus spent most of his ministry among the poor. The disciples that Jesus called to follow him were not the wise and the powerful. They were the despised and lowly of the world. Let me conclude this section by quoting a powerful saying from David J. Bosch:

Those who know that God will one day wipe away all tears will not accept with resignation the tears of those who suffer and oppressed now. Anyone who knows that one day there will be no more disease can and must actively anticipate the conquest of disease in individuals and society now. And anyone who believes that the enemy of God and humans will be vanquished will already oppose him now in his machinations in his family and society. For all this has to do with salvation.<sup>18</sup>

## **Holistic Mission in Mission History: Some Examples**

### **1. David Livingstone**

David Livingstone was known as an explorer by the British, but he has been known as a great medical missionary by the Christians. On the one hand, his exploration was so much popular that the *New York Times* had sent one journalist to report on his achievements. On the other hand, his holistic mission was so great that his African friends could not live without his bodily presence even after he died in 1873. Here is Ruth Tucker's account on David Livingstone's friendship with his African friends:

After burying his heart under a Mpundu tree, the body was dried in the hot African sun until it was mummified and they carried overland fifteen hundred miles to the coast.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Phillip Potter, "Mission," in *Dictionary of Ecumenical Movement*, 1991.

<sup>18</sup> *Transforming Mission*, 400.

<sup>19</sup> Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), 162.

Though his body was buried in Westminster Abbey in London, his heart is still in Africa. The account of his encounter with Henry Stanley, a journalist sent by the *New York Times*, was also very interesting:

I live with him in the same hut, or the same boat, or the same tent and I never found a fault in him. I went to Africa as prejudiced against religion as the worst infidel in London. To a reporter like myself, who had only to deal with wars, mass meetings, and political gatherings, sentimental matters were quite out of my province. But there came to me a long time for reflection. I was out there away from a worldly world, I saw this solitary old man there, and I asked myself, "Why does he stop here? What is it that inspires him?" For months after we met I found myself listening to him, wondering at the old man carrying out the words, "leave all and follow me." *But little by little, seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness, and how he went quietly about his business, I was converted by him, although he had not tried to do it.*<sup>20</sup>

## **2. Mother Teresa**

Mother Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata, India in 1950. For over forty years she ministered to the poor, sick, orphaned, and dying. In 1979, Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for work undertaken in the struggle to overcome poverty and distress, which also constitute a threat to peace." When Mother Teresa received the prize, she was asked, "What can we do to promote world peace?" She answered, "Go home and love your family."<sup>21</sup>

Mother Teresa's holistic mission was so great that even the Indian (Hindu) government, in gratitude for her services to the poor of all religions in India, honored her with a State Funeral when she died in 1997.

## **3. Missionaries in the Chin Hills (Myanmar)**

Rev. & Mrs. Arthur Carson arrived in the Chin Hills in 1899, along with their four Karen helpers. Although they knew that there was no Christian in the Chin Hills, they established four schools in the Chin Hills, giving the best education they could afford to the non-Christian Chins. They had run the schools for four years without any Christian convert. Dr. East, a medical doctor, and his wife also had treated many non-Christian Chins without any fees for many years. Most importantly, Dr. Joseph Herbert Cope, missionary to the Chins for more than 30 years, was appointed Inspector of Schools in the Chin Hills by the British government due to his unrelenting efforts and services to give good education to the Chins in Myanmar.

In retrospect, the Chin Christians in Myanmar could not help but acknowledging that the work of some missionaries in the Chin Hills were not proselytism but holistic mission.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* I italicized the last sentence since I think it is related with holistic mission.

<sup>21</sup> *Wikipedia*, The Free Encyclopedia.

## Conclusion

By seeing the present context of Asian religious and cultural plurality, its corrupt governments, poverty, and of the poor return of our mission, we should realize that today the only means of doing God's mission in Asia is holistic mission. It is relevant to our context and it is also in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ. As an evangelical missiologist, C. Rene Paddilla says that holistic mission is not to build a big Church full of people, but to obey all that Jesus Christ taught us.

Holistic mission is the means through which the glory of the Kingdom of God is announced and concretely manifested in history in anticipation of the end by the power of the Spirit. Consequently, the first condition for the church to become an agent of transformation in its own community is to see herself as nothing more (and nothing less!) than a witness to the Kingdom that has come and is yet to come. Faithfulness to the King of kings and Lord of Lords is not to be measured in terms of big church buildings full of people, but in terms of faith communities that are making disciples who are learning to obey all that Jesus Christ taught.<sup>22</sup>

In the present context of poverty and injustice in Asia, Christians are challenged and even put to shame by people (e.g. the Buddhist monks and students in Myanmar) whose dedication to the cause of justice and peace is far greater than ours. In short, Christian holistic mission in Asian plurality is a must.

While acknowledging that we are living in corrupt and poor societies, which are plural in terms of religions, cultures, and races, our mission in Asia should focus on transforming our societies through holistic mission as David Bosch has put it in the following way.

If Christianity would lose its counter-cultural and world-transforming role, other forces would take its place. We need a vision to direct our action within history. Indifference to this vision is a denial of the God who links his presence to the elimination of all exploitation, pain, and poverty. As soon as our hope is compromised, as soon as we stop expecting the wholesale transformations within history that the Scriptures talk about, we kill that vision. We have to turn our backs resolutely on our traditional dualistic thinking, of setting up alternatives between the body and the soul, society and the church, the *eschaton* and the present, and rekindle an all-embracing faith, hope, and love in the ultimate triumph of God casting its rays into the present.<sup>23</sup>

I would like to conclude this small paper with a story from the Chin Hills where I was born. In 1975, when the dictator General Ne Win was the president of Myanmar, a military officer came to a village of the Chin Hills and ordered the Pastor to come to his lodging house. Believing that the Pastor might have no proper answer, the officer asked the Pastor, "Why did you become Christians although we the Burmese (Buddhists) have been your neighbors for a long, long time?" The pastor answered simply, "Well, it is because the Christians had suffered with us for a long time before you came to our land."

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<sup>22</sup> *Holistic Mission Occasional Paper No. 33*, LCWE, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> *Transforming Mission*, 447.