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EDITORIAL

This is the second year since we began publishing the CTS journal annually. This is also the eighth volume of the *JCTS*. We have endeavoured to maintain the focus of the articles as that of evangelical views of Christianity in South Asia – and Sri Lanka in particular. Evangelical influence is now seen in the entire spectrum of the Christian church in Sri Lanka including its predominant constituent, the Roman Catholic Church.

Our contributors come from different denominational backgrounds. Norman Taggart and Ivor Poobalan are of Methodist background; Kumar Abraham and Prabo Mihindukulasuriya are Anglicans; Paul Mantae Kim is Pentecostal; and G P V Somaratna is Pentecostal.

The articles also vary in academic focus. Prabo Mihindukulasuriya's "*Dharmayānō* in the Sinhala Bible" is a thorough research on the word 'dharmayānō' used in the New Translation of the Sinhala Bible. It is an excellent contribution to the study of Bible translation.

Ivor Poobalan's "Theological Foundations for Evangelical Leadership of the 21st Century: 2 Corinthians 5:18-21" is a well-researched study of the biblical passage in its application to modern evangelical leadership.

Paul Mantae Kim's "Folk Religious Beliefs and Practices among Sinhalese Buddhists" seeks to make the gospel meaningful by responding, both in biblical faithfulness and in contextual relevance, to the Buddhist folk religious beliefs and practices.

Kumar Abraham, in his "The 'Jesus Method' of Training Evangelists" examines the biblical principles which can be applied to the training of evangelists in the 21st century.

Norman W Taggart's "Gender and Ethnicity in Methodist Mission: an Irish Perspective" is a study of the reality of Christian fellowship that includes an openness to one another

and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, contributing to a family likeness among believers, however varied their ethnic, gender, and theological backgrounds.

G P V Somaratna's "Christian Spiritual Warfare in the Theravada Buddhist Environment of Sri Lanka" is an examination of the shamanistic aspects of popular Buddhism and its impact on Christian evangelism in Sri Lanka.

The article by Prabo Mihindukulasuriya and David A deSilva is on whether Paul's references to *the stoicheia tou kosmou* (Gal 4:8-9 and Col 2:8, 20-23) can be interpreted to mean that non-Christian traditions, such as Buddhism, could serve a providentially positive role in the history of nations awaiting the Gospel.

I am grateful to the contributors for striving to help me continue the annual publication of the *JCTS*. I know that all of them are very busy with their teaching, preaching, and church activities, in addition to their family responsibilities. Yet, all of them have upheld the standard of the Journal as a publication which draws attention to original research.

Our authors have for many years been interested in the evangelical aspect of Christian theology and mission. They have brought together theological scholarship and evangelical practice, with special reference to Sri Lanka. Though they are from different social and church backgrounds, they have shared intellectual interests and a passion for the edification of the Christian church in Sri Lanka.

It is our hope that this journal will be a valuable contribution to evangelical Christian scholarship.

G P V Somaratna
September 2012

GENDER AND ETHNICITY IN METHODIST MISSION: AN IRISH PERSPECTIVE[1]

NORMAN W TAGGART

INTRODUCTION

Commenting in the *Cambridge History of Christianity* on the role of women in Christian mission in the 20th century, Kevin Ward declared:

> By the early twentieth century, the majority of missionaries were women: wives, single women, or, in the case of the Catholics, members of a wide variety of religious orders. In the period after the First World War, women demanded, and in many cases obtained, full recognition as missionaries and representation on their local and central boards. Their role in education, medicine and evangelism, as well as in fostering Christian family life, was crucial to the whole mission enterprise.[2]

I endorse much in this statement, though in the case of *Irish* Methodist women it does not seem to me that they "demanded" to be recognised and represented at the highest levels in the church's life either at home or overseas. Instead they appeared rather passive in accepting the role and positions allocated to them within male-dominated churches

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[2] 'Christianity, colonialism and missions' in The Cambridge History of Christianity: World Christianities c. 1914-2000, p. 77.

at home and overseas. Some of the early Women's Work (WW) officers in Britain and Ireland were undoubtedly formidable characters, but was this only in relation to restricted areas of the church's life? What part were they able to play, for example, in discussion and decisions relating to finance, mission policies and the related topic of inter-church relations in the first half of the 20th century?

Methodist women, including those from Ireland, engaged mainly in medical, social, educational and evangelistic work, and undoubtedly made a significant contribution. Of the Irish Methodist Missionary Society (MMS) doctors serving overseas in the 20th century, for example, women were in the majority. There were, too, thirty Irish nurses in the 20th century, all of them women with professional qualifications, working in hospitals, clinics, or occasionally, in less formal settings. Sister Easter Hayden, for example, was a trained nurse, a midwife and a Wesley Deaconess. She served in Ceylon from 1910 to 1944, helping to lay the foundations of the 'Order of Women Workers' on the island. Ismena Warren was a full-time artist with the Christian Literature Society (CLS) in India, providing illustrations for a large number of publications. Deirdre Fee, the Rev John Fee's wife, used her considerable artistic skills in painting and sketches to portray everyday life in China, including their time as a couple in a Japanese internment camp. Maureen Neill-Watson was a qualified social worker. Her exertions during the Biafran war contributed to her early death at Heathrow airport, on her journey home from Nigeria to recuperate. As many as thirty women were engaged in evangelism in the 20th century, mainly working in villages with women's groups, distributing scripture portions, teaching Bible stories and home skills, and encouraging Christian women to share their faith with others.

A report in 1916 from Hunan, China, noted that the Rev Wesley Hill, the Rev Deane Little and Dr George Hadden, all from Ireland and with their wives (Mrs Hadden was English), lived and worked in the same circuit, with Little the circuit Superintendent. Mrs Little (née Caroline Crawford), who had initially gone out as a single missionary, and Mrs Hadden (née Helen Vickers) were both "qualified doctors." As "honorary workers," the report ran, they were recognised as playing a valuable part in the Mission's "healing and teaching departments."[3] Yet, while prayer was requested for all three couples, there was no question of payment for the two doctors!

Single women missionaries who married "on the field" were treated particularly unfairly, often continuing their work after marriage while losing status and forfeiting income. The case of Nelson Ludlow's wife (who was English) well illustrates the situation. Ludlow, an Irish missionary minister between the late 1920s and the early 50s, married Joyce Woods in 1933. A qualified doctor and surgeon, she had commenced work at Ilesha hospital, Nigeria, two years earlier, where Ludlow was already serving with his sister, a nurse. It proved a highly effective partnership, involving medical, evangelistic and educational work largely among Muslims, facilitated by a specially adapted vehicle in which Nelson and Joyce Ludlow frequently travelled together, ministering over a wide area.[4]

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[3] *The Christian Advocate*, 25 February, 1916, p. 63.

[4] *The Kingdom Overseas*, November 1949, pp. 208-14. Nelson's sister, Elsie, also served at Ilesha as a nurse, becoming the Matron at the hospital. Another member of the wider Ludlow family, Bertha, married the Rev Donald English, a prominent minister of the British Conference, serving with him in Nigeria (1962-6). Their marriage was conducted by Nelson Ludlow. Donald later became President of the British Conference in 1978 and 1990. See Brian Hoare and Ian Randall, *More Than a Methodist: the Life and Ministry of Donald English*, 2003, pp. 39-58.

After retirement, Ludlow wrote a book describing their shared life and ministry. On the MMS attitude towards missionary spouses, he commented:

> In our early days, wives did not count in any official lists or appointments and, if a woman worker had the misfortune to marry a missionary, she was removed from the official list….Many of us…would gladly claim that our life partner did as much and often more than we did for the Kingdom of God, but (the MMS headquarters) would have none of these things. To carry matters further, each overseas District Synod had its own Missionary's Meeting which…included a report on the condition of each residence, its repairs, furnishings and need for improvements. But the missionary's wife was not a member and was not entitled to attend. This was very sad and frustrating.[5]

Ludlow later noted that what he described as "the emancipation of women" eventually led to the qualifications of wives as doctors, teachers and other professions being listed in the annual *Prayer Manual*. Financial arrangements however remained largely unaffected, and as retirement drew near he and his wife wondered where in England they might eventually find a suitable and affordable property:[6]

> The financial aspect was a great worry to me…True I had a wife who was a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. Her missionary years had earned for her the princely sum of three pounds a week. After our marriage, while she engaged fully in medical activities in pioneering and helping

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[5] R N Ludlow, *Partners in Pioneering: Ludlow's Memoirs*, available on his son Tony's web site: http://www.tonyludlow.net , pp. 89-90. The italics are mine.

[6] As a family they had earlier arranged for their children to be educated in England. This inevitably influenced later decisions including retirement.

with surgery at our hospital, for eighteen years she received no salary, grant nor allowances.[7]

Others had similar experiences including the Turtles in Burma and the Gallaghers in India. Maureen Turtle was a practicing doctor in a remote part of Burma, providing the base and focal point for much of her shared ministry with David, a minister. In South India, Muriel Gallagher (née Hyman, from England), impressively combined the roles of wife to Ernest and mother to their children while continuing her initial work as an educationalist and nursery school secretary throughout the extensive Medak Diocese.

Barry and Gillian Sloan, working through the World Church Office in the former East Germany from the late 20th century, commented significantly in 2004 in response to a questionnaire on missionary service:

> The biggest change for us was the decision…to pay spouses serving overseas. Gillian had been working part-time in a night school teaching English. She was then able to give this up and offer classes in the church. This was very useful to the church: the students paid a fee to the church for their course; and we had people from outside the church attending.[8]

Turning to ethnicity, this emerged as an important factor in mission in the second half of the 20th century, encouraging a need for clarity and sensitivity in expressing the theology and practice of mission in different settings. Deriving from the Greek word *ethnos*, it refers to shared kinship and consciousness among people. Ethnicity may, however, also be

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[7] R N Ludlow, op. cit., p. 186.

[8] I take it that the final comment referring to the payment of spouses implies that the new arrangement, instead of reducing mission opportunity, enlarged it while easing things for the Sloans as a family.

divisive, highlighting difference and leading to bitter conflict with others. Since the gospel is to be shared with all, it is therefore vital to define a basis on which this can be done:

> Mutuality among cultures…built on the meekness of Christ is the essence of inter-cultural witness to the gospel. Since…all are one in Christ, no ethnic group has intrinsic superiority over any other. This spirit of mutuality in Christ in the intercultural communication of the gospel provides the theological basis for a meaningful witness to the gospel in the context of ethnic division, competition and violence.[9]

The role and place of Sahr Yambasu has been particularly significant in this area. Born and brought up in Sierra Leone, Yambasu studied, taught and ministered in Ireland as well as Sierra Leone. Married to an Irishwoman, herself a Methodist minister, and knowledgeable of missionary literature and methods particularly in Africa, Yambasu ministers in Ireland. His book *Dialectics of Evangelization*, published in 2002 and subtitled *A Critical Examination of Methodist Evangelization of the Mende People in Sierra Leone* are both instructive and challenging. As a Mende himself, Yambasu assessed the aims and preaching of pioneer missionaries among the Mende between 1890 and 1932 in these terms:

> In whatever way one chooses to interpret missionary preaching methods, they all had one single ultimate goal: to achieve the missionaries' intended outcome–conversion from the old Mende way of life to that proclaimed by missionaries: it was to instil habits of appreciation, of overt behaviour, and of thought, which together were believed to be Christian rules of behaviour. It was to replace, or at the very least, to instil in Mende religion and practice the one

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[9] John Corrie (ed.), *Dictionary of Mission Theology* (Evangelical Foundations, 2007), p. 114.

and only true religion and its practices, missionary Christianity.[10]

Included as part of 'missionary Christianity' according to Yambasu, was an assumption that missionaries did not need to take seriously the worldview of the peoples among whom they served. Missionaries, he argued, tended to hold fixed "Western" views of life, conversion and Christian experience in contrast to the Mende who were more open to their immediate environment including African religious traditions.

In 1932, a year of Methodist union in Britain, union took place, too, in Sierra Leone involving the two branches of Methodism formed by separate British and American initiatives. Examining the following period under the title 'The Power to Live as Historical Beings: Mende Mission 1933-60', Yambasu concluded that the response of Mende converts fell short of what was perceived as the 'pure' and 'perfect' Christian belief and practice for which missionaries looked. Converts refused to jettison Mende beliefs and practices in exchange for "finished and fixed Christian Truths" and values, as defined by missionaries. Official reports, for example, confirmed that they failed to meet missionary expectations regarding the abandonment of polygamy.[11] Mende converts saw themselves as shaped in part by "cultural relativity" and remained open to the possibility of "the existence of other forms of secular and

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[10] Sahr Yambasu, *Dialectics of Evangelization*, 2002, p. 107. Yambasu himself attended and addressed an earlier conference of the MMS History Project.

[11] Polygamy proved to be a highly sensitive issue for missions throughout Africa. Consideration had to be given, for example, to the need to protect all the wives and children in pre-Christian marriages. This was a subject of debate at the Edinburgh 1910 mission conference. For a useful discussion on the topic, see *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, 1995, pp. 672-3; and John Corrie (ed), op. cit. pp. 291-4.

spiritual power" outside their immediate experience. The Mende view of selfhood therefore differed significantly from early Western expectations and –to their credit, argued Yambasu– missionaries learnt to welcome fresh understandings and approaches:

> The (first) missionaries assumed that conversion involved sincere personal belief on the one hand, and on the other, committed membership of a community in Christ. According to this assumption, it was up to every individual to arrive at a rational choice among alternatives and mutually exclusive faiths and then act upon it…Those Mende (however) who became Christians largely expressed themselves according to their own understanding of being a person, ownership of property, work and the production of wealth, social and religious relations…(Though) the role of Mende agents in the proselytization of their fellow Mende proved to be crucial (in leading to conversions)…there was no question of total rejection of their pre-missionary Mende faith….Conversion was amorphous, gradual, often implicit, and evidently 'syncretic' in nature. The nature of the transformation it achieved in Mende peoples' lives– their social identities, cultural styles and ritual practices– was complex….The meaning and significance of conversion must be sought from the peoples themselves who have experienced it, rather than from the preconceptions of other people.[12]

Yambasu here identifies and highlights questions and issues relevant to churches in mission in different situations and

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[12] Sahr Yambasu, ibid., pp. 249-51. Lamin Sanneh, from a Muslim background and now a leading figure in world Christian and Muslim-Christian circles, continues to value his contacts with Muslims, makes similar points concerning 'the limitations of…pre-packaged religion'. In correspondence with me, Dr. Elizabeth Harris, a Methodist Local Preacher deeply involved in inter-faith dialogue, found parallels to the Mende experience in her research on Buddhism and Christianity in Sri Lanka.

times. His approach recalls the tension and challenge identified in the early church when consideration was given to whether Gentile believers should be required to conform to the practice and disciplines of Jewish believers. Differences over belief and practice need to be taken seriously, with new believers viewed as converts not proselytes, charged with the task of opening their culture, traditions and values to Christ while seeking to give authentic local expression to their new-found faith in Christ. This process inevitably presents challenges to those thought of as the 'giving', 'going' and 'sending' partners in mission and their need to re-examine past assumptions and to face fresh challenges. This was widely acknowledged in the 20th century as when, for example, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization declared in its Willowbank Report:

> Sensitive cross-cultural witnesses will not arrive at their sphere of service with a pre-packaged gospel. They must have a clear grasp of the 'given truth' of the gospel. But they will fail to communicate successfully if they try to impose this on people without reference to their own and that of the people to whom they go. It is only by active, loving engagement with the local people, thinking in their thought patterns, understanding their worldview, listening to their questions, and feeling their burdens, that the whole believing community (of which the missionary is a part) will be able to respond to their need….We are not claiming it will be easy.[13]

The approach of Inderjit Bhogal is revealing at this point. A Sikh, a Methodist minister, indeed a former President of the British Methodist Conference, he is now the Leader of the Corrymeela Community in Ireland. In the year 2000 he wrote:

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[13] Ralph D Winter and Steven C Hawthorne (eds.), *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 1981, p. 517.

Paul, after his Damascus road experience, did not cease to be a Hebrew but remained proud of his culture although he questioned some parts of it. So I try to follow Christ within the Sikh culture. I do not describe myself as a former Sikh. Culturally I remain a Sikh. I am able to worship God and to remain within the communal meals with my family and others in the Sikh temples. And I wear the bracelet, the KARA, for this in Sikhism is the symbol of God's truth and justice. I wear it as a sign of my respect for Sikhs, and my family, and also to remind me that my hands must always seek the truth and justice and mercy of God….Christians, like our Lord, must relate to different religions with respect and with a willingness to learn from them. [14]

Similarly, Jewish converts today often refer to themselves as Christian Jews, not former Jews.

Professor Andrew Walls has helpfully drawn attention to the fundamental distinction between 'proselytism' and Christian 'conversion' in the early church council described in Acts 15, convened to discuss the reception of Gentile believers. Writing of the council's 'astonishing' rejection of a Judaising type of proselytism he commented:

The Early Church decided that Gentile believers in Jesus– although ex-pagans without the lifelong training in doctrine and morality that Jews had–should not be circumcised, should not be expected to keep the Torah, and should be left to find a Christian lifestyle of their own within Hellenistic society. *They were not to be proselytes, but converts.* [15]

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[14] Inderjit Bhogal in *A Continuing Faith: The 2000 Methodist Companion*, (Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes), pp. 7-8. Bhogal became the Leader of the Corrymeela Community in Ireland in 2011.

[15] See Professor Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 2002, pp. 67-8, for a discussion on the church council's

The distinction between 'proselyte' and 'convert' is fundamental, with converts from other faiths, though requiring continuing encouragement and support, recognised as being "in Christ" and as such entitled to take their place alongside others within the church. It is vital, too, that in the interests of mission, converts, wherever possible, are encouraged to retain contact with their traditional communities while "baptising" into Christ what is good among their traditional values, thought-forms and practices. This will inevitably lead to a questioning and confronting of issues best resolved by converts themselves, with established Christians maintaining a supportive role. A recent comment from within Sri Lanka is strikingly relevant:

> Genuine conversion is not an abandonment of one identity for another, but the radical re-orientation of the original identity towards Christ….This is a radically new Christ-centred *way of being*….Christianity infuses indigenous cultures and languages rather then replacing them with sacred languages, dress codes, dietary laws, and normative philosophical templates.[16]

Instances of inter-faith conversion may lead to "a long, dynamic and dangerous process, producing distinctive discipleships as diverse and variegated as human life itself."[17] This is deeply challenging both to established and new Christians. With patience, however, and within the reality of Christian fellowship that includes an openness to one another

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decision in Acts 15. The italics within the quote are mine. See however John Corrie (ed.), *Dictionary of Mission, Evangelical Foundations*, pp. 321-2; and Elmer Thiessen, *The Ethics of Evangelism*: *A Philosophical Defence of Ethical Proselytising and Persuasion*, for a wider discussion on proselytism.

[16] Prabo Mihindukulasuriya, a lecturer at Colombo Theological Seminary (CTS), argues this in the *Journal of CTS*, 2010, p. 104.

[17] Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission*, 2003, p. 79. This is relevant also to the earlier discussion on conversion concerning the Mende people.

and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, shared beliefs and characteristics will undoubtedly emerge, contributing to a family likeness among and between believers, however varied their initial ethnic, gender and theological backgrounds.

FOLK RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AMONG SINHALESE BUDDHISTS: A REFLECTION FOR CHRISTIAN FAITH AND MISSION

PAUL MANTAE KIM

INTRODUCTION

During my residency in Sri Lanka in the late 1990s, I keenly observed and conversed with my Sinhalese Buddhist neighbours, the majority people of the nation. One day, I saw a Sinhalese Buddhist lady plucking flowers in her yard and putting them into a basket. I asked her what she would use them for. She replied that she would offer the flowers to the gods ruling over her village. Otherwise, she would be harmed. That day, I realized that Buddhism does not explain all the Sinhalese Buddhist beliefs and practices. Another belief system operating in their lives is folk religion. They often seek to contact supernatural beings and powers that they believe influence their lives for good or bad.

I used to pray for the sick while visiting Buddhist homes. Some Buddhists also came to visit us requesting prayer for healing. When they experienced healing, they did not reject hearing the gospel. This was because they felt they had benefitted. That was when I realized it is important to relate the gospel to people's daily lives.

Sri Lanka has experienced a long history of European Protestant missions for more than three hundred years. However, the total number of Protestants is only 1% of the population despite their substantial mission endeavours. The Protestant missions' major methods of spreading Christianity were education, preaching, and printing work (Malalgoda 1976:193-205). It seems that the Sinhalese have not been so responsive to the gospel because they have not seen, in Christianity, the supernatural aid they want for their daily lives. On the other hand, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have been growing continuously through the postcolonial period when those churches were introduced. I assume these churches have drawn the attention of the Sinhalese people and have met their needs by manifesting supernatural works. In this study, I explore the beliefs and needs that underlie the Sinhalese folk religious practices and then identify the appropriate Christian responses to these practices.

Buddhism and Folk Religion among Sinhalese Buddhists: Syncretism or Coexistence?

The introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka is attributed to Arahat Mahinda, who came to the island in about the middle of the third century BC. Asoka, the great emperor of India who was a convert to Buddhism, sent religious ambassadors and monks to all the outlying regions and border countries, as well as to countries as far away as Egypt and Macedonia in order to preach Buddhist doctrine (Rahula 1993:48). For this reason, Asoka sent Arahat Mahinda, one of his own sons, with other monks to Sri Lanka. Tissa, the king of the Sinhalese, who had a favorable political relationship with Asoka, received the group with gladness. Upon hearing the teaching of Buddha from them, he became a convert to Buddhism. Thereafter, Buddhism spread through the country along with the

supportive promotion of the kings and rose above the mass of local cults which related to Hindu gods, local deities, and demons (Pakeman 1964:28).

The Buddhism which Arahat Mahinda brought was that of the Theravada school. 'Theravada' literally means "the way of the elders." Its adherents are convinced that it has conserved the early traditions of pure Buddhism (Guruge 1984:66). Theravada Buddhism is referred to as the 'Lesser Vehicle' of Buddhism in that it seeks a narrower ideal of emancipation, which is obtainable by self-effort through the renouncing of the world and submitting to a life of monkhood. Buddha is considered a natural and holy man who attained nirvana,[1] rather than a superhuman being. Further, Theravada Buddhism does not give significant attention to spiritual beings or powers.

However, Sinhalese Buddhists frequently turn to folk religion that engages spiritual beings and powers. Regardless of Western influence and over four hundred years of colonial Christian missions, folk religious practices are very common in urban settings, as well as in the villages (Vogt 1999:112). Sinhalese Buddhists have retained their folk religious beliefs and practices even though they experienced Western education, industrialization and urbanization.

Chronologically, folk religious beliefs and practices precede Buddhism among Sinhalese Buddhists. Prior to the arrival of Buddhism, rites and cults centered on spiritual beings were not unusual among the people. They believed in nature gods, ancestral gods, planetary gods, and other gods (De Silva 1980:24-26). The origin of the Sinhalese folk religion can

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[1] 'Nirvana' indicates the ultimate state of complete emancipation from suffering and rebirth.

largely be attributed to four sources. First, the Veddas, the aboriginal population, presumably practised some form of animistic religion prior to the arrival of the Indian migrants; and they initiated the Sinhalese people (Pakeman 1964:26). Their practices are believed to have been incorporated into the practices of the Sinhalese forefathers. Second, Sinhalese ancestors seem to have brought in Indian folk religious practices. Third, Buddhist forefathers came with pre-Buddhist folk practices to the island of Sri Lanka. Fourth, the Sinhalese encounters with South India commenced at the beginning of the Common Era and included cultural exchanges with the Tamils. Later, the Tamil's migration to the nation led the Sinhalese to associate more with their Hindu religious customs (Vogt 1999:105). Consequently, the Sinhalese folk religion incorporated aboriginal and Indian influences in its formation.

Sinhalese Buddhists engage in both Theravada Buddhism and folk religion. Why do Sinhalese Buddhists practise folk religion? Is Buddhism not sufficient to meet their religious needs? Are they compromising their Theravada Buddhism by practising folk religion? How do these two religions operate in the lives of Sinhalese Buddhists? A number of scholars have attempted to answer these questions. In this regard, Gananath Obeyesekere uses Redfield's terms, "Great Tradition" and "Little Tradition" to explain the religion of Sinhalese Buddhists. According to him, Great Tradition refers to doctrinal Theravada Buddhism of the Pali Canon, whereas Little Tradition indicates Sinhalese Buddhism, the religion of the Sinhalese masses (Obeyesekere 1966:2). He does not identify the Buddhism of the Sinhalese with syncretism. Rather, he views it as a locally institutionalized Buddhism; a later variance from the Great Tradition. He recognizes that the Buddhism of the Sinhalese includes particular elements that are not authenticated in the Buddhism of the Great Tradition.

Michael Ames and Edmund Leach, however, regard the interplay of Buddhism and popular beliefs among Sinhalese Buddhists as syncretism (Ames 1966:41). This is because they note that gods are not part of Buddhism; or, more exactly, not part of the Pali Canon. In contrast, Richard Gombrich, opposes their views, on the basis that the core of Buddhist doctrine remained without damage among the Sinhalese. He also reasons that the existence of spirit-beings was unsurprisingly recognized in Buddhism (Gombrich 1971:48-49).

Martin Southwold's view is in line with Gombrich's position. He uses the term "True Buddhism" and "Village Buddhism." "True Buddhism" indicates the Buddhism which is made known only in the canon or authentic books and is observed by educated elites, whereas "Village Buddhism" indicates the Buddhism of the common folk. However, Southwold states that such contrast is not completely valid, because the elite Buddhists are also engaged with Village Buddhism (1982:139).

Ven. Walpola Rahula, the eminent scholar monk, asserts that Buddhism acknowledges the existence of spiritual beings. He further maintains that Buddhism and popular beliefs are incorporated in harmony. He does not view the Buddhism of the Sinhalese as syncretism, nor the Buddhist accommodation of popular beliefs as contradictory:

> In fact, there are many references, in early Buddhist texts, to spirits or deities residing in parks, forests and various trees. There was no clash, therefore, between Buddhism and the pre-Buddhist cult of spirit worship. The only difference was that in Buddhist Ceylon all those deities were "converted" to Buddhism. They were very popular with the masses and Buddhists located them almost everywhere (Rahula 1993:263).

Heinz Bechert notes that there is no conflict between Buddhism and folk religion among Buddhists (Bechert, Küng, van Ess, and von Stietencron 1993:296). This is because Buddhism is religion to them, but folk religion is simply mundane. Sinhalese Buddhists generally refer to the teachings of Buddha when it comes to indicating their religion. Most Sinhalese Buddhists believe in the existence of gods and spirits. However, they hardly consider such popular beliefs and practices to be part of religion, according to Gombrich (1971:46) and Winslow (1982:177-178). Sinhalese Buddhists refer to the concepts of *laukika* (this worldly) and *lokottara* (other worldly) in defining religion. They regard the former to be non-religion and the latter to be religion. They assume that religion is concerned with supra-worldly matters, contrasted with worldly matters (Southwold 1978:363). Popular beliefs and practices are concerned with worldly matter. Thus, Sinhalese Buddhists hardly regard these beliefs and practices to be religion. Though, Gombrich and Obeyesekere name their beliefs and practices as "spirit religion":

> [I]f we work with the Western conception of religion as involving belief in and action directed toward supernatural beings, we must add that the religious life of Sinhala Buddhists has always (except for a few individuals) included such belief and action…. Here it suffices to say that this non-Buddhist part of the religion of Sinhala [Sinhalese] Buddhists has no name, no unifying label in the culture, and as we need to refer to it we shall give it a label of convenience and call it "spirit religion" (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988:3).

Sinhalese Buddhists' religion involves the practices of both Buddha and of spirits. Buddhism and popular beliefs coexist among Sinhalese Buddhists in a way that Buddhism is more concerned with ultimate matters while popular beliefs are with mundane needs. Consequently, the coexistence of

Buddhism and popular beliefs is neither confusing nor contradictory to Sinhalese Buddhists, since both of them play meaningful roles in their lives. *Table 1* displays how Sinhalese Buddhists conceive of Buddhism and popular beliefs, respectively. I refer to Sinhalese beliefs in spirits as "religious" in this study, since a general definition of religion includes beliefs in spiritual beings as its significant component.

Buddhism	**Popular Beliefs**
Religion	Non-religion
Lokottara (other worldly)	*Laukika* (this worldly)
Ultimate matters	Mundane needs
Centered on the Buddha	Centered on Gods and Spirits

TABLE 1: The Sinhalese conception of Buddhism and popular beliefs

The Sinhalese Folk Religious Beliefs and Practices

The religious lives of the Sinhalese Buddhists entail both Buddhism and folk religion as addressed in the prior section. Their folk religious practices centre on supernatural beings and powers. This section explores the spiritual beings and powers that ordinary Sinhalese Buddhists believe in, their view of the world, and their subsequent practices. I attempt this investigation to ascertain the people's rationale underlying their practices and then to meaningfully respond to them in light of biblical truth and contextual relevance.

Beliefs in Supernatural Beings and Powers

Many Sinhalese Buddhists locate diverse supernatural beings under the headship of Buddha. They assume that there is a system of government among supernatural beings as exists in human societies. In this hierarchical structure, Buddha is the supreme being, forever victorious and triumphant. Power and authority are distributed vertically from Buddha at the head down to the lowest supernatural beings. The next highest gods are guardian gods: Natha, Vishnu, Kataragama, Saman, and Pattini (Obeyesekere 1966:6). Below them are planetary gods and, then, district gods (Kapferer 1991:159). *Yakkas* are subject to higher gods. They obey their commands and dare not transgress them. Ghosts (*prethas*) are the lowest. Buddha is the only perfect and pure being. Guardian gods, planetary gods, and district gods are benevolent in line with their hierarchical order, but they are also sometimes punitive (Brow 1996:137). *Yakkas* and *Prethas* are irrational and destructive.

Sinhalese Buddhists also believe certain gods rule over territories. I have seen bus drivers stop by a shrine en route to their destination. They offer coins and bow their heads with hands joined before the statue of a god. This act is to ensure safety from accidents in the belief that particular gods govern the areas people pass through in vehicles. They think that if they do not honour them, the gods will feel ignored and became annoyed. Therefore, at various places along the dangerous, often winding mountainous roads there are elaborate shrines dedicated to the local god who is believed to have power in the particular area through which the road passes (Baker 1998:42). The structure of governance of gods over regions of Sri Lanka is portrayed as below.
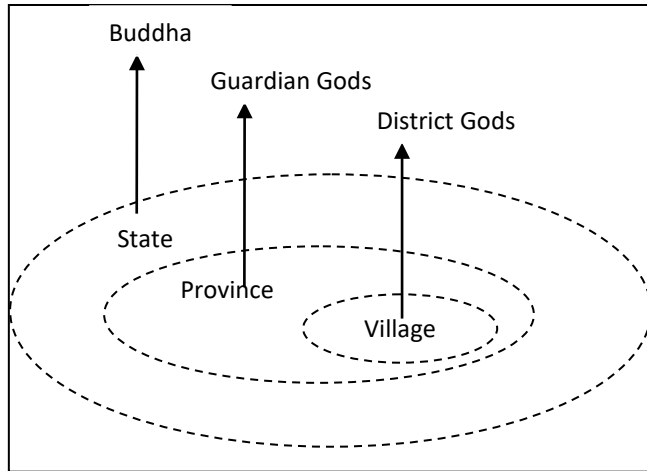
FIGURE 1: Regional Government of Gods

The higher gods oversee a larger area, while lower gods preside over a smaller one. The boundaries or limits are allocated to each god in terms of territory, authority, and time (Obeyesekere 1966:17). As portrayed in *Figure 2*, the regions that gods preside over are largely divided into: village, province, and state (Obeyesekere 1966:20). Buddha is in charge of the entire state. The guardian gods oversee large provinces and district gods supervise villages.

In addition, Sinhalese Buddhists connect their perception of supernatural beings with the Buddhist concept of karma[2]. The different levels of supernatural beings are viewed in terms of different karma. Each level indicates the stage human beings are supposed to reach according to their karma:

> The major ideas underlying the rank ordering of the cosmic hierarchy concern the extent to which the various

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[2] 'Karma' means action, the law of moral rewards and retributions (Guruge 1984:231).

> supernatural beings are conceived of as following the Buddha's teaching or as committed to his Path, the extent to which they are given to the dominance of nature disordered in their being and action, and the degree to which they express this in their relative purity or pollution (Kapferer 1991:159).

Buddha is at the top, the ultimate stage of Nirvana. At the bottom, demons are sinful and vicious beings born as a result of their bad karma. They are not considered able to move upward on account of their continuous tendency towards evil. The gods who come between Buddha and demons are in the process of moving toward Buddha in the future, but not yet. Buddhism bestows a morality structure on the supernatural beings Sinhalese Buddhists believe in (Obeyesekere 1966:11). In the framework of Buddhism, engaging supernatural beings becomes a co-beneficial act for people and gods based upon the karma concept:

> It is in relation to the gods, however, that merit transfer becomes significant, linking the deity and the worshiper in a morality of mutual self-interest. Man needs the providence of the gods, who protect him and banish the demons of disease, but man in return transfers some of his accumulated merit to the gods and thus assists the latter in their spiritual progress toward nirvana and enlightenment (Obeyesekere 1966:12).

Therefore, gods are understood to be beings who have earned particular stages and who are moving on the way toward Nirvana. They need more karma from people in order to reach Nirvana. In this integration of the Buddhist concept of karma and the existence of supernatural beings, the Sinhalese Buddhist engagement with these beings embodies a Buddhist meaning as well as a means of achieving their daily requisites.

Practices of Engaging Supernatural Beings and Powers

Sinhalese Buddhists employ several methods to invoke supernatural beings and powers. These methods include rituals, magic, amulets, and divination. Sinhalese Buddhists perform various rituals in accordance with their needs. The rituals for gods and demons have to do with this-worldly goals, while the rituals performed to Buddha largely with other-worldly orientations (Obeyesekere 1966:14). Buddha is generally honoured and revered at the outset of rituals directed to gods. One of the major functions of rituals is that they enable people to experience and relate directly to gods, spirits, ancestors, and supernatural forces (Hiebert, Shaw and Tiénou 1999:301). Rituals are the ways through which people influence the deities that they believe control their lives.

Sinhalese Buddhists perform rituals mostly to deal with their life crises. They intend to offset crises and also to ensure good luck. These crisis-rituals are with respect to disease, accidents, bad luck, financial loss, unnatural death, epidemics, or natural disasters such as famine, drought, flood and storm[3]. It is common for the people to try to ward off the spirits who have caused trouble for individuals, families or communities by way of placating or expelling them. Healing rituals entail an intense and complicated process of dealing with the spirits that are believed to cause illness. The folk Sinhalese deal with diseases and illness in several ways:

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[3] Rituals are divided into three types in accordance with the purpose (Hiebert, Shaw and Tiénou 1999:302): 1. Rituals of transformation are to create new order and move individuals and groups through life; 2. Rituals of intensification are to reinforce existing order; 3. Rituals of crisis are to enable people to survive emergency situations.

> [T]he villagers use four different approaches to healing or a combination of any of these: 1) home remedies, 2) traditional medicine, 3) ritual healing, and 4) Western medicine. The first three approaches are closely related and often difficult to divide neatly into categories, while the relatively recent Western medicine is kept separate in the minds of the villagers (Baker 1998:65).

Traditional medicine is based on herbal, naturopathic, and homeopathic treatments. Local doctors knowledgeable of traditional treatment serve people in the villages. When no specific improvement occurs, they perform rituals of healing. They assume there is a supernatural cause as well as a natural cause for a person's sickness. Practitioners are called on to perform healing rituals. The aim of the rituals is to expel or protect oneself from the malevolent spirits who are believed to cause illness. The practitioners mediate between spirits and humans. *Table 2* portrays how healing practitioners deal with spiritual beings.

Healing Specialist	Associated Spirits	Healing Method (Rituals)
Yakadura (demon master)	Demons (Yakka) and gods	Healing ritual (*thovil*), demon dance, propitiation of the gods.
Kapurala (priest of the gods)	High gods	Offerings (*puja*), vows, and self-mortification.
Shastrakaraya (astrologer, fortune teller)	Planetary gods	Discerning causes, Prescribing rituals.

TABLE 2: Healing Rituals and Practitioners[4]

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[4] The table has been selectively taken and modified from Beatrice Vogt (Vogt 1999:11).

Yakadura is the best-known figure in villages whose task is to deal with many Yakkas (demons) – to exorcise them, to make offerings to them, and to move them to release the person made ill by them from his sickness (Wirz 1954:1-2). He is invited to the house the sick person lives in. *Tovil* is the complicated healing ritual he performs. This ritual consists of demon dance and the propitiation of gods. Yakadura chants magical incantations over a string and ties it around the sick person's neck as a means of driving out the influence of malicious spirits from the sick person (Baker 1998:70). In healing rituals, each of the major Yakkas is propitiated along with his assistant Yakkas (Ames 1966:41). Preceding every invocation, homage is paid to Buddha; during every invocation gods are called upon to help control the Yakkas (Ames 1966:41). They are told to leave the patient by order of the Buddha and the power of the gods. Yakkas are believed to cause illness. Therefore, it is a major goal to remove Yakkas from the patient in healing rituals. Primarily it is necessary to know the specific Yakka who is the cause of the illness in order to prescribe the means to satisfy him and drive or cajole him out of the body of the sufferer (Ratnapala 1991:58).

People also go to the shrine where the practitioner *Kapurala* resides. The kapurala performs rituals regularly in the shrine. He comes into contact with superior deities whose favor he strives to gain by performing traditional rites and ceremonies (Wirz 1954:3). First of all, people start making offerings to high gods such as Kataragama or Pattini. Flowers or baskets of fruit are offered to the gods and incense sticks are lit. During the ritual, Kapurala chants incantations and tells the people the cause of their afflictions or misfortune and what they should do (Baker 1998:71). Kapurala is highly trusted as manifesting healing powers among the folk Sinhalese. When diseases are assumed to have occurred through cosmic influence, the

Shastrakaraya (astrologer) is consulted to discern the causes by astrological diagnosis and to prescribe appropriate rituals.

As noted above, many Sinhalese Buddhists believe that demons or evil spirits afflict people (de Silva 1980:111). Special performers play a leading role in rituals. They mediate between supernatural beings and people. Buddhist monks are concerned about people's salvation and moral values rather than the involvement with supernatural beings. Thus the people's desire is met by the role of intermediary agents mediating between them and gods. In the non-western world, specialists who take part in activities such as witchcraft, magic, and sorcery are often considered to be important parts of the total religious belief system (Lehmann and Myers 2001:87).

Alongside healing/exorcism rituals, Sinhalese Buddhists carry out Bali rituals to cope with troubles they believe planet gods are involved in. The planet god is propitiated through rituals. They also perform rituals for prosperity. In these rituals, the goddess Pattini is often appealed to for a good harvest and for prosperity (Ratnapala 1991:51). People often seek prosperity by visiting shrines and appealing to gods. These practices are all for a person's own good.

On the other hand, the practice of directing hostile magic towards others also exist: Black magic entails harming an individual or a family by invoking supernatural powers to cause physical or mental disabilities or even death (de Silva 1980:195). Many Sinhalese people believe they can instill magical powers into objects by manipulating spirits. These objects are called amulets. Threads are normally charmed and tied on wrists. In addition some people wear around their neck an amulet, pieces of copper foil on which are engraved linear diagrams with letters of the alphabet and which are then rolled up and kept in a small cylinder (Gombrich 1971:200).

People use these objects mostly for protection from evil spirits. Astrology is a supernatural means to reveal a person's future or to determine auspicious times. A Sinhalese Buddhist respondent from my doctoral research on the Sinhalese culture replied that "according to astrology, I come to know the good or bad results of things in the future. If something bad is predicted to happen in the future, I can take steps to avoid its ill effects." Sinhalese Buddhists refer to astrologers in order to identify auspicious times for performing their weddings, puberty rites, funerals and so on. Sinhalese Buddhists believe in divination, which includes astrology, to avoid misery and to ensure good fortune.

Belief System, Needs, and Subsequent Behaviour

There are two contrasting worldviews that are largely accepted: one is the secular worldview commonly governing modern societies, and the other is the primal worldview widespread in non-Western societies. The secular worldview asserts that God may have been the 'first cause', but he is no longer concerned with the affairs of human kind (Burnett 1988:21). This Western Enlightenment thought denies the reality of the supernatural realm in the events of human life, and reduces the reality of this world to purely naturalistic explanations (Hiebert 1994:200). On the other hand, the primal worldview addresses that spirits are real and influence human lives. In line with this worldview, Sinhalese Buddhists believe that they live in a world populated by supernatural beings and powers.

Sinhalese Buddhists assume that the supernatural affects their day-to-day life situations. Therefore, they try to supplicate, invoke or coerce supernatural beings for their survival, safety and prosperity in this world. They seek power as the key to prosperity, health, success, and control over life (Hiebert,

Shaw and Tiénou 1999:373). On the one hand, in Western thought, the causes of problems are usually attributed to natural or social matters. On the other hand, the folk Sinhalese relate causes to the domains of both the natural and supernatural.

> In this vein, the belief system of a people determines their perception of causality. People interpret crisis or misery from their belief system and identify its cause. They then use appropriate methods to restore their situations to normality or to seek success. Western doctors are more likely to be referred to for severe physical symptoms. In the case of mild symptoms, people see local doctors. However, it is by traditional healing rituals that they deal with severe psychic disturbances that make patients incapable of work or communication (Vogt 1999:113).

Wellbeing is a condition everyone ordinarily hopes for. The natural belief system does not consider supernatural elements to be necessary in attaining well-being. On the other hand, the supernatural belief system infers that hard work may be in vain without the aid of the supernatural. The natural belief system stems from an Enlightenment/rational concept of reality in Western societies. This view of the world regards that involving supernatural realms or beings are unscientific and primitive.

The Sinhalese pursuit of the supernatural reflects their life needs. Sinhalese Buddhists often ascribe afflictions and crises in their lives to supernatural causes. Then, they resort to the supernatural to overcome their unpleasant life circumstances such as illness, famine, and bad luck. They assume that numerous gods subjugate the world. They engage particular gods to meet their needs. They attempt to resolve afflictions based upon their view of the world, in other words, upon their belief system that acknowledges the supernatural. Their

subsequent action is to connect with supernatural beings and powers. Figure 1 portrays how life needs and belief system interacts to produce folk religious practices among Sinhalese Buddhists.
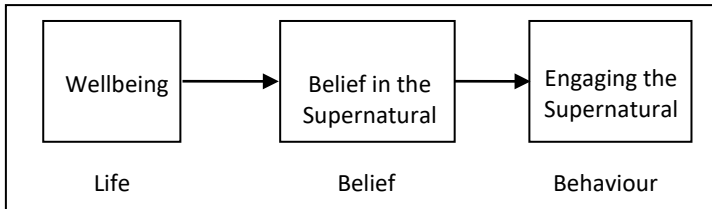

FIGURE 2: Relation of Life Needs, Belief System, and Behavior

People engage spiritual powers to ensure wellbeing here and now on earth rather than wait for eternal rest in the other world (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999:133). Need is a motivational force instigated by a state of disequilibrium or tension in an organism due to a particular lack (Doyal and Gough 1991:49). The Sinhalese life-needs manifesting in their folk religious practices are health, protection, and prosperity needs as noted in earlier sections.

During my residency in Sri Lanka, I noted that supernatural healing from disease is perceived to be a felt need among urban and suburban Sinhalese Buddhists. According to Gombrich and Obeyesekere's research, healing from illness was the most frequent reason that motivated visitors to come to the shrine: 20 out of a total 55 respondents indicated it (1988:73).

All people prepare means by which to defend themselves against natural environments, danger or calamity. However, Sinhalese Buddhists seek an additional type of protection means. This is supernatural protection in the world where the supernatural influences human lives. Protection from

supernatural forces is a great need for Sinhalese Buddhists. Buddha and gods under his supremacy are believed to be benevolent to them. However, Sinhalese Buddhists feel vulnerable to harm and attacks exercised by malignant spirits. They also recognize that they are exposed to charms, spells, and black magic, which threaten their security and safety. Thus, they seek to have protection from harmful spiritual powers. Most ordinary Sinhalese Buddhists wear talismans around their wrist or neck as a means of protection. Protection is an all time need for them. Bus drivers worship gods prior to departure to other regions, seeking protection from accidents.

Prosperity sought after through engaging the supernatural is divided into two main categories: fertility and material prosperity. Folk Sinhalese Buddhists seek to conceive by pursuing the help of supernatural beings and eliminating the hindrance of evil spirits. In this regard, Pattini is recognized as the goddess of fertility. Material prosperity ranges from plentiful crops in agriculture to success in jobs. Farmers assume that a good harvest does not come only by their hard labour but also by beneficial supernatural causes. I saw a young Buddhist man go Down South – a six hour distance – with the expectation that the god Kataragama would provide a better job during the annual festival and ritual season. The folk Sinhalese ask for blessings from gods for all their life affairs. Ordinary Sinhalese Buddhists ask for prosperity, daily. I saw a good number of Sinhalese Buddhists place other images of gods alongside the statue of Buddha. They offer flowers to the Buddha and other gods in the morning and evening. They ask for blessings and wellbeing on a daily basis. Prosperity is a significant need for folk Sinhalese Buddhists, which motivates their engagement with the supernatural.

Missionally Engaging the Sinhalese Folk Religion

This section explores relevant Christian responses to the Sinhalese folk religious beliefs and practices in order to make the gospel meaningful to their lives. Firstly, it examines how colonial Christian missions approached such beliefs and practices in Sri Lanka. This examination provides the reasons why many Sinhalese Buddhists remained dedicated to their traditional beliefs despite over four hundred years of Christian mission effort. Subsequently, this section addresses the importance of recovering the supernatural in Christian faith, appreciating a holistic aspect of human life, and fulfilling the wholeness of human needs, salvation, and transformation in Christian ministries.

Colonial Missions' Responses to Sinhalese Folk Religious Practices

During the colonial period, European Protestant missionaries generally viewed Sinhalese folk religious practices as pagan, primitive, and demonic. In this regard, K M De Silva articulates the problem of such a stance:

> The Christian missions had come to Sri Lanka as the apostles of a new faith and as critics of indigenous society, and in preaching their new ideas the missionaries had been fortified usually by an unquestioning faith not merely in their own rightness but also in the intrinsic depravity of many traditional customs and beliefs. This latter had given the Christian missionary movement its characteristic feature of cultural intolerance. There was a conscious attempt to undermine traditional customs and beliefs and to impose in their place the whole system of Christian values associated with the Victorian age (1977:395)

The colonial missions' message centered on questions of eternity. Their message emphasized the depravity of human

beings, the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of the regenerate soul (Bradley 1976:22). On the other hand, the goal of Christianization was connected with the process of Westernization (Somaratna 1988:95). Missionaries introduced Western education and medicine as a means of civilizing local culture and customs. At the same time, Christian missions repressed Sinhalese traditional religious practices. Conversion normally meant breaking with the people's traditional practices and customs. However, Christian missions accompanying Western civilization did not succeed in eradicating folk religious practices among Sinhalese Buddhists. Their beliefs in the supernatural did not die out. Many conversions were not as genuine as the missions expected them to be: "[T]he strategy of the Buddhists of nominally acceding to Christianity while continuing their indigenous practices struck at the heart of the Evangelical conception of the inner experience of conversion"(Scott 1994:165). Converted Christians often continued folk practices outside church. This was because the church did not respond properly to their belief in supernatural beings and powers.

Charles Kraft asserts that the blockage to supernatural powers lies in the naturalistic Western worldview influenced by the Enlightenment (1989:9). Similarly in Sri Lanka, Christian missions have missed the importance of responding to the people's concerns regarding the supernatural, thereby largely failing to make the gospel and Christianity meaningful to their lives. This was due to the fact that Christian missions were under the influence of the Western worldview that denounces the reality of the supernatural realm.

Recovering the Supernatural in Christian Faith

If Christian missions ignore or deny the supernatural, Sinhalese people may take one of three courses of actions toward

Christianity. First, they may reject Christianity as irrelevant to them.[5] Another option is to admit secularized Christianity with no supernatural aspect. The other is to accept Christianity as a high religion and yet continue to engage in popular religious practices.

Allan Tippet views that in a supernatural power-oriented society, change of faith needs to be supernatural power-demonstrated (1971:81). This does not mean that we base our mission on the people's understanding of the world. Instead, it is to have the gospel respond to their view of the world and their concerns. Belief in the supernatural is obvious in the Bible. God, angels, Satan, and demons are not fictitious but real in the Bible. John Taylor remarked: "There is no understanding of other religions, which does not yield new biblical insights. What is more, such understanding also yields new insights as to the nature of the church" (1963:36). In this regard, acknowledging the supernatural aspects of Sinhalese folk religious beliefs leads us to new insights into the supernatural character of God.

As mentioned in earlier sections, Sinhalese Buddhists have a firm belief in the regional ruling of the gods. They believe in village gods, and provincial guardian gods. They fear those gods as well as seek help from them. They believe those gods influence their lives for good or bad. When people see the overwhelming power of God, they will be able to trust in the God who overrules their gods. They will respond more readily to the truth that Jesus is Lord and Saviour when they see that His power is superior to the gods they have given their allegiance to.

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[5]Paul Hiebert points out that non-contextualization may result in people's rejection of Christianity (1985a: 184).

The Sinhalese may not show much interest in the gospel if it is presented without supernatural elements, since it does not seem to protect them from possible harm by malicious spiritual beings. The apostle Paul's remarks are therefore applicable in the context of Sinhalese Buddhists who are concerned about powers: "For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction" (1Thessalonians 1:4, 5). Experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit is very significant in order for the gospel to be meaningful among supernatural power-oriented people. It means that the communication of the gospel needs to be directed at their responsive dimensions. R Daniel Shaw describes the importance of implementing the gospel into the people's belief system in Samo contexts:

> Those Samo who have embraced the teachings of Christianity have accepted it in terms of their own belief system. Christianity is not simply a matter of attending church regularly on Sunday, but rather an incorporation of Christian thought into daily life. Thus, after reading St Paul's letter to the Colossians, one young person asked God's protection over a garden rather than invoke the assistance of benevolent spirits (Shaw 1981:363).

The demonstration of supernatural power nurtures the cognitive understanding of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus proved His Lordship not with logical proofs, but by a demonstration of power in curing the sick and casting out evil spirits (Hiebert 1985a:189). In a similar vein, the church and believers should recognize the mightier power of God over all other supernatural powers. People will respond to the claims of Christ when they see that His power is superior to the magic of the sorcerer, or that of the ancestors (Burnett 1988:33). Then, people's attention will be drawn to the God who

subdues other supernatural beings and powers, and then the gospel will gain an opportunity to draw them to Christ.

As noted early, colonial Protestant missions denounced the Sinhalese people's folk religious beliefs and practices as vicious. The supernatural realm has been left out of the periphery of their missions among the Sinhalese. Relevant answers in regard to supernatural issues were not provided to the people. Hiebert names this neglected area concerning Christianity the 'Excluded Middle' – a term that indicates the cries and misfortunes of present life crucially treated in the primal worldview (1994:196-97). The supernatural is an essential part of a biblical worldview. Christian missions should recapture the realm of the supernatural in human lives and provide biblical truth about it.

Responding to Holistic Human Life

Sinhalese Buddhists consider Buddha as the great teacher and Supreme Being. However, they turn to lesser gods in seeking to meet their day-to-day needs. As Marvin Harris notes, "Most of the early gods abstained from contact with human beings. Having created the universe, they withdraw from worldly affairs and let other lesser deities, animistic beings, and human beings work out their own destinies" (1989:404).

The God of Christianity may not impress Sinhalese Buddhists when He is presented as the Absolute One that seldom engages Himself in the affairs of human lives. As examined early, there are a variety of supernatural beings the Sinhalese engage to meet their needs. When they turn to Christianity, how do these new converts resolve the same needs? John Taylor articulates that Africans of primal religion understood God as the Being who withdrew from the people after creating this world (1963:86). What African people really longed for

was a God who hears their crying and responds to them. However, such a God was not offered to them. Taylor calls their dream for such a God "primal vision". It is, in fact, the Christian God who is able to meet the longing of the Africans of primal religion. He is the One who is the ultimate Being, but who comes near and cares for people. He is not only transcendent but close to human beings, as shown in the incarnation of Jesus (Taylor 1963:89). This is the understanding of God the Sinhalese will want to have. He is the Ultimate Being – different from us but intimate with us. He involves Himself in our daily lives.

The incarnation of Jesus is the self-disclosure of the true character of God to human beings. He came among the people, lived, and answered their life concerns as well as ultimate matters. Jesus prayed that the Father's will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). This earth is not merely a temporary place that Christians should endure or escape from but a meaningful place in which God fulfills His will through His faithful people. He takes care of the concerns and needs of His loving people on earth at present, as well as leads them into the eternal heaven in the future. His presence is not only in heaven but also in human lives on earth.

Human life in God is holistic. It is with respect to both heaven and earth. It is not only spiritual but also physical. Jesus taught His disciples to pray to the Father for their daily food (Matthew 6:11). Charles Kraft makes a point: "Openness to Christian conversion on the part of the receptors is usually conditioned by the receptors' ability to relate the gospel message to their felt needs. A perceptive advocate will be able to discover these felt needs and to present the gospel in relation to them" (1979:344). Therefore, the gospel can gain a greater response from the Sinhalese people when it addresses their holistic lives on earth, as well as the coming Kingdom.

Moving Beyond Power and Needs Toward Salvation and Transformation

As noted in this article, the Sinhalese folk religious beliefs address the people's day-to-day life concerns by resorting to supernatural beings and powers. Should Christianity disregard their practice to be unreal? Both the Old Testament and the New Testament seriously treat the spirits called on and revered in magic, astrology and cults:

> They made him jealous with strange gods, with abhorrent things they provoked him. They sacrificed to demons, not god, to deities they had never known, to new ones recently arrived, whom your ancestors had not feared (Deuteronomy 32:16-17).

> What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons (1Corinthians 10:19-20).

How will Christianity respond to the Sinhalese folk religious beliefs in supernatural beings and powers? Jesus says demons are defeated by the power of the Holy Spirit: "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:8). Jesus presents the Holy Spirit as a Person of supernatural power by saying: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Thus, it is very important to inform Sinhalese Buddhists of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit who subdues other supernatural beings and powers.

The apostle Paul emphasizes that his witness about the gospel involved the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit:

"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power" (1 Corinthians 2:4); "I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So, from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:18-19). As did the apostle Paul, the reality and power of the Holy Spirit need to be shown to Sinhalese Buddhists.

The Sinhalese folk religious beliefs expect the supernatural mostly to bring good luck and to offset bad luck in the matters of this world. However, the work of the Holy Spirit in Christianity moves beyond the concerns of this world. The Holy Spirit essentially witnesses about Jesus Christ, convicts people of their sins, and begins to dwell in them when they accept Jesus as their Saviour. The Holy Spirit significantly works to save people to Christ. As the apostle Paul points out, the Gentiles came to Christ "by what [he] has said and done by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit," the demonstration of power should aim to save people in Christ (1Corinthians 2:4). The supernatural power of the Holy Spirit heals people from their sickness or demonic oppression. His supernatural signs, wonders, and miracles play a significant role in drawing people's attention to the reality and the saving truth of Jesus Christ.

Another setback of the Sinhalese folk religious belief in the supernatural is its exclusion of a person's moral changes. In contrast, it is an important work of the Holy Spirit in Christian faith to sanctify and transform a person's heart and life. Christian faith is not simply a means for making things happen as we wish. God transforms us through the work of the Holy Spirit. We have to allow the Holy Spirit to transform our mind,

ways of thinking, values, motives, words, and behavior toward being like Christ and loving others. Folk religious beliefs do not have such a transformational aspect. If they fail to earn what they seek to have by a certain folk religious method, they try some other methods.

In the folk religious context, it is very important for people to encounter the power of the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit should be introduced more wholly as the Person of God who empowers, saves, and transforms people in Christ Jesus. Our Christian life is not merely about receiving supernatural benefits here on earth but further about being invited into the eternal heaven, serving God and our neighbours through our transformed life.

Implementing Relevant Ministries

The demonstration of the supernatural work of God does not always result in immediate conversions. However, this does not negate the necessity for Christian witness. This is because God's supernatural touch will lead people to become interested in His reality and Christian faith. When they see their needs met through His supernatural intervention, we direct their interest to God, the source and person of supernatural manifestations. Once they are convinced of salvation in Christ, their old folk religious beliefs and practices should go through the process of transformation. Their old view of the world and beings should be transformed into the biblical view. Their life focus should move beyond meeting their needs through supernatural means toward meeting the needs of others in Christ. Christian faith does not end in supernatural aid from God nor in a transformed life style, but moves for missions. God wants His people to reach the unsaved with the gospel in His power and in their transformed

life. *Figure 3* demonstrates ministerial directions in the Sinhalese folk religious context.
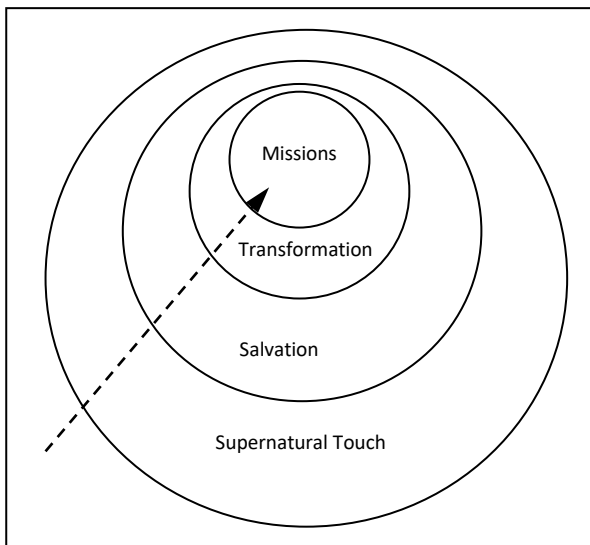

FIGURE 3: Ministry Focus from Supernatural to Missional

Regarding ministry methods, it is very important for the church to provide people with an access to God's supernatural touch on their life concerns. Here I suggest ministry approaches in response to the Sinhalese pursuit of supernatural aids in meeting their prime needs: health, protection, and prosperity. First, evangelism and pastors' sermons will need to include the message of God's care for people's needs on earth as well as eternal life in heaven. As addressed earlier in this article, the gospel must address every area of human life that embodies spiritual and material; future and present; heaven and earth.

Second, worship services may want to include an opportunity to pray for the sick and for the needs of their daily lives. Through prayer, people may ask for God's protection from the

Evil One and ask for their daily needs to be met (Matthew 6:13-15), thereby becoming assured of peace, safety, and care in Him. Third, the church can arrange regular prayer meetings during the week for healing and deliverance. The folk Sinhalese Buddhists may demonstrate less resistance towards coming to these meetings, for they will see that these meetings are geared toward their felt needs. These meetings can serve as a bridge until they gradually join Sunday services. Sunday services function more to explain the truth in greater depth than in prayer meetings.

Fourth, it is crucial to teach believers a clear biblical view of the world and supernatural beings. As explored earlier, the folk Sinhalese have an elaborate system of supernatural beings and powers they believe in. They must know which old assumptions they should denounce, and instead, know how to meet their needs biblically in their new Christian faith. This will prevent them from seeking other power sources than God or from taking dual allegiances. Christian community and the church also need to provide biblical teachings or detailed Bible studies on blessings, guidance, protection, healing, and deliverance, which are major themes in the Sinhalese folk religious beliefs. Subsequently, Sinhalese Christians may be able to deal with their needs according to biblical direction without returning to their old beliefs and practices.

Fifth, the church needs trained workers or teams for healing ministries. I met a large number of people suffering from sickness and spiritual oppression during my mission work among Sinhalese Buddhists. Some people experienced instant healing at my prayer, but others would need continual and extensive care. It was quite hard for me alone to care for all of them sufficiently and regularly. For this reason, gifted and trained workers or teams must care for people immediately, carefully and continually. As noted in earlier sections, various

healing practitioners conduct rituals and other practices to supernaturally cure Sinhalese people. Why should the church not serve in the mighty power of God? The church needs to train and build up healing ministry teams. The Bible affirms that the spiritual gift of healing is available among believers (1Corinthians 12:9) and church elders should pray for the sick (James 5:14-15).

Concluding Remarks

This study noted that both Buddhism and folk religion operate in the lives of Sinhalese Buddhists. This duality is not considered to be a syncretism. They turn to Buddhism to deal with ultimate matters, while involving folk religion to resolve their earthly concerns. In fact, they do not consider the latter to be religion, because they view that religion is about ultimate matters. This study identified a relationship between needs, belief system, and behavior in the Sinhalese Buddhist's engagement with supernatural beings and powers. Their needs are summed up with the word "wellbeing," which includes health, protection, and prosperity. They seek to meet these needs on the basis of their belief system. They believe that the supernatural influences their earthly wellbeing. Thus, they try to invoke the supernatural by performing folk religious practices.

Sinhalese Buddhists engage in folk religion because they believe it helps meet their earthly needs in contrast to Orthodox Buddhism, which teaches them to suppress those needs. Buddhism coexists with folk religion among Sinhalese Buddhists because it tolerates the latter. What does this mean to Christianity? Christianity should provide the good news about both worlds: the eternal heaven in the future and the world that God cares about in the present. How can Christianity respond to the Sinhalese beliefs in the

supernatural? Christian missions, evangelism, and ministries need to allow God to do His supernatural work among people so that their hearts are open to hear about the living God and salvation in Christ Jesus. Unlike folk religion, Christian faith must address salvation, transformation, and missional services to those who experience God's supernatural touch. Christian faith is not simply meeting people's needs on earth, but rather, it is about moving them towards salvation, transforming them in the truth, and commissioning them to God's mission.

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THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR EVANGELICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-21 [1]

IVOR POOBALAN

INTRODUCTION

Paul's correspondence with the church in Corinth provides us a fascinating insight into the character of first-century Christianity when, with every passing year, churches grew exponentially, even as the number of apostles dwindled alarmingly. Limitations of time and space, therefore, placed an enormous burden on the apostles that remained who alone constituted the locus of authority as far as the interpretation of the gospel was concerned. A passing comment by Paul reveals something of the nature of this challenge: "Besides everything else, I face daily the *pressure of my concern for all the churches*" (2 Corinthians 11:28).

It can safely be said that nowhere else do we see as deeply into the soul of the great apostle as in his Corinthian correspondence. Paul's relationship with the church in Corinth brought him often to the point of despair and grief. He was misunderstood, criticized, accused, and faulted, and yet,

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[1] This is the transcript of an exposition presented at the Lausanne III (Cape Town 2010) Planning Meeting held in Budapest, Hungary, June 18–22, 2007.

because of his shepherd's heart, he wouldn't walk away from this difficult relationship. He would only respond with letters of longing, tears, agony, correction, and love.

Fatigue, disappointment, and discouragement are occupational hazards of Christian leadership. Every person who has been called upon to exercise the role of a leader in the church of Jesus Christ has shared these experiences in common with brothers and sisters around the world.

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians exemplifies the idea that at the heart of the gospel is the experience of pain; that God is most clearly revealed, and his work most effectively done, when the servants of God demonstrate an unreserved willingness to embrace that pain. So, at the beginning of this letter Paul writes:

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

We are a generation that has come to be governed by utilitarian values, outside, and often inside, the church. Utilitarianism says: "The greatest good is that which causes the greatest happiness." Happiness is equated with goodness; and the absence of happiness, with evil. Although this way of thinking has become prevalent in the church, it is alien to the message of 2 Corinthians, and indeed of the entire Bible.

Towards the end of this letter Paul introduces us to his "thorn" and uses this to underscore the overarching theme of 2 Corinthians: *that God's power is best shown, when human weakness is most owned*.

> He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12: 9-10)

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 must be read within the context of that overarching theme of "Power in Weakness". These few verses are significant because they constitute the very centerpiece of Paul's defense of his apostolic ministry. Scholars would go further to argue that 5:18-19 is, in fact, the pivot of the entire letter. How then does this text shape our practice of evangelical leadership in the 21st century?

May I suggest that as we approach our study we keep in mind the great evangelical emphasis: that orthodoxy leads the way to orthopraxy; that right thinking is the sure basis for right action. In 5:18-19 Paul crystallizes his understanding of the Gospel:

> [18]All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; [19]that is God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation.

In this brief summary statement of his apostolic message, Paul weaves together the four great strands of Christian doctrine: in the term "God", theology or the doctrine of God; in the term "in Christ", Christology or the doctrine of Christ; in the term "reconciles", soteriology or the doctrine of salvation, and in the term "ministry", missiology or the doctrine of ministry. These theological foundations undergirded the leadership of the New Testament church. We shall do well to re-examine these great truths, and call for a fresh commitment to these

biblical underpinnings as we look to offer evangelical leadership to a world facing the grave uncertainties of the 21st century.

God was in Christ Reconciling the World: Our Doctrine of God

History bears testimony to a great truth: that *what we think about God affects what we think about everything else*.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was a German philosopher who wielded tremendous influence in Germany within the first few decades of the 20th century. About God, he said such a being might have once existed but God had died. It had become Nietzsche's task to announce God's obituary. Belief in God had restricted human beings from reaching their full potential. Christian morality based on its views of God had, in Nietzsche's opinion, done a great disservice to humanity. God was dead, so now humanity could assert its "will to power," and discover an unlimited potential for greatness. A collection of his writings called "Will to Power" became compulsory reading among the Nazis who disseminated Nietzsche's ideas extensively. Christianized Germany, now reeling from the force of pessimistic theology of the 19th century, now petrified by the nihilism of Nietzsche's philosophy, watched haplessly as Nazism, and bloody treason, flourished over her.

What we think about God affects what we think about everything else.

The God of Saul of Tarsus was the tribal god of rabbinic Judaism. He was holy, sovereign, legalistic and partisan. He had to be appeased by a legalistic morality and ceremonial purity. He may have created all humanity but now has set his affections only on one ethnic group. For Saul, God was austere, legalistic, and distant. It was on the Damascus Road that Paul rediscovered God. He understood God had made himself known in a man; that the flesh and blood, resurrected

Jesus was the Christ, the only place where one may encounter God. In Jesus, God had involved himself in the stuff of the world, and envisioned a salvation that equally encompassed the Jew and the Gentile, the seen and the unseen, the world and the cosmos. Paul was transformed when what he thought about God was transformed.

In the progressive revelation of God within the pages of Scripture we become aware of two great poles on the matter of how God relates to His creation: the pole of God's *transcendence*, His otherness, on the one hand, and the pole of His *immanence*, His nearness, on the other. God is at the same time both holy and distinct from His creation, as He is intimate and engaged with His creation. Theological error largely arises from a bias towards one of these truths about God to the neglect of the other.

Deism of the seventeenth century that postulated the notion of a divine clockmaker – a God totally detached from the world – was an over-emphasis of God's transcendence. In this view, God only gets the universe going; He interferes not a jot by answering prayer or performing miracles. God was far, and within the church during this time God became an austere figure: one to be feared not loved. In fact, Don Carson comments that 300 years ago Christians found it far easier to believe in the wrath of God than in the love of God.

The Pentecostal and charismatic resurgence of the twentieth century swung theology in the direction of God's immanence, his nearness. Songs like:

> He lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today.
> He walks with me and talks with me
> Along life's narrow way.
> He lives, he lives, salvation to impart.
> You ask me how I know he lives–
> He lives within my heart.

sought to recapture the intimacy and immediacy of a filial relationship with God. Over time, though, God's nearness was asserted at the expense of His holiness.

The New Religious Movements of the late twentieth century, especially the New Age Movement, spoke of finding God, not "out there" but "in here". To know God, you go in to yourself, and make the surprising discovery that 'God' is quite indistinguishable from who you are. It is this extreme notion of God's immanence that gives rise to the disillusionment in Joan Osborne's song:

> What if God's like one of us, just a slob like one of us?
> Just a stranger on the bus, trying to make his way home,
> Nobody calling on the phone, except the Pope maybe,
>   in Rome.

The biblically-informed Christian cannot opt for one or the other: she must hold both the transcendence and the immanence of God in healthy tension.

John's Gospel follows this same pattern. In his prologue, John uses his unique designation, *logos*, or the Word, in only two locations: 1:1 and 1:14. In the first instance, he emphasizes the transcendence of the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In the second, he emphasizes the immanence of the Word: "The Word became flesh and lived among us."

Methodism was shaped in the crucible of John Wesley's experience of God, his example of godliness, and his expositions on godly living. His life and ministry is witness to the powerful outworking of a biblical view of God.

Trained as a son of the Church of England, and instructed by the spirituality of a strictly devout mother, John Wesley never lost the biblical emphasis on the holiness of God. As father of a

movement that would sweep the world like a flood, Wesley never muted his call to scriptural holiness. His vision of God's holiness demanded that authentic Christianity be marked by godliness in the personal realm and justice in the social realm.

At the same time, John Wesley's biography is about a heart strangely warmed. The imbalance in his experience of God was rectified on that fateful day, May 24th 1738 at Aldersgate Street. He says:

> In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. It was this deep assurance of the immanence of God that gave Wesley, and the Methodist movement, such a passion for the lost, and such a compassion for the poor.

God was *in Christ* Reconciling the world: Our Doctrine of Christ

The phrase "in Christ" (*en Christo*) is used in 76 verses of the New Testament, of which 73 are found in the writings of Paul. And yet, although the phrase is unique to Paul, the notion is fundamental to the whole of the New Testament.

Christianity emerged against the backdrop of an ideology that divided the world simply into Jews and Gentiles. The preaching of the apostles however, with their insistence on the centrality of Jesus Christ for any notion of divine revelation, challenged this scheme and forced the recognition of a third categorization they felt compelled to call "Christian". In Antioch in Syria, where the term Christian was first coined, the

church was founded by Jews, but increasingly constituted of Gentiles. What bound these traditionally hostile communities together was not their subscription to the strict legalism of orthodox Judaism, nor an accommodation of a loose syncretism, but a passionate loyalty to Christ, especially to the centrality of His sacrificial death vindicated by His physical resurrection and ascension as Lord.

Several years ago, at a conference of theologians, one delegate asked why Christians have to be so "christocentric". Why can we not be "theocentric", he asked, and thereby become more acceptable to the other communities among whom we live? However, to deny Christ-centredness is to dispense with the New Testament, and hence with historic Christianity. The burden of the New Testament is that God reveals *in Christ*, God regenerates *in Christ*, God reconciles *in Christ*.

John's Gospel, for example, is driven by his Christology: "These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and by believing have life in his name." He examines all Jewish notions of mediation; whether Abrahamic descent, Moses, or *torah*, and concludes that "Everyone who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him" (5:23). The cleansing of the temple is reported in John 2, and this leads to a dialogue that focuses on the importance of the temple for encountering God. By the end of the narrative Jesus has asserted that he is the new locus of any encounter with God. In modern parlance we might say that God had changed his email address from <God@temple.jerusalem> to <God@Jesus.cross>.

In 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, a person "in Christ" becomes a new creation (v.17), and "in Him" becomes the very righteousness of God (v.21). All this is possible because "God was *in Christ* reconciling the world to himself" (v.19).

God was in Christ *Reconciling* the World: Our Doctrine of Salvation

The verb *katallasso* translated "reconcile" is used in the New Testament only on six occasions, of which three are in the context of 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Of the four occurrences of the corresponding noun, two are found in the same context.

In classical Greek the term meant "the restoration of the original understanding between people after hostility or displeasure". To reconcile presupposes relationship. The word transports us to the domain of a family and connotes the relationship of a parent and a child. This relationship is spoilt by open rebelliousness. The parent may have every good intention but the child makes his choices, and these choices increase the hostility between them. In place of a relationship there is an impasse. Humanity has offended a holy God, and the offence cannot be wished away.

In non-Christian thought it is man that performs acts intended to reconcile with the deity; the god is the object of man's reconciling work. The gospel alone presents a God who, entirely of His own freedom, initiates reconciliation. This reconciliation is through Jesus. Romans 5:10 states: "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled will we be saved by his life."

Reconciliation is not that individuals are automatically restored to a new life with God. Rather, God takes the initiative to put aside the cause for offence. The consequence of human sin and transgression that stood as the stubborn obstacle to any further relationship between God and man was roundly dealt with by the vicarious action of the Son – powerfully stated in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "God made him to become sin who knew no sin, so that, in him we might become

the righteousness of God." The offence has been put aside, not just of an elite few, but also of all: "God was in Christ reconciling *the world* to himself." God has, therefore, chosen humanity for salvation, which is why we can insist "All can be saved!" Repentance and confession, which brings the individual to the experience of a heart strangely warmed, are not human actions that prompt a reaction from God; they are, in fact, human reactions that introduce us to the full benefit of God's initiative to save.

He Has Given Us the *Ministry of Reconciliation*: Our Doctrine of Ministry

> All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, *and has given us the ministry of reconciliation*; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, *and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.* (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

So, as John Stott has put it, if God is the author, and Christ is the agent, *we are the ambassadors of the reconciliation*. Moreover, this ministry is a trust. God, for reasons that can never be fully fathomed, has chosen to entrust His greatest work in our world to people such as you and I. This fact must grip our hearts if we are to maintain a consistent passion for the work we are called to do: "He has *entrusted to us* the ministry of reconciliation!"

Reconciliation in the Bible is, first and foremost, the restoration of a friendship with God where once there was only enmity. Evangelism is the happy task of announcing that such a restoration is possible, and that individuals and communities are invited to regain their place in the family of God. However, in as much as there is a vertical dimension in the biblical idea of reconciliation, there is also a horizontal dimension; *individuals and communities reconciled with God*

are thereby reconciled also with each other. This is what makes our dichotomisation between evangelism and social action, or individual salvation and social justice so harmful to the character of the gospel that has been entrusted to us. Reconciliation is not either…or, but both…and.

"He Has Made the Two, One" (Ephesians 2: 14)

In the hugely important passage on reconciliation, Ephesians 2:11-22, Paul explains how in reconciling both Jews and Gentiles to God, Christ has made these once estranged communities into one new humanity in Himself. He goes on to say: "He has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us." When he mentions the "dividing wall", Paul is alluding to the literal wall that surrounded Herod's Temple in Jerusalem, and separated Jewish worshippers from Gentiles. About this "wall" John Stott writes:

> It was a notable feature of the magnificent temple built in Jerusalem by Herod the Great. The temple building itself was constructed on an elevated platform. Round it was the court of the priests. East of this was the court of Israel, and further east the court of the women. These three courts – for the priests, the lay men and the lay women of Israel respectively – were all on the same elevation as the temple itself. From this level one descended five steps to a walled platform, and then on the other side of the wall fourteen more steps to another wall, beyond which was the outer court or Court of the Gentiles . . . From any part of it the Gentiles could look up and view the temple, but were not allowed to approach it. They were cut off from it by the surrounding wall, which was a one-and-a-half metre stone barricade, on which were displayed at intervals warning notices in Greek and Latin. They read, in effect, not "Trespassers will be prosecuted" but "Trespassers will be executed". (John Stott, *God's New Society*, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1979, 91-92)

This is good news to our world so deeply divided along nationalistic, ethnic, linguistic, generational, and gender lines. To the church God has now entrusted the ministry and the message of reconciliation.

What are the implications of Ephesians 2 for the situations of conflict that rage in our world?

Yet, if we are to fulfill our calling as ambassadors of reconciliation, we will have to become more intentional about our role in the world. We don't fulfill this role on autopilot. The ministry of reconciliation is not just a title we bear, but also an awesome responsibility, which we fulfill both by who we are, and what we do.

How Can We Be More Effective in Our Ministry of Reconciliation?

a) *Systematically root out the prejudices that lurk in our own souls*

In Galatians 2:11-14, we read of an incident involving Peter and Paul in the predominantly Gentile church in Antioch. After the life-changing experience Peter had when he had been called to preach to Cornelius, where he discovered that "God shows no favoritism," and that Gentiles are co-heirs of salvation, one would expect Peter to have dealt with his prejudices. Yet in Antioch, several years later, his old Jewish prejudices return to the surface, and he withdraws from the Gentiles when they needed his support the most.

Every one of us is a bundle of prejudices. Christian discipleship is a lifelong process of discovering and rooting out these prejudices that make us regard others merely "from a human point of view."

Let us reflect honestly.

- What did we *feel* when we heard about the 9/11 attack that killed so many thousands in New York? Now, what did we *feel* when we heard about the aerial bombing of Afghanistan in the aftermath?

- What do we *feel* about the injustices done to the Jews over the centuries? Now what do we *feel* about the displaced Palestinians that live in constant fear of Israeli soldiers?

- What do we *feel* about countries such as North Korea and Iran that refuse to comply with UN expectations? Now what do we *feel* about countries such as the US and Australia that have refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol that aims to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and so reduce global warming?

b) *Develop a sharper sense of our individual identities so that we become more aware of our own limitations and more mindful of our status as representatives*

I grew up as a child of mixed parentage. My mother was one of four sisters, and the only one who remained loyal to her Christian-Methodist affiliation; her three sisters married a Hindu, a Buddhist, and a Moslem, respectively. The language of my parents was exclusively English, my grandmother exclusively Tamil, and my siblings exclusively Sinhala. So, when an ethnic riot broke out in 1983, I really wasn't quite sure who I was; I was a pretty confused young man. Later, with our home destroyed and our family permanently scattered, as a refugee in my home church, God helped me to come to a deeper sense of my ethnicity. I saw how my pastor, as a Sinhalese, *chose* to sacrificially serve the needs of the Tamil community. I realized then that God demanded that I make similar choices.

Having a sharper sense of our individual identities is crucial to the business of reconciliation, because it helps us to know our limitations, as well as to accept our *representative* role. I am a Christian; to people of other faiths, I represent Christianity. I am a male; to women everywhere, I represent the masculine gender. I am a Tamil; to the other ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, I represent the Tamil community. I am a parent; to children, I represent the generation that has preceded them. For better or for worse, my values, words and actions represent to a considerable extent the values, words and actions of these segments of my society.

c) ***Consistently maintain the biblical vision of the church as a multicultural, international community of redeemed sinners***

When we operate on the basis of such a vision we don't have to fear that we still practise colonialism simply because a European or North American is appointed to leadership. Neither do we need to be anxious that we are making too many concessions when an Asian, African or Latin American becomes the leader of what was once exclusively the prerogative of white Westerners. No, like Paul we say: "We no longer regard anyone from a human point of view." The overseas missionary need not apologize for exercising her ministry, nor do the national Christians have to feel intimidated, because the church is always a multicultural, international community of redeemed sinners, bound together in Christ. Our diversity of nationality, race, language, and colour is cause for celebration and joy, not suspicion or fear.

d) *Deal Proactively with the Sin of Denominationalism*

The blatant practice of denominationalism among evangelical Christians scandalizes Christ. The problem is not so much the existence of different church traditions, as much as the fear, antipathy, and criticism that mark our relationship. We refuse to engage with brothers and sisters simply because they worship in a different church tradition. We refuse to share ministry, and refuse to fellowship. What we need is that precious piece of wisdom:

> *In Essentials, Unity*
> *In Non-Essentials, Diversity*
> *In All things, Charity*

I serve in a seminary that commenced in 1994 with a chairman of the board being Methodist, the principal Dutch Reformed, the academic dean Anglican, the registrar Presbyterian, and the vast majority of students from the Assemblies of God! I don't know what you feel about it, but I can say from experience there is nothing better than such a combination to deal with the sin of denominationalism.

e) *Recognize that our ministry of reconciliation has to be applied far more widely than in situations of ethnic or regional conflict*

There are several spheres where our ministry of reconciliation has to be urgently applied. May I merely mention some and illustrate the point briefly:

- Gender Relations
  In the sphere of gender relations in Sri Lanka, women and girls are justifiably afraid to use public transport because of the constant threat of sexual harassment. It is beyond belief that in the face of such

unprecedented violence against women, the church has been so silent and apathetic.

- Children and Young People
  We pay lip service to children and young people, but hardly take them seriously. We are reluctant to share leadership with those in their twenties and even thirties, because we fear they might not be mature enough. Our children are taken tortuously through Sunday-school material that was designed for the needs of two generations past, and then we wonder why they don't develop as dynamic disciples of Christ with a passion for the church.

- People of Other Faiths
  Some Christians view people of other faiths like Elijah viewed the prophets of Baal on Mt Carmel; those that need a fiery lesson! We ought rather to encounter them as Paul encountered the Athenians on Mars Hill: not as protagonists, but as winsome apologists, who say: "The love of Christ compels us".

- The Environment
  Christ reconciles the whole creation to Himself. This includes the natural world, the creation which waits with eager longing for the children of God to be revealed, so that it will be set free from its bondage to decay.

  How we have done violence to God's good earth!

  - We have punched a hole in the ozone layer, reduced the Aral Sea (the fourth largest lake in the world) by two thirds its volume, and decimated the lion population in Africa in a few decades from 200,000 to 29,000.

- In Sri Lanka, we have reduced the elephant population in a hundred years from 60,000 to just over 4,000, and raped her forests so that we have just 18% forest cover today from 60% a century ago.

- We are rapidly polluting the fast depleting reserves of drinking water, and have removed 90% of all large fish from the oceans in the last 50 years. Surely creation groans.

How must we then exercise our ministry of reconciliation?

DHARMAYĀNŌ IN THE NEW SINHALA BIBLE

PRABO MIHINDUKULASURIYA

INTRODUCTION

At the dedication service of the New Sinhala Interconfessional Bible on 22 January 1983 at the Sugathadasa Indoor Stadium, its Chief Reviser, Rev S J de S Weerasinghe, chose the opening words of St John's Gospel to exemplify the breakthroughs of vocabulary and literary style achieved by his Revision Committee:

> අනාදියේදී ධර්යාණෝ වූ සේක.
> ධර්යාණෝ දෙවියන් වහන්සේ සමඟ වූ සේක;
> ධර්යාණෝ දෙවියන් වහන්සේම වූ සේක.
> … තවද ධර්යාණෝ මිනිසත් බව ගෙන අප අතර වැඩ විසූ සේක.[1]

> In eternity was *Dharmayānō*.
> *Dharmayānō* was with God;
> *Dharmayānō* was God Himself.
> … Furthermore, *Dharmayānō* took human birth
>   and lived among us.

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[1] S J de S Weerasinghe, 'Baibalaye Samakalina Nava Anuvadayak: Ithihasaye Aluth Pituwak Peraleyi,' *Nava Sinhala Baibalaya Dorata Vadīmē Aithihāsika Mangalōthsavaya* (CBS souvenir). Rev Weerasinghe was quoting from the original New Translation. The current revised version (1990) reads: "ආරම්භයේ දී, ධර්යාණෝ සිට සේක… ධර්යාණෝ මාංසගත ව අප සමඟ වැඩ විසූ සේක" ("In the beginning was *Dharmayānō*… *Dharmayānō* taking flesh, lived with us"), see CBS' *Vāgmālā Sanshōdana* (2004), 91.

While the New Translation constituted monumental literary, theological and ecumenical achievements, the Chief Reviser's choice of paradigm text reveals that its crowning glory was '*Dharmayānō*', the neologism created to translate the Christological title *ho logos* ("the Word", Jn 1:1, 14; Re 19:13).[2] As such, the story of how the Ceylon Bible Society's (CBS) Revision Committee arrived at this breakthrough neologism deserves to be documented. Sadly, however, all the members of the original Revision Committee are now deceased, and all their working documents were lost during the disruptions of the CBS' building project of 1997-8. Therefore, this article seeks to trace the history of how the Revision Committee arrived at the term *Dharmayānō* by studying the extant writings of its two main architects, Rev S J de S Weerasinghe (1897-1991) and Rev Dr Lynn A de Silva (1919-1982), and reviewing the crucial concurrence of their Roman Catholic collaborators.

THE JOHANNINE *LOGOS*

The interpretation of *ho logos* in the Johannine Prologue has been exhaustively explored,[3] and only the briefest summary may be required by way of introduction. It will be remembered that the enormous theological significance of *ho logos* as a Christological title lies in the felicitous synthesis of Jewish exegetical theology with Greek philosophy. For

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[2] *Dharmayānō* first appeared in print in the CBS' *Gospel according to St John* (1972), followed by the New Testament (1973), and finally the complete Bible (1982).

[3] See for example, G Kittel (ed), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol 4 (Tr. and ed. G W Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 69-136 (esp. 124-136); C Brown (ed), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol 3 (London: Paternoster, 1975-78), 1114-1117; J B Green (et al), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL/Leicester: IVP, 1992), 481-484.

Hellenistic Jewish thinkers, it was the personification or hypostatic emanation of God's wisdom (Heb. *hokma*, Gk. LXX *sophia*) through whose agency God created and sustains His orderly creation, and imparts His law and wisdom. In Stoic thought, *logos* was the rational principle of the cosmos, the impersonal 'mind' controlling the universe. In a Spirit-inspired stroke of theological genius, John not only combined the Jewish and Greek ideas into a single concept, but radically revealed that the creative, rational and enlightening *logos* was no mere principle, personification or hypostatic emanation, but that *ho logos* was the very Person of the pre-incarnate Christ himself, co-eternal and co-creator with God. It was this *Logos* who had entered the finitude and particularity of his own creation, and sacrificed himself for its redemption. Translating such a theologically intricate concept into another language far removed from its original thought-world has obviously presented a formidable challenge for Bible translators everywhere.

LOGOS IN PREVIOUS SINHALA VERSIONS

From the earliest attempts of the Dutch missionary translators to the revisers of the still-popular 1938 Union Version, no satisfactory dynamic equivalent for *Logos* had been found. All vernacular renderings merely reflected the same literal sense of the Latin *Verbum*, Dutch *het Woord* or English *the Word* as occurring in the Bibles of the European translators.

The pioneering Dutch translators of the *Four Gospels* (1739), Wilhelmus Konijn and Johannes Wetzelius, ventured into the process with the featureless *Vachanaya* (වචනය, lit. word). This was preserved in the Serampore Version (1813) and the abortive Cotta Version (1846) of the Church Missionary Society. The intervening Tolfrey Version of the NT (1817) introduced *Vākyaya* (වාක්‍යය, lit. sentence). The considerably

more dignified personification *Vākyayānō* (වාක්‍යයානෝ, lit. sentence-person) was substituted in the Wesleyan Missionary Society version published by the Ceylon Auxiliary Bible Society in 1860. This term was continued in the 1885 and 1894 versions of the Colombo Auxiliary Bible Society. In its more orthographic form වාක්‍යයානෝ (*Vākyayānō*) the term passed into the 1916 Revised Version, and on to the 1938 Union Version.[4] Meanwhile, a parallel process was underway among Roman Catholic translators. The authorized 1929 Catholic Version had *Vachanaya thema* (වචනය තෙම). Individual Catholic translators of John's Gospel offered *Vakyānan Vahansē* (වාක්‍යාණන් වහන්සේ),[5] *Vachana Thumānō* (වචන තුමාණෝ, 1960),[6] and *Shrī Vachanayānō* (ශ්‍රී වචනයානෝ).[7]

The only meaningful development of these translations was personification, following the Sinhala religious idiom of attributing an honorific persona upon inanimate objects of veneration.[8] However, the basic referent itself needs to convey some culturally coherent meaning. *Vachanaya* and *vākyaya* are not theologically self-explanatory in reference to Christ. At best, these terms could be vested with the biblical significations of divine teaching, commandment, prophecy or covenant promise with Christological foreshadowing by catechetical eisegesis (i.e. reading into the text). Yet, such an idiosyncratic approach to the semantics of Bible translation

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[4] Fr D J Anthony also adopted this term for his Catholic translation *Shuddhavū Juvām Thumāgē Suvishēshaya* (1965).

[5] Fr F E Aubert OMI, *Jēsu Swāmi Daruwangē Suvishēshaya* (1935).

[6] Fr Sebastian Fernando OMI, *Apagē Swāmīnvū Jēsus Kristhu Thumangē Shuddhavū Suvishēshaya* (1960).

[7] Used in the literature of the Catholic Charismatic movement Kithu Dana Pubuduwa.

[8] For instance, a Bo tree is referred to as *Bōdhi rājaya* or *Bōdhīn vahansē*; the *pirit*h Book as *Piruwāna poth vahansē*; or relics as *Dhāthun vahansē*.

would only ensure that the text would effectively remain opaque to its non-Christian readers. In any event, none of these alternatives conveyed the theological lucidity of the Christological *Logos*. For readers of such a rich literary culture as the Sinhalese are, a far more satisfactory translation was needed.

REV S J DE S WEERASINGHE:
NEW TRANSLATION FOR A NEW ERA

The Sinhala Bible would have remained without lucid expressions for such important theological terms as *Logos* if not for a paradigm shift in the thinking of the CBS Revision Committee. Visionary theological leadership for this new initiative came from the Baptist minister Rev S J de S Weerasinghe.

Rev Weerasinghe had been the youngest member of the committee that had produced the Union Version of 1938.[9] They had successfully blended the Bible Society's 1910 version and the Baptist Mission's 1919 version, and presented the country's multi-denominational Protestant community with a single Sinhala Bible.[10] However, outside the insular Sinhala Christian subculture, seismic socio-cultural changes were unfolding in post-Independence Sri Lanka. Since his appointment as General Secretary of the CBS in 1940, Rev Weerasinghe became increasingly convinced that the primary resource needed by the Sinhala-speaking church to be an effective countercultural witness against the alienating tide of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism was nothing short of a new translation of the Bible. In 1959, the CBS convened a preliminary consultation chaired by the like-minded Bishop

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[9] He joined the Revision Committee in 1927, at the age of 30.

[10] See S J de S Weerasinghe, 'The Sinhalese Bible from early beginnings to our times,' *New Lanka Quarterly Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (April 1952), 69-75.

Lakdasa de Mel, which decided that it was time for the churches to be officially consulted on

> A Revised Version of the Sinhala Bible which will not only be acceptable to the Sinhalese Church but also will command the respect and admiration of the non-Christian world, [and which] will greatly enrich and strengthen the life and witness of the Church.[11]

That historic second conference in October 29-30, 1960 brought together all the major Protestant denominations, the Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists and the National Christian Council.[12] It appointed Rev Weerasinghe and the young Methodist minister Rev Lynn A de Silva as "Co-Revisers [to be] assisted by a Revision Committee nominated by a Representative Conference of co-operating churches."[13] Reporting on the initial sessions of the Revision Committee, Rev Weerasinghe wrote:

> A mere paragraph in a report cannot catch the spirit of this keen committee of Christian Scholars and Evangelists nor of the hard work they do as they consider innumerable words and phrases to translate one familiar word of Scripture.[14]

They identified their task as

> [T]o proclaim the Word of God in the *best words possible* to Sinhala readers 'whether familiar with the Bible or not, with a faithful rendering of the best available Greek text into the

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[11] 148th Annual Report of the Ceylon Bible Society (Nov 1959-Oct 1960), 3.

[12] S J de S Weerasinghe, 'Some Reflections on Sinhalese Bible Revision,' *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan 1964), (19-26) 19.

[13] 149th Annual Report of the Ceylon Bible Society (Nov 1960-Oct 1961), 8.

[14] 150th Annual Report of the Ceylon Bible Society (1962), 12.

current speech of our own time and a rendering which should harvest the gains of recent Biblical scholarship.'[15]

JABALPUR CONFERENCE (1960): NO NEW NAMES FOR GOD

The quest for a better Sinhala equivalent for *Logos* took place in wake of the Revision Committee's initial deliberation over finding a new term for 'God'. The early missionary translators had not easily come upon the now-ubiquitous term *Deviyan wahansē*. Literary historian Ediriweera Sarachchandra noted that:

> A suitable word did not exist in the Sinhala language to identify a personal god with attributes as believed by monotheists. Therefore, they used the term '*deviyan wahanse*'. Some Catholic translators used the word '*Ishvara*'. Hindus use this to refer to the personal Brahman with attributes. But some were reluctant to refer to the Christian god by the name of a Hindu god.[16]

Rev Weerasinghe reported that two members had presented "stimulating papers" proposing two alternative terms for God. "One is *Asankhatayāno*, meaning 'The Infinite One'. And the other is *Nirvānayāno*, meaning 'The Transcendent', 'The Beyond'."[17] The latter was proposed by Rev Cyril Premawardhana, who argued that:

> In a Christian context new features will accrue to the idea of Nirvāna even as a new personal form is given to the word...

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[15] *Ibid.* (my emphasis).

[16] Ediriweera Sarachchandra, *Sinhala Navakathā Ithihāsaya saha Vichāraya* (1951; reprint, Nugegoda: Sarasavi, 1997), 48 (my translation).

[17] 150th Annual Report, 12.

> Used in this way Nirvāna would no longer be for us the Buddhist symbol any more. This would be a case of "baptizing" a term of great significance to our brother Buddhists into the Christian Faith. Speaking of God we shall speak to the Buddhist in a language that at once communicates in an infinitely more satisfactory manner, whereas දෙවියන් වහන්සේ (*Deviyanwahanse*) only creates a barrier against true communication. To the Christian too the new term will open wide vistas of new meaning.[18]

However, as serious as these considerations were, Rev Weerasinghe appears to have exercised a great deal of caution about their actual adoption. At a conference for Bible translators organized by the Bible Society of India and Ceylon at Jabalpur in October 1960, Rev Weerasinghe had heard the eminent Greek scholar and translation consultant Harold K Moulton assuring his colleagues that from the time of the Jewish translators of the Septuagint who had had to satisfy themselves with the pagan *Theos*, successive translators have had to adopt whatever existing terms for God that was already in use in a culture. Even though they contained "all sorts of imperfect, sub-Christian ideas of God" eventually the "Biblical idea of God went on to develop far beyond the original etymology of the name."[19] Moulton reminded them that the Bible Society's *Rules for the Guidance of Translators* sensibly advised that "every care should be taken to select the *highest* term for God that a language affords. The teaching of the Bible will by degrees *purify and raise* the ideas associated with the word used [p11]."[20] Therefore, Moulton urged that "the

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[18] Subsequently published as Cyril Premawardhana, 'God and Nirvana', *Dialogue*, No. 7 (Nov. 1965), 3-4.

[19] Subsequently published as H K Moulton, 'The Names and Attributes of God,' *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Apr 1962), 71.

[20] *Ibid.* (original emphasis).

existing terms are probably too strongly entrenched for change."[21]

Evidently, Rev Weerasinghe came away convinced. At the very top of his list of suggestions noted from the Jabalpur conference, he resolved that "(a) We should not attempt to invent terms for God. The best word available may be imperfect and sub-Christian, but wherever possible it should be used and purified."[22] *Deviyan Vahansē* thus carried over to the New Translation. But the translatability of *logos* by a Buddhist term replacing the prevailing *Vākyāno* was perceived in quite a different light.

NEW TRANSLATION PHILOSOPHY

In a 1964 article in the United Bible Society's journal, Rev Weerasinghe explained the threefold rationale that constituted the guiding principles of the new translation project.

Firstly, it was for "the spiritual edification and growth of the indigenous Church…all the more important now because more and more people will read the Word of God in the national languages."[23] Here he acknowledged that "the linguistic conservatism of the Church" presented a problem because many "prefer familiar phrases and an accustomed vocabulary, quite regardless of scholarship, accuracy and precision as well as new literary trends."[24] Instead, he urged that "we must always look forward to the time when a new generation of

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[21] *Ibid*., 72. Beginning with the preliminary 1960 consultation, Moulton and Wesley J Culshaw made successive visits to Colombo to assist the Revision Committee during the early years of the project.

[22] 'Some Reflections', 25.

[23] Ibid.

[24] *Ibid.*, 23-24.

readers will arise and it is for them that we are primarily catering now" although "it is necessary to carry the more conservative elements in our churches with us too."[25]

Secondly, it was "a way of preparing the ground for a more effective evangelistic weapon [*sic*] and an apologetic instrument;"[26] or, as he would later rephrase it, "a way of preparing the ground for a dialogue between followers of different faiths."[27] This was particularly critical, as Bible translation requires the "crossing of cultural frontiers" requiring attention to the possibility that "what is highly acceptable in one may be quite inappropriate in the other. What is readily understood in one may sound completely alien and incomprehensible in the other."[28]

Thirdly, Bible translation was "a contribution of great literary importance to indigenous literature." As an avid student of Sinhala literature and a writer himself, Rev Weerasinghe clearly believed that the Sinhala Bible must be a work of literary excellence worthy of the respect of contemporary Sinhala literati. The Bible was originally "an Asian book," he would later write, and hoped that it may "once again become an Asian book speaking to Asian minds in an Asian idiom."[29]

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[25] *Ibid.* 24.

[26] *Ibid.*, 19

[27] 'New Horizons in Bible Translation,' *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Apr 1968), 70 (70-73).

[28] S J de S Weerasinghe, 'Some Reflections on Sinhalese Bible Revision,' *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan 1964), 24.

[29] 'New Horizons,' 73.

RANGOON CONSULTATION (1961): BUDDHIST TERMINOLOGY

If these aspirations were to be realized, the Revision Committee had to embrace the Sinhala language with all its embedded Buddhist nuances and connotations. Previous translations had studiously avoided the use of any phraseology tinged with Buddhist beliefs. However, that overcautious fear of syncretism had resulted in a conceptually barren text, which was now acknowledged as having ironically impeded the imaginative communication of orthodox teaching. Rev Weerasinghe acknowledged that:

> One of the biggest problems we have to face in Bible revision is concerned with our vocabulary and our theological terms. We have felt for some time that the Sinhalese equivalents for some of the key Biblical categories are unsuitable and inadequate. There is also a growing impression that wherever possible we should endeavour to use terms taken from the Buddhist religious vocabulary.[30]

This was an unprecedented challenge. The confidence to step forward in this new direction came from a regional 'Consultation on Buddhist-Christian Encounter' jointly convened by the East Asia Christian Conference and the WCC in Rangoon, Burma in Feb 1961.[31] Both Rev Weerasinghe and Rev de Silva attended this conference, at which the latter presented two papers based on his pioneering theological method of using Buddhist concepts to express Christian truths. The consultation's chairman U Kyaw Than remarked that Rev

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[30] 'Some Reflections,' 22.

[31] Co-sponsored with the East Asia Christian Conference the Rangoon consultation (Holy Cross College, Rangoon, Feb 21-26, 1961) was part of the WCC's series 'Consultation on Word of God and Living Faiths of Men'.

de Silva's papers were "hailed as an attempt to do something Christians frequently talk about these days but seldom do."[32] These papers generated a whole section (II.2) in the Consultation Statement under the sub-heading '*The use of Buddhist concepts to 'translate' the Gospel*.' It is worth quoting in its entirety for the direct impact it had on both Co-Revisers:

> It was agreed that there were great <u>advantages</u> in the use of these concepts as it has been demonstrated in L A de Silva's paper. There were also <u>dangers</u>.

> First it must be said that these concepts could be useful in this way in the service of the Gospel, but only up to a certain point. They can be used to fulfill Buddhism's function as a pedagogue to lead men to Christ: but this function is pointless apart from Christ; there must come the point where the conceptions of Buddhism are transcended or restated in a revolutionary way that the Buddhist as such, would not accept: This is the challenge of the Gospel. The use of the terms must be firmly controlled by nature of the Gospel.

> Unless this is kept prominently in view there will be the danger of adapting the message to suit the content of the Buddhist terms – as it were "bending" the Gospel to make it fit the Buddhist conceptions which we have to use. And sometimes where there is obviously no Buddhist term available, Christian terms will have to be used as in the case perhaps of such realities as

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[32] U Kyaw Than, ed. *Statement of the Rangoon Consultation on Buddhist-Christian Encounter* (Rangoon: East Asia Christian Council, 1961). Quoted from Lyn de Silva (ed), *Consultation on Buddhist-Christian Encounter* (cyclostyled document containing the original papers regrouped and republished for the Conference on Buddhism (Theological College of Lanka, May 1964; TCL Library Accession No. 261.243 CON), 1.

grace, mercy, resurrection and so on.

A further danger would be that we leave the impression that there is no essential difference between the message of Buddhism and the message of the Church. This will be safeguarded if the essential point of distinction (the Cross) is emphasized. So far, however, the Church cannot be said to have exposed herself unduly to such dangers, but has on the contrary, been over-cautious in the translation of the Gospel.

The <u>advantages</u> of such a method of communication were seen to be that this new kind of dialogue ensures a much greater measure of intelligibility on the part of the Buddhist; in presenting the Gospel in the clothing of Jewish or Greek or Latin thought, we may be putting the Buddhist at an initial disadvantage; the conversation would be conducted in two different idioms.

Secondly, in using the (Buddhist) terms in this way, they would themselves be given a higher meaning, a richer significance; they would be sanctified.

Thirdly, the use of these terms may also lead us to see new and greater depths of meaning in the Gospel; meanings which we had not realized before, because the limitations of Jewish, Greek or Latin terminology had obscured them from us.[33]

Based on these principles, Rev Weerasinghe worked out their implications for the task of the Sinhala translation at hand. He listed three categories of Buddhist terms that may be employed: "(1) Buddhist technical terms pure and simple,[34]

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[33] *Ibid.*, 73-74 (original emphases).
[34] *Ibid.*, 23. The examples given are:
deva = heavenly beings (literally 'radiant ones')

(2) Sinhalese terms which carry Buddhist overtones,[35] (3) neutral terms into which we may hope to pour Christian content and meaning."[36] Echoing the Rangoon Statement, he affirmed that some biblical terms such as 'mercy', 'sin' and 'hope' have no theological equivalents in other languages because they are "peculiarly Christian concepts which distinguish the Christian faith from every other faith."[37] Also that in using Buddhist terms the committee is "conscious of their inadequacy and unsuitability." Yet, despite these acknowledged translational limitations, Rev Weerasinghe revealed that the committee was resolved to venture forth and mine new semantic fields in the territory of non-Christian literary sources.

> The question is being raised whether we should not make a serious endeavour to employ non-Christian terms from Buddhist and Hindu literature to convey some of the great key categories of our faith, such as: God, *logos*, faith, *kosmos* and *agap-ē*. This is a task which is fraught with danger, and yet a task which must be attempted. The Christian Church of today in Asia must take the same kind of daring step which the early Church took in

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papaya = sin
atmaya = ego, personality, spirit
[35] Examples given:
damsak pavathvima = preaching (lit. 'setting in motion the wheel of doctrine')
divya loka = world of the gods, heavens
deva-duta = divine messengers, angels
[36] Examples:
sabhawa = assembly, society, church
paschattapa = repentance
kamawa = forgiveness
dharmishtakama = righteousness
anugrahaya = grace
[37] *Ibid.*, 23.

> communicating the Gospel to the Graeco-Roman world. The author of the fourth gospel is an inspiring example in this venture. It is a venture full of risks and yet they are well worth taking.[38]

This was the missional anvil upon which the term *Dharmayānō* was forged. Rev Weerasinghe's stated resolve is buoyed with the same sense of adventure that has been essential for cross-cultural Gospel transmission, when the living Word is translated into existing worldview concepts and simultaneously transforms those concepts with radically new meaning. In this 1964 article, "*logos*" is identified as one of the "great key categories of our faith" for which the Revision Committee was willing to search the vocabularies of Buddhism and Hinduism. Although Rev Weerasinghe's essay does not reveal further details of that process, his comment that "[t]he author of the fourth gospel is an example in this venture" clearly indicates that they were now on the path that would lead to *Dharmayānō*.

PILIMATALAWA CONFERENCE (1964): IMPLICATIONS FOR SRI LANKA

A conference on the theme 'The Word of God and the Faith of the Buddhists'[39] was held at the Theological College of Lanka, Pilimatalawa, from 29 May–1 June 1964, at which about 35 delegates from most of the Protestant denominations and two from the Roman Catholic Church participated.[40] In his keynote address on "Living on the Christian-Buddhist Frontier in

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[38] Ibid.

[39] The conference notice states its purpose as "To inquire into the relevance of the Christian message to the faith by which Buddhists live." *Dialogue*, No. 2 (January 1964), 9.

[40] Lynn de Silva, 'Living on the Christian-Buddhist Frontier' (editorial), *Dialogue*, No. 3 (June 1964), 1

Ceylon," Rev Weerasinghe drew a parallel with the situation of the early Jewish Christians as they faced the challenge of communicating the Gospel to the Hellenistic world.

> As revealed by New Testament writers, especially by the Gospel of John and the first Epistle of John, we find ourselves living in a situation which is strongly similar to that of the early Christians. While there are strong temptations and real dangers which we must continually guard against, there are also new gains and invaluable opportunities which we must warmly welcome and exploit to the full.[41]

He defined those opportunities as identified by NT scholar C H Dodd:

(a) A new intellectual apparatus for interpreting Christianity to the wider world.
(b) An opportunity of penetrating more deeply into the unsearchable riches of the Christian Gospel.
(c) The exciting discovery that the more openly the religious discussion was conducted upon ground common to Christianity and the best non-Christian thought, the more clearly did the specific differentia of the Christian Faith emerge.[42]

Rev Weerasinghe then applied these factors to the Christian experience in the Buddhist context of Sri Lanka:

(a) An intellectual apparatus of new phraseology and thought-forms.
(b) A strong challenge to delve deep into what we believe; and,

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[41] Quoted by de Silva, *ibid*.
[42] Ibid.

(c)   A new understanding of the uniqueness of the Gospel.[43]

The interest in Buddhist studies generated by this conference contributed towards making the newly-formed Christian Institute of Buddhist Studies (later to become the Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue at 490 Havelock Road, Wellawatte), under the directorship of Rev de Silva, a major centre for Christian research.[44] It is equally significant that on 1 June 1965, two rooms at these very premises were allocated for the Sinhala Bible Revision Centre. Translation work picked up pace from this time onwards with both Co-Revisers now able to devote their full attention to the project.[45]

EMERGENCE OF *DHARMAYĀNŌ*

The available sources indicate that the precise term *Dharmayānō* emerged during 1967. This is the year when the tentative draft translation of John's Gospel was completed.[46] The *idea* of using the term *dharma* (Sanskrit) or *dhamma* (Pali) for *logos*, however, appears to have had a longer history in Asia.

Dao in Chinese

The Sinhala Bible Revision Committee was not the first to translate *logos* with a concept word from another Asian religious philosophy. The earliest precedent was set by translators into Chinese, where the term *dao* (lit. the way) in Taoism conveys a concept comparable to *dhamma* in Buddhism. In 1836/7 Walter H Medhurst and Karl F A Gützlaff

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[43] Ibid.

[44] *Ibid.*, 2.

[45] 153rd Annual Report of the Ceylon Bible Society (1965), 11-12.

[46] *Annual Report of the Ceylon Bible Society* (1967), 13. Luke's Gospel was also reported as having been completed this same year. Mark's Gospel had been completed the previous year; *154th Annual Report* (1966), 13.

were the first to use the term *Dao* in their Protestant New Testament. Over a century later, Wu Jingxiong adopted the same term for the official Roman Catholic translation of 1949. Until then, Catholic translators had used *Wu-er-peng* (a transmorgrification of the Vulgate's *verbum*) first found in the 17th century Gospel lectionary of the Jesuit Manuel Dias, Jr.[47] The 1919 Chinese Union Version and its subsequent revisions consistently employ *Dao*.[48]

Tham in Thai

In Theravada Buddhist cultures, translators into Thai and Burmese contemplated the idea for many years prior to the Sinhala translation, but implemented the choice only later. In 1957, Francis M Seely observed that in Thailand (where he ministered from 1947-78) "[t]he word *tum* [Pali *dhamma*] has been suggested as a translation for *logos* in John,"[49] and weighed its pros and cons. Positively, he noted that:

> …the *tum* and the *logos* are both of prime importance, each in its respective religion, in bringing a person to his ultimate goal. Without the *tum* in Buddhism, as without the *logos* in Christianity, the worshipper would be left in darkness. So the emotional color of the two words should not be too different.[50]

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[47] Lloyd Haft, 'Perspectives on John C H Wu's Translation of the New Testament' in Chloë Starr (ed.), *Reading Christian Scriptures in China* (London/NY: T&T Clark, 2008), 193.

[48] Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Translation in China (Indiana: Monumenta Serica Institute, 1999), 69, fn. 63.

[49] Francis M. Seely, 'Some problems in Translating the Scriptures into Thai,' *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (April 1957), 50.

[50] Ibid.

Yet Seely conceded two objections on the basis of "personality and the nature of salvation":

> The *tum* is impersonal. It does not come from a personal God nor does it speak in a personal way. It is there as a gem for those who seek it, but it seeks no one. The *logos* on the other hand comes from a personal God and is a person, actively seeking and speaking.

> The ultimate salvation of which the *tum* speaks is Nirvana, escape from being and becoming. It is a void, a nothingness, which is spoken of as bliss… [with] mileposts on the way… [such as] the lower heavens and higher stations of rebirth in this world. But in the salvation of the *tum* there is no parallel to the Christian conception of salvation as unbroken fellowship with the Creator God.[51]

Seely's proposal to the Thai Bible Revision Committee (commenced in 1954) was set aside in favour of the existing 1940 version's more neutral *Phra Wata* (lit. Venerable Word) in the Thai Standard Version (1971). In 1974, Seely founded an institute for Buddhist-Christian dialogue, naming it the Dharma-Logos Project.[52] However, *Phra Tham* (lit. Venerable Dharma) was eventually used in the Thai Common Language Version's New Testament in 1977 and Bible in 1984.[53]

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[51] *Ibid.*, 50-51.

[52] Patricia McLean, Thai Protestant Christianity: A Study of Cultural and Theological Interactions between Western Missionaries (the American Presbyterian Mission and the Overseas Missionary Fellowship) and Indigenous Thai Churches (the Church of Christ in Thailand and the Associated Churches of Thailand-Central), (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2002), 149.

[53] *Phra Wata* is also used in the Thai King James Version (NT 2000, WB 2003) and Thai New Contemporary Version (NT 2000/WB 2007). The Thai Catholic Version has *Phra Wajanat* ('Venerable Word/Statement').

Burmese

Based on his acquaintance with Burmese Christians as pastor of the Judson Memorial Church in Rangoon and lecturer in its divinity school (1960-62),[54] Prof Trevor Ling wrote in 1966 that:

> It is interesting to note that in its Pali form, *Dhamma*, it has found its way into the Burmese language and provides an appropriate word for translating into Burmese the first verse of St John's gospel: "In the beginning was the *Dhamma*…"(55p)

However, Prof Ling was not referring to any of the four Burmese Bible translations available at the time. None of them contain the Pali *dhamma* or *tarā*" (its Burmese cognate) for *logos*. Originating with the Judson Version (1834) and continuing through the U Tun Nyein Version (1906), BFBS Version (1928), McQuire Version (1933), Common Language Version (2005) and Living Bible (2006), it was rendered by the compound *nuht' ka pat' to'* (*nuht'* = lit. mouth; *ka* = from; *pat'* = fall; *to'* = honorific indicator), denoting 'speech' or 'utterance'. La Seng Dingrin supposes that "The reason behind such a choice would have been that the theistic concept of

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[54] Cynthia Chou, 'In Memoriam: Trevor Oswald Ling (1920-1995)' <www.iias.nl/iiasn/iiasn5/ling.html> (accessed 18/09/2012).

[55] Trevor Ling, 'The Buddhist-Christian Encounter (The Christian Encounter: 2)', *Theology*, Vol. 69 (1966), 364. He repeated this claim in his 1968 book *History of Religion East and West*: "The Pali word *dhamma* has passed into the vocabulary of South-East Asian languages, such as Burmese, where it is used by Christians to render into Burmese the word 'Logos' in the opening sentences of St John's Gospel: 'In the beginning was the *Dhamma*…'" (London: MacMillan/ NY: St. Martin's, 1968), 87.

God and creation are alien to the concept of *tarā*"or *dhamma*."[56]

It appears that Prof Ling was merely stating a wishful proposition arising from his acquaintance with Burmese Christians as pastor of the Judson Memorial Church in the University of Rangoon and as a lecturer in its School of Divinity from 1960-62. Interestingly, Prof Ling had participated as an observer in the 1961 Rangoon Consultation at which Rev. de Silva had presented his papers on expressing Christian truths through Buddhist concepts.[57] The '*Logos* as *Dhamma*' idea may well have been generated or reported in the interaction among participants there.

In a response to Prof Ling's 1966 article in *Theology* (quoted above), Rev David Young (then Director of Buddhist Studies at the Theological College of Lanka, Pilimatalawa) reported in the subsequent issue of that journal (published in 1967) that:

> It has been suggested in Ceylon that a possible translation for the word "God" in the Sinhalese language is the personalized form *nirvanayano*. This links with Dr Ling's suggestion that *dhamma* provides a possible translation for *logos*. *Dhamma*

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[56] La Seng Dingrin, 'Is Buddhism indispensable in the cross-cultural appropriation of Christianity in Burma?' *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 29 (Jan 2009), 3-22. However, Dingrin points out that "Judson did not totally ignore Pali *dhamma*; instead he Christianized it." He translated ''Old Testament' as *Dhamma Hoṅ'" Kyam'"* ('the book of old law/teaching'), 'New Testament' as *Dhamma Sac' Kyam'"* ('the book of new law/teaching'), and 'Holy Bible' as *Thavāra Bhurā e* Sammā Kyam'"* ('the true scripture of eternal God'). In his tracts, Judson also used the term *evangeli tarā*" (gospel, Mt 28.19), *kusala tarā*" (for the foremost commandments, Mt 22.38-40; Mk 12.29-31; Lk 10.27), and *samma tarā*" ("[I am…] the Truth", Jn 14.6).

[57] U Kyaw Than (Ed.), 'Appendix: List of Participants' in *Statement of the Rangoon Consultation*.

> is the truth about things (and people) as they really are, seen without illusion and without ignorance. St John would then be translated as saying that *dhamma* was with and was *nirvanayano*. In other words the truth about the way things are is a part of transcendent reality. But then the *logos* became *sarx*, the *dhamma* entered *samsara*, truth took shape for us. The Buddhist claims that *dhamma* is to be found in the teaching of the Buddha. The Christian claims that it is to be found in the person of Jesus Christ.[58]

Rev Young's attribution to Prof Ling of the "suggestion that *dhamma* provides a possible translation for *logos*" indicates that prior to 1967 the idea had not yet been proposed among Sri Lankan theologians and Bible translators with whom he was well acquainted.

However, in January 1968 we learn of a 'liturgical experiment' conducted by Rev Yohan Devananda at Pilimatalawa where the term *dhamma* was adopted in the Gospel reading. According to Fr Aloysius Peries, this was one of two "bold experiments" aimed at "making our Liturgy meaningful in the context of a Buddhist Culture."[59] The distinguished Buddhist layman Gunaseela Vitanage who participated in the proceedings reported that "The [Gospel] passage chosen was St John's prologue" and that "[w]hat was most significant here, was the rendition of the term LOGOS by the word Dharma."[60]

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[58] David Young, ''The Buddhist-Christian Dialogue' (Letters to the Editor), *Theology*, Vol. 70 (1967), 31-32.

[59] Fr Aloysius Pieris, s.j. 'Liturgy and the Dialogue with Buddhism: An Experiment,' *Dialogue*, No. 15 (July 1968), 1.

[60] Gunaseela Vitanage, 'A Buddhist Appraisal of the Liturgy,' *Ibid.*, 5 (original emphasis).

Also in 1968, Rev. Lynn de Silva wrote in an article to the *International Review of Mission* that:

> Following the Johannine way, we could present Jesus Christ as the unique revealer of the eternal *logos* just as the Buddhas are revealers of the eternal *dharma*, but with the utmost stress on the historicity and divinity of Jesus, firmly rooted in history and at the same time supra-historical, all-embracing and all-sufficient. The close resemblance between the *logos* of the Fourth Gospel and *dharma* (Pali: *dhamma*) of the Buddhist scriptures, provides an excellent contact-point to venture on these lines.[61]

To this, he appended a footnote announcing: "In the preliminary draft of the new Sinhalese Translation of St John's Gospel, this word *dharma* has already been adapted to translate the word *logos*."[62] As the New Sinhala Translation of John's Gospel was published in 1972, this announcement (appearing in October 1968) serves as the first published notice of this translational breakthrough.

REV LYNN DE SILVA: A THEOLOGY OF *DHAMMA*

Rev de Silva's lifelong endeavour was the construction of a Christian theology in dialogical engagement with Buddhism. Although he found the foundational doctrines of *anicca* (impermanence), *anatta* (no-self) and *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness) insightful for constructing a trinitarian theology of intervention in the human condition, he discovered that when it came to the central Christian doctrine of God, it was the Buddhist doctrine of *Dhamma* that offered

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[61] Lynn A de Silva, 'Good News of Salvation to the Buddhists,' *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 57, Issue 228 (Oct 1968), 452.

[62] *Ibid.*, fn. 1.

the closest possible analogy. In his 1972 doctoral dissertation, Rev de Silva wrote:

> No two concepts in two religions, however close they are can ever be identical, but it is legitimate to use them for the purpose of promoting inter-religious communication and for building an indigenous theology.
>
> The central concept in such a theological structure would be *Dharma*. This word easily lends itself to be used in a personalized form in Sinhala and probably in many other Eastern languages. In the new translation of the Bible the word *Logos* is translated *Dharmayānō*. It can also be used to signify the Ultimate Reality, God.[63]

When in 1967, the Thai reformist scholar-monk Ven Buddhadāsa Indapanno caused some controversy by declaring that "*Dhamma* functions as the Buddhist God,"[64] Rev de Silva responded that "This *Dhamma*-God idea is not new."[65] He brought to the attention of his contemporaries two important studies published by Wilhelm and Magdalene Geiger in 1920 and 1921 (and available only in German), in which they clearly demonstrated that the Buddha had intentionally replaced the

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[63] Lynn de Silva, *The Three Signata in Buddhism: An Examination in the Context of the Human Predicament with Special Reference to the Biblical Understanding of Man* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Serampore College, 1972), 341.

[64] 'Everyday Language and *Dhamma* Language' (Ch. 7) in Phra Thēpwisutthimēthī and Donald K. Swearer (Eds.), *Me and Mine: Selected Essays of Bikkhu Buddhadāsa* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 133. Originally published as *'Sinclair Thompson Memorial Lecture, Fifth Series: Christianity and Buddhism* (Bangkok: Thailand Theological Seminary, 1967).

[65] Lynn A de Silva, *Why Believe in God? The Christian Answer in Relation to Buddhism* (Colombo: Christian Study Centre, 1970), ii.

Vedic Brahman with the impersonal *Dhamma* at the centre of his philosophy.[66]

In his 1969 essay 'Dharma as the Ultimate Reality' Rev de Silva elaborated on the implications of this insight for bridging the gap between the Theravada 'atheism' and Christian monotheism. Most importantly, he was struck by a passage in the *Brahma Suttas* of the *Sumyutta Nikaya* where,

> Buddha, after His enlightenment, longs for an object of worship for, says he, "It is ill to live paying no one the honour and obedience due to a superior" (*Dukkham kho agāravo viharati appatisso*)… "For the perfection of the sum-total of virtues is still imperfect," says the Buddha, "I would dwell so doing honour, obeying, reverencing and serving a recluse or Brahmin." One should worship, revere, serve and honour a superior to oneself in order to perfect the vitues of *sila*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, *vimutti*. But the Buddha is unable to find anyone in the whole world who is worthy of worship: "Not in this world of devas, Mārās, Brahmās, not in the host of recluses and brahmins, not in the world of devas and mankind do I behold any other recluse or brahmins more perfect in virtue than myself, whom honouring I could dwell reverencing, obeying and serving him." Then the thought struck him: why not worship and respect the Dhamma in which he was supremely enlightened. "Suppose this Dhamma in which I have been perfectly enlightened, suppose I were to dwell honouring, reverencing, obeying

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[66] *Pali Dhamma, vornehmlich in der kanonichen Literatur* (München: Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1920) and 'Dhamma and Brahman,' *zeischrift fur Buddhismus*, 3. Jahrg., 2 Heft (Marz, 1921), 72-83. Eng. tr. W J T Small, 'Dhamma and Brahman,' *Dialogue* NS Vol. IX, No. 1-3 (Jan-Dec 1982), 83-90.

and serving that Dhamma?" Thereupon Brahmā Sahampati appears, and congratulating the Buddha says, that in time past all the Arahants, Buddhas Supreme, those Exalted ones lived only under the Dhamma, honouring, reverencing, obeying and serving the Dhamma, and all to follow in future will do likewise: "So also now, Lord, let the Exalted One who is arahant, a perfectly enlightened one dwell honouring, reverencing, obeying and serving the Dhamma."[67]

Closely examining the Pali texts cited by the Geigers, Rev de Silva made three observations about the Buddhist understanding of *Dhamma*. Firstly, he noted that the *Dhamma* is personified and hypostatized as a 'personal reality' in the role of a protecting deity and the object of reverence and devotion. Secondly, that *Dhamma* is elevated as a 'transcendent reality' which according to the Geigers, "*Dhamma* is used as the name for the highest principle underlying everything."[68] Thirdly, he proposed that *Dhamma* is the 'supreme reality' synonymous in many texts with Brahmā, constituting creative power; and with *Nirvāna*, the highest good and the highest aim.

Rev de Silva worked out that *Dhamma* can be reinterpreted theistically because it had already acquired certain characteristics within the Pali canon that pointed in a theistic direction. This is startlingly similar to the process by which *logos* acquired sufficient semantic content in Greek thought almost in anticipation of John's theological appropriation of it as an eminently suitable description of Christ.

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[67] 'Dharma as the Ultimate Reality,' *Dialogue* 17(March 1969), (14-20) 14.

[68] *Ibid.*, 17.

The strongest support for crediting Rev de Silva with the term *Dharmayānō* is the eight-page document included as *'Appendix C: Dharma and Logos'* in his doctoral thesis submitted to Serampore College in 1972. This was almost certainly the mandatory paper he submitted to the Revision Committee for their consideration towards adopting the term. It is appended to this article in recognition of its value as an important theological document. In it, Rev de Silva outlined the meanings of *Dharma* in the Indic context and *Logos* in the Hellenistic Jewish context. He commented that "Here we have accommodation at its best"[69] and "[e]xcept for the idea of Logos as the Reason of God, the Ultimate Reality would find a very close similarity between the idea of Logos as the rational principle of the Universe and Dharma."[70] In conclusion, he referred to the discourse on the *Dharma-kāya* in the *Prajnāpāramitā* (100BC–AD900), and proposed with great confidence that:

> In this passage we come very close to the idea of "The Word become flesh" – the *Dharma-kāya* becoming the *Nirmāna-kāya*. In a sense the word *Dharma* is better suited than the word *Logos* to express the idea of the word becoming flesh. Being a word is current usage, having numinous connotations in a living context, it is a word that has great potentialities for use in a contextual theology.[71]

CATHOLIC CONCURRENCE

Dharmayānō may have been a brilliant coinage of the Protestant translators, but it would never have made it into

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[69] Lynn de Silva, *The Three Signata*, 409.
[70] *Ibid.*, 410-411.
[71] *Ibid.*, 416.

the Common Sinhala Bible if not for the wholehearted theological concurrence of their Roman Catholic partners.

By his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritus* (1943), Pope Pius XII had dispelled the notion that the Council of Trent had forbidden Bible translation into local languages, and encouraged Catholics everywhere to have "the Sacred Scriptures translated, with the approval of the Ecclesiastical authority, into modern languages."[72] In colonial Ceylon, Catholics already had a satisfactory Sinhala translation since 1929. However, by the 1960s, church leaders–many of them scholars in Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit as well as Latin, Hebrew and Greek–had keenly felt the necessity for a fresh contemporary version. The revolutionary dispensation of the Second Vatican Council (1964-67) was the decisive impetus for this ecumenical collaboration. Its dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* (1965), decreed not only "that suitable and correct translations are made into different languages, especially from the original texts", but hoped furthermore, that "should the opportunity arise and the Church authorities approve, if these translations are produced in cooperation with the separated brethren [i.e. Protestants] as well, all Christians will be able to use them."[73] Looking still wider, the Council anticipated that "editions of the Sacred Scriptures, provided with suitable footnotes, should be prepared also for the use of non-Christians and adapted to their situation."[74] In a series of articles to the popular Sinhala Catholic magazine *Bhakthi Prabōdanaya* in 1981, Fr Andrew Peter Fernando (Catholic Reviser of the Deutero Canonical Books) explained the

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[72] Section 51.
[73] Ch. VI. 22.
[74] Ch. VI. 25.

importance of these new developments for scholarship and biblical literacy Sri Lanka.[75]

Roman Catholic clergy had been eagerly consulted, albeit informally, from the very beginning of the revision project in 1961. By 1967, the year *Dharmayānō* was coined, formal collaboration was initiated on behalf of the Catholic Church, first by Fr Peter Pillai, and then by Fr Joseph Ciampa, "who with dynamic zeal pursued his eager concern for a common Sinhala translation of the Bible in the spirit of the declarations of Pope John [XXIII] and Vatican II."[76] Once this partnership was officially formed in 1968, the main challenge was to formulate a common terminology between divergent Catholic biblical terms with Latin and Portuguese infusions and Protestant ones with Dutch and English influences. Reporting on the initial consultations between the Colombo Divinity School, the Theological College at Pilimatalawa and the Ampitiya Seminary, Rev Celestine Fernando stated that:

> [F]rom the point of Biblical scholarship our common consultation must help in leading us to where God would have us be in this great venture of a Common Bible for all readers, irrespective of religious or denominational affiliation. It is essential that we must not try to bind God's Word or His power with our age-old prejudices when His Spirit calls all men to know Him in truth and at a time when we all desire to make the Word of God accessible to all men everywhere.[77]

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[75] 'Sabha Nila Nivedana', *Bhakthi Prabōdanaya* Vol.82, No. 5 (July 1981), 2-3; 'Jagath Samulu Prakashana (1)', *BP* Vol. 82.6 (Aug 1981), 2-3; 'Jagath Samulu Prakashana (2)', *BP* Vol. 82.7 (Sep 1981), 2-3.

[76] 164th Annual Report of the CBS (1976), 24.

[77] 155th Annual Report of the CBS (1967), 13-14.

In 1968, it was reported that "considerable agreement has been reached" between Roman Catholic scholars and the Protestant seminaries on 50 proper names and key terms, of which only six required further discussion.[78] Archbishop Emeritus Oswald Gomis (then Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo) remembers one such meeting among Catholic scholars at the Bishop's House in Chilaw, presided over by the scholarly Bishop Edmund Peiris, where the suitability of the term *Dharmayānō* was specifically debated. Bishop Gomis recalls that at the conclusion of the session, Bishop Peiris had declared his approval of the term and that the participants had hailed it as a major breakthrough for Sinhala theological idiom.[79]

In the CBS report for 1969, Rev Celestine Fernando announced that Catholic collaboration had been particularly focused on the translation of the Fourth Gospel.

> A note-worthy fact about St John's Gospel is that a Roman Catholic delegation consisting of two scholarly Bishops [i.e. Bishops Edmund Peiris and Oswald Gomis] and two Priests [i.e. Rev. Frs. Andrew Peter Fernando and Don Sylvester][80] who

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[78] 156th Annual Report of the CBS (1968), 11.

[79] Personal communication with Archbishop Emeritus Most Rev Dr Oswald Gomis (28/08/2012).

[80] These names are identified in the *160th Annual Report of the CBS* (1972), 14-15: "The Sinhala Bible Revision Committee has been composed of Revd. S J de S Weerasinghe, the Revd Lynn de Silva, the Ven Sydney Weragoda, the Revd Chrisantha de Mel, the Revd G S Weerasooriya, the Revd C D E Premawardhana, Mr L G Goonewardena, Mr Moses Fernando and Dr L S Perera, with the Revd Celestine Fernando as Chairman. The members of the Roman Catholic delegation consisted of the Rt Revd Edmund Pieris, Bishop of Chilaw, the Rt Revd Oswald Gomis, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo, the Revd Fr Andrew Peter Fernando and the Revd Fr Don Sylvester."

> are noted for their scholarship are now joining us in working on the draft.
>
> The Roman Catholic Consultants have expressed the desire to make use of our text after they have had an opportunity to comment, as a common text for the Ceylon Church.[81]

The report further states that,

> In Bible Translation, we are constantly aware of the need to re-examine certain basic words such as Grace, Repentance, the Gospel, Logos, the Holy Spirit and so on. For this purpose, two Seminars on Key Biblical Terms were held in February and March 1969. Among the 23 who attended the Seminars there were University Dons, whose areas of special study were Sinhala Literature and Linguistics, and other eminent scholars as well as leaders of the Churches, including the Roman Church.[82]

IS DHARMAYĀNŌ SYNCRETISTIC?

Critics of the New Translation's choice of *Dharmayānō* object to the term as a syncretistic attempt to make Christianity more acceptable to Buddhists, thereby compromising the uniquely Christian message of the *Logos* in the process. In response, it must be acknowledged that *Dharmayānō* was undoubtedly a radical introduction to the Sinhala Christian vocabulary, being consciously derived from a Buddhist technical term because of its rich semantic content. The CBS's published definition of *Dharmayānō* in the glossary of the 1978 publication *Kristhiyāni Vimukthi Māragaya* makes this quite plain:

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[81] 157th Annual Report of the CBS (1969), 13.

[82] *Ibid.*, 14.

> *'Dharma'* or *'dhamma'* is a significant and distinguished term held with the highest esteem by all Eastern religions [Sin. *pera diga samayānthara siyalu āgam*]. It bears many profound meanings. One of them is that the fundamental element [*mūla dhāthuwa*] that sustains the world or the universe is *dharma*. So also John begins his Gospel by stating that the *Vākyānō* or *Váchanaya théma* who exists with God eternally is the fundamental element [*mūla dhāthuwa*] of all created things. Just as John took the Greek word *'logos'* and invested it with Christian ideas, the honorific suffix *-ānō* has been applied to the word *dharma* to impart the same weighty meaning he implied. (my translation)[83]

The issue, then, is whether it is biblically legitimate to adopt a concept developed and established within another religious system. Here it must be borne in mind that the overwhelming consensus even among conservative NT scholars is that *logos* represents one of the clearest biblical examples of the positive theological appropriation of ideas and concepts from the philosophical and religious vocabularies of the ambient culture into which the Gospel is incarnated. Therefore, those who object to *Dharmayānō* as an illegitimate syncretism must first account for the syncretism of John's own application of *logos* as a title for Christ, especially when that title had been previously applied to mediatory cult deities such as Dionysos, Orpheus, Isis and Hermes in Hellenistic paganism.[84]

It must also be remembered that *Vachana* and *Vākhya*, though assumed to be religiously neutral terms, also have

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[83] Colombo: CBS, 2008, 428. This definition now appears in the Glossary of the New Revised Sinhala Bible itself.

[84] R M Clark, 'Words Relating to the Lord Jesus Christ,' *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (April 1962), 88.

deep-rooted associations in Indic spirituality. As Robert Clark observed:

> The [Indian language] versions translate [*logos*] either by a derivative of *vach* (*vachana, vakya*) or *shabda*. In early Vedic literature *vach* is the creative power of the universe. Sometimes she appears alone, sometimes with Prajapati, the creator god. She is called 'Mother of the Vedas'. All this suggests an interesting parallel with logos. From the Upanishads on, however, she retreats from her creative role and becomes identified with Saraswati, the goddess of speech.[85]

In comparison, *Dharma* and *Dharmayānō* appear less 'syncretistic'! Rather than disputing over words regarding their non-Christian etymologies and connotations, the more prudent approach is one of 'subversive accommodation' as Willem Visser 't Hooft coincidentally advised in the same year that *Dharmayānō* was coined:

> Key-words from other religions when taken over by the Christian Church are like displaced persons, uprooted and unassimilated until they are naturalised. The uncritical introduction of such words into Christian terminology can only lead to that syncretism that denies the uniqueness and specific character of the different religions and creates a grey relativism. What is needed is to re-interpret the traditional concepts, to set them in a new context, to fill them with biblical content. [Hendrik] Kraemer uses the term "subversive fulfillment" and in the same way we could speak of subversive accommodation. Words from the traditional culture and religion must be used, but they must be converted in the way in which Paul

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[85] Ibid.

and John converted Greek philosophical and
religious concepts. [86]

As we have seen, both Revs Weerasinghe and de Silva were
deeply aware that in translating *logos* by a term appropriated
from the Buddhist philosophy, they were but faithfully
imitating John's own inspired application of a hybridized
Hellenistic Jewish theological concept to Christ. The Co-
Revisers were also keenly aware of the risk of syncretism's
negative effects, particularly the blurring of Christ's
uniqueness as the incarnate Word; a conviction they
wholeheartedly affirmed. For instance, when analyzing the
trikāya concept in Buddhism from a Trinitarian perspective,
Rev de Silva stated unequivocally that

> … a Trinitarian structure that can hold together all
> these aspects of religion, must be able to
> maintain, on all levels, a balance between ultimacy
> and concreteness. In this respect the *Nirmanakaya*
> concept is deficient in that, all the Buddhas and
> Bodhisatvas are partial manifestations of the
> *Dharmakaya* and therefore do not contain within
> them the principle of the ultimate in full. But in
> Christianity ultimacy and concreteness are
> preserved in the fact that, in the historical reality
> of Christ the fullness of the Godhead dwelt once
> and for all; in Him the Unconditioned and the
> Conditioned meet in a unique way.[87]

There have been a few alternative renderings of *logos* by
independent translators (subsequent to *Dharmayānō*) who
have avoided the syncretism issue altogether. Rev J W
Samarasinghe's erudite but encumbered *Divya Bhashithaya*

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[86] Willem A Visser 't Hooft, 'Accommodation: True or False,' *South
East Asia Journal of Theology*, 8:3 (January, 1967), (5-18) 13.

[87] 342.

(1970) offers three different neologisms: *Divyamanasa* ("Divine Mind"),[88] *Dēvavachanaya* (Divine Word, my translation) and *Divyavakthrū théma* ("the Divine Speaker").[89] All three are hermeneutically plausible and reflect aspects of the Johannine sense. However, they lack the comprehensiveness and 'category transformation' force of *Dharmayānō*. The translators of the Living Bible NT (1991) offer the explanatory paraphrase *Dēva Vachanaya vū Kristhuswahansē* (Christ who was the Word of God).[90] This communicates the OT Hebrew sense, but not the Greek. In his paraphrase of the KJV NT *Ævith Balanna* (2010), Canon Lakshman Peiris opts for neither a literal nor dynamic equivalent form. Instead he 'simplifies' the term with the straightforward explication *Vimukthi dāyakayānan vana Kristhun vahansē* (the Saviour who is Christ).[91] Although the risk of syncretism has been circumvented in these examples, they have also foregone the opportunity to present one of the most astonishing claims of the NT, the kerigmatic force of which can only be recaptured in translation by a similarly radical concept-transformation as John originally accomplished.

Finally, the excellence of *Dharmayānō* rests on the fact that it fulfils many important criteria. As Rev de Silva commended, *Dharma* is "a word in current usage, having numinous connotations in a living context, [and] it is a word that has great potentialities for use in a contextual theology." Sinhalese Christians must gratefully, sensitively and adventurously mine the rich heritage of conceptual and linguistic resources to explore and communicate God's truth. Hendrik Kraemer, who

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[88] (no publication data), 156. (Anglican Colombo Diocesan Library, Accession No. S/48)

[89] Ibid.

[90] Colombo: Living Bible Lanka, 1991.

[91] Mt. Lavinia: Intenso Offset, 2010.

cautioned incessantly against the dangers of syncretism, nevertheless encouraged the 'younger churches' of the Global South in their emerging theological enterprise:

> The smell of the earth, the brightness of the sky, the natural and spiritual atmosphere which, in the course of ages, wrought the soul of a people, have to manifest themselves in the kind of Christianity that grows there. This is far from being syncretism in the technical sense in which it is currently used, but it is a certain kind of coalescence, of symbiosis without losing identity.[92]

CONCLUSION

Despite all criticisms of the New Sinhala Bible, its rendering of the Christological title *ho logos* as *Dharmayānō* in the Johannine Prologue is arguably its crowning glory. This deeply evocative neologism was made possible by the visionary translation philosophy introduced by Rev S J de S Weerasinghe. The term, expressive of the uniquely Christian truth of the Incarnation, adapting the central Buddhist concept of *Dharma*, was the innovation of Rev Dr Lynn de Silva. As far as can be ascertained, it was first introduced in the draft translation of John's Gospel sometime in 1967; first appearing in the individually published *Gospel according to St John* (1972) and the New Sinhala NT (1973). However, its adoption into the complete New Interconfessional Sinhala Bible in 1982 was due to the theological concurrence of the Roman Catholic scholars, whose historic partnership with the CBS was an ecumenical landmark in Sri Lankan Christian history. Furthermore, the fact that *Dharmayānō* was carried into the 1990 revision of the New Sinhala Bible demonstrates

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[92] *Religion and the Christian Faith* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1956; reprint James Clarke, 2002), 390-391.

that it has secured a permanent place in Sinhala Christian theology and spirituality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

APPENDIX: REV LYNN DE SILVA ON '*DHARMA* AND *LOGOS*'

Source: Lynn de Silva, 'Appendix C: Dharma and Logos', The Three Signata in Buddhism: An Examination in the Context of the Human Predicament with special reference to the Biblical Understanding of Man *(unpublished DTh thesis, Serampore College, 1972), 409-416.*

The words *'Logos'* and *'Dharma'* have an extensive range of meanings with very striking similarities. (a) The plural *Logoi* is used in the sense of the spoken word of Jesus; *Dhamma* is used in the sense of the spoken word of the Buddha. (b) The singular *Logos* is used for a saying, statement or discourse of

Jesus, so also is the word *Dhamma* used in reference to a saying, statement or discourse of the Buddha. (c) *Logos* is used collectively for the whole of Jesus' teaching. *Dhamma* is used in a similar way to signify the whole body of the Buddha's teaching contained in the Tripitaka. But these are not the significant similarities.

The most significant similarities are to be seen in the special sense in which St John uses the word *Logos* and the special sense in which the Buddha uses it. Since we have already had an extended discussion of the meaning of *Dhamma*, we shall here only indicate the essential similarities between this term and the term *Logos* used by St John. The fact that John introduces this term without explanation indicates that his readers were not unfamiliar with it. Apart from the Prologue, it occurs in revelation 19:13 and probably in 1John 1:[1]. St Paul reaches a similar Christological position as that of John, in Colossians 1:15-20, without using the word itself. In John's concept of *Logos*, different strands of thought, Greek and Jewish, are woven together in a unique way. Here we have accommodation at its best.

Three strands in Greek thought contributed to the making of the Logos concept in the Prologue.

(a) To the [S]toics who believed that the universe was essentially rational, *Logos* denoted the rational principle by which the universe was sustained and in accordance with which it existed. It was also the Norm by which men endowed with *spermatikoi logoi* in varying degrees were to order their life and conduct. The *Logos* governed the natural uniformities of the physical world and pervaded all things. This idea is very similar to the *rta* and *Dharma*. As we have seen, *Dharma* is the rational constitution of the Universe.

(b) This rational principle was not only a Norm of conduct for men; it was also the principle of reason within man by which one was able to distinguish between right and wrong. It is the moral Law, the Law of Righteousness. It is that which enables a person to choose aright and recognize the truth when it is seen. *Dharma* is also used in this sense. It is the moral law; it is the principle of righteousness. It is not only the objective Norm, but is also subjective – morality, right behaviour, righteousness. It is that which constitutes character.

(c) In the interaction between Stoicism and Platonism, i.e. between Stoic Pantheism and the [P]latonic idea of a transcendent God, a compromise was reached: the abstract rational principle of the universe came to be identified with the *Logos* of God, the Reason of God. We have seen that a similar interaction took place between Hindu philosophy and Buddhism which resulted in the concept of *Dharma* as the Ultimate Reality, the *Dharma-kaya*.

Except for the idea of *Logos* as the Reason of God, the Ultimate Reality would find a very close similarity between the idea of Logos as the rational principle of the Universe and *Dharma*. The Venerable U Thittila states the meaning of *Dharma* in contemporary usage, as follows:

> All the teaching of the Buddha can be summed up in one word: *Dhamma*. The Sanskrit form of the word is *Dharma*, but in the Pali language, which the Buddha spoke and which all the Buddhist scriptures were written, it is softened to *Dhamma.* It means truth, that which really is. It also means law, the law which exists in a man's own heart and mind. It is the principle of righteousness. Therefore the Buddha appeals to man to be noble, pure, and charitable not in order to please any

Supreme Being, but in order to be true to the highest in himself.

Dhamma, this law of righteousness exists not only in a man's heart and mind, it exists in the universe also. All the universe is an embodiment and revelation of *Dhamma*. When the moon rises and sets, the rains come, the crops grow, the seasons change, it is because of *Dhamma*, for *Dhamma* is the law residing in the universe which makes matter act in the ways revealed by the studies of modern science in physics, chemistry, zoology, botany, and astronomy. *Dhamma* is the true nature of every existing thing, animate and inanimate.[1]

Three strands of Jewish thought also contributed to the making of the *Logos* concept in St John's Gospel.

(a) In the Old Testament the Word of God is the creative power. As John Patterson puts it: "The spoken Word to the Hebrew was fearfully alive. It was a unit of energy charged with power. It flies like a bullet to its billet."[2] In the Prologue the *Logos* is associated with the act of Creation.

(b) Jewish thinkers who were probably influenced by Greek philosophers reached a concept of divine "Wisdom" similar to the idea of the "Reason of God" in Greek thought. In the Old Testament, the great example of Wisdom literature is the Book of Proverbs, in which there are passages which personify Wisdom and give it (her) a unique place as the eternal agent and instrument and co-

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[1] Fundamental Principle of Buddhism – *The Path of the Buddha*, ed. Kenneth W. Morgan, p. 67.

[2] Quoted by W. Barclay, *The Gospel of John* – Daily Study Bible, Vol. I, p. 3.

worker with God.[3] She (Wisdom) is God's agent in enlightenment and creation. Wisdom is the light that enlightens men, an idea John makes use of in the Prologue in speaking of Christ as the light that enlightens all men. We may note that St Paul calls Jesus the "Wisdom of God" and the "first-born of all creation" in whom "all things were created."[4] Wisdom has an independent existence before God.

(c) A particular development of the Jewish figure of Wisdom is Torah (law). This Law is considered to be eternally existent and is described in personal terms and has cosmological and soteriological functions like Wisdom and Reason.[5]

From our earlier discussion of the term *Dhamma* we see that we could speak of the *Dhamma* in some sense as creative, that it is the source of Wisdom and that it is the eternally existent Law. But the idea of Dhamma in conjunction with Wisdom (pannā) did not develop in the same way in Pali literature as in the Wisdom literature which influenced the Old Testament writers. But parallels are to be found in the Buddhist Wisdom literature written in Sanskrit. The best known work in this connection is the *Prajnāpāramitā*, the composition of which extended over a period of 1,000 years beginning from about 100BC. This text probably originated among the

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[3] See Proverbs 3:18-20; 8:22-30; Ecclesiasticus 24:3-5, 9; 18:14-16.

[4] 1 Corinthians 1:24, cf 1:30; Colossians 2:2f; 1:15ff.

[5] "The role which the Law fulfils in relation to the Gospel has traditionally been described in a scheme of three uses. (i) It serves to preserve the order of creation where there is no saving faith. (ii) By reason of fallen man's impotence to fulfil it, it drives him to realize the need for grace and summons him to Christ, the only Saviour. (iii) For believers it has a further use as a standard of obedience to God, which by the fruit of the [S]pirit may be brought forth." See Richardson, *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, p. 125.

Mahāsanghikas in the south, in the Andhra country of the Kistna River near Amarāvati. It claims to be the "second turning of the wheel of the *Dharma*."

Prajnāpāramitā (prajnā wisdom, paran beyond, itā he who has gone) is literally rendered "The wisdom which has gone beyond." One could therefore speak of "transcendental" wisdom. The following selections from this text will give us an idea of what "perfection of Wisdom" means and indicate some parallels with the idea of Wisdom in the Wisdom literature of the Bible.

In the following passage, Wisdom is personified as a loving Mother:

> Homage, homage to the Perfection of Wisdom, the lovely, the holy, who is adorable and endowed with infinite virtues! Homage also to the knowledge of all modes of all the Tathagatas, and to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas! i.e. Om, O Wisdom, O Wisdom! O Great Wisdom! O Wisdom, the Illuminator! Wisdom, the Giver of Light! Remover of ignorance! Success, Good Success! Help me Succeed! Blessed Lady! Beautiful in all your limbs! Loving Mother! Your hand is held out to me! Give courage! Stand, stand! Tremble, Tremble! Shake, Shake! Yell, Yell! Go, Go! Come, Come! Blessed Lady! Do not delay your coming! All Hail![6]

The following litany extols wisdom as the source of light that dispels darkness and frees one from Samsaric existence:

> The perfection of wisdom gives light, O Lord, O pay homage to the perfection of wisdom! She is worthy of homage. She is unstained, and the

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[6] Edward Conze, Selected sayings from the Perfection of Wisdom, p124.

entire world cannot stain her. She is a source of light, and from everyone in the triple world she removes darkness, and leads them away from the blinding darkness caused by defilements and wrong views. In her we can find shelter. Most excellent are all her works. She makes us seek the safety of the wings of enlightenment. She brings light to the blind, so that all fear and distress may be forsaken. She has gained the five eyes, and she shows the path to all beings. She herself is an organ of vision. She disperses the gloom and darkness of delusion. She does nothing about all dharmas. She guides to the Path those who have strayed on to a bad road. She is identical with all-knowledge. She never produces any dharma, because she has forsaken the residues relating to both kinds of coverings, those produced by defilement and those produced by the cognizable. She does not stop any dharma. Herself unstopped and unproduced is the perfection of wisdom. She is the Mother of the Bodhisattvas on account of the emptiness of own-marks. As the donor of the jewel of all the Buddha-dharmas she brings about the ten powers of a Tathagata. She cannot be crushed. She protects the unprotected, with the help of the four grounds of self-confidence. She is the antidote to birth-and-death. She has a clear knowledge of the own-being of all dharmas, for she does not stray away from it. The perfection of wisdom of the Buddhas, the Lords, sets in motion the wheel of Dharma.[7]

All the Buddhas or Tathagatas are born or created by "Perfection of Wisdom" and it is their duty to protect and transmit the *Dharma* which contains the Word of Wisdom:

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[7] Ibid. pp61-62.

So fond are the Tathagatas of this perfection of wisdom, so much do they cherish and protect it. For she is their mother and begetter, she showed them this all-knowledge, she instructed them in the ways of the world. From her have the Tathagatas come forth. For she has begotten and shown that cognition of the all-knowing, she has shown them the world for what it really is. The all-knowledge of the Tathagatas has come forth from her. All the Tathagatas, past, future and present, win full enlightenment thanks to this perfection of wisdom. It is in this sense that the perfection of wisdom generates the Tathagatas, and instructs them in this world.

Therefore, Ananda, remember that it would be a serious offence against me if, after you had learned the Perfection of Wisdom, you should again forget it, cast it away, and allow it to be forgotten, and that would greatly displease me. For the Tathagata has said that "the perfection of wisdom is the mother, the creator, the genetrix of the past, future and present Tathagatas, their nurse to all-knowledge." Therefore, then, Ananda, do I entrust and transmit to you this Perfection of Wisdom, so that it might not disappear. One should learn it, and in so doing one should carefully analyse it grammatically, letter by letter, syllable by syllable, word by word. For as the Dharma-body of the past, future and present Tathagatas this dharma-text is authoritative.[8]

In the above passage *Dharma* appears to be somewhat similar to the Jewish idea of Torah.

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[8] Ibid. pp107-108.

Finally we have a passage where the physical body of the Buddha and his *Dharma*-body are identified with the "Perfection of Wisdom".

The Lord: Those who by my form did see me,
And those who followed me by my voice,
Wrong the efforts they engaged in,
Me those people will not see.
From the Dharma should one see the Buddha,
For the Dharma-bodies are the guides.
Yet Dharmahood is not something one should become aware of,
Nor can one be made aware of it.

Sakra: It is because the Lord has trained himself in just this perfection of wisdom that the Tathagata has acquired and known full enlightenment or all-knowledge.

The Lord: Therefore the Tathagata does not derive his name from the fact that he has acquired this physical personality, but from the fact that he has acquired all-knowledge. And this all-knowledge of the Tathagata has come forth from the perfection of wisdom. The physical personality of the Tathagata, on the other hand, is the result of the skill in means of the perfection of wisdom. And that becomes a sure foundation the revelation of the cognition of the Buddha-body, of the Dharma-body, of the Samgha-body.

Sakra: In a true sense this perfection of wisdom is the body of the Tathagatas. As the Lord has said: "The Dharma-bodies are the Buddhas, the Lords. But, monks, you should not think that this individual body is my body. Monks, you should see me from the accomplishment of the Dharma-body!" But that Tathagata-body should be seen as brought about by the reality-limit, i.e. the perfection of wisdom.[9]

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[9] Ibid. pp 111-112.

In this passage we come very close to the idea of "The Word become flesh"–the *Dharma-kāya* becoming the *Nirmāna-kāya*. In a sense, the word *Dharma* is better suited than the word *Logos* to express the idea of the word becoming flesh. Being a word in current usage, having numinous connotations in a living context, it is a word that has great potentialities for use in a contextual theology.

THE "JESUS METHOD"
OF TRAINING EVANGELISTS

KUMAR ABRAHAM

Why do we seldom hear of training for evangelists almost anywhere in the world? This rhetorical comical statement is my answer: It is because evangelists unlike theologians, pastors, counsellors, educators and missionaries, and other full-time servants of God, need no training as they are the most intelligent. On second thoughts, maybe I need to add something. Maybe it is so easy that you could be an evangelist without brains, especially, when evangelists preach just one message. Today, we not only see a lack in training for evangelists but also a lack of evangelists to reap the ever-ripening worldwide harvest. Why is it that we do not have formal training for evangelists as we do for other offices in the body of Christ? The theologians, pastors, educators, and others mentioned above have multiplied themselves because they had a vision and a plan to do so. Why not the evangelists? There seems to be no lack of methods and materials for training believers in evangelism. However, this is different from what is needed to train evangelists.

The Word of God clearly mandates the spiritual gift of the evangelist and his role in the local church (Eph 4:11-12). He is able to "build up the body of Christ…" both spiritually and numerically. For this, he needs to be trained. Thus, I beseech the church at large to consider the training of evangelists as an

urgent priority. This could be done formally and non-formally as apprentices.

Graham writes how around 1960 he was challenged by Dr Victor Nelson, a Presbyterian pastor, who was also his friend and advisor.

> "Billy, if you puddle-jump from Crusade to Crusade all over the world," he said bluntly, "you'll never accomplish what you could and should accomplish. You not only need to do this work yourself, but you need to multiply your efforts. You need to train others to do effective evangelistic work also." I knew he was right. In spite of an almost non-stop Crusade schedule, I sensed that we needed to work toward an international conference on evangelism (Graham 1997:561).

As a result of this discussion Graham had with Nelson, the 1966 World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin was born. It is evangelists who must have a vision to train other evangelists and have a vision to reproduce their own kind. Let me raise a banner for long-term training for evangelists.

The church must train evangelists and empower and employ them before they become endangered. Then they will lift high a banner in the marketplace of world opinion by proclaiming the gospel and calling people to repentance from sin and faith in Christ.

John Wesley, the great 18th century evangelist, who touched the world, cried out:

> Give me one hundred men who love only God with all their heart and hate only sin with all their heart, and we will shake the gates of hell and bring in the kingdom of God in one generation (Ury 2005: July 30).

Robert Coleman, writing about Jesus training just twelve adds: "A few people so dedicated in time will shake the world for God. Victory is never won by multitudes" (1983:34). Training a few faithful men and women can pay eternal dividends and be a powerful contribution to the church and to the salvation of the lost.

What is the situation with training evangelists today?

1. There is an appalling lack of training and equipping available for the evangelist. I know of only four groups[1] in the Philippines who are training evangelists in contrast to over three hundred who train the rest of the church for every conceivable ministry from diploma to the doctoral level. I suspect the situation in other countries could be similar or worse. What's gone wrong? Why is there a scarcity of training for evangelists at a Bible School level? It is misconstrued that evangelists can do ministry with a minimum of training.

They need not have a formal theological training… they need a passion for Christ, a desire to make Him known to the world and the willingness to be used in any and all situations to help usher others into the Kingdom of God (Barna 1995:27).

I do sympathize with Barna that theological training with all the other trappings may not be necessary. Yet, evangelists should also be trained theologically while not losing their passion. Training improves any servant of God. Once recognition is given to the gift of the evangelist in our Church institutions, the local churches may follow suit by recognizing the gift and making room for the office. Eph 4:11 says: "It was he who gave some…." In short, God has already given

[1] Good News Evangelistic Association, Institute for Itinerant Evangelists, Training Evangelistic Leadership, and SOWERS International.

evangelists to the church in every generation. The church must now identify those who have this spiritual gift and provide them with training.

William Abraham correctly observed: "One of the undeniable features of modern theology is the scant attention it has given to the topic of evangelism" (1989:1). Note that this is in the broader field of evangelism. The attention given to the evangelist is miniscule.

It is a fact that the best known evangelists in history had hardly any theological education. Moody had a grade five education. Charles Finney and Billy Sunday had monumental impact on the church and the world despite their lack of education. Some may point to the negative effects on the church as a result of a lack of a theological education which could lead to being theologically unsound and preaching a false gospel. As a result, some question whether education indeed could spell "doom" for an enthusiastic evangelist. Thus unfortunately, they discourage evangelists from being educated. Many incorrectly perceive the seminary to be a cemetery. Evangelist Dr John Sung, while studying at the Liberal Union Theological Seminary in New York City wrote: "But this seminary became a cemetery to my troubled soul" (Timothy Tow 1985:69), a place where the fire and the passion for souls is extinguished. Often, the evangelist who enrolls in seminary graduates after four years with a different calling and desire. This has resulted, at best, in the evangelist having to develop himself personally outside the context of the "Bible school". Seminary courses are generally geared to be useful inside the local church with an emphasis on pastoral ministries, education, counselling, and youth ministry. Outreach related courses such as Missions, Church Planting, and Community Development are still not fully relevant to understanding the theology, office, and functions of the

evangelist. Thus, in effect, evangelists have to personally prove that they can pull themselves up by their own boot straps. Generally, those teaching in "Bible institutions" do not have an evangelistic orientation. They may, in fact, sometimes even be hostile to the evangelist and proclamation evangelism. This could also be true on the denominational and local church level. Thus the evangelist is forced to join or start a para-church organization, exist alone, or give up the calling and perform some other ministry function, such as serving as a pastor.

An evangelist trainee once said: "I know I have the gift but I don't know how to use it other than preach." Not only is the church lacking in structures to hone, encourage, shield, and nurture the evangelist, but it also lacks role models. This has resulted in the evangelist becoming an endangered species.

2.   There is a perception that theologians are opposed to evangelists and vice versa. The prevalent idea is that evangelists do not study and theologians do not evangelize. The Evangelist vs the Theologian: is this reality? Can these two never be joined together in happy marriage? To the evangelist, the theologian will seem to be all intellect and boring. I once heard a theologian say that he had not shared the gospel in thirty years. The theologian, on the other hand, may withdraw from the evangelists because he perceives them to be shallow in theology and feels threatened by their fruit in the ministry. As a result of neglecting theology, the evangelist may become a noisy gong without content. The Lord of the church must grieve to see His body devour one another instead of complementing and building each other up. The evangelist and the theologian are the two wings of a bird. Remove a wing, and the bird will still be a bird, but will not be able to soar in the air. When the two unite both are enriched. Paul, the evangelist (herald), was also a theologian. Polarization will

greatly impair the growth of the Church. Those who train evangelists may tend to become impatient with formal education because of the time taken to produce labourers, while the call to evangelism is always urgent. Brereton says:

> An enormous army of evangelists [is needed] for this task. It is impossible to train them all in theological courses of our seminaries. We must either have new institutions for the purpose, or our theological seminaries should have sufficient elasticity to adapt themselves to the work (1990:60).

The Amsterdam Declaration of 2000, addressing the issue of 'Theology and Evangelism' says it well:

> Evangelists and pastors can help theologians maintain an evangelistic motivation, reminding them that true theology is always done in the service of the Church. Theologians can help clarify and safeguard God's revealed truth, providing resources for the training of evangelists and the grounding of new believers in the faith (pp. 2-3).

Indeed, theologians and evangelists need each other.

We have a Church that is mostly ministering, not in community, but in its own little safe houses, not wanting to change nor be confronted by the truth that will enable it to be more effective in serving the Lord. Some say theologians have closeted themselves in their "ivory palaces" and as a result do not hear the cries of a lost world nor what the evangelist is experiencing. The evangelist sees no need to study or prepare new messages and itinerantly moves from town to town in his or her "blissful ignorance". He or she generally has three messages that have been tested and tried in the city and in the village and are sure to work. With an inadequately prepared evangelist, the church is at grave risk of having an ambassador

who may misrepresent Christ and His message to a world seeking the truth of the gospel.

Green observes:

> Evangelism has been part of my life ever since my twenties. It is so still. For decades now, two callings have been struggling within me: that of the theological teacher, and that of the evangelist. But perhaps that tension is not altogether a bad thing, unusual though it may be. For most theologians do little evangelism, and many evangelists have little use for theology to the impoverishment of both. (Michael Green 1992: xiv)

Reid says,

> Theology without evangelism leads to dead orthodoxy. Vance Havner said, "You can be straight as a gun barrel and just as empty. There are conservative churches across America that are ineffective and spiritually dead. They have the right doctrine, but their practice is far from the biblical standard. In fact, theology without an evangelistic priority means we haven't really understood theology." …Theology and evangelism must remain linked because the Bible always weds theology with practical matters like evangelism…. People who have been used of God have generally kept theology and evangelism in unity. (Reid 1998:85).

Green and Reid are both theologians who believe in aggressively carrying out the work of the evangelist and of evangelism. Thus, they address this issue fearlessly.

There is a great need for evangelists to be prepared for their specific calling. They are more concerned about "winning souls" and doing the ministry than getting "bogged down" in more formal training as they might do in a seminary. They are more interested in "getting on" with the ministry than stopping to take time to study. In comparison to others in the

ministry, the evangelist has usually not pursued higher theological education. I am not commenting on the merits of the situation, but making observations. However, this is one of the reasons that has given rise to an apparent lack of scholarship among evangelists and their lack of ability to reproduce "after their kind".

I believe evangelists must maintain a balance between ministry and academics. I want to encourage Bible institutions to offer accredited training for evangelists. This will encourage evangelists in the church to remain within their calling and seek to use their spiritual gift. There is a need for both formal and non-formal training to be made available to the range of evangelists, beginning from the tribal oral learner evangelist to the urban evangelists to children and youth evangelists.

3. The lack of scholarship among evangelists has resulted in a scarcity of quality teaching tools available to develop evangelists. While there could be thousands of books related to pastoral ministry, theology, counselling, and education, the books on the evangelist in the world are so few that they could literally be held in a person's hand. True, there are possibly over one hundred titles on evangelism. Nevertheless, these mostly do not address the theology nor the practice of the ministry of the evangelist. The closest one can get to some form of inspiration is by reading the impactful biographies of great evangelists. However, evangelists need more than inspiration in equipping themselves.

One of the purposes of this thesis is to produce materials so that we address this lack and raise up the next generation of evangelists by providing them with training that blends both the academic (that which is suited for their ministry) and the practical.

4.   The lack of full-time evangelists has meant there are very few who know how to train the emerging evangelists. The basic plan of God was that every living thing was to multiply itself. This included man (Gen 1:28). It is all but natural that the evangelists too must multiply themselves. To my knowledge there has been a major lack here.

Billy Graham and his association are to be highly commended for launching Amsterdam '83, '86, and 2000, especially dedicated to teaching and encouraging the evangelists. Thousands were brought to the RAI Centre in Amsterdam from all over the world to listen to some of the most gifted theologians, teachers, and evangelists, including Billy Graham. I believe the meetings encouraged the evangelist. I launched out by faith as a full-time evangelist as a result of the '83 conference. However, this type of exposure is insufficient. When the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association conducted the Institute for Emerging Evangelists, it was mostly restricted to the classroom.

Evangelist Luis Palau mentors junior evangelists instead of focusing only on his own evangelistic ministry.[2] This is very commendable indeed. Unlike other ministry workers, the evangelist may be more susceptible to the pursuit of making a name for himself. With this possible chase after personal glory, he may be tempted not to want anyone else to replace him. As a result, the training and multiplication of evangelists has been neglected. While evangelistic organizations must be involved in multiplying evangelists, the easiest venue is the local church or the denominational structure. The Methodists and the Salvation Army are two groups that can be singled out for successfully implementing this in the past. Regrettably, it is

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[2] The ministry is known as the Next Generation Alliance and headed by Dr Tim Robnett.

not the case today with Methodists. The Methodists in Sri Lanka, however, do have a programme to train evangelists.

Both the evangelist and the church need to have a new understanding of the spiritual gift of the evangelist and provide good role models. This could result in future evangelists being more effective in their ministry and thereby reclaiming this gift for God's glory and for the salvation of the lost.

5. It is also widely misconstrued that the ministry of the evangelist is easy, consisting of simply travelling from place to place preaching the same message. The commonly held perception, too, is that the preparation of the evangelistic message is a simple task. Sometime around 1987, the Discipling A Whole Nation (DAWN) organization held a nationwide conference in Baguio, Philippines. After a Bible College president had given an eloquent message, the one handing him the plaque of appreciation said: "Now, preparing that message took lots of hard work. Unlike preparing an evangelistic message." At a conference for evangelists organized by the League of Philippine Evangelists, in Tagaytay, Philippines in 1994, a speaker said: "Evangelists have only three messages. They repeat them wherever they go." Another said the number of messages was seven. The last preacher at the conference, thankfully, made it twelve. On the other hand, in answer to a question, Billy Graham in Amsterdam '83 said that he had prepared over three thousand separate evangelistic messages. Like Graham, evangelists must be diligent to study and prepare new messages appropriate for their audiences and the times.

6. Most denominations and local churches neglect the training and the office of the evangelist. The good news is that some, like the Christian Missionary Alliance Churches and the

Church of the Foursquare Gospel in the Philippines, are beginning to see the need and are talking about it. I commonly hear denominational leaders say: "Kumar, we do not have evangelists in our denomination." This is the lame excuse of many. Why should you, or how could you have training for evangelists, when you do not have any to train? What then happened to the "some" He gave to be evangelists? (Eph 4:11). The lack of vision for evangelists also blinds leaders to the presence of these evangelists in their midst.

Unlike the ministry of the pastor, theologian, teacher, worship or music minister, counsellor, and others, the evangelist is not given equal priority in the local church or in denominations. A good gauge in evaluating the importance of something in the church is by asking how much money is being allocated for a certain ministry. The saying: "Put your money where your mouth is" is true. In the Philippines, very few denominations support even one full-time evangelist. In one denomination in Sri Lanka, in their hierarchical ladder, the evangelist was just above the janitor. The pastor held the highest position.

Senior evangelists, with very few exceptions, have failed to train and mentor junior evangelists. Evangelists want to become the next Billy Graham of whatever country or town they are from. So then why would they want to train others? Open your eyes. Look unto the harvest fields. The harvest is plenteous but the labourers are few. The evangelists also are few, and the plenteous harvest includes millions of villages in which to preach all over the world. For all of these reasons, few evangelists remain at their work for more than a decade, according to Carswell (2000:18).

I have laid a basis for the biblical theology of the spiritual gift of the evangelist. This has a major implication for the church today: the need to train evangelists effectively to reap the

ever-growing harvest of people waiting to hear and respond to the gospel invitation. With very little material for us to draw on from the history of the church, I will address this need by studying Jesus the evangelist and how He trained His evangelists. He is the role model on which I have based the following section.

Selecting the Team

Jesus was a multiplying evangelist. Even though He was the Messiah, He didn't have a "messiah complex". That is, He did not wish to do it all by Himself. Thus, He began His ministry with the act of choosing a team. The evangelist cannot and must not do it alone. This is one perceived weakness in the ministry of the evangelist: independence. The team will also enable him to have a broader and more effective ministry. He badly needs a team and the help of the local church as well as a healthy relationship with the local pastors.

a) What to Look for in a Budding Evangelist?[3]

- Does he have the spiritual gift?
- Does he have an excitement for proclaiming the gospel fearlessly?
- Is he willing to pay the price of taking the gospel to all people?
- Is he willing to work with others?
- Does he have a good understanding of his calling and the content of the gospel?
- Does he have a love and passion for people and for souls to be saved?

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[3] When selecting men and women to train, we can also be looking for other team members who will complement the evangelist in his or her ministry.

b) Prayer Precedes Selection

Jesus prayed all night before choosing His disciples. So, He had to remove Himself from people that He dearly loved and get away to a quiet "mountainside" and "he spent the night praying to God" (Lk 6:12). Jesus in His humanity needed to be sure that He knew His Father's mind on this crucial decision. His time on earth was limited, and He would train only one group of trainees, a training which would not be repeated. Can you imagine Jesus mentioning the disciples name by name and asking the Father about them? Jesus would have been looking out for men with certain character qualities. John McClure, one of the Vineyard Fellowship leaders, has a simple and helpful acrostic: FATSOS. We need to be looking for FATSOS, people who are:

> **F**aithful to God, to His Word, and to the leadership
>
> **A**vailable to God in the use of their time and opportunities
>
> **T**eaching by leaders, circumstances, and the Spirit
>
> **S**ound in New Testament Christianity, both orthodoxy and orthopraxy
>
> **O**utgoing in social skills, so as to maximize their impact
>
> **S**pirit-led in the development of character and obedience to Jesus. (Green 1992: 96-97)

One thing was common to all the disciples when Jesus called them. They were already busy. Simon Peter and Andrew, for instance, were "casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen" (Mk 1:16). Then a "little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat preparing their nets" (Mk 1:19). Levi, the son of Alphaeus, was "sitting at the tax collector's booth," when Jesus said, "Follow me" (Mk 2:15). They were in motion. They already knew what hard work was. He was not looking for idle ones to give work to.

Even today, God seldom looks for lazy and aimless people to serve Him.

When recruiting evangelists for training, those who already are proclaiming the gospel should be sought. Someone might ask: "How about those who are potential evangelists but have not yet started proclaiming?" These could be recruited from the larger pool of those who come to help in the evangelistic event. Often, while they observe the evangelist proclaiming, the Holy Spirit lights a fire in their hearts. Many emerging evangelists found their calling by being in the company of another senior evangelist. In other cases, they discovered their calling because they were converted at meetings where an evangelist presented the gospel.

Almost all chosen by Jesus were from Galilee. "Life in 'Galilee of nations' was much more cosmopolitan than in exclusive Jerusalem, and the minds of Galileans were more open to new ideas" (Sanders 1980:43). It appears Jesus was intentional in choosing those who would be most open to his new teaching.

Chronologically, in Matthew (Mt 4:18-22, 10: 1-4)[4] and Mark's (Mk 1:16, 3:13-19) gospels Jesus has two "callings" of the disciples. Why two callings? Possibly, the first was so that Jesus could observe them at close quarters for a probationary period. The first calling also provided the opportunity to withdraw from Jesus if they wished to for any reason. However, after close examination and much communion with the Lord on this crucial matter, Jesus "appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they may be with him and that he may send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons" (Mk 3:14-15). This confirmed their calling

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[4] Matthew 9:9 gives the call of Matthew.

as apostles to be sent out one day as messengers and ambassadors to the world.

Jesus knew the time was right to start His ministry. Jesus called his disciples "without…delay" (Mk 1:20). They too were prepared. But they had to pay a price (Mk 1:18; 20). He also gave them the purpose of their call: "…and I will make you fishers of men" (Mk 1:17). Saving souls was priority.

The "With Him" Principle: Demonstration and Observation (Mk 3:14; Lk 8:1)

After selection, Jesus leads them out in ministry (Mt 4:23-25; 8:1-9:37) with the disciples observing Him. He ate with the tax collectors and "sinners". When the Pharisees saw this, they asked: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" (Mk 2:16). Jesus used this opportunity to teach about His mission on earth and on the need for sinners needing Christ and salvation (Mk 2:17).

It is important to note that Jesus did not first preach an eloquent message on prayer or give out books on the topic. Alas, this sterile approach to ministry is mainly what we see happening today in our Christian institutions.

Mark records that "He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they may be with him…" (Mk 3:14). It is from this verse that we get the "With Him" principle. The disciples had to first be with Him before they could be "sent out to preach" or do ministry. To Andrew who asked Him: "Where are you staying?", "'Come,' He replied, 'and you will see.' So, they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him…" (Jn 1:38b-39b). After the time with Jesus, Andrew told Peter his brother: "We have found the Messiah…" (Jn

1:41b). By being with them, He was able to model everything He wanted. This was being incarnate in its ultimate form.

Leroy Eimes discovered in his experience the very significant difference between "with Him" training and mere classroom-type instruction. In his words:

> I have made mistakes in this regard. I have tried to train men by gathering them together in a quiet basement once a week to discuss the Christian life and then supplement this with occasional seminars or special meetings. It didn't work. But men who have ministered with me in the push and shove of life, out where we face victory and defeat daily, out in the world of real living, are today productive for Christ. I have watched them bear fruit that remains. (Eims 1981:36)

As Eimes has pointed out "with Him" training produces followers who bear fruit. Jesus' approach was not just through words but also through deeds. The Jesus-way of training according to Robert Coleman, in the book *Master Plan of Evangelism,* was through selection, association, consecration, impartation, demonstration, delegation, supervision, and reproduction (Coleman 1983:all chapter titles). The disciples observed Him as He proclaimed, healed, showed compassion to the marginalized, had one-on-one meetings, taught, did public relations, confronted critics, prayed, and much more. A B Bruce, commenting on the disciples observing Jesus says: "In the early period of discipleship hearing and seeing seem to be the main occupation of the twelve. They were then like children born into a new world…observing the wonderful objects by which they were surrounded" (1988:41).

Eims writes,

> The effect this ministry of making disciples by association has on the men in training is powerful, dramatic, and life changing.   It is almost unbelievable to see the

transformation that took place in the lives of the twelve apostles. It is one of the most spectacular miracles in Scripture. To watch them go from the humble shores of Galilee to the sophisticated center of Jerusalem and more than hold their own with the most august assembly Jerusalem could produce is a wonder to behold. (1978:33)

The kind of transformation that was seen in the disciples was possible, as Eimes points out, because of the manner in which they were trained – by association. Jesus had private teaching times with the disciples (Mt 5:1[5]; 9:37, 10[6], 13:10, 13:36, 15:12, 24:3; Mk 9:28, 33: 10:32; Lk 10:23). For Jesus, the classroom was where life was lived. As situations developed, it was an opportunity to teach theology, display and teach on character, or demonstrate a skill. Then after some time, He gave them just one round of instruction on evangelism, and they were ready to go (Mt 10:5-20; Lk 9:2-6; the result vs 7-9; Lk 10:1-23). How did He achieve his goals of evangelism so fast? Jesus was training His disciples right alongside himself. Every moment of being "with him" was an opportunity to observe how He ministered to a myriad of needs. Because He associated with them, they observed all His methods. "Evangelism was lived before them in spirit and in technique" (Coleman 1983:78). "His training classes were never dismissed" (Coleman 1983:80).

Jesus trained and coached His disciples. Clinton defines coaching as: "A relational process in which a mentor, who knows how to do something well, imparts those skills to a mentoree who wants to learn them" (Stanley and Clinton 1992:79).

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[5] Some have thought that the Sermon on the Mount was addressed only to the disciples.

[6] The entire chapter is directed only to the disciples (Mt 11:1).

However, Jesus was more of a playing coach. With the presence of the Holy Spirit and with the equipping they had received, the early disciples turned their "world upside down" in one generation. The Church today, on the other hand, has taken so many generations to reach the nations and peoples around her even with thousands of educational institutions to help do the training. The disciples' professor, the Lord Jesus, was willing to *show* them how, even though He knew "all" the theologies one could know. Bruce Larson says:

> Years ago, before seminaries existed, future ministers were trained by sitting under the mentorship of pastors, studying the Scriptures with them and working alongside them. Now this process is available to lay people through the mentoring relationship. I believe that there is no more significant ministry for gifted pastors and strong churches than to mentor younger Christians in their daily walk. (cited in Davis 1991:220)

I was first exposed to the "with Him" principle while in Surabaya, Indonesia, living in the homes of Roy Robertson and Marvin Ladner of the Training Evangelistic Leadership from 1974 to 1975. It was an 18-month-long training programme. God used Robertson to hone the evangelistic and training skills in me and to give me a vision for multiplying evangelists. Seeing the advantages of such an approach to training, I too went about to apply what I had seen and learned. From 1987 to 1994 I trained evangelists using our home as a base for training. I have had three to five evangelists live in our home for periods of a year to 18 months. We ate, studied, played, prayed, and travelled, preaching the gospel and nurturing new believers for periods of 70 to 104 days: all the while having the team together. These were opportune moments for modeling and instruction. This type of training must not have too many trainees in it. It should be a "manageable" number (Coleman

1983:24). Younger evangelists could benefit a great deal from this kind of exposure to life and ministry.

It is not involvement in programmes that matters, but involvement with people. It is this that qualifies us to know who our audience is. Making time for people is costly.

> A Chinese preacher in Singapore struggled with this common problem. "People say I must have content in what I preach, so I studied. But the more I studied, the more I felt removed from real human struggles." He has found that striking up conversations with people at shopping centers, talking with them about their feeling toward life, their aspirations and frustrations, helps him to keep in touch with the reality of his people's emotions. "This way," he said, "whenever I stand behind the pulpit and preach the Gospel, I know what I'm talking about." (Donald K Smith 1992:26)

The "with Him" method of training is very slow and tedious. There will be no quick results to show. Yet, it is the most conducive to bringing about change in the operating values, attitudes, and beliefs of Christians. Impartation of knowledge, an aspect of "with Him" training, may take place in a classroom setting. Ideally, the number to be trained should be twelve or fewer. Numbers must be kept low because education is not purely cognitive. The truth, however, is that quality education will reproduce quality. The professor, lecturer, or teacher may feel apprehensive to tell his or her students to "Follow my example" (1 Cor 11:1; see also 1 Cor 4:16-17; Phil. 3:17, 4:9; 1 Thess 1:6-7, 2:14; 2 Thess 3:7). Does this mean that students should follow all that their leaders or role models do? Not necessarily. But we can model character, spirituality, and ministry. It is no longer only the students who are in the spotlight, but also their teacher. It is the high price of having our lives exposed. No more is there the security of a pulpit or a staff room in which to hide. This was how Jesus and Paul raised up leaders. Our students are crying out not for

knowledge, but for role models. Not for great lectures, but to see a truth work in their lives. Brereton reminds us of Bible institutions in the past: "The chief strengths of Bible school teachers, as of those at training schools, lay in their religious dedication and their experience in Christian work, not their academic credentials" (1990:70).

The "with Him" method exposes the character of the students. The leader can observe the student's attitudes, behaviour, responses to situations, and use of language, among other things. The student also gets to observe the teacher. This leads to many opportunities for growth in character and life skills, not merely academic knowledge.

Role-modeling or "showing how" is not easy. It is costly and time-consuming, and only a few leaders are willing to pay the price. Some are known for being scholars. And, scholars are what our Christian institutions will produce. The greatest weakness in our church institutions may be the fact that we are just teaching how and not demonstrating truth. Teaching a lesson or asking students to read a book is simple. Almost any educated person with maturity could qualify to share something with a younger person. Yet, seeing a truth demonstrated along with the teaching is far more effective. For example, Jesus prayed "often" (Lk 5:16) and the disciples got to observe this. Similarly, as teachers we must be known to be men and women of prayer. What is lacking is that our students need to be with us and see how we pray and how we spend time in prayer. While the teacher should have a vibrant personal prayer life, prayer could also be incorporated in the classroom. Someone has wisely verbalized this role modeling this way: "I do you watch. I do you help. You do I help. You do I watch. And you do others watch". And then, the entire process is repeated and continued. Michael Green states it like this.

> These are believed to be vital elements in this 'hands-on' training. First, do the ministry yourself, learning as you go and reflecting on how others can be involved. Second, draw others into doing the ministry with you. Third, let them do the ministry as you stay alongside, supervise, and encourage. Then comes the transfer of the responsibility for the ministry to them: They report back to you on how they got along. And finally, the responsibility for training others is passed to on them. (Green 1992: 96-97)

This is an excellent summary of the process of training through modeling and coaching. The poem below expresses the importance of living out and modeling what one teaches.

<u>Let'Em See It Done</u>[7]

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day;
I'd rather one should walk with me, than merely show the way.
The eye's a better pupil, and more willing than the ear;
Fine counsel is confusing, but better examples are always clear.

And the best of all the preachers, are the men who live their creeds.
For to see the good in action is what everybody needs.
I can soon learn how to do it, if you'll let me see it done;
I can watch your hand in action, but your tongue too fast may run.

And the lecture you deliver, may be wise and may be true,
But I'd rather get my lesson, by observing what you do.
For I may misunderstand you, and the high advice you give.
But there is no misunderstanding, in how you act and how you live.

(Edgar Guest; paraphrased by Mentor Link Philippines 2004:7).

"People are looking for a demonstration not an explanation" (Coleman 1983:80). Luis Palau is one who was influenced to

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[7] While I emphasize the importance of role-modelling, this in no way should trivialize the priority and the power of the preached Word of God.

become an evangelist by hearing one in action. "When Luis Palau was 18 years old, he heard a young preacher called Billy Graham on the radio and prayed that he, too, would become an evangelist one day" (Lee 1996:38). Jesus' method of training was to have the disciples with Him all the while. He could then impart all His "knowledge". This was an important aspect of His training. However, to Jesus, passing on knowledge was not just teaching some "truths". The best method of training was to put into practice the knowledge that had been imparted. Jesus showed them how to do it. The most effective way of imparting knowledge is to demonstrate the truth through action. Jesus was willing to set aside three years of His life with twelve insignificant motley fishermen because He intended to make them the foundation upon which to build His church.

The disciples had observed Jesus. They had time to study who Jesus was, what He taught, and what He believed. They could decide whether they wanted to be a part of His mission and wanted to pay the price to be in it. However, the greatest impartation to His disciples was not methods or knowledge but Jesus' desire to die to self (Jn 12:23-26). Today, we have many sophisticated methods and books about training but we are low on obedience. When others see us live differently, the Great Commission may become reality.

I will now discuss specific areas of training evidenced in Jesus' training of the twelve, beginning with the character or heart development.

Spirituality and Character Development[8]
Heart – Character

Immediately after His first selection of disciples, Jesus followed up by teaching the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). These chapters are all about a Christian's growth in character (Heart). This area should be the highest priority[9] in training evangelists, before their knowledge (Head) and skills (Hand) are developed. I believe the Lord as well as some of the greatest leaders of the church have given this the number one priority in their training. The trainer Jesus had only a three-year period to build Christ-like character in the twelve. Most of those Jesus chose were simple fishermen. They may have rugged, uncouth and unrefined in their ways. However, Jesus must have already seen that they could become great learners.

In the early church it was not education but character that was considered the primary qualification to be a leader over others.

> The early Christians saw all ministry as a gift from the ascended Christ for his Body through one of its members; the authorization followed once a person had shown that he had received the gift. If we think about it all, we assume that the ordination will convey the gift. All too often it does not! In New Testament days, character, not intellect, was the most important condition. If you look at the qualities laid down for those who would exercise oversight in Christian assemblies (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 1 Pet 5:1-5) you will find that they do not concentrate on passing examinations and collecting an adequate amount of book learning. Instead they are much more concerned with the person's maturity, his control of temper, his family life and

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[8] Character is the development of the 'heart'
[9] Thus in the curriculum, I have placed spirituality and character development ahead of knowledge and skills.

> sex life, whether or not he drinks a great deal, and whether he has a gift of shepherding others humbly and tenderly. (Green 1983:11-12)

Green points out that the importance given to character as the primary qualification of church leaders. The Pastoral Letters also included teaching as a qualification. Developing character and accountability figured very prominently in early Methodism. John Wesley wrote:

> Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be trifling employed. Never while away time. Be serious...Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking. Converse sparingly and cautiously with women, particularly with young women. Take no step towards marriage without solemn prayer to God and consulting your brethren. Believe evil of no one unless fully proved…Speak evil of no one…Tell every one what you think wrong in him, lovingly and plainly, and as soon as may be, else it will fester in your own heart. Do not affect the gentleman…Be ashamed of nothing but sin; no, not of cleaning your own shoes when necessary. Be punctual...Do not mend our rules, but keep them...You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work.... (Ayling 1984:176).

What a joy it is for the trainer-teacher, who has a student or trainee, who is longing to soak in everything that is being taught. This does not mean that no questions are asked and there is blind submission, which really is subjugation. In fact, asking questions is a key attribute of a learner. On the contrary, it is impossible to lead someone who is unwilling to learn. An unwilling learner can weigh down the spirit of the teacher-trainer. Tex Winter, the famed assistant coach of Phil Jackson and the two National Basketball Association championship teams of six years, the Chicago Bulls and the Los Angeles Lakers, said this after game three where the Lakers were beaten by the Detroit Pistons in their championship in June 2004:

"I still love the teaching aspects of this game. But it is pretty hard to teach unless you have someone who is willing to learn. The hardest thing about this job now is dealing with today's professional athletes. Don't get me wrong, not all are bad. But after fifty-seven years of coaching, I am finding more players wanting to learn less, and that's frustrating for a teaching coach like myself."[10]

While in training, the student knows less. He has not yet "arrived". The trainer has been there and has had the experience. The student needs a learner's attitude and needs to be teachable. He needs to learn all he possibly can from his master (Exod 33:11). Thus it's apt that the Scriptures call Jesus' followers "disciples"; "learners" in short. Interestingly, the Greek root for the word disciple (*mathetes*) is *mantano* or learner. In short, without the word "learner" you can never have the word "disciple".

"But everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher (Lk 6:40)". What joy awaits this learner. Jesus assures the learner that he will be like his master in the end. For the thorough trainer there is much hope and joy awaiting as he seeks to multiply himself. Often, when we train others we wish those we train would reach their goals sooner and not later. We get impatient and distressed at slow progress. I said "thorough" trainer because, alas, many do not wish to multiply themselves. This is especially true of evangelists. For some, it is the desire to become "the Billy Graham of…" which seems to drive them. Thus, there may not be a desire to want to develop others. The gospel seems to be preached out of "envy and rivalry" (Phil. 1:18). They may be afraid that they may not get invited anymore to speak. This is a baseless fear. The world is vast enough for every evangelist to have over four

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[10] A Detroit newspaper, June 2004.

billion who do not name the name of Jesus, to share the gospel with.

Some important areas of spirituality and character that Jesus paid attention to were: developing a love for the Word,[11] prayer,[12] humility,[13] popularity and pride,[14] suffering,[15] faith,[16] servanthood,[17] commitment,[18] interpersonal relationships,[19] confronting sin and evil,[20] developing new habits and attitudes,[21] poverty – low salaries and material provision,[22] and tiredness and rest.[23]

The challenge before us is to be willing to die to our ambition of being famous and be involved in lifting others to greater heights of ministry.

Coleman addresses the importance of such a surrendered and sanctified life from the example of Jesus.

> An expanded free interpretation of this passage in John 17:19 might read thus: "For their sakes I continually – moment by moment – renew my commitment to the work of evangelism, and I am willing to make every sacrifice

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[11] Jn. 17:14

[12] Mt. 14:23; Mk. 6:46; Lk. 5:15-16, 6:12, 9:28, 11:1

[13] Mk. 6:45, 10:35-45; Eph. 4:1-6

[14] Mk. 6:54, 7: 7:24-25, 37, 8:26-38, 9:9, Lk. 5:15-16; Jn. 6:15

[15] Mk. 8:31-35; Jn. 13:1-20

[16] Mt. 6:30, 8:26, 14:31, 16:8, 17:20, 21:21; Mk. 16:14; Jn. 4:35, 14:12

[17] Jn. 13:1-17 see also 2 Co. 4:5

[18] Lk. 9:18-27, 9:57-62

[19] Mk. 10:35-45; Lk. 16:14

[20] Mk. 9:33-35 see also 1 Ti. 3:2; Ac. 8:26

[21] Mt. 5: 20, 9:11, 12: 2, 15:1; 23:23; 16:1; 23:13, 25-27; Lk. 7:36-49.

[22] Mt. 10:9; Mk. 10:29-30; Lk. 10:7 see also 1 Co. 9:14

[23] Mk. 6: 31-32; Jn. 4:6

necessary to accomplish this purpose of God for My life. And because I know that nothing else will suffice if the work of God is to be carried on in the future, I am asking the same of you. I have appointed you to go out and do My work, but before you will really feel My compassion for the lost world, you will have to make a full commitment of all that you are and all that you have to God's plan of world evangelism, and keep it up every day of your lives." I believe that such a dedication taken to heart would do more for the evangelization of the world than anything else. Surely it is a dimension of the sanctified life that needs more emphasis. (Coleman 1983: 64)

Evangelists must be careful to protect their testimony before God and man. Paul wrote: "No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached[24] (*kerusso*) to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Cor 9:27-28). The context is that after heralding (doing the work of an evangelist) Paul talks of the need for self-discipline. "Verbal proclamation without a lifestyle that supports that proclamation is powerless. The most effective evangelists are the most obedient and committed Christians" (Barna 1995:27).

Too often evangelists are stubborn individualists. Sometimes this can be a blessing when the gospel has to be taken to difficult areas. Carswell describes them this way:

The popular caricature of the evangelist is someone sweeping into town in a blaze of glory; extravagant dress, luxurious lifestyle, exaggerated claims, and charismatic personality. Brash, belligerent, beguiling and boastful... (2000:15).

Carswell has the Western evangelist in mind, but this could also be true elsewhere as well.

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[24] Better translated as proclaimed.

As a leader who was going to mould them to His ways, Jesus had to be patient with his disciples' failures, especially in the development of their character. Jesus was fully aware that Peter would deny Him (Mk 14:66-72), yet He gave him more attention than the rest. No one loved unconditionally like Jesus, nor did He hold back a rebuke from them, either publicly or in private. Attitudes that will help us to be patient with people in the process of character change are: the ability to look beyond and see who they would finally become; recognizing that people take time to change; and a willingness to give people a second chance.

Evangelists need spiritual guides. Clinton describes well the qualities of and the contributions a spiritual guide can make in the life of a believer.

> The primary contributions of a Spiritual Guide are accountability, decisions, and insights concerning questions, commitments, and direction affecting spirituality (inner-life motivations) and maturity (integrating truth with life). A Spiritual Guide is a godly, mature follower of Christ who shares knowledge, skills, and basic philosophy on what it means to increasingly realize Christ-likeness in all areas of life. (Stanley and Clinton1992: 65)

Training fails when character development is ignored. John Sung, the Chinese evangelist, believed that degrees, diplomas, and certificates should be withheld from seminary students if positive character qualities were not evident (Tow 1985: 94). This may be hard to implement, but should be seriously considered by the church.

Today, academic excellence is emphasized in educational institutions. Yet it was not always so, as evidenced by Brereton's (1990:82) descriptions of the qualifications

considered necessary for those training for ministry in the 1900's.

> At Biola not much was said about educational prerequisites at all until 1920, and then only a common school education or its equivalent was specified. And the founders of the Boston Missionary Training School explained that it was a school for "young gentlemen and ladies, who are called of God to enter Christian service, but who may, for various reasons, find it impractical to take the more extended course of College or Seminary instruction." The founders went on to prescribe as academic prerequisites only a "fair knowledge of the English branches of education," which could and did mean anything from a year or two in grammar school to high school graduation. Beyond that, the students were to possess 'sufficient gifts and consecration' to guarantee they would give themselves 'wholly to the Lord's service'. A pastor or church 'or some other responsible party' was to vouch for applicant's character and intentions.

> Regrettably, currently, unlike in the past, 'Intellectual standards often displace the higher spiritual ideals'. (Brereton 1990: 62).

Accountability is a vital grace that should be restored in the life and ministry of the evangelist: holding people accountable to clear definable spirituality, character qualities and ministry goals. Those unwilling to be accountable, or that make statements like, "I am accountable only to God," either need to learn more about this, or will be losing a very important aspect of God's grace. Zachary writes:

> Accountability conversations do not have to be formal, but they do need to be meaningful and regular. Periodically asking, "How is it going?" keeps accountability at the forefront. Posing a simple question regularly instead of waiting until something goes amiss offers a non-threatening

approach. When checking in is an established, normative part of the relationship, it takes the pressure off and encourages accountability. In some situations, more detailed accountability mechanisms are appropriate. If this is not the case, the mentor and mentee could choose to develop a list of itemized questions to discuss at predefined milestones in the relationship. (2000: 101)

The Salvation Army has some sound words of advice on both the selection and heart-training of candidates for the ministry:

First we begin with the heart. We receive no candidates but such as we have good reason, after careful enquiry, to believe are truly converted, and are actuated by pure motives in seeking to enter the work. Yet we find many of them not sanctified, that is, not having fully renounced the flesh or the world, and thoroughly given up to God. There are lurking evils to be discovered and renounced, mistaken notions to be corrected, the remains of self-seeking to be crucified, and the soul led up to the thorough abandonment of selfish interests, which we regard as indispensable to an experience of the fullness of the Holy Spirit; and to success in winning souls. Consequently the most time and the greatest strength of the principals and of the Staff are devoted to this department of labor; not only is the daily lecture devoted to the most heart-searching spiritual truths, founded, of course, on the Scriptures, but every candidate is seen privately, talked and prayed with and counseled according to his or her individual necessities by the principals. We take it to be a fundamental that if the soul is not right, the service cannot be right, and therefore make the soul the first and chief care. (Sandall 1942: 384-385)

I believe that we would do well to follow this advice in training evangelists and other ministry workers today.

Training for Ministry[25]

As we have already seen, Jesus trained His disciples in many areas of ministry. However, His method was more through demonstration than through a classroom explanation. Some of these areas were: proclamation evangelism,[26] passion for evangelism and souls,[27] compassion and social action for physical needs,[28] meeting spiritual needs,[29] answering questions,[30] teaching through dialogue,[31] speaking techniques,[32] speaking posture,[33] itinerating,[34] role modeling evangelism,[35] role modeling great preaching,[36] instruction in evangelism,[37] dealing with children,[38] dealing with family,[39] delegating responsibility,[40] evaluation and its advantages.[41]

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[25] This is the skills development of the evangelist, or the "hands".

[26] *Kerusso* used 24 times by Jesus in the gospels.

[27] Mt. 9:35; Mk. 1:38-39.

[28] His compassion for the suffering (Mt. 9:36, 14:14, 20:34 Mk. 1:41), driving out evil spirits (Lk. 4:31- 37), healing Simon's mother-in-law (Lk. 4:38-41). The people are fed (Mt. 14:16, 15:32)

[29] Mk. 6:34, 10:1.

[30] Mt. 12:1; 12:39, Mk. 11:27-29, 3:1-6; Lk. 5:30-38.

[31] Mk. 10:2-12.

[32] Mt. 13:2, 15:29 (Jn. 6:3); Mk. 3:9, 4:1.

[33] Jesus stood (Lk. 5:1, 6:17; Jn. 7:37); Peter stood (Ac. 1:15, 2:14); Paul stood (Ac. 17:22, 21:40); Seated in a boat (Mt. 13:2; Mk 4:1). In the synagogue Jesus spoke seated (Lk. 4:20).

[34] Mt. 4:23, 11:1; 19:1; Mk. 1:38-39, 6:6-7, 7:24, 7:31-32 see also Lk. 4:43; 9:6, 10:1.

[35] Jn. 3:1-21, 4:5-26, 7:53-8:11, 9:1-41, Lk. 18:35-43, 19:1-10.

[36] Mt. 7:28 (Mk. 1:21-22), 13:54, Mk. 1:27, 6:2; Lk. 4:22; Jn. 7:15.

[37] Mt. 10:5-42; Mk. 6:8-13; Lk. 10:2-16.

[38] Mk. 9:36-42, 10:13-16.

[39] Mt. 12:46-50, 19:29, Mk. 3:21, 31-34, 10:29-31.

[40] Mk. 6:7, 40, 8:6-8, 11:1-7. Mk. 6:37-38 (Lk. 9:13-17).

[41] Mk. 6:30; Lk. 9:10-11.

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The Great Commission, as we know it today, was the last words of Jesus while on earth.[42] The Master has impressed upon His disciples the importance of this for three years, yet now He has to repeat it. It is now the responsibility of the twelve to get the job done. The last words of a person are crucial in that this is what matters the most. In Matthew 28:19-20 the command is to "make disciples." However, in Mark 16:15 the command is "Go in to all the world and preach (*kheruzate* – 'to herald' or 'proclaim') the good news to all creation." Mark is the only gospel writer who mentions that disciples indeed went and began applying what Jesus commanded. I believe this is after Pentecost.

One way to test the success of methods is to see whether others are copying them and whether they are reproducible. After thirty-five years of persecution had passed "like an evil dream," Booth and his Army were honoured by heads of states and kings. In 1904, when asked by King Edward VII how the churches now viewed his work, Booth replied with characteristic humour: "Sir, they imitate me" (Collier 1965:214).

Training the "Twelve"

The chronology of how Jesus first saw the need and responded to it is significant. First, He "…went through all the towns and villages…. he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd". Then he said to his disciples: "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." He then got them involved in the harvest by asking them to pray to "…the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"

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[42] Mt 28:19-20; Mk 15:15; Lk. 24:47; Jn 20:21; and Ac. 1:8

(Matt 9:35-38). Then He took the practical step of recruiting "his twelve disciples…and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness" (Matt 10:1; Lk 9:1). His next step was to recruit a larger group of "seventy-two" (Lk 10:1,17).

Why choose only twelve instead of several thousand?[43] Coleman suggests this produces greater effectiveness (1983:24). Bruce explains:

> These Twelve, however, as we know, were to be something more than traveling companions or menial servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were to be, in the mean time, students of Christian doctrine, and occasional fellow-laborers in the work of the kingdom, and eventually Christ's chosen trained agents for propagating the faith after He Himself had left the earth. From the time of their being chosen, indeed, the twelve entered on a regular apprenticeship for the great office of apostleship, in the course of which they were to learn, in the privacy of an intimate daily fellowship with their master, what they should be, do, believe, and teach, as His witnesses and ambassadors to the world. Henceforth, the training of these men was to be a constant and prominent part of Christ's personal work. (1988: 30)

The smaller the group the better the quality. Initially, Jesus was with the twelve all the time. Eventually, He sent them out on their own. Jesus demonstrates an important principle here. In the beginning of training in evangelism, it is vital that the trainer, professor, or team leader accompanies and role models. At some point, however, the trainees will have to be

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[43] We can have thousands attend an international conference for instance, like Jesus had "about five thousand men" (Mt 14:21). The purpose of a large conference is different. At the end it is best to limit the number and work with a small group.

on their own. This must then be followed through with close monitoring and evaluation (Lk 10:17-24).

Why did Jesus send out the twelve in twos? So they could encourage each other in ministry and in making decisions (Ecc 4:9-10); hold each other accountable for ministry and spiritual things; be prayer partners; help each other in communicating truth or answering questions. Being alone is hazardous to the evangelist. This multiplication of small teams of itinerant evangelists must go on today at every level of society. John Sung trained his preaching bands who consisted mostly of teenagers.

David Aikman, in his book *Jesus in Beijing*, gives us a peek into the church in China and the rapid growth of Christian communities in the Henan province of around 96.5 million people – in his words: "One of the most rapidly expanding Christian communities, not just in China but anywhere in the world" (2003:76-77). The key contributing factor for this growth was:

> …[A] parade of itinerant evangelists and teachers preaching furtively in China's countryside. The visitors would stay a few days with the Christians, preaching, evangelizing, teaching, and sometimes baptizing new believers. Then they would move on to make another village – an underground railroad of clandestine preachers that stretched across Henan and into other provinces (2003:76-77). This had been on going from the early 1980's. Fangcheng and other emerging networks of house church Christians were developing a pattern of evangelism. They would train the young – some still teenagers – sometimes rather new Christians for just a few weeks, then send them out in pairs all over China. The teams are sent to relatives in different parts of China, to preach the Gospel to them first (2003:77).

There was a price to pay though. One of the Chinese evangelists put it this way: "We called this period the 'three-shedding period'. We shed blood in persecution, we shed tears in our prayers, and we shed nasal mucus because we wept for such long periods of time" (2003:83). Aikman relates the story of seventy-two young evangelists sent out to twenty-two of China's thirty provinces with just 1,500 yuan (about $200 in 1994) for six months. All returned alive and joyful despite persecutions and hardships. The results were astounding. Two of these teenage missionaries started independent house churches in the Inner Mongolia region that grew to number around 100,000 people (2003:83).

The "Three" Amongst the "Twelve"

From amongst the twelve, Jesus chose three, Peter and brothers James and John, with whom he cultivated a more intimate relationship. We see this occurring in Jairus' home (Mk. 5:37; Lk. 8:51-56) and the Mount of Transfiguration (Mk. 9:2-13; Lk. 9:28-36). Mark places this incident directly after Peter's confession as to who Jesus was. Jesus also had publicly raised His expectations to a higher level of commitment. Why is this intentional attention given to the three? He must have begun to sense that at least "the three" were ready for a higher revelation. Mark observes that they "were all alone" (Mk. 9:2). Jesus thus exposed them to God's glory, a view of Moses and Elijah, and their role in the coming months and years in His life and ministry. The voice in the cloud spoke directly to the three. "…Listen to him" (Mk 9:7). Some have suggested that this meeting was meant to encourage Jesus before His traumatic death. This may be the case. However, the Father's voice from heaven seems also to focus on the need for the apostles to "listen to him". In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus leaves the nine behind to sit [t]here and pray and took Peter, James, and John along with him, and he

began to be deeply distressed and troubled. Then he tells the "three": "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch." (Mk 14:32a-34). Jesus opened a window into the deep inner struggles of His soul only to these three disciples. There is a clear distinction between them and the rest.

What was His purpose in asking only three to come along in the above mentioned instance? Since it is not clearly specified, we have to speculate. Was this favoritism? Did it affect relationships within the team? Coleman answers: "It could well have precipitated feelings of resentment on the part of the other apostles. The fact that there is no record of the disciples complaining of the pre-eminence of the three, though they did murmur about other things, that where preference is shown in the right spirit and for the right reason offence need not rise" (1983:26). I agree with Coleman here. Investing in a handful is very important, as it will help you to focus on a few, who will influence a larger circle in turn. One can be more certain of quality. It enables the few to realize they are being given greater consideration and thus more is expected of them. Ultimately, intense, focused training of a few results in more effective training both in breadth and in depth.

Empowering for Ministry

When Jesus sent the disciples out to minister, He not only trained them, but He empowered them. "…He gave them power (*dunamin*) and authority (*exousian*) to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach[44] (*kerussein*) the kingdom of God and to heal the sick"

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[44] Should be heralding, or proclaiming, which is the work of an evangelist.

(Lk. 9:1-2 also see Mt. 10:1; Mk. 6:7). Without the power and authority of God, we cannot function (Mt. 28:19-20; Ac. 1:8). Ministry is not "our" work. It is a spiritual work of God done by the Spirit's power and enabling.

Jesus' goal is not just to hang on to power and position, but also to train His students and to empower them for ministry. Timing is important; the trainer must ask: "Are they ready for this stage of life?" The disciples had already associated with Jesus and observed His ministry. Sent out prematurely, they could have been nervous and fearful, felt intimidated, lacked confidence, and been unprepared to trust God.

The confidence of trainees must be built up. Some ways to do this are through training, telling them we trust and believe in them, and giving them the needed authority to fulfill the role. Leaders can lay hands on them in public and commission them (Ac. 13: 2-3). Having an identity card in the Philippines is empowerment because the card identifies them with a known school or organization and gives them credibility.

Having a good understanding of the spiritual gift of the evangelist—his or her position—can also help. They are God's heralds, angel-messengers, and ambassadors of the King of Kings. Understanding how they fit in to the body of Christ, and the total mission of God throughout the ages, is empowering. They also need to understand the content of the gospel and its demands on the lost. It is thus unfortunate when some believe that all that the evangelist needs is a five-day training program.

In conclusion then, several key principles have been gleaned from the study of Jesus' training His disciples, an intentional, focused approach to selection, and to training and deploying them to the harvest fields. These principles, modelled by Jesus

and recorded in Scripture, can be applied to the training of evangelists in the 21st century, the core ideas remaining the same, while creatively fleshing out the training to best suit the religious, social, and cultural milieus of the evangelists.

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BUDDHISM AS *STOICHEIA TOU KOSMOU*:
DOES PAUL ATTRIBUTE A CONSTRUCTIVE FUNCTION TO NON-CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS?

PRABO MIHINDUKULASURIYA and DAVID A DeSILVA

This article presents a debate between the two authors on whether Paul's references to the *stoicheia tou kosmou* (Gal 4:8-9 and Col 2:8, 20-23)[1] can be interpreted to mean that non-Christian traditions, such as Buddhism, serve a providentially positive role in the civilizational history of nations awaiting the Gospel.

In an essay entitled *'Without Christ I Could Not be a Buddhist: An Evangelical Response to Christian Self-Identity in a Buddhist Context'* (2010) Prabo Mihindukulasuriya proposed that while Paul clearly rejects the adoption of beliefs and practices (collectively referred to as 'the basic principles of the world') as an attempted *post-conversion supplement* to the salvation already received through Christ, he nevertheless attributes a "contingent providentiality" to the moralistic (not salvific) role of these traditions as divinely permitted until the coming of the Gospel. David deSilva critiqued this interpretation in his *Global Readings: A Sri Lankan Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (2011), by arguing that Paul's rejection of the *stoicheia* is absolute, and that there is no plausible hermeneutical basis for their having served any "relatively

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[1] "elementary principles of the world" (NASB, ESV); "the elemental spiritual forces," marg. "the basic principles" (NIV).

constructive" function, as Mihindukulasuriya had proposed. For the convenience of the readers of this journal, we have reproduced in their entirety our initial interactions (published separately) as sections I and II of this article. Our fresh continuation of the debate is presented here as sections III and IV.

I. Mihindukulasuriya: Does God provide other faith traditions?[2]

The clearest biblical teaching on the role of other spiritual/religious traditions in salvation history may be found in Gal. 4.8-9 and Col. 2.8, 20-23. The term Paul uses for these traditions is *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* (lit. 'the basic elements or principles of the world'), a term which evidently encompassed Pagan deity-veneration, ascetic ethics and the spirituality that held them together. In both epistles Paul addresses Christians of Jewish and other ethno-religious backgrounds who sought to supplement their salvation in Christ by re-submitting to codes of spiritual veneration and ascetic discipline as *salvific practices* (cf. Col. 2.20-23). Several insights may be gained from the apostolic teaching that follows.

Firstly, the 'basic principles' functioned among the Nations in a comparable (yet not identical)[3] manner as the Torah did within Israel. This goes beyond the affirmation of mere individual "conscience" in the Gentile context (Ro. 2.14-16). Paul here recognizes the external "traditions" in Gentile

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[2] 'Without Christ I Could Not be a Buddhist: An Evangelical Response to Christian Self-Identity in a Buddhist Context,' *Current Dialogue* 51 (Dec 2011), 82-83 (73-87). An earlier version of this article was published in the *Journal of the Colombo Theological Seminary 6* (2010), 102-104 (83-110).

[3] As the gift of divine revelation the Torah was intrinsically superior to the traditions of the Gentiles in Paul's thought (cf. Ro. 2.20; 3.31; 7.7, 12; 9.4).

cultures (Col. 2.8; 20-22) as the ethical counterpart to the function of the Torah in Israel's context.

Secondly, personification of the 'basic principles' as "guardians" (*epitropoi*) and "managers" (*oikonomoi*) (Gal. 4.2), parallel to the Torah's role as Israel's "supervisory guardian" (*paidagōgos*, Gal. 3.24-25), is a relatively constructive assessment. The 'basic principles' are therefore seen to have exercised a custodial function over human societies: positively, by inculcating ethical virtue, spiritual piety, existential wisdom, and community bonding; and negatively, by restraining, to an extent, humanity's propensity for collective evil.

Thirdly, there is a contingent providentiality about these roles. The Nations are said to have been "held in bondage under" the 'basic principles' (4.3), as Israel was "under the Torah" (v. 5), "until the date set by the Father" (v. 2). Within this allegory, the work of the many "guardians and managers" makes sense only in relation to the purpose that the Father has for the children. Yet the role of the 'basic principles' is never implied to be independently 'salvific'. They are 'moralistic'. It is here that the ambivalence of Paul's characterization of the 'basic principles' makes sense.

Fourthly, it is only in relation to the full freedom and inheritance of mature sonship that Christ brings that the 'basic principles' are called "weak and poor" (v. 9), just as the Torah would be found to be "weak" (Rom. 8.3) if one misused it as a tool for self-liberation. Indeed, such an attempt would be a pitiful self-enslavement (Gal. 4.9; Col. 2.23). Is it not interesting that the Buddha, too, rejected the 'basic principles' of dependence on *devas* (deities) and extreme asceticism as paths to *nibbana* as part of his own 'basic principles'?

The 'guardian'/'father' inter-relationship is directly relevant to Christian self-understanding in response to the emotive Buddhist accusation that Sinhalese who convert to Christianity are thereby "forgetting mother and father" (i.e. betraying their native Buddhist patrimony). In a traditional story motif, a young prince entrusted to the temporary tutelage of a renowned sage learns to honour and care for his *guru piyāno* (lit. teacher-father) as his own father. Once he has completed his education, the prince is gloriously reunited with his *raja piyāno* (lit. king-father) who embraces him back into the royal household, assigning his duties and privileges. The prince never loses his esteem and gratitude for his *guru piyano*; neither is he confused about whose son he really is. Likewise, those of us who have been blessed with a Buddhist heritage and understand in retrospect that it was God who placed the culture of our ancestors under its formative 'basic principles', will never despise or disparage its exceptionally rich ethical, cultural and intellectual endowment. If the Greek and Latin Fathers could express gratitude to God for the wealth of their pagan heritage,[4] Christians of Buddhist culture can celebrate with at least as much enthusiasm. For surely, the discerning enjoyment of the wealth of Buddhism is part of the "all things" for which Christ has matured and entitled us (cf. Gal. 4.1, 7).

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[4] Commenting on Paul's use of *stoicheia*, Clement of Alexandria wrote: "For Paul too, in the Epistles, plainly does not disparage philosophy; but deems it unworthy of the man who has attained to the elevation of the Gnostic, any more to go back to the Hellenic "philosophy," figuratively calling it "the rudiments of this world," as being most rudimentary, and a preparatory training for the truth" (*Stromata*, 6.8). For similar assessments of Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Augustine of their own philosophical tradition, see Alister E McGrath (ed.), *The Christian Theology Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 4-6.

II. deSilva: The Buddha was our pedagogue?[5]

Prabo Mihindukulasuriya has suggested that Paul's model of passing from the tutelage of the "pedagogue" (3:23-25), the "custodians and stewards" (4:2), and the "elementary logic of the world" (4:3) into the state of being mature heirs in the household of God provides the means by which Sri Lankan Christians, particularly those who come from Buddhist backgrounds, can look constructively back upon their Buddhist heritage and even integrate it into their Christian worldview. Mihindukulasuriya makes several observations on the basis of his study of Gal 4:8-9 and Col 2:8, 20-23, the places where Paul speaks of *ta stoicheia tou kosmou*:

1. The *stoicheia* function among the Gentiles in a manner comparable to the way the Torah functioned among Jews. The Gentiles' cultural and religious traditions served as "the ethical counterpart" to the Torah among Jews (though Mihindukulasuriya recognizes that Paul regarded the Torah to be qualitatively superior to Gentile traditions; see Rom 2:20; 7:12; 9:4-5).

2. Paul casts these "elementary principles" in a rather positive role when he sets them in parallel to the Torah, Israel's "pedagogue". This "custodial function over human societies" would have included "inculcating ethical virtue, spiritual piety, existential wisdom, and community bonding" as well as "restraining, to an extent, humanity's propensity for collective evil".

3. The *stoicheia* are only called "weak and poor" (4:9) in light of the surpassing value of the freedom of becoming God's sons and daughters.

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[5] David A deSilva, Global Readings: A Sri Lankan Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 233-236.

Our analysis [pp195-233] disagrees with that of Mihindukulasuriya in several important respects. Paul speaks of life under the *stoicheia* – including the Torah – as slavery and confinement. It is a state from which liberation is desperately required (3:23; 4:1, 7-9), and to which one should not consider turning back for a moment. Moreover, the "pedagogue" does not serve an educative role in the Greco-Roman world. The pedagogue is not the teacher. He may accompany the child to the teacher. He may stand over the child to make sure the child completes any lessons assigned by the teacher. However, he does not serve an educative, formative role. Finally, I think one would have to grant that Paul regarded the *stoicheia* as "weak and poor" in an absolute sense, and not just in comparison with the freedom of life in Christ. We also have to reckon with the fact that Paul is here at his most negative in regard to the Torah: it is, for the moment at least, just another *stoicheion*. That is to say, we should probably not read Paul's more positive statements about the Torah in Romans back into Paul's image of the pedagogue in Galatians.

Nevertheless, all exegetical "sour grapes" aside, Mihindukulasuriya's model is contextually relevant and fruitful, and well grounded in early Christian practice. It is in keeping with the willingness of Paul and other early Christian leaders to draw upon the wisdom of the sages and teachers of other cultures to contextualize their message, and even to support their message. It is especially in keeping with the venerable tradition of the *preparatio evangelica* of the ante-Nicene and Nicene-period Christian writers, who looked to Greek and Latin philosophers and religious practices for the hints and prefigurations of what was later to come into the world in Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel. As Mihindukulasuriya rightly comments on this point: "if the Greek and Latin Fathers could express gratitude to God for the

wealth of their Pagan heritage, Christians of Buddhist culture can celebrate with at least as much enthusiasm. For surely, the discerning enjoyment of the wealth of Buddhism is part of the 'all things' for which Christ has matured and entitled us (cf. Gal. 4.1, 7)." A Christian re-reading of Buddhist texts is also very much in keeping with the practice of the Jewish wisdom tradition (the compilers of Proverbs, Yeshua Ben Sira, and the like) and their openness to the wisdom of non-Jewish peoples.

Sri Lankan converts from Buddhism or Buddhist families are invited by these paradigms within the Jewish and Christian traditions to return to the familiar writings of the Buddha and to explore them anew from their place in Christ so as to integrate their own past religious experience and formation into their new formation in Christ. The Buddha perceived many of the important problems besetting human life and human community, and Jesus and his apostles had much to say to address these problems as well. In one sense, then, the Buddha still offers helpful diagnoses, even if we turn to Christ for the treatment and cure. In other respects, the Buddha's counsel resonates with Christian counsel at many points – his admonitions against certain vices and "cankers" provide an outrigger to the canoe of Christian discipleship. In yet other respects, those who have experienced life in Christ may be able to say, with respect, that the Buddha did not see some aspects of human existence, or of the interest and investment of the divine in human affairs, as clearly as we have been enabled to see by God's Holy Spirit. Like Virgil in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the Buddha can only guide a person so far, after which it must fall to someone who has experienced that life of the Spirit that Virgil (or the Buddha) had shut out.

By attending to sifting through classical Buddhist literature from the perspective of *preparatio evangelica*, Sri Lankan Christians coming from Buddhist backgrounds need not reject

their heritage outright, which might also help allay the sense that converts to Christianity from Buddhism are or will become antagonistic toward Buddhism and agents of Western imperialism. Throughout the remainder of the commentary, we will give due attention to some of the fruitful points of connection and conversation between the Buddha and Paul, and hence between the devotees of both.[6]

III. Mihindukulasuriya: Protective custody, not punitive imprisonment

I am deeply convinced that a theological idea merely serving a homiletic purpose, but lacking a plausible exegetical foundation amounts to wishful sentimentalism and irresponsible theology. I am equally convinced that a faithful reading of Scripture must be self-consciously emic; that is, searching the Scriptures from inside my particular culture; and not just that, but for my context. Therefore, I seek to comprehend the whole biblical theology of the Nations, reading Paul canonically (together with everything else that we can learn from the Bible on God's plan for the Nations), all the while asking: So what was God doing with my ancestors?

Yes, Paul's attitude to the *stoicheia* is primarily negative. The question we are asking then is: Is it negative ontologically and absolutely (comparable to the "futility" to which creation has been subjected until the children are revealed? (Ro 8:20); or is it negative functionally and relatively only after the full freedom has arrived and made our "subjection to guardians" obsolete, in the same way that rabbinic Torah-observance became redundant in the post-conversion experience of Paul. I am assuming that Paul believes that Christ created the

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[6] These points of connection are explored in deSilva, *Global Readings*, 281-83, 291-92, 306-309.

stoicheia 'good' (cf. Col 1.15-16) and that they became ambivalent with the rebellion-fall, and continue to function in history in that ambivalent state, just as the Law which was given for "life" under the Sinai Covenant (Dt 32.47) was subverted by sin with deathly effect (Ro 7:5-9). Acknowledging the obvious qualification of the Torah's superiority as divine revelation, I contend that it is perfectly legitimate to understand Paul's positive-and-negative perspective of the Torah (holding in tension Romans and Galatians) as a paradigm for interpreting the ambivalence of the *stoicheiaas* "human traditions" (Col 2: 8). I am not trying to impose Romans on Galatians, rather I am upholding both and asking what they both mean together.

So, my interpretation hangs by this thread: I believe it was the Father's gracious will by which the child is subject to the guardians and managers until full maturity. Not a punitive imprisonment, so much as a protective custody. Here the phrase "subjected…until the date set by the father" (Gal 4:2) is critical. What does it mean? Does it imply that the Father is responsible providentially for the temporary guardianship by the *stoicheia* as He is for the emancipation that begins in Christ? I think, yes.

The homiletic bit is the *guru piya/raja piya* story motif. It's not exactly analogical, it is more parabolic. I give myself this license because I think Paul would have given the Buddha's system a more favourable assessment than the kind of *stoicheia* he saw in the Greco-Roman world.

However, I do see that the *stoicheia* are not simply "weak and poor" in relation to the unique salvific power of Christ, but that they are aggressively hostile to the work of Christ. I recently came across a statement produced by an ecumenical consultation held in (what was then) Rangoon, Burma in 1961,

where theologians from predominantly Theravada Buddhist countries met to discuss the emerging hostility to Christianity arising from the resurgence of Buddhist nationalism in those nations. Interestingly, that statement refers, in a Bultmannian accent, to the spiritual-ideological reaction to Christian presence and witness in terms of, among others, the *stoicheia*. I quote here the relevant section at length, because it resonates so clearly with what we have been discussing.

> The resurgence of Buddhism may be seen in terms of the New Testament. There, religions of all kinds are represented in mythological language in terms of "angelic powers" (*archai, exousiai, thronoi, stoicheia tou kosmou*, etc.). These angelic powers are a cluster of mythological symbols which were used in the New Testament for religio-cultural life, Jewish and pagan. In the first instance they are guardians and pedagogues to lead men to Christ, but when Christ has come, they resist the new relationship to God which this implies for man and attempt to hold man back from the light of Christ.

> They seek to retain man under their own domination or even to win back believers. Their encounter with the Church, says St. Paul, leads to a growing hostility; in Ephesians and in the Book of the Revelation these powers are seen in their ultimately hostile attitude. But to the Christian their power has already been replaced and superseded by the new relationship which the believer has to God in Christ. What Christ has done for the believer is to demonstrate His lordship over these powers – a lordship which has, however, existed from the beginning of creation. The resurgence of Buddhism may possibly be interpreted in these New Testament terms. That is to say, while we acknowledge that religion may be a guardian and a pedagogue, yet ultimately there is always the possibility that there will be manifested in religion's relationship with

the Gospel in the presence of the Church an attitude of bitter and unyielding hostility.[7]

The interpretation of the Rangoon Consultation helps me incorporate a new dimension to my understanding of the *stoicheia* that I did not previously perceive. That is, that the *stoicheia* must be treated with caution because they have a reactionary power that seeks to reverse the transformative work of the Gospel in people's lives. This clarifies for me the vehemence of Paul's pastoral chastisement over his readers' resorting to supplementary practices characterized as *stoicheia*.

However, my point was a different one. Firstly, I was making a case for considering the existential experience of life under the tutelage of Buddhism as a *stoicheia* guardianship. Secondly, I was arguing that it was God who placed the Nations under a diversity of such *stoicheia* as part of His divine economy awaiting the unique and decisive revelation of Christ.

IV. deSilva: Did Christ create the *stoicheia*?

My colleague's further reflections helpfully push my own thinking on the important questions he raised for me in his initial article, and, indeed, on the concept of the *stoicheia tou kosmou* as a whole. I would still affirm the value of Mihindukulasuriya's affirmation of pre-conversion experience as a devout Buddhist as a positive *preparatio evangelica* and, therefore, of the possibility – indeed, desirability – of incorporating one's pre-conversion experience positively as an expression of prevenient grace, of God's provision of the

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[7] U Kyaw Than, ed. *Statement of the Rangoon Consultation on Buddhist-Christian Encounter* (Rangoon: East Asia Christian Council, 1961). Partially reproduced as "God and Buddhism" (Section of the Rangoon Consultation Statement), February 1961, *Dialogue* 2 (Jan 1964), 9.

means that would prepare the individual, and position him or her, to embrace the deliverance that Jesus brings and the life of discipleship to which he calls us.

However, I still do not think I can affirm on the basis of exegesis that the *stoicheia tou kosmou* really provides the best textual foundation for the same. My stubbornness arises from two considerations:

3. I find no evidence that Paul believes that the *stoicheia* were created "good," or created in any way, by God or His Christ, nor that God subjected the nations to these *stoicheia*.

4. I question the extent to which the analogy of being brought up as a minor child in a well-to-do Greek or Roman household, an analogy created to serve the rhetorical purposes of Galatians, should be pressed to provide a blueprint for salvation history for all nations.

First, then, did Christ create the *stoicheia*, and did he create them "good"? Mihindukulasuriya refers to Col 1:15-16 in support of answering this question in the affirmative, but the term *stoicheia* is noticeably absent from those verses, which speak instead of varying orders of angelic (?) powers, namely "thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities." Later in this same epistle, when the *stoicheia tou kosmou* are actually named, they are presented as a parallel expression for "human traditions" that lead one astray from God's truth and that are decided not "in line with Christ's teachings" (Col 2:8). Examples of the rules imposed by such human traditions, such *stoicheia tou kosmou* from which the Christians have been liberated, include "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch"

(Col 2:20-23), rules that have the appearance of acting piously but do nothing to curb self-centered passions.[8]

In Galatians, Paul will barely acknowledge that God gave the Torah itself (3:19-20), let alone established the *stoicheia tou kosmou*. They are enslaving powers (4:3); they are intrinsically not divine, powers to which those who are ignorant of God are enslaved (4:8-9). These *stoicheia* are probably anchored in the idolatrous worship that was ubiquitous throughout the Gentile world of the Mediterranean (and beyond) and, as such, could in no way have been created by God. This would be in keeping, however, with the view in Colossians that the *stoicheia* ultimately have a human origin (which Jews frequently predicated of idolatry, as in Wis Sol 13:10-14:2, 12-21; Letter of Jeremiah).

Regarding the Gentile Christians' pre-conversion past as one lived in ignorance of and alienation from the one and only God, Paul stands alongside other Hellenistic Jewish authors on this point: "All people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; they were unable, on the basis of the good things that are seen, to know the One who is" (Wis 13:1). Gentiles failed to move from contemplation of the created order to the discovery of the Creator, falling instead into serving "things that are not divine in nature" (Gal 4:8): "Those who call 'gods' the products of human hands – gold and silver items carefully sculpted, images of animals, a useless stone worked by someone's hand long ago – are pitiful, setting their hopes on dead things" (Wis 13:10). Paul would include idolatrous religion as a facet of the *stoicheia* that dominated and limited Gentile life in society (as in 1 Thess 1:9), but he was looking

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[8] The alternative to a human origin would be a demonic one, as demons were also credited with establishing idolatrous worship and extending its tendrils throughout Gentile society (see Bar 4:6-7; 1 Cor 10:14-21; Rev 9:20).

beyond it to the larger issue of how Gentiles, like Jews, were slaves to the ideological and social structures around them.[9]

If we were to look for uses of the phrase *stoicheia tou kosmou* roughly contemporaneous with Paul, we would find the bare term *stoicheia* referring to a series of things lined up in a row, hence the alphabet, and in an extended sense to "the ABCs" of some body of teaching, even the "ABCs" of human and institutional logic. If Paul has such a sense in mind, he would not be using the term to speak positively about some elementary teaching serving as a preparation for the Gospel, but more as a set of rules, ideas, values, prejudices, and divisive categories (like "slave versus free," "male versus female," "Greek versus barbarian," "Jew versus Greek") that imprison and constrain those who grow up knowing nothing else and nothing better. In this sense, Paul would be speaking about slavery to "the way the world works," however the society in which a person is born and bred defines the rules and sets the parameters on life.[10] There is no sense, however, that this is divine in origin.

The best attested meaning for *stoicheia and especially stoicheia tou kosmou* in the first century and before is the elements out of which the natural world was believed to have

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[9] F F Bruce (*The Epistle to the Galatians* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1982], 30) comments on the essential difference between Torah as a *stoicheion* and the *stoicheia* to which Gentiles were enslaved: "According to Paul, pagan worship was always culpable because it involved idolatry and the vices which followed from idolatry; Jewish worship in the pre-Christian stage of God's dealings with humanity was far from being culpable – it was divinely instituted – but it had the character of infancy and immaturity as compared with the coming of age into which human beings were introduced by faith in Christ."

[10] J Louis Martyn (*Galatians* [Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1997], 389) insists on this negative evaluation of the *stoicheia* and their impact on a person's experience of life, community, religion, and so forth.

been made, namely earth, water, air, and fire.[11] These elements were often divinized either in themselves or in connection with a particular deity associated with each element.[12] The author of Wisdom of Solomon similarly wrote that Gentiles "were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works; but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world" (Wis 13:1-2). In this reading, slavery to the "elements" would communicate much what Paul and other Hellenistic Jews communicate elsewhere as they speak of Gentiles worshipping facets of the created order rather than the creator himself, and thus the idolatry that everywhere undergirds Gentile society, politics, morality, and culture.[13] Again, this is hardly something that would have originated in the creative, providential work of God.

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[11] Martyn (*Galatians*, 395) cites Philo, *Heres* 134; Wis 7:17; 19:18; 4 Macc 12:13; 2 Pet 3:10, 12.

[12] See Philo, *Vit. Cont.* 3; *Decal*. 53

[13] In the second century AD (e.g., in Justin Martyr, *Apol*. 2.5.2; *Dial*. 23.3), the term would be applied to the heavenly bodies – the sun, moon, other stars and planets – that exercised influence over people, whether as indicated by Jews' interest in watching them to discover the times for particular observances in a religious calendar, or by Gentiles' obsession with horoscopes, astrology, and divination through reading the stars' and planets' movement. This ultimately also links them with idolatrous worship, however, since in the mind of the ancients, these heavenly bodies were connected with spiritual beings or powers, often hostile toward humans and, thus, needing to be heeded and observed. See Hans D Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 205; Bruce, *Galatians*, 204; Martyn, *Galatians*, 395. *Stoicheia* will come to be used to speak of actual gods, daemons, and other spirit beings in the third or fourth century CE (as in Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Alexander Romance* 1.1).

My second reservation concerns Paul's use of an argument from analogy in 3:23-4:7, the rhetorical purpose behind Paul's argument from analogy, and therefore the limits to which the analogy can be pushed or systematized. In 3:23-25, Paul is searching for something positive to say in answer to the question "Why then the Torah?" (3:19). The best he can do is to say that the Torah functioned analogously for the Jewish people as a pedagogue functions in the house of a Greek family. The pedagogue provides discipline for the minor child until he or she comes of age. So the Torah functioned imperfectly to keep the Jewish people in line until the coming of Christ – and it did, for the most part at least, keep the Jewish people mindful of the One God and out of the trap of idolatry and the worship of false gods, the trap in which all the Gentile nations found themselves.

As the argument progresses, however, the Torah is treated as essentially en par with the *stoicheia tou kosmou*, even as one of them. Here the rhetorical situation of Galatians impinges upon Paul's expressions: it is vital to him that his Gentile Galatian converts regard adopting the Torah (e.g. through accepting circumcision and, perhaps, Sabbath observance and other Jewish calendrical observances) as en par with reverting to their own pre-Christian Gentile life, a life of alienation from the only true God, a life of worshiping and serving non-gods. The beneficial role of the Torah (as pedagogue) does not bleed over into the role of the *stoicheia*; rather, the absolutely negative character of life under the *stoicheia* bleeds over onto the Torah and any role it might now have in the life of the Christian disciple or community.

This is where my point about observing a clear distinction between Galatians and Romans comes in. In Romans, the dynamics of the rhetorical situation are quite different – even inverse. Gentile Christians in Rome have to be shown that the

Torah is good and that those who received it do have advantages over them, so that those Gentile Christians should now show greater respect for Jewish Christians in Rome than they had been showing. However, none of the positive values of the Torah in Romans, and not even the slight positive value of the Torah in Galatians, elevates the *stoicheia tou kosmou* of which Paul speaks.

Mihindukulasuriya raises an important point in this regard when he suggests that "Paul would have given the Buddha's system a more favourable assessment than the kind of *stoicheia* he saw in the Greco-Roman world." But then this is precisely the point: When Paul speaks of the *stoicheia tou kosmou*, he is speaking of what he knows, the Greco-Roman systems of ideological and actual domination that constrain the lives of their subjects. The teachings of the Buddha would simply not fit in among Paul's stoicheia. Had Paul been confronted with them, he would no doubt have had to find a different way of speaking about them (perhaps along the lines of how Paul treats Greco-Roman philosophical teachings in Acts 17), though he probably would have looked upon Hinduism as simply an Eastern version of the *stoicheia tou kosmou* with which he was familiar.

I remain attracted to the notion of the Buddha, or more precisely the tradition of the Buddha's teachings, as the "pedagogue" that provided positive, formative discipline for those who convert from Buddhism to Christianity. That is to say, the Buddha's teachings far more closely resemble the Torah than they do the idol-ridden systems of power and domination to which Paul's Gentile converts to Christianity had been subjected prior to their conversion and liberation from the same. I personally have derived great benefit from reading and meditating on the *Dhammapada*. Indeed, I would have to admit from my own experience that the God of Jesus

Christ used many of the Buddha's sayings as an outrigger to my Christian canoe, steadying me when I found myself in some particularly rough waters.

Mihindukulasuriya is admirably committed both to grounding the "theological idea" that serves a "homiletical purpose" in a "plausible exegetical foundation" and to searching the Scriptures from inside his particular culture. I might suggest that he needs to do more than find Paul speaking about his ancestors in a passage like Gal 4:1-11, for Paul had nothing good to say about the *stoicheia tou kosmou* (and, in Galatians, really has nothing good to say even about the Torah itself). I might encourage him to speak afresh as Paul had spoken, and to determine, in the Spirit and fully informed by Paul's own analysis of Paul's converts' experience, what Sri Lankan Christians have experienced as "pedagogue" (sometimes harsh, but ultimately helpful vehicles of *preparatio*) and as *stoicheia* (ideas, practices, worldviews, values that enslave the individual to a system of domination, often making him or her a willing servant).[14]

CONCLUSION

The authors reach substantial agreement, on a theological and pastoral level, that Buddhist-background believers will do well to look back with gratitude to God for the positive aspects of their formative ethical and cultural heritage. They disagree on the exegetical validity of invoking the Pauline *stoicheia* in this case. Based on the assumption that the *stoicheia* are "human traditions" constituting one manifestation of what Paul generally calls the 'powers', Mihindukulasuriya maintains that

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[14] For some initial suggestions in regard to the latter based on conversations with several Sri Lankan Christians, see deSilva, *Global Readings*, 228-233.

Paul's description of the *stoicheia* as "guardians and managers" in the pre-conversion life of the Galatians presents a helpful analogy for understanding the role of Buddhism in Sri Lankan society until the proclamation of the Gospel. DeSilva finds no demonstrable exegetical basis for bestowing any positive or providential role to the *stoicheia*. Rather, he recommends this dynamic be best understood as an expression of prevenient grace and *preparatio evangelica*.

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL WARFARE
IN THE THERAVADA BUDDHIST ENVIRONMENT
OF SRI LANKA[1]

G P V SOMARATNA

The standard opinion among experts is that Buddhism is a religion and a philosophy without reference to the living reality of a personal spiritual being.[2] Buddhism goes beyond the concept of religion and is more of a philosophy or "way of life". It helps an individual lead a moral life, be mindful and aware of their thoughts and actions, and to develop wisdom and understanding.[3] The branch of Buddhism that is officially accepted in Sri Lanka is that of Theravada which is also called the "School of the Elders". This is the conservative branch of Buddhism. It uses the scripture written in the Pali language, which most Buddhists believe to be the language used by the Buddha himself for his discourses. Buddhism has had an unbroken history in the Island for over two millennia; therefore, it is deeply rooted in the culture of the Sinhalese.[4]

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[1] The Author wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Mr. Red Rubesh for the categorization of the popular Buddhist pantheon presented in this paper.

[2] Gunapala Dharmasiri, A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God: A Critique of the Concept of God in Contemporary Christian Theology and Philosophy of Religion from the Point of View of Early Buddhism, Colombo, 1974.

[3] Mark Siderits, Buddhism As Philosophy: An Introduction, 2007, pp. 1-17.

[4] Robin A E Coningham, "Monks, caves and kings: a reassessment

However, Buddhism, as practised in Sri Lanka, has two clearly demarcated areas with regard to its practices. These are called the Greater Tradition and the Lesser Tradition by sociologists. The seventeenth century British prisoner, Robert Knox (1641-1720), who left a record of his eighteen-year captivity (1661-1679) in the Kandyan kingdom clearly noted this difference.[5]

The Greater Tradition is the canonical Buddhism for merit-making for receiving benefits of better *samsara* and ultimately nirvana.[6] The Lesser Tradition is the practical and popular form of Buddhism. It is for worldly benefit.[7] Therefore, the devotee does not make merit from this Buddhist religious practices and observances. The Buddhist devotee, on the other hand, transfers merit to other forms of spiritual beings in the Lesser Tradition for the favours they are able to receive from them. Deity worship and demon propitiation have been prominent dimensions of the religious systems of Sri Lanka. The Theravada Buddhism is practically fused with popular local animistic devotionalism to form a single fully-integrated religio-cultural system.

The Triple Gem

The foundation of Buddhist religious practice is the Three Gems: the Buddha, the Dharma (the teachings), and the Sangha (the community). The Buddha is the most important

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of the nature of early Buddhism in Sri Lanka," in World Archaeology, Vol. 27, No. 2 Buddhist Archaeology (Oct 1995), pp. 222-242.

[5] Robert Knox, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, Dehiwela, 1981, p. 212.

[6] C F Keyes, Merit-Transference in the Karmic Theory of Popular Theravada Buddhism, University of California Press, 1983. p. 187.

[7] Richard Gombrich, Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka,* Pinceton University Press, 1987, p. 139.

element of the three. The Buddha is regarded as a contemplative world-negating being. He taught the way to redemption which he named 'Nirvana'. He does not redeem devotees as Christ does in Christianity. Buddha's way is worldly renunciation. Buddha's own renunciation and eventual attainment of enlightenment are presented as the nuclear teaching of Buddhism. The worldly renunciation of the Buddha accentuates most Buddhist festivals in a symbolic way. Buddha cannot save anyone. Each person must save himself through his own effort. Theoretically, Buddhism is a religion of renunciation to achieve nirvana.

Taking "refuge in the Triple Gem" has traditionally been a declaration and commitment to follow the Buddhist path. These practices may include following Buddhist ethical precepts, devotional practices and ceremonies traditionally taught by the Buddhist establishment in Sri Lanka. The Buddhists believe that the *dharma* is infallible.

The Buddhist monk is a renouncer of worldly affairs, and therefore does not have an official role similar to that of a parish priest.[8] As such, the role of the monk is an example of the this-worldly renunciatory orientation of Buddhism. The worldly renunciation, and the adoption of a life of other worldly asceticism, is advocated by Buddhism as the means par excellence for obtaining both temporary relief from the suffering of one's present existence and ultimate release in nirvana. Monks not only strive to save themselves but also teach others the path to salvation. The quest for salvation in Buddhism is a personal matter.

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[8] Gombrich, *The World of Buddhism*, London, p. 5.

However, the monks preach the dharma to the laity, who in turn reciprocate the favour by looking after the mundane needs of the monks.

> Oh Monks! Brahmans and householders give you clothing, alms, seats, couches and medicines. You also pay them great service when you teach them the Good Doctrine and pure life.[9]

Of the Three Gems, the only living reality is the *Sangha*. The sangha is respected because they are the repositories of the dharma. Due to the temptations and vicissitudes of life in the world, monastic life is considered to provide the safest and most suitable environment for advancing toward enlightenment and liberation. The sangha also fulfils the function of preserving the Buddha's teachings and of providing spiritual support for the Buddhist lay-community. The distinction between the sangha and lay persons has always been important. The sangha teach and counsel the laity at request while the laity offers donations for their daily support. This inter-connectedness serves as cooperation and has sustained Buddhism to this day.[10]

Salvation

The Buddha emphasized ethics and correct understanding of the dharma as the path leading to salvation.[11] He rejected notions of divinity and salvation of the soul. He stated that

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[9] Ibid, p. 53; *Itivuttaka*, ed E Windisch, Pali Text Society, 1889, p. 111.

[10] Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich, *The World of Buddhism,* London, 1984, p. 56.

[11] This is the Sanskrit word. The Pali word is *dhamma*. 'Dharma' in Hinduism is the eternal law of the cosmos, inherent in the very nature of things. In Buddhism it is used with regard to the teachings of the Buddha as recorded in the *Tripitaka*.

there is no intermediary between mankind and the divine. His view was that all gods are subjected to *samsaric* principles such as karma and decay. The dharma of the Buddha is only a guide and teacher for beings who must move towards the path of nirvana which is the annihilation of *dukkha* in the *samsara*.[12] The prayers and rituals addressed to the Buddha are not propitiatory. Buddha has transcended his humanity. However, the scriptural position is quite clear that the Buddha has no longer any role to play as a personalized supernatural being in the life of the world. However, worship is offered to the Buddha and Buddha is held in the supreme position of the Buddhist pantheon in the Theravada Buddhism as practised in Sri Lanka.

Worldly Requirements

Theravada Buddhism is for matters relating to the dharma that teaches the path to annihilation of dukkha and ultimately the cycle of births and death in the samsara. Buddhism is an inclusivist religion. It can absorb other religious practices for its own benefit.

On the other hand, popular Buddhism satisfies people's devotional and emotional needs that are neglected by the dharma. Popular Buddhism is the religion of the masses, whereas canonical Theravada Buddhism is really the religion of the community of monks, intellectuals, and scholars. The doctrines of Buddhism, such as the Four Noble Truths, the Five Skandhas, and the Eightfold Path are beyond the comprehension of the ordinary masses. Even if they understand these philosophical teachings they do not give them any tangible release from their daily problems.

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[12] Samsara in Hinduism and Buddhism means the cycle of death and rebirth to which life in the material world is bound.

Therefore, "Great Tradition" which is canonical Buddhism, came to be complemented by the "Lesser Tradition" of popular Buddhism consisting of rituals and ceremonies. The latter caters to the day-today needs of the masses while holding on to their affiliation to the Buddhist religion.

The Temple

Canonical Buddhism is centred on the Buddhist temple. The custodians of this religion are known as the *Sangha*. 'Sangha' is the monastic community of ordained Buddhist monks or nuns. They provide the dharma to the laity. Therefore, the laity supports them. They teach the dharma preached by the Buddha. The most important fact is that monks are regarded as *pin-keta* (field of merit). The laity worships them not only because they are the depositories of the dharma but also because they provide the laity the facility to make merit for worldly and other worldly benefit.[13] Monks, being the agents of the Buddha in traditional Sinhalese society, are placed at the top of the social hierarchy. They remain seated even in the presence of kings. The king, on the other hand, is expected to worship them. Their ordination has been based on caste considerations, limiting the ordination to high castes. The monks, as representatives of the Buddha, are regarded as the custodians of Buddhism who deal with the merit-making aspect of Buddhism.

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[13] K Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750-1900*, p17; Thera Dharmasēna, *Jewels of the Doctrine: Stories of the Saddharma Ratnāvaliya*, New York, 1991, p240. "*Pin-keta* generally refers to the Buddha and the Sangha who are deemed worthy recipients of lay generosity (*dane*) and other meritorious acts. They are like a ready field prepared for the sowing of good deeds by lay people."

Respect

The Triple Gem of canonical Buddhism is highly respected. The highest honour is offered to the Buddha in its forms of worship. In fact, there is a special vocabulary associated with the Triple Gem which differs from that of common usage. Buddha is placed at the top of the Buddhist theistic hierarchy.[14] The deities and goblins have to seek permission (*varam*) from the Buddha to carry out spiritual action. Buddha is worshipped with the hands on the head or forehead and offered superior kinds of flowers, clean water, and vegetarian food.

Offering

The term *puja* (offering) is used to refer to any good karma-making activity undertaken as rituals. There are two kinds of offerings in Buddhism. Material or hospitality offerings (*amisa puja*) are offerings of food, drink, clothing, etc; homage through practice (*pratipatti puja*) refers to the acts of observing *sil* and chanting *pan sil* (the five precepts). They are not for seeking help but to gain merit. The benefits are not for the Buddha but for the devotee. The merit gained by such acts is for benefits in this world as well as in the other world.

Monks may offer some material benefit through the chanting of *pirit* and the practice of meditation. Monks also use *pirit* to defeat demons. According to the *Sasanavamsa*, the first Buddhist missionaries who went to Myanmar vanquished demons by the means of *pirit*. [15] In Sri Lanka, also, *pirit* is used to ward off evil powers in households.

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[14] Gombrich and Obeyesekere, op. cit. pp. 237-240.
[15] B. C. Law, History of the Buddha's Religion, 1952, p. 43.

However, the monks may not find any difficulty in practicing other activities which fall within the orbit of popular Buddhism, such as casting horoscopes or chanting spells to cause good (*seth*) or harm (*vas*) to people. Nevertheless, the shamanistic aspect of popular Buddhism does not fall within the orbit of Theravada Buddhism, although most animistic practices are tolerated.

Buddhist Spiritual Hierarchy

From the Buddhist perspective, spiritual warfare as practiced by Christians falls into the category of the Lesser Tradition. It is second-class Buddhism, where animistic practices are observed. The Buddha taught that speculation about spiritual beings hinders one from achieving spiritual enlightenment. However, many Buddhist groups are very concerned with appeasing evil spirits and are very much enslaved by spiritual bondage. Though the different sects within canonical Buddhism may differ in beliefs, none of them have a hostile attitude to shamanistic practices of popular Buddhism.

The order of Buddhist spiritual hierarchy is a replica of social hierarchy. The Buddha is at the top; therefore the leadership of the Order is in the hands of the Sangha. Other beings have to get *varam* or "permission" from the Buddha to accept sacrifices from humans and bring relief to their woes. In fact, all Buddhist gods are aspirants to Buddhahood.[16] The Buddha is given a presidential status in the Buddhist pantheon. The positions of all other supernatural beings derive, directly or indirectly from, or are measured against, the initial presidential status of the Buddha. Buddha is a super deity, the head of a supernatural hierarchy.

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[16] James A Beckford, New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change, 1987, p. 205.

The Lesser Tradition

The Buddhists of Sri Lanka believe in supernatural beings and the healing power of magical rites. We can identify three main branches of popular Buddhism; all of which cooperate with each other and with canonical Buddhism. The Buddhists solicit help from these three groups for personal benefit. They go to them for help, such as healing from sickness, casting out of demons, to avert misfortunes, and to ask help to gain prosperity. The three groups in order of their hierarchical positions are: *devas*, planetary deities, and demons.

This second form of Buddhism does not help the devotees to obtain merit unlike worship of the Buddha. In all its branches, it attends to the daily mundane needs of the Buddhist: mostly in terms of prosperity, security and healing. The lay Buddhists are rarely concerned about the nirvanic aspect of Buddhism. It is a distant achievement for the ordinary man. Anyone who seeks to go the entire way to attain nirvana would renounce lay life and enter a monastery to meditate and gain as much merit as possible. Thus, canonical Buddhism has been supplemented by popular elements. Popular Buddhism caters for the daily needs of the devotee. The Lesser Tradition has made provision for the popular demands related to the day-to-day life of the common populace. This is not incompatible with philosophical merit-making Buddhism. In fact the Buddha sanctioned such activities as would help the devotee in their daily problems. Jataka stories and some canonical texts include such stories.

Status

On the popular level, the belief in *preta* spirits permeates almost every aspect of daily life. Action, therefore, is taken to placate spiritual forces. In this cosmology, gods are thought to dwell in the upper world, demons in the underworld, and

human beings in the middle realm between the two. Much of human effort is directed towards maintaining the proper balance between these worlds, and between the forces of growth and decay in order to exploit beneficiary forces and appease evil powers.

Gods

The gods are beings who enjoy their present status owing to their good karma (*kusal*) in past births, whereas the demons and meaner spirits reap the consequences of bad karma (*akusal*). The gods enjoy sensual pleasure, spiritual pleasure, or tranquility, depending upon the level within the realm of the gods in which they are born. Nonetheless, the realm of the gods is not the ultimate goal of Buddhists because the happiness of the gods is impermanent. No matter how much they may enjoy their existence as a god, when the force of their karma is exhausted, when the merits of their good conduct and the power of their experience in meditation are exhausted, the gods fall from heaven and are reborn in another realm.

Gods, planetary deities, and demons are believed to be below the Buddha in the hierarchy of spiritual powers. The various deities of Sri Lanka who are below him are gods that grant favours, mediate on behalf of humans, help them in worldly affairs, and cause good and ill in the human world.

The first among them are the four guardian deities: Drutarastra, Viruda, Virupaksa and Vaistravana. They have been granted the guardianship of the Island by the Buddha.[17] In addition to them there are four gods who received *varam*

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[17] *Visuddhimagga*, vol. 2, ed. Dharmaratna, 1888, p. 741; *Mahavamsa.*, Tr. W Geiger, Colombo, 1950, Chapter 5:5, p. 55.

(permission) to be the chief gods of Sri Lanka. They are Kihirali Upulvan, Saman Boksal, Vibhishana, and Skandhakumara.[18] Other prominent gods include Dadimunda, Devol, Vahal, Suniyam, Pulleyar, Aiyanayaka and several others. At the bottom of the hierarchy of deities there are *gam-bara* (gods in charge of particular areas) deities. Dadimunda is a god at Aluthnuwara. Many of these gods have names ending in 'bandara'. All these gods are regarded as guardians of particular areas. In case other gods wish to come to their areas they require varam from the hierarchy. In addition, there are dead heroes who have achieved divine status (*sammuti deva*): such as, Taniyavalla of Madampe, Rajasingha of Sitawaka, Mahasen of Minneriya, and Galebandara of Aluthnuwara. They also offer favours to people.

Help

The temples where the Buddhist gods reside are known as *devala*. In devala-worship, the devotees make offerings to these deities and solicit their help in their day-to-day problems. The priest, known as *kapurala*, serves as a mediator (Hindu, *pusari*). Although at times devotees appeal directly to these higher powers without the help of such an intermediary, the usual practice is to seek their help.

The *puja* in the devala are offerings of food and drink as well as gifts of cloth, coins, gold, and silver often accompanied by eulogies addressed to the resident deity and recited by the *kapurala*. Buddhist temples usually have devalas dedicated to various deities. They make vows if there is a problem at hand, such as illness, enemies, etc., for this practice is also a ritual of propitiation through the *kapurala*s.

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[18] *Niakaya-Sangrahaya* ed. Wickremasinghe, 1890, p. 26.

The gods are worshipped with the hands below the heart of the devotee or with the fists clenched and placed against the chest. They too are offered vegetables, good flowers, and incense. They, however, receive veneration as some of them (like Natha, and Vishnu of the Buddhist pantheon) are potential Buddhas. There are groups of musicians, actors, or dancers who perform together to offer elaborately constructed offerings of food and flowers. All of them represent attempts to please the gods and placate demons.

The Kapurala

Buddhists have a large number of gods and they all help the devotees in different ways. The main duties of the *kapurala*s are to look after the devala in their charge, to perform the prescribed rituals, and to offer the offerings brought by devotees in the inner shrine. The *kapurala* is given a fee for his services. Once the ritual is over, a part of the offering is given back to the devotee for him to take home and partake of it as having a sacramental value. Gods are in a higher life form. Their priests, therefore, are selected from the upper echelons of the caste system.

The *kapurala* possesses resources of prayers, mantras, hymns, vandanas, bhajans and meditations in order to seek assistance from Hindu gods and goddesses. The *kapurala*'s role may involve mediumistic possession. The *kapurala*s of the Vedda community are regarded as mediums by some sociologists. Possession, trance, and mediumship are desirable and viewed as essential for the *kapurala* role. The *kapurala* of the Pattini cult is famous for possession and trances. In *gamamduwa* ceremonies, trancelike experience is practised.[19]

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[19] Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*, Delhi,

Offerings

Unlike in the case of the Buddha, gods are not contacted as a daily routine. Offerings are made to them when the devotees are in need of some material gain. The offerings normally consist of milk-rice, coconuts, betel, fruits, camphor, joss-sticks, along with flowers, garlands, flags. The flowers offered are of good quality – such as lotus, lilies, etc. The gods are addressed respectfully depending on their position in the pantheon. Those gods who are considered as Bodhisattva (i.e. aspirants to Buddhahood) are highly respected. The other gods receive honour out of fear rather than reverence.

Offerings which are arranged in an orderly manner in a basket or tray would be handed over respectfully to the *kapurala*, who takes it inside and offers it at the statue of the main deity which is inside the inner room. The devotees wait outside with clasped hands while the *kapurala* makes his pleadings on their behalf. The *kapurala* emerges from the inner shrine room to bless the devotees by using his thumb to place a mark on their forehead. This mark is made from a paste of saffron, sandalwood, and other ingredients.

Types of Favours

Usually offerings would also be made by individuals for specific purposes. If sacrifices and worship given by people to the gods were adequate, the gods in turn would give them prosperity and divine favour, a good harvest or freedom from sickness, etc. Gifts to the gods could range from animal sacrifices[20] to offerings of wealth and treasures for the gods' temples and festivals. In order for one to be successful and

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1987, p. 52.

[20] The Courts of Sri Lanka suspended the sacrifice of animals at Munneswaram Kovil on 13-09-2011.

prosperous, the gods had to be pleased. Sacrifices and worship pleased the gods, and they would respond by blessing their worshippers. Apart from the positive kinds of requests there are negative ones as well. These are rituals known as *pilli paneema* and *naga pilli* (where a cobra is sent to bite an enemy). The god of Seenigama Devalaya is Devol Deviyo. He is famous for helping devotees exact revenge from their enemies. There are other gods who perform black magic to harm people by causing them mental and physical disabilities. *Huniyam* is done to seek help from a god to win over people. This is often used to win over a female love interest. Hair which has been shed from the intended victim can be used for this purpose. These rituals are done in secret. At the same time, other ceremonies, rituals and practices are engaged in to prevent such attacks.

People transfer good karma to gods in return for the help they received. This is especially beneficial to a bodhisattva (i.e. aspirants to Buddhahood) as the transfer of merit would expedite his quest for Buddhahood. Similarly, other gods who grant favours to people are able to increase their merit quotas, thus enhancing their quest for longevity as celestial beings.

Buddhists do not regard any of these gods as superior or even remotely equal to the Buddha. To them, all gods are followers of the Buddha, who has transcended the cycle of rebirth, while the gods are still within *samsara*, hoping to achieve release from it by following the Buddha's teaching.

Worship of Planetary Deities

Graha (planetary) deities are next in order of importance in the Theravada Buddhist pantheon of Sri Lanka. Astrologers are in charge of making obeisance to these deities. Astrologers

study the movements and relative positions of celestial bodies and interpret them as having an influence on human affairs and the natural world. They observe the planetary positions of individuals, villages, and the nation and instruct people what to do to placate these deities. The astrologer would recommend certain actions that should be undertaken if there is any *graha apala* (bad effects caused by planetary positions). The astrologer offers these services for a payment. He would instruct the clients to take remedial action in case he sees any harm to the parties concerned. In the case of individuals, he usually instructs them to observe the auspicious times. He also asks them to perform a *bodhi puja* or *shanti karma* or to make some kind of peace-offering to deities.

The planetary deities are referred to as the *Navagraha* (the 'Nine Planets') and are supposed to have a significant impact on the lives of individuals and therefore Buddhists adore these planets as deities, so that they may bring peace and harmony in their life and help avert any mishap. Each of the planets is supposed to bestow a particular benefit or calamity to humans.

There are nine planets in astrological charts: Sun (Surya), Moon (Sandu), Mars (Angaharu), Jupiter (Guru), Venus (Sikuru), Mercury (Buda), Saturn (Senasuru), Rahu (Demon`s head), Ketu (Cauda Draconis). There are also twelve planetary positions: Aries (Mesha), Taurus (Vrusabha), Gemini (Mithuna), Cancer (kataka), Leo (Sinha), Virgo (kanya), Libra (Tula), Scorpio (Vrucchika), Sagittarius (Dhanu), Capricorn (Makara) Pisces (Kumba) and Aquarius (Mina).

The belief in the good and evil influence of the planets according to the time and place of one's birth is quite widespread in Sri Lanka. Graha (planetary) deities are offered

bali to avert dangers coming from them. The term *bali*[21] signifies both the ritual in general and also the clay representations of the planetary deities which are made in relief on frameworks of bamboo and painted in appropriate colours. The ceremony wherein the presiding deities of the planets are invoked and placated in order to ward off their evil influences is also called *bali*.

The first thing normally done at the birth of a child is to cast the horoscope, which has to be consulted subsequently at all the important events of his or her life. The names of those planetary positions are marked in these astrological charts. When a calamity like a serious illness comes upon a person, the horoscope is inevitably consulted, and if the person is under a bad planetary influence, the astrologer would recommend some kind of propitiatory and appeasing ritual.

This could be a minor one like the lime-cutting ritual (*dehi-kepima*) or a major one like a *bali* ceremony, depending on the seriousness of the case. If it is a *bali* ceremony, he might also recommend the specific kind of *bali* suitable for the occasion. The ritual consists of dancing and drumming in front of the *bali* figures by the exorcist (*bali-adura*), who continuously recites propitiatory stanzas calling for protection and redress. The patient (*aturaya*) sits by the side of the *bali* figures. The exorcist is helped by a number of assistants working under him. The knowledge and art of the *bali*-performing ritual are handed down in traditional shamanistic families.

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[21] The word *bali* is used to refer to offerings to planetary deities and other spiritual forces of the lower strata in the Buddhist pantheon. B. Gunasekakara, *Glossary of native and Foreign Words,* Colombo, 1893, p. 21.

The Astrologer

Events or human fortune, for example, are explained as being influenced by the action of the nine planets. It is a highly deterministic theory of causality because the constellation of planetary forces under which one is born determines one's life course. The horoscopes which are cast at birth are anxiously read during crises faced by the individual, so that good fortune or bad can be interpreted as a product of malevolent or beneficent planetary influences. Though one's whole life course is chartered in this manner by planetary movements, the good or bad fortunes predicted do not relate to specific or concrete acts of fortune, but only state that such-and-such a period is bad or good for the individual.

For instance, a person's horoscope may indicate that during a certain period, he would be under the malevolent influence of the planet Saturn, but no specific incident that may befall him can be predicted. Anything can happen to him during this period of bad luck. The seriousness of his bad fortune depends on the seriousness of the planetary situation. If during this period some specific misfortune does in fact happen to him, it is usually retrospectively related to the astrological prediction after the event has taken place.

These Popular Buddhist practices are sought by the elite as well. The Sri Lankan Parliament usually commences sessions in accordance with the times prescribed by astrologers. Most national events are arranged with the advice of the astrologer in mind.

Demons

The devils of the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon also have a role to play in the daily life of the Buddhists. There are many devils and demons. They are usually treated as malevolent

supernatural beings. Rebirth in these unfortunate realms is the result of bad karma. This group includes the three realms that are considered relatively miserable. They are sometimes called the realms of woe. They are: 1) the realm of animals, 2) the realm of hungry ghosts, and 3) the realm of hell beings.

Identifying demons is not very easy since there is very little difference between gods and demons in Popular Sinhalese Buddhism. For example, the deity known as Suniyam is worshipped as a god and appeased as a demon.[22] Similarly, the popular god Skanda is an *asura* in the seventeenth century documents. He has now reached the bodhisattva stage because of his good deeds and is therefore regarded as a *sura*.[23] In addition to demons, there are *pretha* (departed spirits) and *kumbanda* (monsters).

Human sacrifices were made at Bahirawakanda in the Kandyan period to propitiate the demon known as Bahirawa. Mahasona is a demon who terrorises people by using a black dog as his vehicle. When its influence is felt, people see the apparition of a black dog and faint; some have the hand print on the body where the apparition struck.

Respectful obeisance is not given to the demons at all. They are never worshipped. They are offered neither auspicious flowers nor good incense, but are typically invoked with certain low kinds of flowers which have no fragrance, and inferior incense. The food given to them typically is *pulutu* (burnt meat), fish, or egg. Often some blood from a chicken is offered to them also. Sometimes they are given marijuana and sometimes faecal matter. Hence, the kind of offering

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[22] H Parker, *Ancient Ceylon*, re-print, New Delhi, 1992, p. 195.

[23] J A Beckford, New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change, 1987, p. 206.

symbolizes status in the pantheon. The realm of the *preta* suffer chiefly from hunger and thirst, and from heat and cold. They are completely bereft of the objects of their desire.

'Pretha' means departed ones who have become hungry ghosts. They need merit. They harass the living to get merit. They have to be given food. These departed spirits are also brought under the exorcist's power through the ceremony known as *tovil*. The invisible evil spirits of the same kind are known as *bhutha*.

The Kattadiya

The priests who deal with devils are given a lower status in the social order. They are from lower castes. They do not command respect in the traditional society. Dancing, drumming, and *bali* making are done by those in the lower ranks of the caste hierarchy. Still they are agents of miracles and healing in Popular Buddhism. Buddhists, therefore, have a low opinion of miracles although they seek benefits from them.

Placatory

The Kattadiya plays an important role in healing rituals associated with these demonic forces. As demons are at the bottom of the spiritual hierarchy, the kattadiya may act as a medium or a person who chants spells. Masks used in these devil dances are carefully crafted with a history reaching far back into Sri Lanka's pre-Buddhist past.

In devil dancing rituals, the kattadiya repeats protective spells to keep away evil spirits. The ritual known as *daha ata sanniya* is a dance ritual held to exorcise 18 types of diseases from the human body. *Kohomba Kankariya* is a ritual performed to

ensure freedom from diseases, invoke blessings and prosperous life for the people. *Walli yak mangallaya* is directed at the *Gara Yakka* who has an evil eye. All he wants is to eat. He is said to have the capacity to eat more than any other devil in the nether world.

Prognostications made known by *anjanam eliya* (the Anjanam deity's light) is the work of a person supposed to be able to see actions from the past. A person who is supposed to be able to foresee the future through soothsaying is said to do so as a result of being possessed (*arudha*) by a deity or a demon.

A widely held in Sri Lanka was that it was necessary to sacrifice a living being before the erection of buildings, bridges, wells, etc. The human sacrifice was offered to the demons believed to be resident in the area.

Omens

An omen is regarded as a warning of good or evil. In Popular Buddhism, there is belief in signs which are thought to show if good luck or bad luck is headed one's way. For e.g. if a crow flies through a house, it is a sign that an inmate of the house will have to leave it soon. The cawing of a crow from the house-top is the harbinger of good news; the arrival of visitors is portended by the cawing of a crow in the front of the house, or by a cat washing itself on the doorstep. There are innumerable omens known among Sinhala Buddhists. They are often observed by all classes of people.

The almanac known as *litha* has a description of omens which are connected to household geckos. For instance, when a gecko falls on any part of a person's body it was regarded as some kind of a sign. If a gecko drops from the top of the doorframe onto one's head – disaster may be the omen. Some

never walk under ladders. One may get agitated when a black cat crosses one's path. When they hear an owl hoot at night, they wonder who is ill and who's going to die and it may affect their mind.

The behaviour of animals like the cock, woodpecker, owl, cat, dog, snakes are interpreted as omens associated with good or bad results. Similarly Buddhist monks, barren women and widows are regarded as inauspicious. They daily check the times of evil power known as *Rahu kalaya*. It is an unlucky time period every day which should be avoided for any important work. There are also days that are regarded as inauspicious such as Tuesday and Friday. Even a funeral is not conducted on those two days of the week.

Negatives

Since there is no emphasis on the ethical aspect in Popular Buddhism, hateful activities are also encouraged. There is cursing – to bring disaster to the opponent. There is unethical greed – they seek women or men to marry without the consent of the person or use black magic to win them.

The salvation aspect is also lacking in this Popular Buddhist activities. There is no ethical requirement attached to it. Often there is a requirement of refraining from certain food items. There is no connection between the idea of nirvana, healing and other practices of popular Buddhism. Contrasted with canonical Buddhism, sorcery, astrology, and so on are used only to explain factors pertaining to the mundane world.

Spiritual Warfare and Low-level Buddhism

A Sinhalese Buddhist almost never asks the Buddha for worldly rewards; this he asks only of the gods, planetary deities and

demons. He seeks the Buddhist monk, the representative of the great tradition, to receive spiritual solace. For practical material interests, he seeks the assistance of the specialists of the lower cults of astrology and demonology who have no power over salvation. The practitioners of all levels of popular Buddhism are paid for the services they render even though they fall within the religious purview.[24] The payments can be material things or transferring of one's merit to these beings. Transfer of merit often is done to gods although other beings are also offered on some occasions.[25]

The division of labour and the allocation of crucial religious roles are based on this fundamental differentiation of the two aspects of the Buddhist spiritual system. The Buddhist monk is assisting humans to achieve their other-worldly goals. On the other hand the priests of the lower cults act as intermediaries between men and supernatural beings presiding over the affairs of the gross-material world. Thus spiritual warfare which deals with material help to devotees falls within the area of lower Buddhism.

Future

Historical development of popular Buddhism indicates that some Buddhist practices have lost popularity. The performance of expensive *tovil* ceremonies have been reduced to the minimum. Some of these noisy ceremonies performed in village environment cannot be undertaken in the growing

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[24] Gombrich, Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed*, p. 395-6; Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, Baker Academic, 1997.

[25] Seth L. Fleisher, "Rethinking Historical Change in Sri Lankan Ritual: Deities, Demons, Sorcery, and the Ritualization of Resistance in the Sinhala Traditions of Suniyam," *Journal of Anthropological Research,* Vol. 52, No. 1 (Spring, 1996), pp. 29-59.

urban environment. Caste affiliation of those officiating in demon worship is also a hindrance to the people who try to get out of the curse of caste system. The researchers have indicated that the children of the kattadiyas and kapuwas are not interested following the footsteps of their parents. They prefer different employment according to their educational achievements.

Spiritual Warfare is at the lowest rung in the Buddhist spirituality and only offers temporary benefit. It is not salvific. Therefore, healing a person from demon possession is futile without a call for salvation. This is the background of the Buddhist who may come to a session of Christian Spiritual Warfare.

Christian Spiritual Warfare

Spiritual warfare is a range of activity practised by various Christian groups whereby satanic demons are battled, using a variety of methods depending on the group, but typically through prayer. It is stated that the Charismatic movement filled the "ecstasy deficit" in the post-modern church.[26] Spiritual warfare responds to the Christian concept that the devil and demons attempt to thwart God and the will of God, and are manifested in multiple ways. This includes demonic possession, demonic harassment, attacks on a person's thoughts, relationships, and life with God. Spiritual warfare is believed to be resisting, overcoming and defeating the enemy's lies in the form of deception, temptations and accusations that he sends man's way.

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[26] Harvey Cox, Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of the religion the 21st Century, Reading. MA: Addison Wesley, 1995, p. 86.

Spiritual warfare is dealing with three key things the enemy sends at believers: temptations, deception and accusations. The aim of spiritual warfare is deliverance which is the breaking up of demonic power, the tearing down of strongholds, and the casting out of demons.

Those involved in Spiritual warfare have historically been referred to as "exorcists". An example of spiritual warfare from the life of the disciples in the Book of Acts is found in Chapter 8 verse 7. It is reported that "... many who had unclean spirits, ... were coming out of them, shouting with a loud voice." Therefore spiritual warfare is as old as Christianity itself. However, the charismatic church in the modern era has taken up spiritual warfare in an unprecedented way to the extent of neglecting the ethical aspects of Christianity which is a hallmark of Christian living.

Charismatic Churches

The charismatic churches have become a growing Christian body in Sri Lanka since 1980s. The conversions have occurred from the whole spectrum of Sri Lankan society. New churches have emerged in almost every town in Sri Lanka. In fact the Buddhists who feared this development, have gone to the extent of demanding the prohibition of conversion from one religion to another mainly to combat the growth of charismatic Christianity.

Most of these conversions have taken place as a result of some tangible experience of Christian truth.[27] The new churches are full of people who have received answers to

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[27] David Scott, "Conversion and Demonism: Colonial Christian Discourse and Religion in Sri Lanka," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 34, no 2, April 1992, pp. 331-365.

prayers in various ways. Most significant among them were various healings, redemption from demon oppression, change of family life for better and so on. These new Christians come from non Christian backgrounds. Therefore, their knowledge of the basics of Christian living is far from adequate. This is applicable to their pastors as well since most of them are first generation Christians.

As noticed earlier charismatic Christianity is an answer to certain deficits in the traditional churches in Europe and America. The Christians who came to the charismatic movement in the West know the basics of Christianity. They wished to fill the deficit by insisting on the gifts of the spirit and spiritual warfare and other tangible forms of the Christian faith. However, many of the people who were attracted to the charismatic churches in Sri Lanka came from non Christian background. They do not know the basics of Christian faith, ethics, values and righteous behaviour.

These new Christians come with the Buddhist worldview to the new churches where the leaders themselves lack basic foundations of the Christian faith. In fact the absence of the use of traditional creeds, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments have created groups of Christians who seek miracles and prosperity without the cost of discipleship.

As we have pointed out in this article, Buddhists have a low opinion of the miraculous in their own religion. The miracle-working powers such as gods, planetary deities, demons and spirits are low in their pantheon. In fact they are paid for the miracles they perform and healings they bring. They are offered merit and their intermediaries such as *kapurala*, *jothishaya* and the kattadiya are paid for the job they do. The clients do not try to maintain a relationship with these powers because of the healing they brought. These spiritual powers

need merit either to get away from the spiritual status that they are in, or in the case of gods, to remain in that position. It is the Buddha that the Buddhist honour. Buddha is not offered merit rather one receives merit by worshiping him. Buddha does not perform miracles or engage in spiritual warfare. The Buddha, who does not perform miracles is honoured, while those spiritual powers who perform miracles are treated cheaply in the Buddhist worldview. If the charismatic churches failed to understand this phenomena in Popular Buddhism their new converts would treat Christianity in the same way that they treat their lower spiritual beings of the Popular Buddhism where there is no salvific value.

The people from traditional cultures where shamanism is frequently practised would be attracted to spiritual warfare practised by the charismatic churches and their leaders. New leaders of Charismatic Christian Churches, however, offered services at no cost. If there is any cost it would be their own travelling cost to get to these meetings. By contrast the popular Buddhist rituals need special items which are costly. Their performers charge a fee. Some rituals carry heavy stipulated payment. Many people become debtors or pauperised by seeking shamanistic healing rituals.

Both parties believe in the spirit world. Indeed one can find many functional parallels between Pentecostalism and Popular Buddhism. Therefore the Buddhist would not find any difficulty in accepting their services. In fact Buddhists would not have any hesitation in attending Christian worships services as they consider their participation of any religious activity irrespective of labels would reward them meritoriously. In both kinds of practice demons are cast out, people can be healed, and individuals who are spirit possessed restored to health.

The difference, however, is that there is no longer a need to appease a whole pantheon of spirits through the traditional magical ways. In fact, the major difference between spiritual warfare of the Charismatic Christians and the people of shamanistic Buddhist culture is that the Christians affirm that there is only one spirit, the Holy Spirit.[28]

To an uncritical observer the Pentecostal worldview may appear somewhat similar to that of the familiar Buddhist animistic belief. Yet the gap is vast. While the shamanistic healing rituals are conducted on a commercial scale, the Christian ritual has eternal ramifications. Christians believe that the healing miracles would only be the first step for knowing Christ and making a spiritual walk with him for the rest of their life.

CONCLUSION

The modern emphasis on Christian spiritual warfare is a new phenomenon. There is a danger in giving more prominence to the devil than to Christ in the spiritual warfare undertaken without due theological considerations. Spiritual warfare should not be an end in itself. Bus loads may come to attend performances involving healing and exorcism creating a populist environment. Christ in fact refused to perform miracles to gain popularity.

As we mentioned earlier, spiritual warfare of the Lesser Vehicle of Buddhism also lacks salvific purpose. It caters to this-worldly needs and often ends at that. The credit for its success is often taken by the shamanist or any other performer.[29] The whole operation is commercial venture

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[28] D Miller and T Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism,* 2007, p. 25.

[29] C Peter Wagner, Warfare Prayer: What the Bible Says about Spiritual Warfare, 2009, pp69-82.

without any attachment to the spiritual forces which are supposed to be at work.

On the other hand every such Christian miracle should lead to the path of salvation. The biblical teaching that a vacuum caused within a person from whom a demon is caste should be fill with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Christ warned that the failure to do that would result in the arrival of seven other spirits more wicked than itself.

Another grave danger is that the agent through whom God is acting would be lulled into a false sense of ownership because of the material benefit that he may receive from those he serves. Material benefits include financial benefits, popularity and fame.

To the Buddhist mind, miracles are not done by the Buddha who is at the top of the Spiritual hierarchy. The Buddhist gives the utmost respect to the Buddha. On the other hand, the performance of miracles, exorcism, healings etc. fall in the lower realm of Buddhist spirituality where the demons and the deities take a leading part. Both demons and deities are paid for their services through their mediator priests. This is because demons are perpetually hungry for food and the gods are merit-hungry!

The church has to be aware of this predicament of a growing Christianity in non Christian environments. Spiritual warfare brings about a sensation among believers, pastors and on-lookers. The leadership of the charismatic churches is an English-speaking, middleclass, Colombo educated elite. They lack knowledge of the deep basis of the Sinhala Buddhist culture. The charismatic worship is a replica of American styles of worship where there is a long period of singing and a long sermon. The absence of liturgy and the lack of teaching on

Christian living contextualised to the Sinhala Buddhist culture are almost nonexistent.

One has to remember that the acts of spiritual warfare are not newly introduced to Sri Lanka by the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. In fact the Roman Catholic priests from the sixteenth century utilized various kinds of spiritual warfare. However, they managed to control it without allowing it to cross the border into occultism and magic. In the eighteenth century, Joseph Vaz used spiritual warfare for purposes of evangelism and as a result there was a tremendous church growth in the Kingdom of Kandy.[30]

New believers, who have had some tangible experience as a result of Christian spiritual warfare, would come to worship Jesus and are very enthusiastic about Christianity. They have a joy which the traditional believers in the mainline churches lack. The Christian leadership should be able to utilize that enthusiasm to form a community of believers based on sound doctrine of the faith. Similarly, they have to be grounded on Christian ethical values. Spiritual warfare can be utilized for that end. The miracles are not useful in themselves. They are the first step to know Christ and the beginning of the Christian walk.

If the leadership is unable to realize this truth they will have large throngs of people coming to their churches mainly for healing and miracles and leave the same way they came without giving credit to Christ. Those who come to them would treat Christianity as a low form of religion which does not deserve continued allegiance.

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[30] V Perniola, The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Dutch Period, Vol. 1, p239.

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