

erations (Col. 1:26-27). This is the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew...but God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit (I Cor. 2:7-10). We must be ready to tell Confucianists the reason of this hope that is in us (I Pet. 3:15).

## EVANGELIZATION AMONG THE BUDDHIST AND CONFUCIANIST

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This study group had several problems that caused limitations to the effectiveness of our discussions. First, the group was small, averaging four or five persons each time, and most of the participants attended only one session. This made it difficult to have continuity and depth. Second, no one had access to the paper before the first session and the writer was not able to be present as a resource. After reading the fine paper, which presented the theology of Buddhism and Confucianism, it was felt that the scope of the paper was beyond our particular need in trying to reach the masses of people in Asia who were mostly nominal Buddhists. This paper would be more helpful for those trying to reach the intellectual Buddhist, and those who are very serious about Buddhist teachings. Certainly, this paper would be helpful for anyone trying to do evangelism in Asia.

Because of the composition of our group, we concentrated upon evangelization among Buddhists. It is believed that the majority of Confucianists are also nominal Buddhists in practice.

First a brief report was given from each country represented: Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Tibet, Japan, and Sri Lanka. Over 90 percent of the people of these countries are normally Buddhist. Thailand has over 50,000 temples and 400,000 monks. Although there are two major branches of Buddhism and there are differences in the practices of each country, the similarities are great.

In some countries like Cambodia, Buddhism is the state religion and is being promoted by the government. In Thailand nearly every government office has a Buddhist image. Some countries have a strong resistance to Christianity. In Sri Lanka the monks try to ridicule it. In Tibet the lamas have warned the people against accepting Christian tracts.

Buddhism is very syncretistic in each country. In Japan the people have Buddhist shrines and Shinto shrines together in the same room. Animism and ancestral worship are all part of Buddhist worship in most countries. (It is reported that Sri Lanka doesn't have ancestral worship).

In many countries the young people are restless and disillusioned with much of what they see. They are searching for something. Many have rejected Buddhism because it has not satisfied them. In fact, many young people now feel it is a foreign religion.

With so much poverty and suffering in many Asian countries it was repeatedly mentioned that the Christian Church must show genuine love and concern for the masses of people through organized efforts to help relieve the people. The church must manifest the love of Jesus Christ for the people.

In trying to evangelize the Buddhist, probably the greatest hurdle is the "foreignness" of Christianity that has been presented and the identity of Buddhism with Asian culture and society.

Specifically we dealt with several areas:

1. In presenting Christianity, the person of Jesus Christ from the Gospels must be the main message. Gospel stories about Jesus, his life, his attitudes, his love, his relationship to people, are attractive to people. A Sri Lanka pastor has had much success doing this. He warned that comparison and contrasting Jesus Christ with Buddha only creates a barrier to the listeners because they would automatically want to defend Buddha. So let the person of Jesus Christ make its own impact.

2. Literature and translation work must be improved. Translation of Christian terms and the use of certain words have had some tragic errors which have proven to be a real hindrance. Often it has proven foreignness. Better translations and more agreement in terminology are needed. Attractive tracts on the person of Jesus Christ and geared to each particular country are desperately needed. Attractive and easier-to-read Bibles must be more available. Many young people are willing to read about Jesus Christ and have requested correspondence courses. We must capitalize on this hunger while there is still opportunity.

3. The national churches must experiment more with indigenous forms of expressions of their living faith. Forms of worship, hymnology, structures, have all given evidence of foreignness. National pastors have been guilty of unconsciously taking on the western habits of western missionaries and have become foreign to their own people. A Thai pastor has returned to the custom of greeting people rather than shaking hands with the people, especially with women: This was much more acceptable by the people.

4. Christians must keep their social contact with their non-Christian relatives and friends and know how to be a Christian in their midst. Their love and concern for them must be deeper than before. If any activity or ritual is rejected because of compromising of faith, it must be done with the least amount of offense and it must be substituted by other means to prove greater love and loyalty.

5. Family-related conversions must be taken more seriously when trying to evangelize in Asian countries. Too often individual conversion outside of the family has been the norm. This has proven to be a major stumbling block for the rest of the family to become Christian. In fact, it has caused many reversions. The social ties are so strong that many young Japanese Christians have returned to nominal Buddhism because they couldn't face the social barriers. Wherever family conversions have occurred, relatives are often converted also. If heads of households can be won to the Lord, then whole families can be brought into the church. Greater efforts must be used to try to reach the parents of children from the Christian schools and Sunday Schools with the Gospel first, before the children are given a chance for a commitment to Jesus Christ. There may be danger in this, but it also has greater opportunities.

In conclusion, we must say that the real barrier to Christianity among the nominal Buddhist population in Asian countries has really been a social and cultural one. But as the national churches mature and

wake up to this problem, there is real hope that each country will know how to break down many of the barriers that have kept the majority of people from really considering Jesus Christ.

The church also needs to understand that the Gospel will affect culture in four different ways. First, there are many things that are good and will not be touched by the Gospel. Second, there are some things that will be rejected because they go contrary to the Word of God. Third, there are some things that will be changed to a higher level because of the influence of the Gospel. And fourth, the Gospel will add new dimensions to a culture which will make it even a better culture to live in. All this can only happen as the Christian community grows and takes up its full responsibility to its own country and culture.