

## Sources for a Theology of Evangelism in Asia: A Survey of Recent Representative Literature

*Even in today's congenial "post-modern" theological climate, evangelism is hardly thought of as an appropriate subject for theological reflection. But here, Dr Scott Sunquist who teaches Church History and Asian Church History at Trinity takes up the subject with a survey of representative literature on evangelism produced in recent years and identifies three major sources for developing a theology of evangelism. The following article forms part of the introductory chapter of his proposed book Evangelism in Asia: An Introduction in Context and Tradition. (Editor)*

For many modern scholars in the West, the Christian faith was issued a death blow with the Enlightenment, and it breathed its last breath with Darwin's evolutionary theory. Thus, there is, in the minds of many in the academy, an unbridgeable chasm between rational, scientific thought ("knowledge") and Christianity ("faith"). A newer form of this dichotomy seems to have crept into the church itself during the latter part of the 19th century. At that point the severely attacked Christian family suffered many divisions, one of which was the division between "theology" and "evangelism." Either, so the argument went, you are a rational, respected Christian, or you are an unthinking (generally manipulative) evangelist. The technique and showmanship of people like D.L. Moody and Billy Sunday did little to bridge this gap.

The history of this division is closely tied in the American church scene with the development known as the "Great Reversal."<sup>1</sup> In general it had been the evangelicals in America who had led in many of the social crusades and who provided leadership in theological education before the 20th century. In the middle of

the 19th century all that began to change and by the time we reach the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early 20th century, it was the new modernist camp which was providing leadership in theological education and in social reform. The more conservative groups entrenched themselves into a revivalist understanding of evangelism and absented themselves from most social reform.

Until the 1970s we can say that this polarization of evangelism from theological discourse made it difficult to carry on serious theological discussion about the topic of evangelism. Suspicions would be raised if anyone from the fundamentalist or evangelical camp were to visit or cooperate with someone considered more broad-minded. On the other hand what broad-minded theologian would ever risk their scholarly reputation by carrying on a dialogue with a narrow-minded person of limited scholarly credibility: an evangelist? Therefore separate groups developed uniting people of like persuasion regarding evangelism and mission: World Council of Churches, the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, the International Council of Christian Churches, et cetera.

In this divisive atmosphere, the ecumenical movement's leadership did a better job than most institutions or movements in keeping the academic discussion on evangelism going until the revolutionary '60s.<sup>2</sup> But the 1960s were a decade when many discussions were pushed to the limit and so even within the WCC we lose the creative engagement concerning evangelism that was present earlier. Billy Graham ran his own consultation on evangelism in Berlin (1966) while the WCC focused on issues of church and society in Geneva. It is only in the last years of the 1960s and the 1970s that more serious discussion and creative engagement between estranged groups began. But as these discussions began and as some wishful theologians began to mumble "convergence," it quickly became clear that the decades of separation between the two groups have left some problems.<sup>3</sup> We must begin our discussion of the present state of the theology of

evangelism by identifying three impediments that remain from the decades of evangelical-ecumenical separation.

First, the two different groups have developed their own scholars and trusted sources, and in a sense, their own evangelism lingo. Those who have been studying evangelism in the evangelical arena will refer to their own authorities: Billy Graham, Robert Coleman, BB Warfield, Donald McGavran or Charles Finney would be recognized names. Those who have looked down on the evangelistic enterprise as an older (pre-modern) notion, may refer to William Hocking, Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann or Raimundo Panikkar. Thus, in looking at the state of theological discourse about evangelism today we need to be conscious of the chasm that still exists between traditions of scholarship.

Secondly, the bias regarding evangelism as anti-intellectual is still in place in the academy. This is clear, for example, when one tries to look up "evangelism" or "theologies of evangelism" in the card catalogue (library of congress system) or in *Books in Print: Subject*. Theologies of evangelism are all found under "evangelistic work," because it is commonly understood that you don't study evangelism, you just do it. Evangelism is a practice or practical study (generally taught in a department with counselling and Christian education) not a philosophical or theological enquiry. Another expression of this anti-intellectual bias is seen in institutional traditions. Seminaries and theology programmes related to universities began to drop evangelism as a field of study at the same time that Bible colleges and mission centers began to multiply in the late 19th and early 20th century. With the rise in religious studies and appreciation of other cultures and belief systems, it became somewhat of an embarrassment to have students learning to convert those that the scholars were learning to appreciate. Thus, a long-standing tradition equating evangelism as anti-intellectual, expressed both in word use and in theological institutions, is a second impediment of which we must be aware.

Thirdly, there is the religions and dialogue trap. During the last three decades, and even in the early decades of the ecumenical movement, most discussions about evangelism quickly slid into an evaluation of other religions. From the late 1950s on this discussion of religions centered upon dialogue, listening to the thoughts and aspirations, the hopes and fears of people of other faiths. This was a healthy development as far as it deepened the awareness of other systems of belief and reduced communal tensions, but in the zeal of this new development evangelism itself as a topic for theologizing receded. Evangelicals, on the other hand saw the discussion of religions and inter-religious dialogue as a substitute for discussion and practice of evangelism.<sup>4</sup> It seemed that the more discussion there was about dialogue, the more evangelical meetings there would be on proclamation. Dialogue was a central theme in mission theology, but very little occurred between Christians across the evangelism divide.

All three of these impediments to discussion must be acknowledged before we look at the literature on evangelism today. Because of these "traditions" of scholarship there is still very little except for practical literature on evangelism from the evangelical camp, and little serious concern for verbal witness from the ecumenical presses. But this is changing and there is some discussion of theologies of evangelism today. Our survey of recent literature on evangelism will identify some of the more important recent conference statements, and then look at recent themes under five thematic headings.

The health of a movement or an organism should not necessarily be measured by the amount of activity or the productivity seen. If this were the case, then we would have to say that Islam in Malaysia and Christianity in the West are very healthy because both are producing a great deal of literature about how to propagate (or protect) their religions. Yet, both religions in their contexts are actually only struggling to claim the high ground of the status quo. So it is with literature on evangelism coming from the

West in the past generation. Speaking only of the Reformed tradition Roger Greenway makes the comment that

the past three decades have witnessed a virtual explosion of interest in Christian evangelism...More books and articles have been published, courses taught, and sermons preached on the subject of evangelism in this period than ever before...Judging on the basis of the amount of words and ideas being communicated and the number of activities performed in the area of evangelism, we can safely conclude we have progressed tremendously in the past thirty years in our understanding of and commitment to the Christian work called evangelism.<sup>5</sup>

What Greenway neglects to observe, Methodist scholar William Abraham sees more clearly. Abraham mentions that evangelicals, who still produce most of the evangelistic material

deserve great credit for insisting that evangelism cannot be dropped from the activities of the modern church without shedding any theological tears. On the whole, however, they have not expressed their concerns in this fashion; their primary concern has been practice rather than theory.

Later he mentions that the focus on the practical and the internal squabbling among evangelicals and fundamentalists, "...make[s] intelligible the scarcity of critical reflection on evangelism."<sup>6</sup> Therefore we stand by our statement that productivity is not necessarily a barometer of health. A recent book on evangelism from the pen of an Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann is more explicit explaining what this evangelism scholarship is all about.

Evangelism is currently a passionate preoccupation of the U.S. church. This accent on evangelism is no doubt a reflection of the deep crisis facing the church. On the surface, there is a 'drive for survival' as mainline churches

notice diminished membership, diminished dollars, and eroding influence and importance. Below that surface agenda, there is the growing awareness among us of the resistance of our culture to the primary claims of the gospel.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to consider this context (a declining and often polemical church) to see clearly the way the arguments and topics are arranged. The western context is not the same as Asia's, but often this western literature uncritically spills over into Asia. Books that have been produced on evangelism in the West in the past generation must be used carefully and critically--with both eyes wide open--before any conclusions are drawn for Asia. The tidal wave of literature on evangelism which is flooding the Asian Christian market makes such critical reflection difficult, but in light of other western imperialisms which have infected Asia such cautious critical assessment is all the more necessary.

For the sake of convenience we will look at recent literature on evangelism under two general headings: 1. ecumenical statements on evangelism and/or mission, 2. books on theory and theology of evangelism.

### I. Ecumenical statements on evangelism

Since the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910, there have been numerous conferences and statements on mission and evangelism.<sup>8</sup> These statements reflect something of the tensions of the times in which they were developed, and the theological persuasions of the conferees. Also, we must remember there is usually a good story behind the final form the statement takes, for these statements (excluding papal pronouncements) are committee decisions. They involve compromise, altered wording to increase the potential inclusivity of the document, and at times there will be statements which seem strongly dialectical (if not clearly contradictory). Yet, statements which are made after years of serious study should be studied seriously. Most of these statements

are 'ecumenical' in that they come from a diverse group of Christian leaders representing different traditions, cultures and societies. This is especially true of any statements made after the 1950s.<sup>9</sup>

There are three statements which we should have before us in developing a theology of evangelism for Asia today. They represent the evangelical Protestant, ecumenical Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions. The first of these is the Lausanne Covenant (LC) which was the evangelical statement of evangelism that was produced at the "International Congress on World Evangelization" in Lausanne in 1974.<sup>10</sup> This document on one level is faithful to the evangelical tradition of theology starting with the purpose of God and the authority of scripture<sup>11</sup> and then talking about the urgency of the task and concluding with the return of Christ. On another level this document marks a fundamental shift, or more accurately return, to a broader understanding of evangelism within the total mission of God. Nineteenth century evangelicals, as we mentioned, were involved in social reform as a natural expression of their faith. Here in the Lausanne Covenant paragraph 5 speaks about Christian responsibility in society, using phrases like "liberation," "justice," and "socio-political involvement." Paragraph 7 speaks about the need to make Christian unity visible, paragraph 8 notes the "dominant role of western missions is fast disappearing," and paragraph ten calls for contextual approaches in evangelism. All of this makes for a rich document which was framed in the presence of the most diverse Christian gathering ever: representing over 150 nations.<sup>12</sup>

The second document for our consideration comes from the World Council of Churches: "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation" (ME: 1982). Although a much more thorough document and coming from the CWME with Roman Catholic participation, ME expresses many of the same concerns as LC, has a great deal of biblical interaction and enjoyed the elated support of at least some evangelicals.<sup>13</sup>

ME does talk about two closely related and often confused concepts: mission and evangelism.<sup>14</sup> Therefore this is a broader document than the LC, but it remains the most concise and most widely publicized ecumenical statement about evangelism to date. The document contains 47 paragraphs beginning with a preface and then the call to mission and the call to proclamation and witness. The body of the document is an exposition of seven "ecumenical convictions" which churches in the WCC discussion share. It is worthwhile listing these seven convictions with a brief comment to see what the contribution of ME is to the modern understanding of evangelism.

1. Conversion
2. The Gospel to all Realms of Life
3. The Church and its Unity in God's Mission
4. Mission in Christ's Way
5. Good News to the Poor
6. Mission in and to Six Continents
7. Witness among People of Living Faiths

These ecumenical affirmations are remarkable in their wide-ranging concerns: concerns which can be echoed by conservative Baptists or mainline Protestants alike. This document in paragraph 10 supports the need for proclamation in evangelism, and the need of the hearer to "accept in a personal decision the saving lordship of Christ." In paragraph 34, speaking about Good News to the poor, we read, "There is no evangelism without solidarity...A growing consensus among Christians today speaks of God's preferential option for the poor." Seldom do we see the concerns for personal decision in evangelism and priority for the poor in the same document. Similarly, in the seventh conviction there is found the

following two statements: "Christians owe the message of God's salvation in Jesus Christ to every person and to every people," and "The Spirit of God is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding....In entering into a relationship of dialogue with others, therefore, Christians seek to discern the unsearchable riches of God and the way God deals with humanity." Thus, ME affirms the obligation to express the message to people of other faiths and the obligation to humbly search to know God's Spirit at work in people of other faiths. Thus we see here a joyous mosaic of conviction and humility in a theological document on evangelism.

The third document on evangelism with which we should be familiar in discussing evangelism in Asia comes from the Roman Catholic Church: "Evangelism in Modern Day Asia" (EMDA).<sup>15</sup> This is the only document we will look at which comes from Asian leadership (under the watchful eye of the Holy Father<sup>16</sup>) and it is significant that it shares so many of the same concerns of our two Protestant statements and that it, like many other non-western theologies is explicitly contextual.

EDMA, when viewed together with the 1970 Asian Bishops' "Message" provides an ecumenical theology for Asia along with a programme, which is faithful to the theology and appropriate to the context, for carrying out evangelization in Asia. The context is described as Asia of the "teeming masses..largely marked with poverty...suffering" (Message, par. 5), a "continent of the young" (par. 6), with "diverse cultures, religions, histories and traditions" (par. 7), marked by old and new colonialisms (par. 9) and the Asia in the midst of "transformation...undergoing modernization and profound social change...and the break up of traditional societies" (par. 4). In this Asia, full of suffering and bondage (par. 6) proclamation of the Gospel is needed so that there might be true liberation, brotherhood and peace (par. 7). There is a sense of "urgency" about the task (par. 8), and the local church, in "dialogue with the great religious traditions of" Asia is where the responsibility lies (pars. 9-18). Equally important is the

need for the church to be in dialogue and solidarity with the poor, for most of Asia is in poverty, caused by unjust structures (pars. 19-24). Therefore, evangelization must include, or be expressed in Asia "...in tasks of justice in accordance with the spirit and the demands of the Gospel..." (par. 23).

This task of evangelization must be done by proclaiming "in word and witness the Gospel of the Lord" (par. 25) through local indigenous churches (par. 26) in diverse ways (par. 29) so there will be an existential "encounter with the Lord in our hearts" (par. 30). The means used for evangelization includes prayer and contemplation, the gifts of the Spirit, renewed missionary formation, genuine Asian theological reflection and the modern forms of media (pars. 31-33). The messengers must include the religious, lay people, missionaries and the young. The statement appropriately concludes with a prayer to the Redeemer, "Christ of the peoples of Asia," asking for him to reveal more and more of himself to the peoples of Asia.

This statement from the First Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops is a wide-ranging theological statement concerning evangelization which is focused on issues which would be of particular concern for Asia. Very carefully it outlines what the church affirms and needs to do, along with a spirituality of engagement.

## II. Recent scholarship on evangelism

As we noted earlier, there is no lack of literature on evangelism today. Most of the literature on evangelism today would fall into one of the following five categories: 1. practical 2. broad view of evangelism 3. narrow view of evangelism 4. mission and dialogue 5. philosophy or theology of evangelism. Of these five categories the first and third are the overwhelming majority, the fifth is the most needed and the second and fourth are the most

marginally about evangelism (but with the greatest integrity for Asia).

First, books of a practical concern about evangelism (including motivational books) are found not only by major publishers, movements and authors, but also they are produced by numerous small church sects and evangelists with a large ego and a wallet of a comparable size. Some of the best known authors of this first type of book on evangelism include Robert E. Coleman (*The Master Plan of Evangelism*; a modern classic), Leighton Ford (*The Christian Persuader*; *Good News is for Sharing*), George G. Hunter III (*The Contagious Congregation*), Paul Little (*How to Give Away Your Faith*), Em Griffin (*The Mind Changers*), Richard Peace (*Learning to Love People*, *Small Group Evangelism*), Richard Stoll Armstrong (*Service Evangelism*, *The Pastor As Evangelist*), Robert T. Henderson (*Joy to the World*), David Watson (*I Believe in Evangelism*),<sup>17</sup> various books by Michael Green and Ben Campbell Johnson (*An Evangelism Primer*). In addition we could list pages of materials sponsored by self-described evangelical and fundamentalist groups, but one book strongly supported by the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, Bill Bright will suffice as an example of this type of literature: *Tell it Often--Tell it Well: Making the Most of Witnessing Opportunities*. With the abundance of such motivational and practical material it is almost a miracle that there are any non-Christians left in the world. But it is our position that more than simple advice or motivation is needed. These books all speak to the situation of the West (more specifically, the USA) even though many of their plans and programs often find their way, translated or not, into Asia. At best these books help the person who is already motivated to actually do some evangelistic work, at worst they perpetrate the western colonial forms of Christianity in Asia. Stories and narrative, which are far more important to the Asian mind than concepts and ideas, are shaped by a context alien--and often oppressive--to the Asian community. Books of this nature, with

stories from Asian life need to be written, but they are as yet unavailable.

The second type of literature currently available is literature which argues for a broader view of evangelism, a view which includes more than mere verbal witness and verbal acceptance of a summarized gospel presentation. These books generally describe the evangelistic task as a part of the mission of God, through the church, in the world. Evangelism is a part of the extension of the reign of God<sup>18</sup> which challenges assumed loyalties and spreads justice.<sup>19</sup> Often this presentation of evangelism is hard to distinguish from discussions of "mission" and so we find authors like Orlando Costas, David Bosch, Waldron Scott, Emilio Castro, Ron Sider and Lesslie Newbigin all presenting similar positions of evangelism under the rubric of missiology. Some have a more integrated theology of evangelism and justice issues than others, but these authors all share the broader view of evangelism which is not limited to verbal messages and a mental acknowledgement of a truth. It may appear that our list of authors is slanted toward the conservative Protestant, but this is in part because of the observation we made earlier that few in the ecumenical tradition continued writing directly about evangelism after the 1970s. Included in this area would be the broad stream evangelicals producing periodicals such as *Transformation* (Vinay Samuel et al.).

The third type of literature on evangelism today includes those books and authors who defend a narrow view of evangelism in an effort to "save" evangelism as they see it. Most of these authors and their writings discuss a hierarchy of concerns in the mission of God, and like D.L. Moody they believe we are given a lifeboat in the midst of a maritime disaster and God has told us, "Save all you can!" Saving souls is more important than saving bodies, as it is often expressed.<sup>20</sup> Since there are clear distinctions made between saving souls, doing justice, feeding the hungry, et cetera, it becomes possible and almost necessary to list the tasks in

terms of priorities. In the Asian context this narrow view of evangelism, which generally lists verbal proclamation as the top priority, can be a most insidious and deceitful doctrine. Where the suffering is so great and widespread, such a theology can make a mockery of the love of God. Tragically, this approach is widespread in countries of free market economies where there is economic stability and the poor are insulated from the theologians. Such a setting makes this dichotomy easier to defend. It is much more difficult for this theological approach to flourish from the underside.

Fourthly, there is a wealth of literature related to evangelism, and especially relevant for Asia, which speaks about mission and dialogue. I suppose interreligious dialogue can be traced back to some of the earliest church leaders and missionaries in Asia,<sup>21</sup> but as a modern movement it is in the aftermath of World War II and with the writings of theologians from the Indian subcontinent (beginning with P.D. Devanandan) that a whole theology of dialogue began. These writings come almost exclusively from Asia and are one of the most original contributions to modern Christian theology. Authors include M.M. Thomas, S.J. Samartha, S. Wesley Ariarajah, Julia Ching and Raimundo Panikkar. Western writers include John V. Taylor, Hans Küng, Jerald Gort, N. Smart and Kenneth Cragg. For some writers dialogue is the new dimension of evangelism where the dialogue partners each seek to discover the work of God through their religious experiences. For others dialogue is necessary to establish peace and justice in Asia where so many world religions are vying for adherents and a secure future. Nation building in a pluralistic society also necessitates dialogue. For still others dialogue is a way of living (dialogical existence) and is therefore a part of listening in order to understand others while involved in the mission of God.

Our final area of contemporary literature on evangelism is those books which outline a theology or philosophy of evangelism. This has been one of the greatest areas of need, but the past decade

has witnessed the advent of some helpful new books. David Bosch, in his *Transforming Mission* (1991) discusses evangelism as one of thirteen areas of mission in his postmodern paradigm.<sup>22</sup> One could not do much better than starting with this book to develop an understanding of evangelism within the *missio Dei*. *God the Evangelist* (subtitled, *How the Holy Spirit Works to Bring Men and Women to Faith*) by David F. Wells, reflects the 1985 discussions of the Lausanne Committee's "Consultation on the Work of the Holy Spirit and Evangelization." In this logical presentation is found a theological discussion of "spiritual power encounters," an issue of increasing significance in Asia. A more imaginative presentation of biblical perspectives on evangelism is provided by Walter Brueggemann in his *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism: Living in a Three-Storeyed Universe* (1993). Brueggemann creatively describes the three "stories" as the initial conflict, the announcer who gives testimony and tells the outcome that was watched, and finally the listener who makes a response to the news. In 1987 Ben C. Johnson published a fairly classical presentation of a theology of evangelism which is entitled, *Rethinking Evangelism: A Theological Approach*.<sup>23</sup> One of the most thorough new presentations of a theology of evangelism is found in *The Logic of Evangelism*, by William J. Abraham (1989). Abraham describes his particular approach in the modern context in this way:<sup>24</sup>

Over against those who construe evangelism as the proclamation of the gospel and against those who construe it as church growth, the thesis presented and argued here is that we should construe evangelism as primary initiation into the kingdom of God.

Abraham's book contains probably one of the clearest sustained arguments for a theology of evangelism that we have today.

This brief overview of the literature gives us some idea of the type of literature from the West which is now available regarding evangelism. We turn now to look at some of the

literature from Asia which has recently been produced to see how evangelism is being discussed by Asian authors.

## II. Asian Theology and Evangelism

In fact we must start our discussion with an admission of weakness: it is hard to discover a great amount of Asian Christian literature that is focused on evangelism. There are some Asians who participate with evangelical groups and churches from the West (Lausanne, World Evangelical Fellowship) who are involved in thinking about evangelism, but these are not specifically Asian in their orientation or application. The Asia Theological Association has produced some publications related to evangelism in Asia<sup>25</sup> but not a theology or philosophy of evangelism for Asia.

Most Asian theology has been produced by the ecumenical and Roman Catholic theologians, and so it is to this literature we now turn to see what contributions there are regarding evangelism. When we enter this field of Asian theology we quickly realize we are in a fruitful area, for the past few decades have seen the production of a small library of theologies written from the Asian perspective. There are many different ways of dividing up this material, but for our purposes of focusing on evangelism we will look at the following categories: literature written by Asian evangelists and different contextual theologies.<sup>26</sup>

There have been a number of notable evangelists in Asia who have both been active as evangelists and written about evangelism. Dr John Sung (1901-1944) from China has been one of the most influential evangelists of the modern period.<sup>27</sup> What we have from his pen is actually very little, but many of his sermons and teachings were transcribed, and many John Sung stories that contain the essence of his teaching have faithfully been passed down. Sung's contribution to evangelism was more by the power of his personal presence and his preaching than any novel ideas. For a bright, western-trained Chinese chemist, his theology was actually very simple and direct.

During the same period there was another influential Asian evangelist but this one from a nearby imperialist nation across the sea: Japan. Kagawa Toyohiko (1888-1960) is much better known to Asians (as well as to the West) because of his ecumenical involvement (especially at the Tambaram 1938 conference), continual dialogue with the West and extensive writings. Like John Sung, Kagawa was educated in the States, but where Sung rejected western education, Kagawa embraced it and applied it to the context of imperial Japan. Kagawa's evangelism is rooted in personal spirituality, strong in its proclamation and it flourishes in social involvement.<sup>28</sup> His writings are extensive and they relate to evangelism, social and economic reform, spirituality of the poor, world peace and education.<sup>29</sup> Kagawa is both a towering figure in the development of Asian theology and in creative mission in the context of Asian injustices and poverty.

Another well-known ecumenical spokesman who has contributed to a theology of evangelism for Asia is Daniel Thambyrajah Niles (1908-1970). Niles' involvement in the SCM, WSCF, the EACC and the WCC are well-documented; what is less well-known is how he struggled to make the gospel message relevant to modern Asia and the world without losing the truth of the message.<sup>30</sup> His publications such as *The Message and its Messengers*, *The Stone of Stumbling*, and *Upon the Earth* show his continual concern for evangelism in the context of the modern day *missio Dei*. Niles' particular Asian contribution would be in exploring the possibilities of dialogue (especially with Hindus) while preaching and writing about the supreme allegiance to Christ (*Stone of Stumbling*).

A fourth Asian evangelist who wrote eight short books and had a major impact, not only in his home country of India, but throughout Asia, is Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929). Sundar Singh was not a theologian but a deeply spiritual man who became a prophet of Asia by fulfilling his mother's dream to become a sadhu. Sundar Singh was not a Sikh holy man, but a Christian

sadhu and mystic whose preaching was a mixture of Urdu storytelling and poetry along with descriptions of his heavenly visions. He contributed a great deal to an Indian theology of evangelism, though it was not at all his intent.

There are many other Asian evangelists, but these four we will look at represent four of the best known and most influential in Asia in this century. Conveniently, they also represent both South Asia (India/Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and East Asia (China and Japan) and their writings and sermons present a very Asian type of theology: narrative rather than systematic.

We turn now to contextual Asian theologies to see what has been recently produced that would contribute to our study of evangelism. Since the 1970s a great deal of Christian literature from Asia has been written, most of it reflecting the cultural and social contexts of the writers. Because this Asian theology is contextual, it only makes sense briefly to survey (from a great distance) these writings by country.<sup>31</sup> One of the most widely known theologies from Asia would have to be the various Minjung theologies from Korea. With the publication of *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History* in 1981, the rest of the world became aware of the existence of a theology outside of Latin America which was nurtured in the midst of pain and injustice. Theology, history and Bible are all studied from the perspective of the minjung, the masses who are poor and oppressed. A whole subculture of minjung theology has developed in the past few decades including artistic representation and poetry.

A second national theology would be the Grassroots Theology of the Philippines. Philippine theology is very similar to the theologies of Latin America. The oppression of Spanish colonialism has left behind similar contexts of inequity and poverty. Philippine theology, as early as the 1970s spoke about revolution as a central theme in the mission of the church.<sup>32</sup> This is a theology of struggle as Filipinos seek to know God's power and presence in the midst of continued poverty in the only "Christian nation" in Asia.

Indian theologians have produced the greatest number of theological works and from the earliest period. The best introduction to Indian theology would be Robin Boyd's *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, but this is only an introduction and Indian theology is as diverse as is the sub-continent. There are some themes that are unique to India of which we should take note. Indian theology, from before the time of Gandhi, was concerned with nation building and justice in the nation-state. We also see in Indian theology the strong Hindu influence in the discussions of plurality of faiths and unity of truth beyond or behind the religions. India is where the discussion of interreligious dialogue started, developed and has produced the most fruit.<sup>33</sup> Finally, much of Indian theology is taken up with questions of spirituality and religious practice.

It is possible to speak today of many more contextual Asian theologies (Homeland Theology of Taiwan, Dalit Theology in India, Batak Theology from Sumatera, et cetera) but these three give an example of how theologies are developing around the special histories and issues of cultures in Asia. Because of the great diversity of Asia, these theologies are as varied as are the languages of the vast continent. This must be kept in mind if we are to look at how theological formation in a particular context develops. A theology of evangelism must grow out of such concerns.

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Notes

<sup>1</sup>For varied presentations of this historic development see: George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: OUP, 1980), pp. 85-93; Martin Marty, *Pilgrims in their Own Land* (NY: Viking Penguins, 1984), pp. 297-317 and Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 286-310; pp. 363-389.

<sup>2</sup>This can be seen not only in the life and concern of the ecumenical founders (Mackay, Soderblom, Visser't Hooft, Mott, et al.) but also in the time and print that is given in conferences and assemblies to basic evangelistic concerns. See for example in the records of the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council (1928) that the largest and first volume is on "The Christian Life and Message in Relation to Non-Christian Systems." We might say that this whole volume develops a theology of evangelism in the various religious contexts of the world. This discussion was going on at the same time churches and seminaries were splitting over theological issues mentioned above.

<sup>3</sup>John R.W. Stott even wrote a book redefining basic words because there was so little shared understanding of the vocabulary of mission and evangelism. The words he defined are: mission, evangelism, dialogue, salvation and conversion. (*Christian Mission in the Modern World* [Downers Grove: IVP, 1975]).

<sup>4</sup>Arthur Johnston's *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1978) and Harvey Hoekstra's *The World Council of Churches and the Demise of Evangelism* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1979) immediately come to mind. The second title (unfortunately) is much too strong for what the author actually does and says in the book.

<sup>5</sup>"Evangelism," in *Practical Theology and the Ministry of the Church, 1952-1984*, p. 219. Greenway is quite accurate in his observation about the proliferation of material and activities concerning evangelism, but his safe conclusion misses the mark. Progress is a relative term.

<sup>6</sup>Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 8, 10.

<sup>7</sup>*Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism, Living in a Three-Storyed Universe* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), p. 7.

<sup>8</sup>For a neat overview of the statements this century, see Roger E. Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission, Mission in the Historical and Theological Perspective* (Bangalore: Theological Books Trust, 1981, 1993).

<sup>9</sup>In the ecumenical movement there had always been a concern to include non-western church leaders, but not until the 1960s does this participation begin to have an impact. 1961 marks a new beginning with the first WCC meeting outside of the western world and the International Missionary Council (IMC) is integrated into the WCC.

<sup>10</sup>J.D. Douglas, ed., *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* (Minneapolis: Worldwide Publications, 1975). The Lausanne movement was an evangelical response to the perceived loss of evangelistic concerns of the WCC as seen in the recently completed Uppsala (WCC: 1969) and Bangkok Assemblies (CWME: 1973). The focus of the conference was to be on the unevangelized "people groups," but during the conference the concerns increased. The participation of non-westerners and younger western evangelicals broadened the concerns to include renewal of the church beginning with repentance for past wrongs. Lausanne is also notable for its years of preparatory studies and its more serious theological explorations: this was not just a pep rally for evangelism. (See appendix for the text.)

<sup>11</sup>Note the same pattern in the Westminster Confession and Catechism.

<sup>12</sup>In July of 1989 the Lausanne movement's concern for evangelism was reaffirmed in Manila at a meeting representing Christian leaders from about 170 countries. "The Manila Manifesto" (MM) which was produced begins with 21 affirmations (regarding traditional theology as well as special contextual concerns for evangelism) and 12 sections. This "Manifesto" is to be studied by churches alongside of the LC. The MM does represent a development from the 1974 document in its discussion of contexts (including modernity and urbanization), its acceptance of spiritual gifts and its straight forward statement that, "We will also work for religious freedom everywhere" (affirmation 20). The LC, for our purposes remains the foundational modern evangelical statement on evangelism and the MM should be kept close by to see the development in some of the thinking of the movement.

<sup>13</sup>See for example, Arthur Glasser, "The Evolution of Evangelical Mission Theology since World War II," in *IBMR*, 9/1 (Jan. 1985): 9-13.

<sup>14</sup>See chapter two of my forthcoming book *Evangelism in Asia*.

<sup>15</sup>Again, as with the LC there is an updating of this Roman Catholic Document which came out of the First Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate which was held 24-31 August 1988 in Suwon, South Korea. This newer document, "Evangelization in Asia Today" is a tightly worded three and a half page statement of beliefs about evangelization and resolutions given in the form of goals and means. Thus, this is as much a manifesto or agenda as it is a theological statement.

<sup>16</sup>At an earlier meeting, the first Asian Bishops' Meeting in Manila (1970) the third paragraph of the message welcomed, "...the Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, whom we welcome as Peter in [our]...midst..." This earlier and first meeting of Asian bishops has provided a theological and programmatic foundation for the mission and evangelistic statements of the bishops ever since. In EMDA it is understood that the statement does not stand alone, but is a part of the theological development which is rooted in the "Message" of the 1970 Asian Bishops' Meeting. Therefore, this Asian perspective on evangelization really begins with the 1970 statement.

<sup>17</sup>This book does provide some biblical and theological reflection, but it is basically a practical book that could be used to train church leaders in evangelism.

<sup>18</sup>For example, see Andrew Kirk's *The Good News of the Kingdom Coming: The Marriage of Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1983); Howard A. Snyder's *A Kingdom Manifesto, Calling the Church to Live under God's Reign* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1985) or less directly about evangelism, but with a similar approach is Jim Wallis' *An Agenda for Biblical People* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

<sup>19</sup>See for example Harvie M. Conn's *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) as well as the concluding chapters of Lesslie Newbigin's *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) and Vernon Grounds' *Evangelicalism and Social Responsibility*.

<sup>20</sup>Representatives of this group, though not all equally narrow, would include: Arthur P. Johnston *The Battle for World Evangelism* and Harold Lindsell. John R. Stott makes the clear dichotomy between evangelism and social responsibility (which almost necessitates the discussion of a priority), but in general he is an equal defender of both; separate but equal. Still, as David Bosch reminds us ("Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-currents Today," in *IBMR*, 11/3 [July 1987]: 98-103) this means that you can, theoretically, have evangelism "without a social dimension" (p. 100). This is the identifying trait of the narrow view of evangelism.

<sup>21</sup>See Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. I (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1992), pp. 341-357 for a discussion of the early polemics and dialogues in Asia involving John of Damascus and the Patriarch Timothy I with local Muslim caliphs. The discussion of Timothy I seems to be a stylized form of a type of discussion which was probably very common under the caliphs in Persia.

<sup>22</sup>Pp. 409-420. He also discusses elements of evangelism in Part I of the book as he goes through New Testament models of mission providing a type of biblical theology of mission and evangelism.

<sup>23</sup>The topics of the chapters show the traditional nature of his presentation: subjects of evangelism, God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, the church, salvation, faith, kingdom of God, concluding with integrity and effectiveness.

<sup>24</sup>p. 13.

<sup>25</sup>*The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology* (Taipei: ATA, 1984) and *Christian Alternatives to Ancestor Practices* (Taipei: ATA, 1985).

<sup>26</sup>The best single source for Asian theologies, listed by country, is found in the *PTCA Bulletin* (Programme for Theology and Cultures in Asia) beginning with Vol. 1/1 and 2. These two volumes contain an initial survey of the literature and then subsequent volumes have updated the material.

<sup>27</sup>The most accessible writings on Sung would be Leslie T. Lyall's *John Sung, Flame for God in the Far East* (Chicago: Moody, 1964); William Schubert's *I Remember John Sung* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College, n.d.); Liu Yih Ling's *Life of John Sung*, Chinese (Hong Kong: Witness Press, n.d.) and Timothy Tow's *John Sung, My Teacher* (Singapore: Christian Life Publications, 1985). All of these are written by authors who greatly respected (and heard) Sung preach. A major critical work on John Sung is still needed, especially in light of the new Chinese context for evaluating his work.

<sup>28</sup>Kagawa is credited, for example, with starting the first labour unions in Japan.

<sup>29</sup>See chapter II of my forthcoming book *Evangelism in Asia* for a fuller discussion of his writings and theology.

<sup>30</sup>This is the assessment of Niles' close friend and ecumenical partner, W.A. Vissert Hooft in *IRM*, 60 (1971), pp. 115-121.

<sup>31</sup>Ch. 3-6 of the book will look at the contextual issues in evangelism in Asia more closely. Here we will merely look at the type of theological literature which is now available for such a study.

<sup>32</sup>For example, Cirilo A. Rigos, *Christians and Revolution* (Manila: Cosmopolitan Church, 1972) and Pierre Salgado, *Christianity is Revolutionary* (Quezon City: Garcia Publications, 1976).

<sup>33</sup>Panikkar's *Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964), M.M. Thomas' *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (London: SCM, 1969) and Wesley Ariarajah's *Hindus and Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) would all be good examples of this type of literature which give a theology of dialogue along with a historical explanation of the development.