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VAN HIEN HOANG

MISSION IN ASIA AS PROPHETIC DIALOGUE

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sob orientação de:

PROF. ARNOLD TAMSE MONERA

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ENDORSEMENT

I certify that this report is solely my work, and that it has never been previously submitted for any academic award.

Student: Van Hien Hoang

I, the supervisor, believe that this Dissertation is ready for assessment, and reaches the accepted standard for the Bachelor in Christian Studies

Supervisor: Prof. Arnold T. Monera

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ABBREVIATIONS

Deut	Deuteronomy
Exod	Exodus
Ezek	Ezekiel
Gen	Genesis
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lev	Leviticus
Mal	Malachi
Zech	Zechariah
1 Kgs	1 Kings
2 Kgs	2 Kings
1 Sam	1 Samuel
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
1 Thess	1 Thessalonians
1 Tim	1 Timothy
2 Cor	2 Corinthians
2 Tim	2 Timothy
Col	Colossians
Eph	Ephesians
Gal	Galatians
Matt	Matthew
Phil	Philippians
Rev	Revelation
Rom	Romans
art.	article
CA	California

esp.	especially
et al.	<i>et alii</i> , and others
etc.	<i>et cetera</i> , and other things
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	Georgia
ICS	Institute of Carmelite Studies
Idid.	<i>Ibidem</i> , in the same place
IL	Illinois
IVE	The Institute of the Incarnate Word
MA	Massachusetts
MI	Michigan
MN	Minnesota
n.y.	no year
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NJ	New Jersey
NY	New York
OR	Oregon
par.	paragraph
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SIGA	Salesian Institute of Graphic Arts
St.	Saint
SVD	<i>Societas Verbi Divini</i> , The Society of the Divine Word
TERI	The Energy and Resources Institute
Trans.	Translator; translated by
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN	United Nations
VA	Virginia
Vol.	Volume

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ABSTRACT

Mission is *missio Dei* and Christians are called to participate in God's mission. But how should Christian mission be done in Asia, a continent characterized by extreme poverty, cultural diversity, and religious pluralism? Based on the biblical foundation and the teachings of the Church on mission, the Asian bishops suggest a threefold dialogue with Asia's poor, its cultures, and its religions in order to deal with these Asian issues. This research paper aims to explore the significance and implications of "prophetic dialogue," which according to its authors Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, is the most relevant approach for Christian missions today, for the effectiveness and authenticity of practical theology, especially in Asia. Being such, the Church in Asia shall be the Church for and of Asians and Christian missions can be carried out in Asia in order that all people in Asia will live together in peace and harmony.

Key Words: prophetic dialogue, *missio Dei*, triple dialogue, Asia, evangelization, inculturation, poverty, *Ecclesia in Asia*, FABC, interreligious dialogue, missionaries.

INTRODUCTION

The world has changed and is still changing. People are moving from industrialization to post-industrialization, from modernization to post-modernization. There is so much progress in science, technology and communications that somehow keep drawing people from different parts of the world together resulting to a global village. In other words, it is easier for people today to have direct contacts with each other. Peoples, cultures, histories, and religions are no longer geographically restrained from one another. Christians also coexist with peoples of other religions as part of ordinary daily life.

Many Asian countries are engaged in the arduous process of nation-building, development, industrialization and modernization. With these came inevitably the wave of urbanization, domestic and trans-national migration, worker exploitation, family disintegration, environmental degradation, and host of other problems. Globalization has also caused negative impacts on the Asians, many of whom have given in to the seduction of materialism, consumerism, and have succumbed to individualism and secularism.¹ Vitor Westhelle states that “modernity has even multiplied [...] values and beliefs in the search for certainties, generating on the one hand fundamentalism and totalitarian beliefs and ideologies and, on the other hand, a radical relativism that easily slides into nihilism.”²

Fundamentally, mission must be rooted in the Bible. In the Old Testament, God himself was a missionary and the chosen people were his agents to fulfill his mission.

¹ Edgar Javier, *Dialogue: Our Mission Today* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2006), 3.

² Vitor Westhelle, “Multiculturalism, Postcolonialism, and the Apocalyptic,” in *Theology and the Religions: A Dialogue*, ed. Viggo Mortensen (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 4.

The history of Israel revealed the continuation of God’s involvement with the nations. It was God’s purpose to elect Israel for salvation of the whole world. Therefore, under God’s direction – the God who was active in past history will also be the God of the future – the chosen people were responsible to bring justice to the nations, to be covenant for the peoples, and to be the light to the Gentiles. In the New Testament, *missio Dei* (mission of God) is fundamental, especially through the words and deeds of Jesus and the help of the Holy Spirit, for all models of mission. After the Ascension of Jesus, his disciples continued his mission of love and service in the world under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Church, as participation in and continuity of God’s mission, is “missionary by [her] very nature.”³ In this modern time, the Church must be God’s missionary people, the Body of Christ in the world by sharing and continuing God’s healing, challenging, fulfilling, and redemptive work. In the various factors of mission today, Christians, who are participants of God’s mission, should “be faithful to the essential missionary identity of Christianity, creative in responding to changing contexts, and communal in engaging God’s Spirit in tradition, history, and human experience.”⁴

Historically, Christianity started in Asia as early as the beginning of the Church. “Jesus was born, lived, died and rose from the dead in the Holy Land, that small portion of Western Asia...”⁵ It is said that St. Thomas went to India and established Christian community there. In China, as the first known, Christian mission was discovered in

³ Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes* (1965), 2, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html (accessed on March 2, 2017). Hereafter AG.

⁴ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 1.

⁵ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* of the Holy Father John Paul II (November 06, 1999), 1, in Peter C. Phan (ed.), *The Asian Synod: Text and Commentaries* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 286.

1623, but in the seventh century, there were twenty-one Christian monks who did their mission in China as interpreters and advisors.⁶ The most impressive missionary in Asia could be St. Francis Xavier, who left Lisbon in 1541, and after passing by many places, reached Japan in 1549. Other important missionaries in Asia include Alessandro Valignano, Matteo Ricci, Robert de Nobili, Alexandre de Rhodes, etc.⁷ After more than five centuries of active mission, countless missionaries have worked for expanding Christians in numbers of the Church in Asia, but until now, Christianity is still a tiny minority (around 5.3 percent) of the total Asian population.⁸

Is it possible to repair the wrongs of mission as saving souls and expanding the Church? Should the Church need more relevant ways to do mission, especially in Asia in the twenty-first century? In dealing with the context of these questions, Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, who published two books *Constants in Context* and *Prophetic Dialogue*, “adapted and developed the idea of prophetic dialogue as an expression of a comprehensive theology of mission”⁹ and “practice of mission that attempts to take into account a changed context, while at the same time to maintain continuity with the past.”¹⁰

This research paper contains three chapters in which the writer aims to bring several ideas for doing mission in Asia. Chapter I, “Asia, The Context of Mission,” describes briefly the real situation of Asia with its people, socio-cultural background,

⁶ See Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 103-108.

⁷ See *Ibid.*, 184-191.

⁸ Peter C. Phan, “World Christianity and Christian Mission: Are They Compatible? Insights from the Asian Churches,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32/4 (October 2008): 193-200, esp. 197.

⁹ Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 2.

¹⁰ Kim Marie Lamberty, “Mission as Prophetic Dialogue: A Case Study from Colombia,” *Missiology: An International Review* 42/3 (July 1, 2014): 295-308, esp. 297.

key constants, as well as challenges and issues. Concise information but those who do mission in Asia must pay attention to them. Chapter II reflects generally on some sources of mission and mission theology in the context of Asia. The emphasis is the biblical foundation for mission. All members of the Church, as participants in God's mission, ought to continue to proclaim the good news, to bear witness, and to bring God's mercy to all nations, according to what circumstances demand. Chapter III aims to apply the idea of prophetic dialogue for promoting mission in Asia in the twenty-first century. Two elements of dialogue and prophecy are linked together in order to deal with the view of Asian bishops that mission in Asia can be carried out in a threefold dialogue: with Asian cultures, with other religions, and with the poor.

In the context of Asia, after colonial years, "new nations emerged on the stage of history and asserted their identity through their own religions and cultures."¹¹ Wars, ethnic and religious conflicts, natural disasters, and the increasing migration, the refugee crisis are happening in this world. Therefore, "dialogue has become a new catchword and people are attempting to move toward indigenizing, inculturation, greater respect for other religions, and attempts at a new interpretation of the christic fact."¹² However, it is necessary to "advance theological and missiological thinking on prophetic dialogue as the key to understanding mission theology and practice today,"¹³ especially in the complex realities of Asia.

¹¹ Stanley J. Samartha, "The Cross and the Rainbow," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, eds. John Hick and Paul Knitter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 79.

¹² Raimundo Panikkar, "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Movements of Christic Self-Consciousness," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, eds. John Hick and Paul Knitter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 95.

¹³ Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 5.

CHAPTER I

ASIA, THE CONTEXT OF MISSION

Introduction

Asia is home to some of the world's earliest civilizations. It is the largest and most populous continent on earth. It is likewise the cradle of the world's major religions. From our Christian perspective, it is birthplace of Jesus and the Christian Church. This chapter is a presentation of the people of Asia and their setting, their contemporary situation and the challenges they are facing ahead. It aims at situating the readers to the context of the study.

A. The People of Asia and their Setting

1. Geographical Setting

Asia is the world's largest continent. This vast area has both the highest and the lowest points on the surface of the earth. With the world's longest coastline and widest climatic extremes, this continent contains many forms of vegetation and animal life.

The name Asia has been variously explained. It is believed that the name may be derived from the Phoenician word *asu*, which means 'east,' and the Akkadian word *asu*, meaning 'to go out, to rise,' in reference to the sun, therefore Asia would mean 'the land of the sunrise.'¹⁴ Another possible explanation is that it was originally a local name given to the plains of Ephesus and then to the known world east of the

¹⁴ "Asia," *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/asia> (accessed on March 30, 2017).

Mediterranean Sea. When Western explorers reached South and East Asia in early modern times, they extended that label to the whole of the immense landmass.¹⁵

The total area of Asia amounts to some 44,614,000 square kilometers, roughly one-third of the land surface of the earth. The islands constitute 3,210,000 square kilometers, about 7 percent of the total.¹⁶ Asia makes up the eastern portion of the Eurasian supercontinent; Europe occupies the western portion. The border between the two continents is debated.¹⁷ However, most geographers define Asia's western border as an indirect line that follows the Ural Mountains, the Caucasus Mountains, and the Caspian and Black Seas. Asia is bordered by the Arctic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans.¹⁸

The farthest terminal points of the Asian mainland are Cape Chelyuskin in north-central Siberia to the north; the tip of the Malay Peninsula, Cape Piai, or Bulus to the south; Cape Baba in Turkey to the west; and Cape Dezhnev (Dezhnyov), or East Cape in northeastern Siberia, overlooking the Bering Strait, to the east.

As a vast continent of fifty countries, Asia can be divided into five geographic sub-regions: Eastern Asia (China, Hong Kong SAR,¹⁹ Macao SAR,²⁰ Taiwan, Mongolia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), Republic of Korea, and Japan), Central Asia (the Republics of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan,

¹⁵ This information of Asia's physical geography is retrieved from Chakravarthi V. Narasimhan and Yury Konstantinovich Yefremov, "Asia: Introduction," *Britannica Academic*, <http://ezproxy.usj.edu.mo:3043/levels/collegiate/article/Asia/110518;jsessionid=64C594343BFD753F3B213C66B6A4A28D> (accessed on January 5, 2017).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ In term of physical geography, Asia and Europe form one continent. But in reality, in term of human geography, they are treated as two different continents. Generally, for a simple way to research, Asia is divided into five sub-regions.

¹⁸ "Asia: Physical Geography," *National Geographic Society*, <http://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/asia/> (accessed on March 31, 2017).

¹⁹ On July 1, 1997, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the Public of China.

²⁰ On December 20, 1999, Macao became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the Public of China.

Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), Southern Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka), South-Eastern Asia (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, East Timor, Brunei), Western Asia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen).²¹



East Asia. With the exception of Mongolia, the other East Asian countries lie on peninsulas and islands. This region has many high mountains, such as the Himalaya and the Kunlun Shan. Between these two ranges lies the world’s highest plateau, the Plateau of Xizang. It has also various long rivers such as the Yellow and the Yangtze. Both are located in China. The Tibetan Plateau is considered the largest and highest

²¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, Volume II: Demographic Profiles* (New York: The United Nations, 2015), xiv, https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2015_Volume-II-Demographic-Profiles.pdf (accessed on February 25, 2017).

area on Earth, averaging more than 5,000 meters. This vast East Asia comprises diverse forms of climate and vegetation, from the subarctic forests of northern Mongolia to the tropical rain forests on China's southernmost tip. Monsoons bring rain to coastal areas each summer, but the moist winds rarely reach the region's deep interior. In this arid heartland lies the parched and windswept Gobi and Taklimakan deserts.²²

Central Asia. After independence from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), specifically in 1993, the term Central Asia has been officially recognized by the international community.²³ It is bounded by the Caspian Sea, Siberia, Mongolia, Tibet and the Hindu Kush. According to Rafael Kandiyotti, Central Asia is “an interior region surrounded by a huge land mass that covers a vast territory of steppes, deserts and mountains”²⁴ such as a large system of mountain ranges, namely Tian Shan (the Heavenly Mountain) with the highest peak in it, Jengish Chokusu (7,439 meters), the Kyzylkum Desert (298,000 square kilometers) and the Taklamakan Desert (337,000 square kilometers), and the Eurasian Steppe.

West Asia. It consists several seas, gulfs, and rivers such as the Mediterranean Sea, the Black and Caspian Seas, the Suez Canal and its Gulf.²⁵ The Dead Sea (about 430 meters below sea level), the saltiest lake in the world, is the lowest point on the Earth's land surface, while the Red Sea is shared by both the Western Middle East and

²² “East Asia,” *National Geographic Society Online*, 632, <http://www.canyonspringshighschool.org/ourpages/auto/2015/11/6/54748438/Geography%2026.pdf> (accessed on March 31, 2017).

²³ Paulo Duarte, “Central Asia: The Bends of History and Geography,” *JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations* 5/1 (May-October 2014): 48-62, esp. 54, <http://ezproxy.usj.edu.mo:2069/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=c9495561-5663-4280-a3a1-48a84936d3a0%40sessionmgr104&hid=119> (accessed April 1, 2017).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁵ West Asia shares the Mediterranean Sea with Africa and Europe and the Black and Caspian Seas with Eastern Europe. The famous Suez Canal and Gulf of Suez run between Egypt's African territory and its Sinai region bordering Israel in Asia, while the equally renowned Nile River flows from the Mediterranean Sea through Egypt and well into the African continent.

parts of Eastern Africa. The massive Tigris and Euphrates rivers which begin in the mountains of eastern Turkey, are flowing through Syria and Iraq out into the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf, along with the Gulfs of Arden and Oman, connect the central and southern regions of the Middle East to the Arabian Sea and ultimately the Indian Ocean.²⁶ The Rub'al Khali desert is the world's largest sand sea, across Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

South-East Asia. Generally, the region contains, as Avijit Gupta explains, “an assemblage of large river basins sloping south and east, a number of peninsulas and archipelagos, and seas that exist between islands and are connected by straits of various widths. It is an area that displays great physical variations.”²⁷ There are two different areas in Southeast Asia: mainland and island. Firstly, the mainland contains long rivers (e.g., Mekong River) that begin from outside such as China, India, lowland plains that are separated by forested hills and mountain ranges, and long coastlines. Secondly, Southeast Asia has many very large (e.g., Borneo, Sumatra, Java, Luzon) and small islands (Indonesia comprises 17,000 islands). In some areas, seas are rough as a cause of many hurricanes and typhoons. There are also many active volcanoes and earthquakes occurring in this region. Nearly almost all countries in this region are similar in climate, flora and fauna. Temperatures are generally warm, although it is cooler in highland areas. The entire region is affected by the monsoon winds that bring fairly predictable rainy seasons.²⁸

²⁶ “Middle East,” *World Atlas* (September 19, 2016), <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/me.htm> (accessed on April 2, 2017).

²⁷ Avijit Gupta, “Preface,” in *The Physical Geography of Southeast Asia*, ed. Avijit Gupta (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), vii.

²⁸ Barbara Watson Andaya, “Introduction to Southeast Asia: History, Geography, and Livelihood,” *Asia Society*, <http://asiasociety.org/education/introduction-southeast-asia> (accessed on April 2, 2017).

South Asia. The Himalayan Mountains dominate in the northern region of South Asia. Among of them, the Mount Everest (8,850 meters) is the tallest peak in the world. Another mountain range is the Hindu Kush as the world's second highest mountain range. There are three major rivers that cross South Asia and originate from the Himalayas. They are the Indus River (starting in Tibet and flows through the center of Pakistan), the Ganges River (flowing through northern India and creating a core region of the country), and the Brahmaputra River (running through Tibet and then entering India from the east). In the north of this region includes some of the highest elevations in the world, and also some the lowest elevations such as the Maldives in the south and some barely above sea level. When the monsoon arrives, there is heavy flooding. On the contrary, the Thar Desert in western India and parts of Pakistan that do not receive monsoon rain, is dry and hot.²⁹ In such condition, there are many different kinds of soil and the growing seasons. Therefore, South Asia has a tremendous diversity in plant and animal life.³⁰

Asia is the continent of extreme contrasts. It has both extremely large countries including China (9.6 million square kilometers), India (3.3 million square kilometers) and Kazakhstan (2.7 million square kilometers), and really small countries such as Maldives (300 square kilometers), Singapore (719 square kilometers), Bahrain (765 square kilometers), and Brunei (5,765 square kilometers). If Hong Kong and Macau are recognized as separate countries, then Macau (31.3 square kilometers) is the smallest country in Asia and Hong Kong (2,755 square kilometers) is the fourth-smallest. Asia has both the highest peak in the world and the lowest point on the Earth's land surface.

²⁹ Saylor Academy, "Chapter 9: South Asia," *World Regional Geography: People, Places and Globalization* (2012), https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_world-regional-geography-people-places-and-globalization/s12-south-asia.html (accessed on April 2, 2017).

³⁰ "South Asia: Geography," *Global Perspectives: A Remote Sensing and World Issues Site*, <http://www.cotf.edu/earthinfo/sasia/SAgeo.html> (accessed on April 2, 2017).

Climatically, the continent ranges through all extremes, from the torrid heat of the Arabian Desert to the arctic cold of Siberia and from the torrential rains of monsoons to the bone-dry aridity of the Tarim Basin.³¹ Some of the driest places on Earth are located in the desert climates of West Asia, the steppes of Central Asia, and parts of China and Mongolia. At the same time, the northeast Indian village of Mawsynram is the absolute wettest place on Earth, with an average of 11,872 millimeters of rainfall per year.

2. Demographic Information

Asia is not only the earth's largest continent, it is also "home to nearly two-thirds of the world population, with China and India accounting for almost half the total population of the globe."³² It is not an exaggeration to say that the total population of Asia is changing every second. The basis of information for this section is the *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision* of the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. According to this report, the population of Asia stands in 2015 at 4,393 billion, which is 63.4 per cent of the world's population. This figure shows that Asia is the most populous of the earth's continents.³³ The two most populous countries of the continent and also of the world are China with 1.376 billion

³¹ Peter C. Phan, "Introduction: Asian Christianity/Christianities," in *Christianities in Asia*, ed. Peter C. Phan (UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 2, <http://ezproxy.usj.edu.mo:2082/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzM0NjQwMV9fQU41?sid=ed95c65f-7c9f-4a45-a6f3-e54db92bb0a5@sessionmgr4007&vid=3&format=EB&rid=4> (accessed on March 29, 2017).

³² See the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women in the Consecrated Life and All the Lay Faithful on Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia: "...That They May Have Life, and Have It Abundantly" (John 10:10), in Peter C. Phan (ed.), *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 290.

³³ "Asia Population 2017," *World Population Review*, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/continents/asia-population/> (accesses on February 25, 2017).

people and India with 1.311 billion people. The estimated population for Asia by 2020 will be 4.498 billion.

Table 1: Population of Asia and the World in 2010, 2015, and 2020

		2010	2015	2020
Total Population (thousands)	World	6,929,725	7,349,472	7,758,157
	Asia	4,169,860	4,393,296	4,598,426
Population density (persons per square km)	World	53	56	60
	Asia	134	142	148
Life expectancy at birth (years)	World	68.8	70.5	71.7
	Asia	70.1	71.6	72.8
Total fertility (children per woman)	World	2.56	2.51	2.47
	Asia	2.29	2.20	2.15

This report also mentions some interesting figures in relation to life expectancy at birth. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations claimed that from 2010 to 2015, life expectancy of Asians stood at 59.9 years and is projected to rise to 60.7 years between 2015 and 2020. The same report also shows that the total

Population of Asia by sub-regions³⁴

<u>Sub-regions</u>	<u>Population</u>
Eastern Asia	1.612 billion
South-Eastern Asia	633.4 million
Southern Asia	1.822 billion
Central Asia	67.3 million
Western Asia	257 million

fertility rate (average number of children per woman) is going down from 2.2 in 2015 to 2.15 in 2020. As the report shows, Asia is the most densely populated continent, in which for every square kilometer of land, there is an average of 142 thousand people.

While in 1980, 42% of the continent's population was living in East and North-East Asia, but by 2050, this number will decrease to 31%. Instead, almost half of the region's

³⁴ United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision*, 21-27.

population will live in South and South-West Asia.³⁵ By 2050 it is expected that the population of even more countries will shrink if no adequate policies, such as encouraging in-migration, are taken.³⁶ It is a big challenge that many Asian countries have to face.

3. Socio-Cultural Profile

Historically, Asia was known as the land of charm and mysticism. Its history of ancient civilizations, philosophies and religions, performing arts and exotic lifestyles, and spicy culinary specialties made enormous efforts for other people to come and discover this land.³⁷ Typically, every country of this continent has its own cultural values that lead people to saying: Chinese culture, Indian culture, Vietnamese culture, Filipino culture, etc. Therefore, to say Asian culture does not mean that Asia is a monolithic culture, but it is to show that Asia has common qualities or points of view that are different from the West.³⁸

In a generic sense, Asia is a multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual, and multi-religious continent.³⁹ In some countries of Asia, cultural diversity, as Joseph Chan indicates, “was sometimes subordinated to the drive toward a more homogeneous national identity based on religion (Islam in Pakistan, Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka), language (Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, Bangla in Bangladesh), and ethnicity

³⁵ United Nations, ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific), *Population trends in Asia and the Pacific* (November 2013), <http://www.unescapsdd.org/files/documents/SPPS-Factsheet-Population-Trends-v3.pdf> (accessed on February 25, 2017).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁷ Manoranjan Dutta, *The Asian Economy and Asian Money* (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing, 2009), 1.

³⁸ Colin Mason, *A Short History of Asia* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 3.

³⁹ Joseph Chan, “Asian Values and Human Rights: An Alternative View,” in *Democracy in East Asia*, eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998): 28-41, esp. 34.

(Pashtun/Afghan in Afghanistan).”⁴⁰ However, in Asia, especially central and south Asia, it is not difficult to see “a large number of ethnolinguistic and religious groups coexisting.”⁴¹ For instance, we have China (95% Han and over 50 national minority groups), India (74% Indo-Aryan, 23% Dravidian, 3% Mongoloid and other), Indonesia (45% Javanese and over 300 ethnic groups), Malaysia (50% Malay, 30% Chinese, 9% Indian), Philippines (very diverse population in terms of language, religion and ancestry such as Tagalog 28%, Cebuano 14%, Ilocano 8%, Bisaya/Binisaya 8%, Hiligaynon Ilonggo 8%), Singapore (79% Chinese, 13% Malay, 7% Indian), Thailand (Majority Thai, 14% Chinese), Vietnam (90% Vietnamese or Kinh and over 50 minor ethnic groups). However, Japan and Korea are very homogenous.⁴²

In linguistic dimension, it is a fact that there are many languages that are spoken in Asia. It is as diverse as ethnicity. In general, every ethnic group has its own language. According to *The Washington Post*, there are at least 2,301 living languages in Asia.⁴³

In terms of religion, Asia is the birthplace of all world religions, including Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Taoist folk belief, as well as Shinto in Japan, Shamanism in parts of Korea, and animism throughout the continent. Along with ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity come extremely diverse cultures, which are also among the oldest and the richest.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Meera Ashar, “Multiculturalism,” in *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa: An Encyclopedia*, vol. IV, eds. Andrea L. Stanton, Edward Ramsamy, Peter J. Seybolt (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 255.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ames Gross, “Understanding Asian Cultural Diversity for Medtech Companies,” *Pacific Bridge Medical* (2008), 10. It is retrieved from website: http://www.pacificbridgemedical.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/2008.10.23_Understanding-Asian-Cultural-Diversity.pdf (accessed on April 3, 2017).

⁴³ Rick Noack and Lazaro Gamio, “The World’s Languages, in 7 Maps and Charts,” *The Washington Post* (April 23, 2015), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/04/23/the-worlds-languages-in-7-maps-and-charts/?utm_term=.439241e94725 (accessed on May 2, 2017).

⁴⁴ Phan, “Introduction: Asian Christianity/Christianities,” 2.

Table 2: Percentage of Religious Composition by Sub-regions of Asia, 2010⁴⁵

Sub-regions	Population	C	M	U	H	B	F	O	J
East Asia	1,575,320	5.6	1.6	52.1	0.1	19.6	19.6	1.4	<0.1
Central Asia	62,139	9.3	88.7	1.7	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1
South Asia	1,702,991	2.1	34.4	0.1	59.6	1.7	0.1	1.7	<0.1
South-East Asia	596,708	21.3	40.4	4.7	0.9	24.2	8.0	1.3	<0.1
West Asia	232,703	6.3	89.1	0.9	0.8	0.3	<0.1	0.2	2.5

Keys: C: Christian, M: Muslim, U: Unaffiliated, H: Hindu, B: Buddhist, F: Folk, O: Other, J: Jewish

Looking at the huge population of Asia, it is necessary to have an idea of some figures of the Asian Catholic Church. Based on the latest edition (December 31, 2014) of the “Church’s Book of Statistics,” in view of World Mission Day, *Fides News Service* offers some statistics to give a panorama of the missionary Church all over the world. The table shows some figures such as members of the Asian Church, church structures, healthcare, welfare, education, etc.⁴⁶

Catholic members

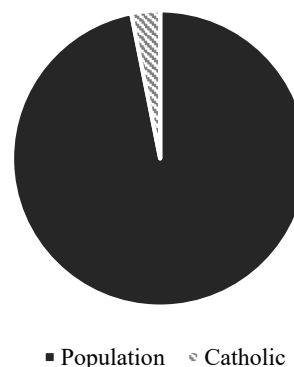


Table 3 shows that the Catholic community of Asia constitutes 3.24 per cent of the total Asian population. If the Philippines is not included, Catholics do not even make up 1 per cent of the total population. Edmund Chia puts it in an imaginative way

⁴⁵ Alan Cooperman (ed.), “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050,” *Pew Research Center* (April 2, 2015), 234-245. It is available on website: http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/03/PF_15.04.02_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf (accessed March 31, 2017).

⁴⁶ Agenzia Fides, *Vatican - World Mission Day - Catholic Church Statistics 2016* (23 October 2016): 5-9. In view of World Mission Day, Fides News Service offered some statistics chosen to give a panorama of the missionary Church all over the world. The data was taken from the latest edition of the “Church’s Book of Statistics” published (updated to 31 December 2014) regarding members of the Church, church structures, healthcare, welfare and education. http://www.fides.org/en/stats/61026-VATICAN_WORLD_MISSION_DAY_CATHOLIC_CHURCH_STATISTICS_2016#.WPixXGcIHIU (accessed on April 10, 2017).

that “for every one Catholic walking a particular street of Asia, 99 others who walk that same street are believers of other religions.”⁴⁷

Table 3: Statistics of the Catholic Church in Asia

Catholics (thousands)	139,829	Primary Schools	16,078
Percentage	3.24	Secondary Schools	10,898
Priests	63,610	Dispensaries	3,584
Bishops	792	Leprosy Centers	313
Permanent Deacons	303	Homes for the elderly, chronically illness disabled	2,564
Religious Brothers	11,921	Orphanages	3,859
Religious Sisters	170,366	Nursery Schools	3,422
Lay Missionaries	31,915	Marriage Councilor Centers	928
Lay Catechists	377,111	Catholic Schools	696
Major Seminarians	34,469	Hospital	1,159
Minor Seminarians	25,646	Other Institutes	4,391
Archdiocese: 76; Diocese: 342; Territorial Abbacy: 1; Apostolic Vicariate:17; Apostolic Prefecture: 34; Apostolic Administration: 5; Mission sui juris: 3; Military Ordinariate: 2			

Economic Situation. In general, the Asian economies are industrialized and modernized in some developed countries, but still traditional and agricultural in many developing and underdeveloped countries. As James Kroeger observes that in the twenty-first century, Asia’s economic growth and modernization can be seen in some areas, but many Asian people are poor and marginalized.⁴⁸ Therefore, according to Statistics Times, based on the share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Asia has some countries standing on the top of the world’s ranking and the poorest ones at the last list. (Table 4). Most Asian countries are drawn into the world economic order as suppliers of raw materials and cheap labor force, and as markets controlled by the North. Many

⁴⁷ Edmund Chia, “Dialogue with Religions of Asia: Challenges from Without,” <http://cirpcu.catholic.org.tw/Eng/dra1.htm> (accessed on April 18, 2017).

⁴⁸ James H. Kroeger, et al., *Once upon the Time in Asia: Stories of Harmony and Peace* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2006), 13.

Asian countries are forced to adopt policies and practices according to the dictates of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Therefore, it is necessary to be aware that the growing interdependence in the world is very important for the development of both the North and the South.⁴⁹

Table 4: GDP per capita ranking of selected richest and poorest countries in Asia⁵⁰

GDP per capita Nominal (U.S. dollars)						
	Country/Economy	2016	Rank of world	Country	2016	Rank of world
Richest Countries in Asia	Macao SAR	67,013	4	Afghanistan	562	178
	Qatar	60,733	6	Nepal	734	171
	Singapore	53,053	10	Tajikistan	764	167
	Hong Kong SAR	42,963	17	Kyrgyzstan	956	161
	United Arab Emirates	38,050	24	Yemen	1,075	157
	Japan	37,304	25	Cambodia	1,228	156
	Israel	36,557	26	Myanmar	1,307	152
	Korea	27,633	29	Pakistan	1,474	148
	Kuwait	26,146	31	India	1,719	144
	Brunei	24,713	32	Lao P.D.R.	1,921	141
	Bahrain	24,119	35	Timor-Leste	2,104	137
	Cyprus	23,425	36	Uzbekistan	2,131	135
	Taiwan	22,044	37	Vietnam	2,164	134
	Saudi Arabia	19,922	39	Bhutan	2,635	129
Poorest Countries in Asia						

Forms of Government. People who live in a society need a government to govern it. If a state or a country does not have a government, it would be easy to be taken over by other countries or states because of lacking of union.⁵¹ In Asia, there are various forms of government, such as democracy, monarchy, communist, parliamentary

⁴⁹ Felix Wilfred, *Sunset in the East?: Asian Challenges and Christian Involvement*, Asian Theological Search, vol. II (Madras: SIGA Press, 1991), 17-18.

⁵⁰ It is retrieved from "List of Countries by Projected GDP per capita," *Statistics Times* (November 9, 2016), <http://statisticstimes.com/economy/countries-by-projected-gdp-capita.php> (accessed on April 5, 2017).

⁵¹ Niaz Nishat, "Forms of Government in South Asia," *Academia* (2017), http://www.academia.edu/18455704/Forms_of_government_in_south_Asia (accessed on March 29, 2017).

government, presidential government, etc.⁵² Asia has the largest democratic and the largest communist governments in the world, India and China respectively.⁵³

Philosophical Systems: Character traits. Two main sources of Asian traditional philosophy and thought system can be found in South Asia (India) and East Asia (particularly China and Japan). They are associated with Asian religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, and Shinto. But Islamic philosophy has rooted in Western and Southeast Asia. In general, there are many characteristics of Asian philosophy. However, in this section, two major characteristics will be discussed as follow:

Firstly, Asian or Eastern view of the human person can be seen as a part of nature or cosmos in which he/she must co-exist with. For instance, Hinduism views that all living things are part of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality or God. Therefore, plants and animals also have good intrinsic values.⁵⁴ Buddhism's worldview is that human beings are one with nature. "One aims to act as respectfully and inclusively as possible toward plant, animal, and human companions."⁵⁵ Confucianism and Taoism emphasize on one's harmonious interrelationship with the natural world.⁵⁶

⁵² This information is taken from "Maps of World," <http://www.mapsofworld.com/thematic-maps/types-of-governments.html> (accessed on March 29, 2017).

⁵³ Phan, "Introduction: Asian Christianity/Christianities," 2.

⁵⁴ See George Alfred James, "Environment and Environmental Philosophy in India," in *Environmental Philosophy in Asian Traditions of Thought*, eds. George Alfred James, James McRae & J. Baird Callicott (New York: State University of New York Press, 2014), 8-15; Christopher Framarin, "Ātman, Identity, and Emanation: Arguments for a Hindu Environmental Ethic," in *Environmental Philosophy in Asian Traditions of Thought*, 25-26.

⁵⁵ See Stephanie Kaza, "Acting with Compassion: Buddhism, Feminism, and the Environmental Crisis," in *Environmental Philosophy in Asian Traditions of Thought*, eds. George Alfred James, James McRae & J. Baird Callicott (New York: State University of New York Press, 2014), 71-98, quotation at 83.

⁵⁶ See Mary Evelyn Tucker, "The Relevance of Chinese Neo-Confucianism for the Reverence of Nature," in *Environmental Philosophy in Asian Traditions of Thought*, 133-148; Karyn Lai, "Conceptual Foundations for Environmental Ethics: A Daoist Perspective," in *Environmental Philosophy in Asian Traditions of Thought*, 173-195; Alan Fox, "Process Ecology and the 'Ideal' Dao," in *Environmental Philosophy in Asian Traditions of Thought*, 197-207.

Secondly, Eastern view of ideal of life is influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism or Confucianism. Their teachings of tolerance, gentleness, mindfulness and moderation have become a great influence throughout Asia.⁵⁷ Generally, Asians emphasize on detachment, simplicity of life, and transformation of the self by means of prayer, contemplation or meditation. Hence, the Eastern view of ideal of life is based more ‘on being’, rather than ‘on having’.⁵⁸ Typically, Asian behavior, however, “is contextualized at all times, whether in the fulfillment of obligations and duties to the group [...] or taking refuge in its support and solidarity.”⁵⁹ In Asia, “[t]he showing of respect, in speech and actions, is mandatory. There must be no loss of face either for oneself or one’s opponent.”⁶⁰

In summary, Asians focus on the group, authoritarianism, status, family, avoiding conflict and building relationship.⁶¹ Asia has many ethnic groups in which every group has its own customs, lifestyles and values. To have a clear view of Asian characteristics is to deal with many socio-cultural factors such as religion, attitudes, economic status, class, language, politics and law. Accordingly, in the diversity of Asian society, Felix Wilfred suggests that, “the only way to sustain human togetherness is through *dialogue*. Politically, ethnically, religiously, dialogue is going to be most important [approach] for the Asia of tomorrow. It is also in dialogue that we should search for alternatives.”⁶²

⁵⁷ Phan, “Introduction: Asian Christianity/Christianities,” 21; see also Kaza, “Acting with Compassion: Buddhism, Feminism, and the Environmental Crisis,” 75-86.

⁵⁸ James Fieser, “Classical Eastern Philosophy,” *The History of Philosophy: A Short Survey* (2008), <https://www.utm.edu/staff/jfieser/class/110/4-eastern.htm> (accessed on April 7, 2017).

⁵⁹ Richard D. Lewis, *When Cultures Collide: Managing Successfully Across Cultures*, 3rd edition (Boston and London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1996), 123.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁶² Wilfred, *Sunset in the East?*, 13.

B. Key Constants in Asia

1. Tradition

Asian people are characterized by tradition. They want to link themselves to the past with their customs, cultures, and religions as their roots. Tradition gives them their identity. By the geographical setting, Asians who share the same history and cultural traditions, as well as the environment and philosophical systems, have marked them off from others. Moreover, they have also formulated attitudes, value systems, meaning schemes and worldviews that distinguished them clearly from other people.⁶³

In general, “Asians tend to be highly group-oriented people who place a strong emphasis on family connection as the major source of identity and protection against the hardships of life.”⁶⁴ The family model is an extended one which includes immediate family and relatives (uncles, aunts, grandparents). For Asians, family is very important as some proverbs say: “In the time of test, family is best”⁶⁵ or “Come back and bathe in your own pond; Clear or muddy, the home pond is always better.”⁶⁶ To maintain social harmony and interdependence, loyalty to the family is expected. Marcia Carteret describes, “In the traditional Asian family, parents define the law and the children are expected to abide by their requests and demands; filial piety or respect for one’s parents and elders is critically important.”⁶⁷

⁶³ Thomas Menampampil, “Asian Cultures and Evangelization,” *SEDOS Bulletin* 29/3 (March 1979): 67-74, esp. 67.

⁶⁴ Marcia Carteret, “Cultural Values of Asian Patients and Families,” *Dimensions of Culture: Cross-Cultural Communications for Healthcare Professionals*. It is retrieved from website: <http://www.dimensionsofculture.com/2010/cultural-values-of-asian-patients-and-families/> (accessed on March 27, 2017).

⁶⁵ Burmese proverb, quoted in Kroeger, *Once upon the Time in Asia*, 37.

⁶⁶ Vietnamese proverb, quoted in Peter C. Phan, *Mission and Catechesis: Alexandre de Rhodes & Inculturation in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), v.

⁶⁷ Marcia Carteret, “Cultural Values of Asian Patients and Families.”

The traditional attitude among Asians, in general, is due to their cyclic concept of time. Asians do not see time as racing away unutilized in a linear future, but coming around again in a circle. Each day the sun rises and sets, the seasons follow one another, people grow old and die, but their children reconstitute the process. In a cyclic concept of time, humans adapt to time. For instance, in a Buddhist culture (e.g., Thailand, Tibet), not only time but also life itself goes around in a circle. Whatever humans plan they organize in this world, generation follows generation; governments and rulers will succeed each other. According to Richard Lewis, “Cyclical time is not a scarce commodity. There seems always to be an unlimited supply of it just around the next bend. As they say in the East, when God made time, He made plenty of it.”⁶⁸

The diversities of cultures, ethnicities, and religions in Asia are not only remnants of ancient and recent political groupings and religious affiliations, but also the result of occupational specializations and ethnic identities.⁶⁹ However, in this modern time, because of the influence of globalization, the traditional nation borders are becoming less relevant. Language barriers are being broken down and traditional values undermined.⁷⁰ These realities of Asia must be seriously considered and this particular constant cannot be avoided for those doing mission in this continent.

⁶⁸ See Richard Lewis, “How Different Cultures Understand Time,” *Business Insider* (June 1, 2014), <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5> (accessed on March 27, 2017).

⁶⁹ Menamparapil, “Asian Cultures and Evangelization,” 3.

⁷⁰ M. S. Dobbs-Higginson, *Asia Pacific: Its Role in the New World Order* (London: Mandarin, 1995), 409-410.

2. Hierarchy and Authority

There is great emphasis in Asia, particularly in Confucian and Hindu societies, placed on fixed hierarchical relationships. Everyone is conscious of the social order and of their status relative to others in society. It is expected that each person will show a certain respect for others and accept the social obligations that come with one's position in the hierarchy.⁷¹ A hierarchical society is where “virtually all things, people, and social groups are ranked according to essential qualities.”⁷² For instance, in Asian society all family members are socialized to accept the authority of those above them in the hierarchy. Hence, the eldest male acts as a family head and the youngest has the least authority.

Confucianism had tremendous impact in East and Southeast Asia. This complex system of social and political ethics was inspired by Confucius who lived during an era of great chaos and conflict (known as the Spring and Autumn era) in China. Consequently, he was preoccupied with the question of the time, “What is the best way to order society and government?” In short, he was interested on how to bring about societal order and harmony. Confucius believed this was possible if everyone understood their rank in society and were taught the proper behaviors of their rank. He devised a system of interdependent relationships – a structure which is highly hierarchical where the lower level gives obedience to the higher (extending from the family level to the national).⁷³

⁷¹ It is taken from Bob Riel, “East Asian Cultural Themes: A Confucian Region,” on his website: <http://www.bobrieland.com/pdf%20files/east%20asia%20business%20culture.pdf> (accessed on February 22, 2017).

⁷² See Doranne Jacobson, “Indian Society and Ways of Living,” *Center for Global Education, Asia Society* (2004), <http://asiasociety.org/education/indian-society-and-ways-living> (accessed on March 27, 2017).

⁷³ “Confucius 101: A Key to Understanding the Chinese Mind,” *China Mike*, <http://www.china-mike.com/chinese-culture/understanding-chinese-mind/confucius/> (accessed on March 27, 2017).

In other words, hierarchy and authority are still very much alive in Asia and among its people today.⁷⁴ This is concretized in many ways: according to caste, gender, and socio-economic standing such as wealth and power. While it is true that all men and women are created equal, but in the reality of Asian societies, some are held so high while others with no esteem (e.g., the “untouchables” in India). Even modern Chinese today are still used to thinking in terms of hierarchy.

Valuing hierarchy and authority are not without critiques. For instance, the Confucian tradition of respect for authority and family, and the emphasis on community over individual rights were presented as antithetical to Western images of liberalism. Western cultures tend to emphasize more the individual rather than collectivism. The Asian collectivist and hierarchical values have been seen as culprits for Asian underdevelopment. But the Singaporean patriarch Lee Kuan Yew has proven that the hierarchic and deferential social authority relations of Confucian traditions have influenced East Asian development. He states,

The expansion of the right of the individual to behave or misbehave as he pleases has come at the expense of orderly society. In the East the main object is to have a well-ordered society so that everybody can have maximum enjoyment of his freedoms. This freedom can only exist in an ordered state and not in a natural state of contention and anarchy.⁷⁵

In Asian culture, obeying authority and respecting elders are seen as virtues. Therefore, in some of the governing principles, collective values which bring about social interdependence are more important, whereas individual values are less. They focus on maintaining harmony in social relationships, in which the social hierarchy and obligations play a significant role in defining one’s identity.⁷⁶ Especially, in Confucian

⁷⁴ Javier, *Dialogue: Our Mission Today*, 19.

⁷⁵ See Lee Kuan Yew, “Culture is Destiny, an Interview with Fareed Zakaria,” *Foreign Affairs* 73 (1994): 109-126; Surain Subramaniam, “The Asian Values debate: Implications for the spread of liberal democracy,” *Asian Affairs* 27 (2000): 19-35.

⁷⁶ Po Keung Ip, “Is Confucianism Good for Business Ethics in China?” *Journal of Business Ethics* 88 (2009): 463-476, quoted in Lina Nangalia and Ajay Nangalia, “The Coach in Asian Society:

social relationships, it is demanded that “a superior is obliged to lead, advise and guide whereas the subordinate is obliged to obey and be loyal.”⁷⁷ These hierarchical and authoritative concepts give a reason why people prefer to address others and themselves by their full title in order to make sure that everyone knows their rank and status in the society.

Asia comprises nations of beautiful people who are warmly hospitable to visitors, of ancient cultural traditions that still thrive, of great religious monuments and works of art. One can easily be fascinated by Asia.⁷⁸ But it is also a place of tyranny and repression. In Asia, there is that constant tension between the charm and the cruelty of life.⁷⁹ Therefore, absolute sovereignty of the states must be “rethought and reformulated” in this modern time. Instead of it, “[t]he common *humanum*, which is transnational, must be the fulcrum of any conception or doctrine of governance; and the rights of the states must be subordinated to it.”⁸⁰

3. Dynasty and Elitism

Dynasty and elitism are common to Asian countries. After the years of colonization, the new rulers came to set up the new social and economic elites of the lands. According to Mason, “It is a pattern of economic and social elites exploiting the majority of the people ruthlessly and often with self-defeating avarice, using the

Impact of Social Hierarchy on the Coaching Relationship International,” *Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring* 8/1 (February 2010): 51-66, esp. 54.

⁷⁷ Nangalia, “The Coach in Asian Society,” 54.

⁷⁸ Stan Sesser, *The Lands of Charm and Cruelty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), xi.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Wilfred, *Sunset in the East?*, 21.

backing of armed force. This less than admirable tradition can readily be observed in many of the Asian nations today, and has much to do with their problems.”⁸¹

In reality, it is clearly seen that Asia is a rich and beautiful area but overwhelmed by massive and abject poverty. It has highly literate societies but enslaved by superstition. Today, politicians and businessmen are willing to destroy rain forests for the maximum of profits and capital accumulation.⁸² Shiva claims that “nature and human needs are managed through market mechanisms. The ideology of development is in large part based on a vision of bringing all of nature’s products into the market economy as raw material for commodity production.”⁸³

Mark Thompson observes, “Asia’s dynasties are modern hybrids in which elite political aims are linked to popular norms of charismatic legitimacy, often in the context of weak or decaying institutions. Dynasties often cultivate loyal followings through inherited charisma.” Whatever the complex reality, dynasticism is still very much alive and well in Asian politics. Descendants of charismatic leaders continue to play a major role in politics in Asia. They often remain key to the survival of a leading political party, an opposition movement or even the regime itself.⁸⁴

Nationally and internationally, in term of political developments, the most serious crisis in the world is a crisis of leadership. In many Asian countries, people cannot fully exercise their human rights. There are various cases, such as illegal detention, torture, denial of religious freedom, etc., committed “in the name of national

⁸¹ Mason, *A Short History of Asia*, 6.

⁸² See Sesser, *The Lands of Charm and Cruelty*, x and 241-291.

⁸³ Vandana Shiva, “Resources,” in *The Development Dictionary*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (London: Zed Books, 2003), 216.

⁸⁴ Mark R. Thompson, “Asia’s political dynasties: Down but not out,” *The Australian* (July 18, 2015), <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/business-spectator/asias-political-dynasties-down-but-not-out/news-story/ce03078ea66f071d0b5b315886b68828> (accessed on February 22, 2017).

security and sovereignty.”⁸⁵ Therefore, “[r]elying on leader to ‘do the jobs’ is a convenient escape route from our own responsibility, which belies deep-seated laziness and apathy.”⁸⁶ In doing mission in Asia, can social and economic issues become also the concerns of missionaries? How do they deal with economic elites and political leaders for the benefits of human beings, typically Asian people?

C. Contemporary Challenges and Issues

1. Religious Pluralism

Positively speaking, Asia is the birthplace and stronghold of religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, etc.⁸⁷ In fact, Christianity is only a minority among others. This reality demonstrates the challenges for doing mission during the third millennium of Christianity in the Asian continent.⁸⁸

The pluralism of religions in Asia is not only a reality, but could also present a problem. There are many conflicts that happen among different religious groups. To cite examples: In India, Hindu-Muslim riots have been persisting for more than seventy years. Lately, Hindu fundamentalists have attacked Christians. The civil war in Sri Lanka has both ethnic and religious elements. Myanmar also has a similar case of conflict between the government and the Karen rebels that is related to ethnicity and

⁸⁵ Wilfred, *Sunset in the East?*, 21.

⁸⁶ Lorenzo Fioramonti “Collective leadership is the only way out of this mess,” *PressReader* (August 25, 2016), <http://www.pressreader.com/> (accessed on February 22, 2017).

⁸⁷ Jacques Dupuis, “Synod for Asia: First Echoes,” in *The Future of the Asian Churches: The Asian Synod and Ecclesia in Asia*, eds. James Kroeger and Peter C. Phan (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2002), 4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

religions.⁸⁹ In the Philippines and Indonesia, there are conflicts between the Christians and the Muslims.⁹⁰ Edmund Chia describes the religious problems in Asia,

Conflicts committed in the name of race and religion are like an everyday occurrence in many Asian countries. One has only to call to mind the wars and conflicts in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor, and various other countries to be reminded that religion is more often the source of strife and hostility rather than of unity and harmony.⁹¹

After the colonial years, on the one hand, a revival of religions has given opportunities for fundamentalist movements. On the other hand, the growing industrialization and urbanization lead to a secularization that calls the religions to collaborate in the defense and promotion of common Asian human and spiritual values.⁹² Felix Wilfred observes that “the second part of the 20th century has brought fresh awareness about the great religious traditions of humanity, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the powerful trend towards secularization.”⁹³

In the context of Asia, it is necessary for Christians to be aware of doing mission to promote harmony and to respect the identity of other religious groups. In doing so, all people can live together according to the plan of God for the world.⁹⁴ It cannot be forgotten that every religious group “has a *compact world of its own* which needs to be understood from within, attentively listened and responded to.”⁹⁵ In other words,

⁸⁹ Michael Amaladoss, “Identity and Harmony,” in *Mission in the Third Millennium*, ed. Robert Schreiter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 25.

⁹⁰ Javier, *Dialogue: Our Mission Today*, 22.

⁹¹ Edmund Chia, “Wanted: Interreligious Dialogue in Asia,” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 12/1 (January 1, 2002): 101-110, esp. 102.

⁹² Michael Amaladoss, “Questions from the Local Churches in Asia,” in *Trends in Mission: Toward the Third Millennium*, eds. William Jenkinson and Helene O’Sullivan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 46.

⁹³ Felix Wilfred, “Emerging Trends Challenge the Churches in Asia,” in *Trends in Mission: Toward the Third Millennium*, eds. William Jenkinson and Helene O’Sullivan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 5-6.

⁹⁴ Amaladoss, “Identity and Harmony,” 39.

⁹⁵ Felix Wilfred, *Sunset in the East?*, 8.

religions have their own traditions, myths, codes, worldviews and worship.⁹⁶ Therefore, it is not incidental that God spoke in many ways before speaking through his Son (Hebrews 1:1). Edward Schillebeeckx points out: “There is more religious truth in all religions together than in one particular religion ... This also applies to Christianity.”⁹⁷ Recognizing the values of religious traditions, “[t]he Church has the deepest respect for these traditions and seeks to engage in sincere dialogue with their followers.”⁹⁸

2. Poverty and Misery

The economic profile of the Asian continent is very diverse, defying any simple classification. While “[s]ome countries are highly developed, others are developing through effective economic policies, and others still find themselves in abject poverty, indeed among the poorest nations on earth”⁹⁹ (EA 7). We find in Asia the majority of the world’s poorest people today. Poverty in some Asian countries seems largely due to the pressure of excessive population growth on scarce resources and inadequate governments allowing strongly negative caste discrimination.¹⁰⁰ In these poor countries, education, medicine, clean water and sanitation are often inadequate also. In some of these Asian countries the problematic land ownership encourages poverty.

The poverty of Asian people, as Majid Rahnema asserts, is a part of “a global construct due to the economization of life and the forceful integration of vernacular

⁹⁶ Menamparampil, “Asian Cultures and Evangelization,” 3.

⁹⁷ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 50-51.

⁹⁸ Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), 6, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html (accessed on November 20, 2016). Hereafter EA.

⁹⁹ See “Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*,” in Phan, *The Asian Synod*, 290.

¹⁰⁰ Vincent Wilmot, “World Poverty, a look at causes and solutions,” <http://world-poverty.org/povertyinasia.htm> (accessed on March 23, 2017).

societies into the world economy.”¹⁰¹ According to the World Bank, 840 million do not have enough food to sustain even modest health today. Seventy percent of 1.3 billion people in Asia live as “absolute poverty” – subsisting on less one dollar a day.¹⁰²

The new global interrelationships or globalization – that global decisions, policies, and practices are typically influenced, driven, or formulated by the rich and powerful – “is responsible for the emergence of huge urban conglomerations, often with large depressed areas where organized crime, terrorism, prostitution, and exploitation of the weaker sections of society thrive.”¹⁰³ The World Bank researchers and others pointed out that in many countries, poverty and inequality have become much worse because of the unequally global distribution of income.¹⁰⁴ Inequalities become systematic and have produced structural systems of racism, sexism, socialism, communism, creeds, etc. Asians should heed the warning that “very often these inequalities become cumulative. Poverty, discrimination, and oppression mutually increase each other.”¹⁰⁵ In fact, “the more unequal the society, the worse the problem generally.”¹⁰⁶

Having seen a number of Asian countries that made considerable economic progress (e.g., South Korea and China), there still exist degrading and inhuman poverty, widening inequality, unequal distribution of resources and opportunities etc. Poverty is

¹⁰¹ Majid Rahnema, “Poverty,” in *The Development Dictionary*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (London: Zed Books, 2003), 159.

¹⁰² Thomas C. Fox, *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), xiv.

¹⁰³ Josef Neuner, “A Theology of Proclamation,” in *The Future of Asian Churches: The Asian Synod and Ecclesia in Asia*, eds. James Kroeger and Peter C. Phan (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2002), 94.

¹⁰⁴ Jim Davies, “Personal Assets from a Global Perspective,” *Wider Angle* 2 (2005): 6-7, esp. 6.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Amaladoss, “The Challenges of Mission Today,” in *Trends in Mission in the 3rd Millennium*, eds. William Jenkinson and Helene O’Sullivan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 380.

¹⁰⁶ Anup Shah, “Poverty around the World,” *Global Issues* (November 12, 2011), <http://www.globalissues.org/article/4/poverty-around-the-world> (accessed on March 7, 2017).

a telling forecast of Asia's future. Schreiter describes the effects of modernity positively as "increased material prosperity, better health care, expanded opportunities for formal education, an increase in personal freedom [...], and a liberation from many traditional constraints," and negatively, as materialism, consumerism, an anomic individualism, and the relativization of values.¹⁰⁷

Yergin and Stanislaw conclude that "governments have come to plan less, to own less, and to regulate less, allowing instead the frontiers of the markets to expand."¹⁰⁸ On a positive sense, there is a convivial poverty that can "be found in the people's own ethical and cultural approach to poverty."¹⁰⁹ Rahnema states: "The flourishing of other, higher forms of convivial poverty may then appear as a last hope for creating different societies based on the joy of 'more being,' rather than the obsession of 'more having.'"¹¹⁰

3. Globalization

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) defines globalization as "the growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and services, free international capital flows, and more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology."¹¹¹ In addition, Anthony Giddens proposes that globalization is "the intensification of worldwide social relations

¹⁰⁷ Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 9.

¹⁰⁸ D. Yergin and J. Stanislaw, *The Commanding Heights: The Battle between Government and the Marketplace that is Remaking the Modern World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 12.

¹⁰⁹ Claude Geffré, "From the Theology of Religious Pluralism to an Interreligious Theology," in *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, eds. Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 46.

¹¹⁰ Rahnema, "Poverty," 172.

¹¹¹ The International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook* (May 1997), 45. It is taken the website of IMF: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/WEOMAY/chapter3.pdf> (accessed on February 20, 2017).

which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.”¹¹²

Globalization makes the world “becoming a *global village*”¹¹³ due to the free movement of capital and trade. However, it benefits the national economies of the rich countries and threatens the poor such as many Asian countries. Comparing to the colonial systems, Schreiter points out: “Contemporary globalization looks in many ways like the colonialism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries – and its impact on the poor exhibits nearly the same characteristics, as did colonialism.”¹¹⁴ Regardless of its many positive effects, globalization has “worked to the detriment of the poor, tending to push poorer countries to the margin of economic and political relations. Many Asian nations are unable to hold their own in a global market economy” (EA 39). In addition, according to Galbiati, there are some people tending to emphasize globalization’s negative aspects, such as:

... contradiction of power in the hands of a few people, the tendency to cultural standardization, the risk of a single thought, the monopoly of information and communication systems, the elimination of the “territory” with its historical, ethnic, cultural and artistic characteristics, the loss of identity, worship of the market as a dominant and cruel force like a Molock, based on social Darwinism of the survival of the fittest, and individuals’ sense of disorientation and solitude at mercy of the unknown and the ‘other’...¹¹⁵

Just as the coin has two sides, globalization has many negative elements, but it also has many positive ones, as Galbiati enumerates:

... opening the horizons of life and thought, the polycentricism of economic power, the planetary exchange of information in real time, the demand for a world government, more rapid mobility, reduction of the power of state

¹¹² Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 64.

¹¹³ Wilfred, *Sunset in the East?*, 21.

¹¹⁴ Robert Schreiter, “Epilogue: Mission in the Third Millennium,” in *Mission in the Third Millennium*, ed. Robert Schreiter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 150.

¹¹⁵ Fernando Galbiati, “Globalization and Mission through Education,” *Omnis Terra* 351 (November 2004): 367 cited in Javier, *Dialogue: Our Mission Today*, 30.

government, but also the emancipation and raising of the culture of individual nations, and greater possibility of participation in social welfare.¹¹⁶

In Asia, even though the sharp reduction of poverty due to globalization is remarkable, but “poverty is still widespread in Asia as a whole, and the challenge facing policymakers in the region in attacking poverty of this magnitude is still daunting.”¹¹⁷ Moreover, globalization also causes war and violation of other cultures and religions. For instance, for Muslims, globalization is seen as “a power game from which great powers draw immense gains and to which the rest of the world is subjugated.”¹¹⁸ Another example is that, according to Seabrook, “[t]he resentment of many Muslims (not only extremists) toward the U.S. and Israel, the defensive posturing of Hindu fundamentalism, opposed both to Islam and Christianity, are the most vivid dramatization of this [violation between religions’ identity].”¹¹⁹

Once Asian nations are exposed to globalization, many things will change such as their social life, customary practice, traditional behavior, etc. In this modern time, as Brooks states, “while global economies are converging, cultures are diverging, and the widening cultural differences are leading people into a period of conflict, inequality and segmentation.”¹²⁰

For Christians, especially missionaries who work for people living in this huge continent, globalization contains both challenges and opportunities to promote the

¹¹⁶ Galbiati, “Globalization and Mission through Education,” 30.

¹¹⁷ Machiko Nissanke and Erik Thorbecke, “Overview: Linking Globalization to Poverty in Asia, Latin America and Africa,” *Policy Brief* 3 (2010): 1-31, esp. 12, <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/PB2010-003.pdf> (accessed on April 5, 2017).

¹¹⁸ Mahmood Monshipouri, “Identity and Human Rights in the Age of Globalization,” *Global Policy Forum* (May 2, 2005), <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/162/27639.html> (accessed on April 6, 2017).

¹¹⁹ Jeremy Seabrook, “Localizing Cultures,” *Global Policy Forum* (January 13, 2004), <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/162/27633.html> (accessed on April 6, 2017).

¹²⁰ David Brooks, “All Cultures Are Not Equal,” *The New York Times* (August 11, 2005), <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=990CE2DA143EF932A2575BC0A9639C8B63> (accessed on April 6, 2017).

common good, justice and peace for all, particularly Asians.¹²¹ Therefore, missionaries must be rooted in the fundamental mission of the Church “to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served,” to be the bearer of hope and “light for all nations.”¹²²

4. Environmental Degradation¹²³

In the words of T. Howland Sanks, “[e]nvironmental degradation is the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources such as air, water, soil; the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of wildlife. It is defined as any change or disturbance to the environment perceived to be deleterious or undesirable.”¹²⁴ It is also a matter of human society and culture because, according to Boff, “[e]cology is [...] the relationship that all bodies, animate and inanimate, natural and cultural, establish and maintain among themselves and with their surroundings.”¹²⁵

It is a reality in Asia that “the natural resources of land, sea, and forests which were for them (Asians) life-supporting have been taken from them and are today controlled by oppressive forces from within Asia and from abroad.”¹²⁶ According to Shiva, one of two major crises that has intensified the environmental problems in Asian societies “is the ecological crisis and the threat to life support systems posed by the

¹²¹ T. Howland Sanks, “Globalization and the Church’s Social Mission,” *Theological Studies* 60 (1999): 625-651, esp. 651.

¹²² Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), 3, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed on November 15, 2016). Hereafter GS.

¹²³ See Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* (2015), eps. 20-42, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (accessed on November 20, 2017). Hereafter LS.

¹²⁴ Doongar R. Chaudhary, “Restoration Ecology,” in *Introduction to Environmental Sciences*, eds. R. S. Khoiyangbam and Navindu Gupta (New Delhi: TERI Press, 2012), 115.

¹²⁵ Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, “Ecology and Poverty: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor,” *Concilium: International Journal of Theology* 5 (1995): ix-xii, esp. ix-x.

¹²⁶ Felix Wilfred, quoted in Javier, *Dialogue: Our Mission Today*, 32.

destruction of nature resources like forest, land, water, and genetic resources.”¹²⁷ Similarly, humanity is facing an ecological crisis¹²⁸ that “has caused a series of serious global problems: global warming, ozone depletion, acid rain, water shortages, soil degradation, solid waste pollution, species extinction, loss of forests and so on.”¹²⁹

In 1995, a UN Special Rapporteur was set up by the Commission on Human Rights to investigate whether there was a link between environmental degradation and the enjoyment of human rights. As a result of this step taken, in 1996, the Rapporteur reported that “environmental degradation following the dumping of toxic waste would impact on the enjoyment of human rights to self-determination, life, health, food, safe and healthy working conditions, housing, information, participation, freedom of association, as well as cultural rights.”¹³⁰

Environmental degradation is a result of “poverty, overcrowding, famine, weather extremes, biodiversity loss, war and human rights abuses, and an increasingly unstable global situation.”¹³¹ These environmental problems can have effects on both health and productivity. According to the estimation of the United Nations, more than two million deaths and billions of illnesses a year are traceable to water pollution. The insufficiency of water produces health problems.¹³² Because of air pollution, 300,000

¹²⁷ Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics* (London: Zed Books, 1991), 1.

¹²⁸ Piotr Krakowczyk, *Living for the Kingdom of God – Rethinking Religious Life in the Twenty-First Century* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2004), 5.

¹²⁹ Yonghong Zhang, “Capitalism and Ecological Crisis,” *Journal of Sustainable Society* 2/3 (2013): 69-73, esp. 73.

¹³⁰ Preliminary report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the adverse effects of the illicit movement of toxic and dangerous products and wastes on the enjoyment of human rights, quoted in Maryam Ishaku Gwangndi, et al., “The Impact of Environmental Degradation on Human Health and Its Relevance to the Right to Health under International Law,” *European Scientific Journal* 12/10 (April 2016): 485-503, esp. 488.

¹³¹ Chaudhary, “Restoration Ecology,” 118.

¹³² Ibid.

to 700,000 people die every year and produces chronic health problems, such as pneumonia, asthma, etc., for many peoples.¹³³

There are also many miserable things that humankind has to face due to the environmental problems. For instance, noise pollution can cause health problems, such as stress, hypertension, sleep disturbances, hearing loss, etc. Soil degradation is the loss of actual or potential productivity of soil. Deforestation causes the loss of soil nutrients, the erosion of soil by wind and water, flood and drought. Loss of biodiversity causes the balance of the ecosystem in the form of loss of combating pollution, loss of restoring nutrients, loss of protecting water sources and loss of stabilizing climate. Air pollution has damaging effects on living things and the environment, and contributes to global warming that causes the melting of polar ice caps and glaciers, and the rise in global sea levels. Ozone layer depletion emits harmful radiations back to the earth. It becomes potential sources of 300,000 cases of skin cancer per year and 1.7 million cases of eye cataracts.¹³⁴

In many places in the world today, the poor are the most victims of death by pollution and the largest victims by environmental degradation.¹³⁵ This big and deadly risk comes from man-induced activities. Therefore, as Boff states, “From now on the existence of the biosphere is at the mercy of human decision-making. In order to continue to live, the human race has to wish to do so.”¹³⁶

¹³³ Partha Das Sharma, “Effects of Environmental Degradation,” *Partha Das Sharma’s Weblog* (August 18, 2008), <https://saferenvironment.wordpress.com/2008/08/18/effects-of-environmental-degradation/> (accessed on February 19, 2017).

¹³⁴ Onodugo Ifeanyi Chris, “Environmental Degradation and Nigerian Economy,” *National Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 1/1 (April 2016): 5-7, esp. 6.

¹³⁵ Zhang, “Capitalism and Ecological Crisis,” 71.

¹³⁶ Leonardo Boff, “Life and Death on Planet Earth,” *Concilium: International Journal of Theology* 5 (1995): 1-11, esp. 1.

The sustainability of the Earth-system cannot be guaranteed.¹³⁷ Because, according to Coleman, “[e]nvironmental degradation affects the quality, or aesthetics, of human life, but it also displays potential to undermine conditions necessary for the sustainability of human life.”¹³⁸ In the context of mission in Asia, the environmental degradation should be seriously considered because, according to the report of the World Resources Institutes, stated on its first page: “The human race relies on the environment and therefore must manage it.”¹³⁹ Moreover, Pope Francis invites us to care for and listen to it (LS 229, 117).

5. Migration

Migration is also a big problem that Asia has to face. It is not a new issue. It is “as old as history.”¹⁴⁰ In this present time, there are many “people on the move,”¹⁴¹ especially in Asia. The number of migrants in an irregular situation is rising, fueled by the growth of informal forms of employment, shortages of workers for dirty, demeaning and dangerous jobs and lack of opportunities for regular labor migration. In addition, the increase in trafficking, especially of women and children, poses a particular threat to human rights protections and creates new challenges for governments, the international community and the Church. Moreover, temporary workers and migrant

¹³⁷ Boff, “Life and Death on Planet Earth,” 1.

¹³⁸ Denise Youngblood Coleman, “Global Environmental Snapshot,” *Bhutan Country Review* (2013): 178-189, esp. 178.

¹³⁹ Sachs, “Environment,” 35.

¹⁴⁰ Van Thanh Nguyen, “Current Trends of Migration in Asia: Prospects and Challenges,” in *God’s People on the Move: Biblical and Global Perspectives on Migration and Mission*, eds. Van Thanh Nguyen and John M. Prior (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 171.

¹⁴¹ This phrase was used by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People in the title of its first significant document, *The Church and People on the Move* (Vatican City, 1978).

domestic workers who often have limited legal rights, are excluded from social security benefits and face multiple disadvantages.¹⁴²

Popularly, people from less developed countries migrate to other industrializing countries to seek for opportunities to change their economic state. In the last decades, there were 6.1 million Asian migrants working in other countries, but within Asia, especially East and Southeast Asia. In the Middle East, there are about 8.7 million contract employees worked in the Gulf oil countries, such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, and United Arab Emirates. There are hundreds million people moving from rural areas to the new industrial areas, particularly in China and India. Within Asia, there are some 2.6 million people leaving their homes every year finding jobs.¹⁴³ In the Middle East, millions of female Asians work in many areas such as domestic workers, nurses, sales clerks and other services. In the newly industrialized countries in East and Southeast Asia also demand for foreign domestic workers.¹⁴⁴

As one of the biggest issues in the present time, Nguyen asserts, “[t]he contemporary trends of labor migration in Asia, particularly of feminization in migration, have caused serious issues and raised many concerns about the treatment of the vulnerable migrants.”¹⁴⁵ Therefore, facing the complexities and concerns of this current worldwide issue, especially in Asia, how do all members of the Church, typically missionaries who work in Asian soil, respond to issues of migration and look for appropriate solutions to help migrants? Should the Church associate with governments to deal with this problem? The Vatican document “Starting Afresh from

¹⁴² Yu Kojima, “International Female Migration and Trafficking Continuum in Asia,” *Development Issues* 11/2 (November 2009): 11-13, esp. 11.

¹⁴³ Nguyen, “Current Trends of Migration in Asia: Prospects and Challenges,” 161.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 160-162.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

Christ: Towards a Renewed Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees” expresses: “The Church cannot remain indifferent in the wake of the present plight of migrants and refugees. She wants to share their joys and grief, there where they are, and be with them in their search for a better and safer life, worthy of being children of God.”¹⁴⁶

God created men and women in his image. Therefore, as God’s children, all must be equally treated with the fullness of human dignity and human rights. This reminds Christians to open mind and heart by offering a genuine and suitable welcome, sharing together as brothers and sisters at the same table, and working side by side to improve the quality of life for society’s marginalized members. Edwina Gateley writes eloquently: “It is time for all of us who follow Christ to recognize him and to proclaim him. It is time to be prophetic about the Christ we know is present in the folks who are pushed aside, dismissed, left out, undermined, underfed, unhoused, or simply unseen and unheard.”¹⁴⁷

Summary

This chapter overviewed Asia as the context of doing mission in the light of the new evangelization. Three important aspects were discussed: the people of Asia and their setting, key constants in Asia, and contemporary challenges and issues. These realities of Asia contain both challenges and opportunities that missionaries who work for Asian people should seriously consider.

¹⁴⁶ This quotation is retrieved from Final Document, Part I, no. 3 (November 2003), “Starting Afresh from Christ: Towards a Renewed Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees” by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of the Migrants and Itinerant People, on Vatican website: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_2004_001_Migrants_Vcongress_%20findoc_en.html (accessed on March 11, 2017).

¹⁴⁷ Edwina Gateley, “Finding Christ in the Margins: Excerpts from a New Book,” *America* 189/14 (2003):18, quoted in Stephen Bevans, “Mission among Migrants, Mission of Migrants: Mission of the Church,” in *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, eds. Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campese (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 95.

CHAPTER II

MISSION IN ASIA

Introduction

Mission, in terms of the world religions, is “a cross-cultural passage over the boundary between Jesus Christ and its absence.”¹⁴⁸ In the words of Kirk, mission is “fundamental to our self-definition.”¹⁴⁹ According to Castro, “Our life in this world is life in mission. Life has a purpose only to the extent that it has a missionary dimension.”¹⁵⁰

This chapter focuses on mission. It starts with the discussion of the Biblical foundation of mission. Then, a search for mission in the light of the teachings of the Church will be discussed. Finally, this is followed by a reflection on mission theology and its features that might be helpful for doing mission in Asia.

A. Biblical Foundation of Mission

1. Old Testament

Why begin our understanding of mission with the Old Testament? For Christian theology, there is “no New Testament divorced from the Old.”¹⁵¹ As St. Augustine said: “In the Old Testament, the New is concealed, and in the New the Old is revealed.”

¹⁴⁸ W. J. Danker, “Preface,” in Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name?* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), xi.

¹⁴⁹ J. Andrew Kirk, “Christian Mission in Multifaith Situations,” in *Theology and Religions: A Dialogue*, ed. Viggo Mortensen (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 154.

¹⁵⁰ Emilio Castro, quoted in J. Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission? – Theological Explorations* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), 31.

¹⁵¹ David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigms in Theology of Mission*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, American Society of Missiology Series 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 16.

While it can be claimed that “the New Testament is essentially a book about mission,” according to David Bosch, “even so, the Old Testament is fundamental to the understanding of mission in the New.”¹⁵²

The God who in the Old Testament identified himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and who disclosed to Moses his personal name, Yahweh, is the God of the whole world (Exod 3: 5-7). John A. McIntosh defines God’s mission as doing everything possible to communicate salvation to the world.¹⁵³ Thus, God’s universal purpose is actually the “basis for the missionary message of the Old Testament.”¹⁵⁴ Generally, God’s creation was his first mission. Among all creatures, human beings were created in the “image of God” (Gen 1:28-29) to continue his mission on earth. By choosing people, especially of Israel as his own people, God gave them a command to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28; 9:1). In the expression of Lucien Legrand, “[t]he God of historical election of Israel is also the God of cosmic benedictions.”¹⁵⁵ Therefore, God’s mission through his chosen people was “to bless all nations on earth”¹⁵⁶ and to save those who turned to him (Isa 45:22). It means that God had a plan, not only for a particular group of people, but for all, as J. H. Bavinck points out that “from the first page to the last the Bible has the whole world in view, and its divine plan of salvation is unfolded as pertaining to the whole world.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Ibid., 17.

¹⁵³ John A. McIntosh, “*Missio Dei*,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000): 631- 632.

¹⁵⁴ Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 17.

¹⁵⁵ Lucien Legrand, *Unity and Plurality*, trans., Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 14.

¹⁵⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 99-100.

¹⁵⁷ Johan Herman Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, trans. David Hugh Freeman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 11.

God has a mission and he needs people, especially chosen ones, to participate in his mission to accomplish it (Gen 12:1-3; Exod 19:4-6; Psalms 67). God intends to “bring the nations to Jerusalem to worship him there together with his covenant people.”¹⁵⁸ Therefore, in the words of Johannes Blauw, “Israel is called, under the figure of the Servant, to bring justice to the nations, and to bring light to the nations.”¹⁵⁹ In God’s plan and purpose, Israel was “a communicating nation.”¹⁶⁰

Particularly, God expected his chosen people to bring justice to the nations, to be the covenant for the people, and to be “a light to the nations” (Isa 42:6; 49:6).¹⁶¹ Firstly, bringing justice to the nations means to love and care for the widow, the orphan, the alien, and the poor.¹⁶² This justice cannot be a judicial element or any ordinary kind of power but “a corporate servanthood”¹⁶³ and “a spiritual one.”¹⁶⁴ Especially in Isaiah 1:27 and Proverb 21:3, the combined expression “justice and righteousness” can be applied as “a constitutive element of authentic religion.”¹⁶⁵ Hence, the chosen people have to “bring true religion, the right way and ‘manner,’ for the nations to follow.”¹⁶⁶ Secondly, to be the covenant for the people means “to live up to the identity of the covenant: ‘to be faithful.’”¹⁶⁷ According to Israel’s history, God has brought the fathers and mothers from Egypt, through the desert, to the Promised Land, Canaan. Then, God

¹⁵⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (2014), 19.

¹⁵⁹ Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church*, 32.

¹⁶⁰ Walter C. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 11.

¹⁶¹ Norman K. Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).

¹⁶² See Exod 23:9; Deut 10:17-19; Zech 7:10; Mal 3:5; Jer 22:3; Ezek 22:7.

¹⁶³ John Howard Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 51.

¹⁶⁴ Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 59.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas L. Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets: Their Stories, Sayings and Scrolls* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2007), 109.

¹⁶⁶ Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 59.

¹⁶⁷ Yoder, *Theology of Mission*, 58.

chose them as his own people and made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. God's ideal for Israel was that "[...] if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Exod 19:5-6). God called Israel to an ethical distinctiveness (Lev 11:44, 45; 18:3; Micah 6:6-8). The Israelites were to be committed to a holy life, because only in this way could they live up to the glory of God and his name, attract people to him, and the nations could see their wisdom (Deut 4:6; Isa 58:8; Ezek 36:23). In addition, Moses' speech to Israel, when he stressed the importance of obedience to God and his law (Deut 4:5-8), implies the visibility of some kind of missionary activities of Israel. Therefore, they should be the means of bringing people to God and "all the Gentiles and nations are to be consolidated in the same covenant that Yahweh has made with Israel."¹⁶⁸

Thirdly, in Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6, "a light to the nations" means, "Israel's witness to Yahweh must be one of corporate servanthood for the sake of the Gentiles."¹⁶⁹ Johannes Verkuyl describes the mission of Israel and the main function of prophets in this way:

The prophets never tire of reminding Israel that her election is not a privilege which she may selfishly keep for herself; election is a call to service. It involves a duty to witness among the nations. Israel must be a sign to the other nations that Yahweh is both Creator and Liberator. On Servant song (Isa 49:6) refers to Israel's mandate to become a light to the nations ... But however hot their righteous anger burned against Israel's disobedience, the prophets kept on reminding Israel to the very end of her mandate to be present among the people as distinct people and a royal priesthood.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 60.

¹⁶⁹ Yoder, *Theology of Mission*, 52.

¹⁷⁰ Johannes Verkuyl, "The Biblical Foundation for the Worldwide Mission Mandate," in *Perspectives*, 3rd edition, eds. Ralph Winter & Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), 29.

It is clear from Genesis 12:2-3 – receiving the Lord’s blessing – that Abraham should live for others. Kaiser says that this text provides “the formative theology” for “a divine program to glorify himself by bringing salvation to all on planet earth.”¹⁷¹ One interpreter claims, “Abraham was a missionary because he leaves and goes out to receive some promise that is not defined but which has to do with being a blessing to the world.”¹⁷² Moreover, prophets of God did not only prophesize about their own people, but also about many nations as well, like “God will judge all,” (Jer 46-51; Ezek 25-32; Amos 1-2; Jonah; Obadiah). Peters states that “it is a profound fact that ‘the [Psalms] is missionary preaching par excellence’” and “one of the greatest missionary books in the world.”¹⁷³ God was concerned with all nations, and the message of the Old Testament people transcended Israel’s borders, e.g., the nations will come to Jerusalem, bringing tribute (Isa 18:7); they will learn the Law (Psalms 67), etc. God also provided warnings to people with a purpose: repentance (Gen 6:3; Jonah 3).

Accordingly, to be a light to the nations is a duty to proclaim the goodness of God to all people. The Baptist Old Testament scholar, Harold Rowley says that “if there is only one God, then that God must be God for all people and that the election of a particular human group to know this one true God automatically calls them to become God’s proclaimers.”¹⁷⁴

In the Old Testament, God himself was a missionary and the chosen people were his agents to fulfill his mission. The history of Israel revealed the continuation of God’s involvement with the nations. It was God’s purpose to elect Israel for salvation of the

¹⁷¹ Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 13.

¹⁷² Yoder, *Theology of Mission*, 49.

¹⁷³ George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 115-16. See also Psalms 2, 33, 57:9; 66, 67, 72, 98, 100, 117, 145:11-21; 119:46; 126:2-3.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

whole world. Therefore, with God's accompany – the God who was active in past history will also be the God of the future – the chosen people were responsible to bring justice to the nations, to be covenant for the peoples, and to be the light to the Gentiles.

2. New Testament

The New Testament is a “missionary document.”¹⁷⁵ Similarly, Johannes Verkuyl, the European mission scholar, adds:

From beginning to end, the New Testament is a book of mission. It owes its very existence to the missionary work of the early Christian Churches, both Jewish and Hellenistic. The Gospels are, as it were, “live recordings” of missionary preaching, and the Epistles are not so much some form of missionary apologetic as they are authentic and actual instruments of mission work.¹⁷⁶

In the New Testament, the *missio Dei* is more clearly centralized in which God the Father sent his Son Jesus who in turn sent his disciples to continue his message under the guidance of the Spirit.¹⁷⁷ From the beginning, God has been reaching out to human beings out of love through the work of the Spirit. Two SVD missiologists affirm:

From the first nanosecond of time, God has been there, in the fullness of God's Mystery, through the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, as it were, God's “inside out” in the world. She is God's complete presence, palpable, able to be experienced, and yet elusive, like the wind.¹⁷⁸

Mission is the work of the Triune God, especially seen in Acts, that according to William J. Larkin:

It is common to recognize that Luke's presentation of mission in Acts is less about the “Acts of the Apostles” than about the “Acts of the Holy Spirit,” less about mission of the Church than about the mission of God. [...]. For Luke's narrative portrays each person of the Godhead as a “sending one,” both in commissioning and promoting mission. Each person of the Trinity is also a “sent one,” a direct agent of mission, as well as a participant working through human

¹⁷⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (2014), 15 and 55.

¹⁷⁶ Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, trans. Dale Cooper (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 101-102.

¹⁷⁷ See Legrand, *Unity and Plurality*, xiv.

¹⁷⁸ Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 11.

agents. Finally, Luke does not hesitate to emphasize that the results of mission are divine results.¹⁷⁹

From the beginning, “God has been the great initiator of mission.”¹⁸⁰ He continually seeks to initiate reconciliation between himself and all humankind by sending his Son in the power of the Spirit to reconcile the world to himself.¹⁸¹ Accordingly, to recognize God’s mission is to look at Jesus through his words and deeds, for “God is like Jesus.”¹⁸²

Jesus, the Savior of the world (John 4:42), came to this world to seek and save what was lost (Luke 19:10), such as Nicodemus (John 3), the Samaritan woman (John 4), and the stories about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (Luke 15). He also taught the people everywhere in different groups (Matt 5:1, 2): on a mountain (Matt 5:1-2), in the synagogue (Matt 4:23; Mark 1:21), by the seaside (Mark 2:13), in the temple (Matt 26:55), etc. Hence, S. Greenway says, “The Gospel portrays Jesus as the Missionary Messiah.”¹⁸³ The New Testament shows that the purpose of Jesus’ signs is to make a change in human beings such as the blind see, the deaf hear, the crippled walk, the poor receive good news, the dead are resurrected, etc. (Isa 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19; 7:22). Above all, his mission is a mission of love – incarnation, suffering, death on a cross, and resurrection – for the union, reconciliation and salvation of humankind (John 17:20-21; Col 1:20; Eph 2:14).

¹⁷⁹ William J. Larkin and Joel F. William, *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 174-175.

¹⁸⁰ G. Van Rhee, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 14.

¹⁸¹ Robin A. Parry, *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2005), 58.

¹⁸² Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 12.

¹⁸³ Roger S. Greenway, *Go & Make Disciples: An Introduction to Christian Missions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 1999), 39.

After his resurrection from death, Jesus did not leave his disciples alone but he sent the Holy Spirit to be his disciples' advocate and to maintain his mission on earth through his agents (Acts 1:8). Thus, Christopher Wright defines mission in these words: "Fundamentally, our mission [...] means our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation."¹⁸⁴

Participation in God's mission in the New Testament can be understood as following the Great Commission¹⁸⁵ that Jesus himself commanded his disciples and also believers to make disciples by going out, baptizing, and teaching.

To make disciples, it is necessary for someone to be sent out (Matt 28:18-20; John 20:21; Rom 10:14-17), and to proclaim and witness the Gospel of God to the entire world (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47). Preaching the Gospel is one of the most important aspects for those who are sent. This is a reason why Paul declared that "woe to me, if I do not proclaim the gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16), and he also urged Timothy to "proclaim the message" and to "be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable" (2 Tim 4:1, 2). Consequently, people who want to follow Jesus must believe in him as their Savior and Lord and serve him as the living and true God (1 Thess 1:9), then they are to be publicly baptized as a testimony before others. Above all, the new baptized people have to change their way of living by obeying and practicing all the teachings of Jesus and to reproduce other disciples or followers of Jesus to fulfill his commands.

Besides the duty of making disciples, in the New Testament there is another important aspect of mission, namely a humble service (Mark 10:42-45; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2:5-11). Mission is not only to evangelize but also to work with people and to serve

¹⁸⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 22.

¹⁸⁵ See Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8, 10:42.

them. Moreover, the disciples who follow Jesus – the Servant Lord, must be one of servanthood. It is found in Mark 10:45, “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” The evangelist John proved his Master’s word by showing the washing of the feet of his disciples (John 13:5) and the death of Jesus on the cross (John 19:17-37). Therefore, disciples are called, according to Schweiser, “to attach great importance to what takes place through Jesus and with him. They are called to delegate their cares and worries and anxieties”¹⁸⁶ in order to serve not for their own sake but for the reign (kingdom) of God (Matt 4:17) and “the whole of God’s creation.”¹⁸⁷

Because of love for humanity (John 3:16), Jesus showed a reality that he lived and died for the values of peace, justice and nonviolence.¹⁸⁸ This was one of the instruments of service that Jesus rendered to human beings.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, disciples and believers who are the continuation of Jesus’ mission (John 20:21; Acts 1:16) must do what he did (John 13:15; 12:32; 1 Peter 2:21) by taking care of the poor, the sick, the discouraged, etc. (Acts 2:42-47; 3:1-10; 4:32-37; 6:1-7) and must “be the visible demonstration of God’s healing and restoring work in this world” (Matt 5:4; Acts 13:47).¹⁹⁰

The followers of Jesus have to practice and promote justice, mercy and love everywhere, and to bear witness (Acts 1:8) to the truth and righteousness of Christ in

¹⁸⁶ Eduard Schweizer, *Jesus*, trans. David E. Green (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1971), 41.

¹⁸⁷ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 22.

¹⁸⁸ Thorwald Lorenzen, *Resurrection, Discipleship, Justice: Affirming the Resurrection of Jesus Christ Today* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2003), 167.

¹⁸⁹ Joseph Comblin, *The Meaning of Mission: Jesus, Christians, and the Wayfaring Church*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1977), 75.

¹⁹⁰ Matthias Wenk, “Reconciliation and Renunciation of Status as God’s New Testament Thoughts on Final Aim for Humanity on the Church’s Mission and Unity,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 19 (January 1, 2010): 44-58, esp. 45.

society.¹⁹¹ In doing so, their light will shine forth before others and people will see the good works and give glory to the Father in heaven (Matt 5:16). Consequently, the world will be reconciled with God (2 Cor 5:19-20), will see the glorification of God (Rom 8:17-18), and saved by God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 15:2; Eph 2:5-9).

In the New Testament, *missio Dei* is fundamental, especially through the words and deeds of Jesus and the help of the Holy Spirit, for all models of mission. After the Ascension of Jesus, his chosen people continued his mission of love and service with the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the world. For Christ, they were willingly giving up houses, lands, positions, even their own lives (2 Tim 4:6-8). Through him, they preached his Gospel for a better world and for the salvation of humankind. They moved from winning converts to building up the community (the Church) to care for human issues. This community will be light, salt, and leaven in this world (Matt 5:13-16) and be a model for other ecclesial communities. Concerning this idea, John H. Yoder puts it, “The primary social structure through which the gospel works to change other structures is that of the Christian community.”¹⁹² Therefore, it is necessary for the continuation of Jesus’ mission that Christians must rely on Jesus Christ and follow what he said and did two thousand years ago. In summary, Norman E. Thomas says, “If we are in Christ we have the Spirit of service of Christ ... So that we should evangelize and promote social action. They are inseparable.”¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Norman E. Thomas (ed.), *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity*, American Society of Missiology 20 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 67.

¹⁹² John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 157.

¹⁹³ Thomas (ed.), *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity*, 144.

B. Mission in the Light of the Teachings of the Church

After the second Vatican, there are many documents of the Church for mission. In this section, however, only selected documents will be discussed. According to Stephen Bevans, “it is time to bring the essential missionary nature of the church to the forefront of our ecclesiological reflections, given today’s global ecclesial reality on the one hand, and the ‘new chapter of evangelization’¹⁹⁴ into which we have entered on the other.”¹⁹⁵

1. Vatican II: *Ad Gentes*

Although the Church has practiced her mission since she was founded, *Ad Gentes* was the first document from an ecumenical council for Church’s missionary activity. Bevans points out that it was a document with a particularly turbulent history and spanned the whole period of the Council from the ante-preparatory phase in 1959 to its promulgation in the very last session in 1965.¹⁹⁶ Among the members of the commission, there were two groups working on the draft: one group favored a canonical approach that focused on the reform of *Propaganda Fide* (the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith), and another group desired the missionary work of the Church as the theological exposition of her nature and her purpose.¹⁹⁷ As the various drafts of

¹⁹⁴ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), 1, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed on March 17, 2017). Hereafter EG.

¹⁹⁵ Stephen Bevans, “Mission as the Nature of the Church: Developments in Catholic Ecclesiology,” *Australian eJournal of Theology* 21/3 (December, 2014): 184-196, esp. 184, http://aejt.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/694298/AEJT_Mission_as_the_Nature_of_the_Church_Developments_in_Catholic_Ecclesiology_Bevans.pdf (accessed on April 12, 2017).

¹⁹⁶ See Stephen Bevans, “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*,” in *Discovering Vatican II: Evangelization and Religious Freedom*, eds. Stephen B. Bevans and Jeffrey Gross (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 9-29.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10-12, 14.

Ad Gentes were being revised, Pope Paul VI took the unusual step of attending in person during the working session of the commission.¹⁹⁸ Finally, the Decree Concerning the Church's Missionary Activity was approved by receiving the highest number of affirmative votes and was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on the 7th of December 1965.¹⁹⁹ It is an important decree in the history of the theology of mission with a new and solid direction for Catholic missions at the end of the twentieth century.²⁰⁰

Ad Gentes provides many aspects for the life of faith. On the one hand, Christians are called to unite with the universal Church as one people, one Body of Christ. On the other hand, missionaries have to preserve and respect the particular genius, disposition and cultures within each society for the richness of the universal Church. However, to connect with mission, there are two main features of the Decree that the writer wants to concentrate on as a "model" for many missionary activities. They are mission of the Church as *missio Dei* and mission of the Church as evangelization.

Firstly, the comprehensive presentation of *Ad Gentes* can be called a *missio Dei* (mission of God) theology, that the foundation of all missionary activities is based on the Trinity. In *Ad Gentes*, God himself revealed and intervened in human history. The Fathers declared that the missionary nature of the Church comes from the universal saving will of God:

The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father; it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This plan flows from "fountain-like love," the love of God the Father. As the principle without principle from whom the Son is generated and from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son, God in his great and merciful kindness freely creates us and moreover, graciously calls us to share in his life and glory (AG 2).

¹⁹⁸ Michael G. Layugan, "The Conciliar Decree *Ad Gentes Divinitus*," *Missio Inter Gentes* 1/2 (July 2015): 5-64, esp. 47.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

²⁰⁰ Giuseppe Alberigo (ed.), *History of Vatican II*, vol. V, trans. Mathew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 451.

Hence, the mission of the Church must be regarded in Trinitarian mystery, especially in Christ's mission. Consequently, "the Church, urged on by the Spirit of Christ, must walk the road Christ himself walked, a way of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice even to death" (AG 5).

The Trinity becomes a model for the unity of the Church and Christian unity. That is a "tri-personal God"²⁰¹ – "the unity in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."²⁰² Lack of this unity or Christian division "openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature" (UR 1). Accordingly, the Apostle Paul wrote, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:4-6).

The missionary Church is called and sent to unfold God's salvific plan at all times in all places, "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Through the missionary Church, the quest for the living mysterious God must go on.²⁰³ The grace, love, and fellowship within the Tri-personal God draw us and all things back to divine *communio*.²⁰⁴

The second feature of *Ad Gentes* is evangelization that is taken from the Greek *eu-angelion* "good news" (Matthew and Mark) and *eu-angelizo* "to announce good

²⁰¹ See Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999).

²⁰² Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964), http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html (accessed on November 21, 2016). Hereafter UR.

²⁰³ See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 778.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

news” (Luke and Acts).²⁰⁵ *Ad Gentes* speaks of the purpose of missionary activity as “evangelization and the planting of the Church” among peoples where it has not yet taken root (AG 6). Therefore, missionaries are “sent out by the Church and going forth into the whole world, carry out the task of preaching the Gospel and planting the Church among peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ.” In other words, “[t]he proper purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization” (AG 6).

Concerning this evangelization of “salvation of soul,”²⁰⁶ Karl Rahner pressed his theory of “anonymous Christians”²⁰⁷ that according to Johannes Vorgrimler, the central idea of Rahner’s theology was “God’s self-communication.”²⁰⁸ It means that the power of God, our Savior is universal:

God our Savior ... desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all – this was attested at the right time (1Tim 2:3b-6).

Mission, therefore, is not only the Church going out and saving people. Rather, it is God creating and saving the world and this includes peoples, the natural world and indeed the cosmos as a whole.²⁰⁹ Mission has started already with “a movement from God to the world; the Church is viewed as an instrument for that mission [...]. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ Moises Silva (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 2, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 306.

²⁰⁶ This is taken from the prayers on the feast day of Saint Francis Xavier on December 3rd, in *The Roman Missal* (2011), 1007-1008.

²⁰⁷ See Karl Rahner, “Anonymous Christians,” *Theological Investigations* 6 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969): 390-98.

²⁰⁸ Herbert Vorgrimler, *Karl Rahner: His Life, Thought and Works* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1965), 82.

²⁰⁹ Stephen Spencer, *Christian Mission* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 12.

²¹⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (2014), 400.

In conclusion, although the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes* says little about justice and peace, economic development, the role of women or environmental concerns, and the theological meaning and value of culture seemed naive, yet it opened new perspectives in the Church's mission. As Avery Dulles claimed that the single most dramatic shift that has occurred within the Church since Vatican II has been the shift from a static, institutional model of being Church to a missionary-minded evangelistic self-understanding.²¹¹ Hence, the people of God must focus on *missio Dei* and the emergence of "evangelical Catholicism."²¹² However, to become more relevant for mission of postmodern times, especially in the context of multicultural Asia, is it necessary to shift from the term *missio ad gentes* to *missio inter gentes*?²¹³ The values of various cultures and societies that are concerned for mission today tell us that "the centralizing type of universality seemed to wane, giving place to the pluralism of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-12)."²¹⁴

2. Papal Teachings

a. Paul VI: *Ecclesiam Suam*

Paul VI was the first Pontiff to step outside the gates of the Vatican on apostolic journeys to other countries. With these pastoral journeys, he demonstrated his deep

²¹¹ See A. Dulles, "John Paul II and the New Evangelization: What does it mean?" in *Pope John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, eds. R. Martin and P. Williamson (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995): 1-39.

²¹² See G. Weigel, *Evangelical Catholicism: Deep Reform in the 21st Century Church* (New York: Basic, 2012).

²¹³ Antonio Pernia, "The State of Mission Today," *Verbum SVD* 55/1 (2014): 9-25, esp. 13.

²¹⁴ Felix Wilfred, "The Reception of Vatican II in a Multi-Religious Continent," *Concilium* 3 (2012): 116-121, esp. 117.

commitment to evangelization and the enhancement of healthy relationships between the Catholic Church and other communions and religions.²¹⁵

There are two “poles” that are connected with each other. On the one hand, Pope Paul VI called for awareness on account of a connection with Christ who is the unique mediator of humankind and the source of the Church’s very identity. On the other hand, the Pope calls for dialogue to connect with the world.²¹⁶

The theme of mission of dialogue in *Ecclesiam Suam* is very important for building up a bridge between the Church and the world, when Pope Paul VI said that “the sort of relationship for the Church to establish with the world should be more in the nature of a dialogue.”²¹⁷ The Incarnation, for Paul VI, is the dialogue *par excellence*: “Revelation, too, that supernatural link which God has established with [human being], can likewise be looked upon as a dialogue. In the Incarnation and in the Gospel it is God’s Word that speaks to us” (ES 70). The Pope added:

In Christ’s “conversation” with men, God reveals something of Himself, of the mystery of His own life, [...]. This relationship, this dialogue, which God the Father initiated and established with us through Christ in the Holy Spirit, is a very real one, [...]. We must examine it closely if we want to understand the relationship which we, the Church, should establish and foster with the human race (ES 70-71).

Therefore, the Church as the continuation of Christ, firstly, “must be gripped with an intense and unfailing desire to learn the ways of the Lord” (ES 41), and then to carry out her mission, the Church should be in harmony with those of Christ. The Church is distinguished from the world “does not mean that we are entirely separated from it. Nor does it mean that we are indifferent to it, afraid of it, or contemptuous of it

²¹⁵ Dulles, “John Paul II and the New Evangelization: What does it mean?” 27.

²¹⁶ Carlos Walker, *Missionary Pope: The Catholic Church and the Positive Elements of Other Religions in the Magisterium of Paul VI* (New York: IVE Press, 2009), 312.

²¹⁷ Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964), 78, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html (accessed on November 20, 2016). Hereafter ES.

(ES 63). It is said that the world can be saved by the Word of God who became man. Hence, one must identify himself to a certain degree with the forms of life of those to whom he wishes to bring the message of Christ (ES 87).

The subject of dialogue could be anything that touches people. Dialogue can be with anyone because the aim of it is the progress and development of the world. Here the Pope said:

The dialogue of salvation was made accessible to all. It applied to everyone without distinction (Col 3:11). Hence our dialogue too should be as universal as we can make it. That is to say, it must be catholic, made relevant to everyone, excluding only those who utterly reject it or only pretend to be willing to accept it (ES 76).

The duty received from Christ is that of spreading, offering, announcing salvation to others. All members of the Church should bear in mind the last mandate of Christ to his apostles before his Ascension, “Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). The term “apostles” defined their inescapable mission: it is “the source of our evangelical duty, our mandate to teach all nations, and our apostolic endeavor to strive for the eternal salvation of all [people] (ES 64). More clearly, the Church realizes that “[she] is the seed, [...], the leaven, the salt and the light of the world (ES 95). Hence, witness and proclamation of the gospel should be done in “bold humility” and “prophetic dialogue.”²¹⁸

Dialogue can be done with people of different religious traditions. A sharing of the spiritual richness of people of different religions leads them to work together in search of God and for spiritual fulfillment. God himself is the original dialogue, that is, “a certain relationship between God and [human beings]” (ES 70). By searching for methods and ways of promoting interreligious dialogue, Christians know their partners honestly, so that in turn their partners can know and esteem Christian doctrine and

²¹⁸ See Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (2014), 501; Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*.

life.²¹⁹ Therefore, “[t]he Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. It has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make” (ES 65).

In *Ecclesiam Suam*, another important element of the dialogue in the Church’s mission is that,

Charity is the key to everything. It sets all to rights. There is nothing which charity cannot achieve and renew. Charity ‘beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things’” (1 Cor 13:7) (ES 56).

Dialogue, according to the late Bishop Fulton Sheen, “is the same as the manifestation of love towards the whole of mankind. In this way, the concept of mission has been expanded.”²²⁰ In dialogue, “truth is wedded to charity and understanding to love” (ES 82). Moreover, dialogue lives from friendly relationship and service for the profession of the Christian faith (ES 88). As the practical extending of Christian charity, the call to dialogue is one of various ways to open the door of the Church to the world.²²¹ Borrowing the words of Peter Hebblethwaite in describing Pope Paul VI’s vision of dialogue, “he saw in everyone a brother, to be helped if possible, perhaps to be saved, at any rate to be listened to and learned from. He moved easily and without strain from the dialogues with God in prayer to the more difficult dialogue with men who start from different premises.”²²²

All members of the Church has to work in collaboration with other religious believers in various fields such as nation-building, protection of human rights, religious freedom and education. Through the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* Pope Paul VI

²¹⁹ J. H. Kroeger, “Milestones in Interreligious Dialogue,” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 7 (1997): 232-237, esp. 233.

²²⁰ Walker, *Missionary Pope*, 325.

²²¹ Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Question for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 115.

²²² Peter Hebblethwaite, *The Year of Three Popes* (London: Collins Fount, 1978), 7.

presented a theology of dialogue and collaboration with other religions. He affirmed the need and importance of this new approach to other religions.²²³

b. John Paul II: *Redemptoris Missio*

The Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*,²²⁴ entitled in English “The Mission of the Redeemer” is a document that “represents a new synthesis of the Church’s teaching about evangelization in the contemporary world.”²²⁵ Its purpose is to proclaim the Gospel effectively with a deeper awareness of the theological meaning and value of culture.²²⁶ It was necessary to enlarge the understanding of the local culture, make adaptations and develop an indigenous clergy. Through *Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul II set out a pastoral plan for the Church when he mentioned “new evangelization” for the first decades of the twenty-first century. When visiting Haiti in 1983, the Pope had spoken of the need for an “evangelization new in its ardor, new in its methods and new in its expression.”²²⁷ Basically, the Encyclical Letter developed this and identified the three main types of evangelization, such as proclamation for non-Christians (RM 2), pastoral care for believers (RM 3, 34), and new evangelization for those who live a life far away from Christ and his Gospel (RM 33).

²²³ George Varghese Tothamkara, “Church Documents on Interreligious Dialogue,” *Vincentian Charism and Formation in Asian Pacific* (February 5, 2011), <https://cccprf.wordpress.com/2011/02/05/church-documents-on-interreligious-dialogue/> (accessed on November 22, 2016).

²²⁴ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html (accessed on December 2, 2016). Hereafter RM.

²²⁵ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), 114.

²²⁶ See A. Beards, “Christianity, ‘Interculturality’ and Salvation: Perspectives from Lonergan,” *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 161-200.

²²⁷ See John Paul II “The Task of the Latin American Bishop,” *Origins* 12 (March 24, 1983): 659-62; Rino Fisichella, *The New Evangelization* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2012), 8.

Based on the Trinity as the original source, “[t]he Council emphasized the Church’s ‘missionary nature,’ basing it in a dynamic way on the Trinitarian mission itself” (RM 1). It is focused on “faith in Jesus Christ, as is stated in our Trinitarian profession of faith” (RM 4). By the redemption of Jesus Christ, everyone will be united with him till the end of time (RM 4). Therefore, taken from the idea of the priestly prayer of Jesus for unity in John 17:21-23, the Pope said that “[t]he ultimate purpose of mission is to enable people to share in the communion which exists between the Father and the Son” (RM 23). To accomplish this purpose, the Church must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit who is “the principal agent of the whole of the Church’s mission” (RM 21).

In the context of the Trinitarian foundation of mission in *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II noted that the center of evangelization is to proclaim Jesus Christ and his offer of salvation “to all people, as a gift of God’s grace and mercy” (RM 44). For a fuller understanding of the primary task of the Church’s mission, Avery Dulles defined evangelization in these words:

[T]he verb ‘to evangelize’ means to proclaim with authority and power the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. The evangelist is one sent by Christ and endowed with a corresponding charism from the Holy Spirit. The preached word comes from God and arouses saving faith in those who believe it.²²⁸

The Church, the service of the kingdom (RM 20), continues the mission of Jesus by proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom through words and works. This proclamation is to bring people to encounter Christ and to help them obtain the fullness of life that is in unity with Christ and with one another (John 17:21-23). This personal encounter that evangelization must build on is “a complete and sincere adherence to Christ and his Gospel” (RM 46).

²²⁸ Avery Cardinal Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), 1.

While some theologians claim that Christ does not represent a unique salvation, Pope John Paul II strongly affirmed that Christ is the only Redeemer of humanity (RM 5). According to Manuel Urena, this was a contrary term with what he called “parallel salvific mediation.”²²⁹ In fact, the Pope did not mean that salvation is only for those who believe in Christ and belong to the Church. By recognizing that, he went on saying:

Today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept gospel revelation or to enter into the Church. The social and cultural conditions in which they live do not permit this, and frequently they have been brought up in other religious traditions (RM 10).

In *Redemptoris Missio*, the Holy Spirit “who sows the ‘seeds of the Word’” (RM 28) has an important role in the mission of Jesus and the Church. To affirm that, John Paul II pointed out:

This is the same Spirit who was at work in the Incarnation and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and who is at work in the Church. He is therefore not an alternative to Christ, nor does he fill a sort of void which is sometimes suggested as existing between Christ and the Logos. Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions it serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit, “so that as perfectly human, he would save all human beings and sum up all things” (RM29).

The Pope continued to say that “the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person... The Spirit’s presence and activity affect not only the individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions” (RM 28).

Another aspect of mission in *Redemptoris Missio* is pastoral care of the faithful. The Church is called “to serve human beings by manifesting to them the love of God made present in Jesus Christ” (RM 2). Therefore, evangelizing mission must aim at nourishing the faithful by preaching the Gospel, celebrating the Sacraments, guiding them to live as disciples of Christ, and uniting them into a community of Christians (RM 34).

²²⁹ Manuel Urena, “The Missionary Impulse in the Church according to *Redemptoris Missio*,” *Communio* 19 (1992): 94-102, esp. 97.

The Pope said that “[t]he witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission” (RM 42). Therefore, the ways that make the Gospel be easily understood by Christians and non-Christians are works of charity, the struggle for justice, the promotion of human rights, community building, and projects for human development. In other words, economic or social development must go hand in hand with evangelization. This the Pope recalled to his message to the Clergy and Religious in Jakarta on October 10, 1989, “[a]uthentic human development must be rooted in an ever deeper evangelization” (RM 58). Fundamentally, it is the task of the Church that she should promote and defend this dignity at every opportunity. John Paul II described this vision as a prophetic humanism. In the words of Dulles, “the central and unifying task of the Church, for John Paul II, is to rediscover and promote the inviolable dignity of every human person.”²³⁰ Moreover, for the success of missionaries, the Pope stressed that the inner joy comes from faith so that “the one who proclaims the ‘Good News’ must be a person who has found true hope in Christ” (RM 91).

In addition, in promulgating this Encyclical Letter, Pope John Paul II tended to promote “a new awareness that missionary activity is something for all Christians, for all dioceses and parishes, Church institutions and associations” (RM 2.1). For the rekindling of faith in persons and cultures, John Paul II emphasized, “the moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization” (RM 3). The new evangelization is the responsibility of the whole members of the Church. Pope John Paul II stated that “mission is seen as a community commitment, a responsibility of the local church” (RM 27). It is a matter of awakening to the need for Christians in secular

²³⁰ Avery Dulles, “The Prophetic Humanism of John Paul II,” in *Church and Society: The Laurence J. McGinley Lectures, 1988-2007* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 143.

culture. Therefore, the new evangelization “enlarges the understanding of mission by taking into account the different contexts of today’s world.”²³¹

John Paul II has stated that “[i]nter-religious dialogue is a part of the Church’s evangelizing mission” (RM 55). In *Redemptoris Missio*, “the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in inter-religious dialogue ... These two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical, as though they were interchangeable” (RM 55).

The central identity of the Church is the proclamation of Jesus Christ as the redeemer of humankind through his life, death and resurrection. This proclamation of Christ and the new evangelization need to pay attention to the cultural meaning and values and lead people to encounter with Christ. This is the goal of the Church that all of her members are called to evangelize and reach out the Gospel of Christ to humankind (Mt 28:18-20).

3. Synod of Bishops

a. Synod of Bishops (1974)

The Third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was convened by Paul VI in 1974, ten years after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. Paul VI mandated the Synod Assembly to “reflect on the topic of evangelization in the light of [...] Vatican Council II, which had ended some nine years earlier.”²³² The Synod

²³¹ Richard Rymarz, “John Paul II and the ‘New Evangelization’: Origins and Meaning,” 17-18, http://www.acu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/225396/Rymarz_evangelization_GH.pdf (accesses on November 26, 2016).

²³² Kenneth Boyack, “Go and Make Disciples: The United States Bishops’ National Plan for Catholic Evangelization,” in *John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, eds. Ralph Martin and Peter Williamson (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 72.

articulated means of committing the Church more actively on evangelization and advised the Pope on considering the present challenges facing the Church.

The Synod represented many months of serious preparation at both the national and regional levels²³³ but it “concluded with only a short and disappointing Declaration”²³⁴ because the participants could not come up with a document unanimously accepted by all parties involved in the session, without any compromise.²³⁵

This Synod ended in “a kind of ecclesiastical gridlock,”²³⁶ as the final text prepared by Cardinal Wojtyla, the appointed relator, and the two theologian-secretaries, were not accepted by the Synod participants.²³⁷ One view was espoused by Father Domenico Grasso who represented “the older classical model of the Roman School,” while the other was adopted by Father Duraisamy Simon Amalorpavadass who proposed “a new voice from the contemporary world of experience.”²³⁸

Consequently, the Synod of Bishops decided to forward the documents to the Pope, telling him that they “awaited from him a fresh forward impulse, capable of creating, within a Church still more firmly rooted in the underlying power and strength

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Louis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 111.

²³⁵ See Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), 240.

²³⁶ George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 221.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Rembert Weakland, “Archbishop’s Welcome,” *CTSA Proceedings* 56 (2001): viii, quoted in Peter N. V. Hai, “Lay People in the Asian Church: A Study of John Paul II’s Theology of the Laity in Ecclesia in Asia with Reference to the Documents of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences,” *Australian eJournal of Theology* 10 (May 2007): 1-22, http://aejt.com.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/378076/AEJT_10.4_Hai_Lay_People.pdf (accessed on April 11, 2017).

of Pentecost, a new period of evangelization.”²³⁹ It took a complete year, after the submission of the documents, to issue the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*). This was, according to Weigel, “one of the finest documents of Paul VI’s pontificate.”²⁴⁰

The reasons for the writing of the document, as noted by Paul VI:

This is what we wish to do now at the close of the Holy Year in the course of which the Church, striving to proclaim the gospel to all men has sought to fulfill its function as the herald of the good news brought to us by Christ and promulgated through her by virtue of these two fundamental exhortations: ‘Put on the new nature and be reconciled to God.’²⁴¹

A further argument was the fittingness to use the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council to address the Church’s responsibility towards evangelization. Hence, on the one hand, the Pope wanted “to renew the Church’s efforts in carrying out the agenda set forth by Vatican II,”²⁴² while on the other hand, “to ensure that the Church of the twentieth century would emerge ever better equipped to proclaim the gospel to the people of this century” (EN 2).

The following discussion will focus on the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. In this document, Pope Paul VI used mainly the word “evangelization” instead of “mission.” However, they have the same meaning and “can be used interchangeably.”²⁴³ The centrality of mission is underlined in the first chapter of the document entitled, “From Christ the evangelizer to the evangelizing Church”. Paul VI stated, “As an evangelizer, Christ first of all proclaims a kingdom, the kingdom of God; and this is so important that, by comparison, everything else

²³⁹ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), 2, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html (accessed on December 3, 1016). Hereafter EN.

²⁴⁰ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 221.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures*, 111.

²⁴³ Bevans, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 144.

becomes ‘the rest,’ which is ‘given in addition.’ Only the kingdom therefore is absolute and it makes everything else relative” (EN 8). Christ who preached about the kingdom of God and witnessed it by his works of healing and exorcism (EN 11-12) “transforms the Church from an evangelized to an evangelizing community.”²⁴⁴ This is why “evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize” (EN 14).

Therefore, the Church, the continuity of Jesus’ mission, needs to be evangelized herself before she takes on the task of evangelization. It must constantly listen to the Word of God; it must constantly be on the road of conversion (EN 15). The church “is linked to evangelization in her very being (EN 15). In fact, evangelization is “not accomplished without her, and still less against her” (EN 16). Therefore, all members of the Church are called to participate in her mission: “the work of each individual member is important for the whole” (EN 15). In his concern to privilege the secular involvement of the laity, Paul VI wrote: “Lay people, whose particular vocation places them in the midst of the world and in charge of the most varied temporal tasks, must for this very reason exercise a very special form of evangelization” (EN 70).

Beside the importance of proclaiming the gospel, working for conversion and planting the church, there are other important dimensions that the Pope called “essential elements” (EN 17). First, the Church must bear witness through a vibrant life of the Christian community and the unity within the Church. If not, the church cannot be credible and “the work of evangelization will not get off the ground.”²⁴⁵ Today, people listen, the Pope said, “more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if [they do] listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (EN 41). Second, for the importance

²⁴⁴ Richard Rymarz, “John Paul II and the ‘New Evangelization’: Origins and Meaning,” 10.

²⁴⁵ Hebblethwaite, *The Year of Three Popes*, 18.

of the evangelization of cultures, the Pope stressed that it is “in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots” (EN 20).

Evangelization includes a commitment to full human development and especially to social justice. In the light of contemporary discussions of justice, particularly in Latin America, this was the first time in a Roman magisterial document using the word “liberation.” The Pope said:

[E]vangelization involves an explicit message, adapted to the different situations constantly being realized, about the rights and duties of every human being, about family life without which personal growth and development is hardly possible, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development – a message especially energetic today about liberation (EN 29).

Evangelization, then, is a theological and pastoral concept rich with ecclesial and missiological connotations. It is at the heart of the Church’s identity and mission.²⁴⁶ In fact, the goal of evangelization does not only aim at the proclamation of the Good News, but also the establishment of the kingdom of God in the world and in human hearts. Hence, evangelization should focus on the development and the uplifting of the human beings so that the human race will come to the knowledge of God and share the joy of the children of God through the Gospel preached to them.

b. Synod of Asian Bishops (1998)

The Asian Synod opened on April 19, 1998 with a solemn Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica, celebrated by Pope John Paul II. There were 252 participants, including 188 Synod Fathers with full voting rights and 64 participants with no voting rights. After various discussions of issues by the Synod and small groups, the “Final Message of the synod was approved during the twenty-first congregation. The Asian Synod was closed

²⁴⁶ Richard Rymarz, “John Paul II and the ‘New Evangelization’: Origins and Meaning,” 10.

by a solemn concelebrated Mass with John Paul II on May 14, 1998.²⁴⁷ Avery Dulles noted that the Asian Synod dealt with “the challenges to evangelization offered by the encounter with the local cultures and with world religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism.”²⁴⁸ In addition, Thomas Menamparampil, the special secretary of the synod, contended, “historically speaking, the Asian Synod was the most important ecclesial event for Asia from the time of the great Councils (Nicaea, Ephesus, Chalcedon).”²⁴⁹

The final step of synod was the promulgation of the Pope John Paul II’s Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* in New Delhi, India on November 6, 1999. With this document, he wished to share with the Church in Asia and throughout the world the fruits of the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops.²⁵⁰

After the promulgation of the *Ecclesia in Asia*, it was received with a great enthusiasm, but also with a sense of disappointment.²⁵¹ Michael Amaladoss asserted that the “Exhortation is a document for Asia. It is not an Asian document. It is not the voice of Asia. The tone and style are very un-Asian.”²⁵² Another Asian theologian, John M. Prior expressed his disappointment with the Exhortation saying that *Ecclesia in Asia* was “a papal document” that was “the Pope’s response to the voice of the Asian Bishops.” He made a remark that, in *Ecclesia in Asia* John Paul II quoted himself sixty-

²⁴⁷ Peter C. Phan, “Introduction: ‘A Moment of Grace,’” in *The Asian Synod: Text and Commentaries*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 3-4.

²⁴⁸ Avery Dulles, “John Paul II and the Advent of the New Millennium,” *America* 173 (9 December 1995): 1-15, esp. 14.

²⁴⁹ Thomas Menamparampil, “Asia Through Asian Eyes,” in *The Future of the Asian Churches: The Asian Synod and Ecclesia in Asia*, eds. James H. Kroeger and Peter C. Phan (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2002), 30.

²⁵⁰ James H. Kroeger, “Continuing Pentecost in Asia. Introducing ‘*Ecclesia in Asia*,’” in *The Future of the Asian Churches. The Asian Synod and ‘Ecclesia in Asia,’* eds. James H. Kroeger and Peter C. Phan (Philippines: Quezon City, 2002), 70.

²⁵¹ Peter C. Phan, “‘*Ecclesia in Asia*’: Challenges for Asian Christianity,” in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 249.

²⁵² Edmund Chia, “Of Fork and Spoon or Fingers and Chopsticks,” in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 275.

eight times while making “not a single direct reference to any intervention by an individual bishop, nor to interventions by bishops in the name of their conferences,” nor to “regional episcopal bodies such as the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) or the Council of Oriental Patriarchs (CPCO).²⁵³ Whatever the critical proclivities of Asian theologians on the *Ecclesia in Asia*, it somehow has many positive aspects to deal with the realities of the Asian people “that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10), through its teachings based on the mission of love and service of Jesus Christ.

The Exhortation is composed of seven parts dealing with the following themes: the Asian context, Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit as Lord and Giver of life, proclamation of Jesus in Asia communion and dialogue for mission, the service of human promotion, and Christians as witnesses to the Gospel. However, the Church’s mission in Asia focuses on three themes that are, for the writer, important in the sense of an Asian, including proclamation, inculturation, and interreligious dialogue.

Proclamation. John Paul II stated that the Church’s proclamation must be “in obedience to Christ’s command, in the knowledge that every person has the right to hear the Good News of God who reveals and gives himself in Christ” (EA 20a) – “the one and only Savior for all people” (EA 10). Putting it in another way, “there can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord,” the Pope emphasized (EA 19). However, his insistence on the need to explicitly proclaim Jesus as the universal and only Savior has received considerable attention from Catholic theologians, and generated a vigorous theological debate.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ See, for instance, Peter C. Phan, “Ecclesia in Asia: Challenges for Asian Christianity,” in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 249-261; John Mansford Prior, “Unfinished Encounter: A Note on the Voice and Tone of Ecclesia in Asia,” in *The Asian Synod*, 236-248; Luis Antonio Tagle, “The Challenges of Mission in Asia: A View from the Asian Synod,” in *The Asian Synod*, 212-221; Michael Amaladoss, “Mission in Asia: A Reflection on

With the awareness of the challenges of the “task of proclaiming Jesus in a way which enables the people of Asia to identify with him,” John Paul II stressed that “the presentation of Jesus Christ as the only Savior needs to follow a pedagogy which will introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of the mystery” (EA 20).

The value of “personal contact” requires the evangelizer “to take the situation of the listener to heart, so as to offer a proclamation adapted to the listener’s level of maturity, and in an appropriate form and language.” The participants of the Synod stressed also the need to “evangelize in a way that appeals to the sensibilities of Asian peoples” (EA 20). To look for the new ways of expressing the Christian faith in the Asian context, the Pope concluded:

The faith which the Church offers as a gift to her Asian sons and daughters cannot be confined within the limits of understanding and expression of any single human culture, for it transcends these limits and indeed challenges all cultures to rise to new heights of understanding and expression (EA20).

Therefore, “the Church must be open to the new and surprising ways in which the face of Jesus might be presented in Asia” (EA 20). One of these ways is inculturation.

Inculturation. Regarding the urgency of inculturation in Asia, the document stresses that on the one hand, “the Gospel and evangelization are [...] not identical with culture.” On the other hand, the Church, at first “transmits her truth,” and then she should “take from the various cultures the positive elements” to make the Christian faith becoming a “part of a people’s cultural heritage.” In the Asian context, this vital but challenging task of evangelization must rely on the presence of the Spirit who plays decisive role. As John Paul II has stressed, “the Holy Spirit is the prime agent of the inculturation” (EA 21).

Ecclesia in Asia,” in *The Asian Synod*, 222-235; Edmund Chia, “Of Fork and Spoon or Fingers and Chopsticks: Interreligious Dialogue,” in *The Asian Synod*, 273-283.

Moreover, the Pope emphasized that “theological work must be guided by respect for the sensibilities of Christians,” and inculturation must be “committed to their Christian faith because they perceive it more clearly with the eyes of their own culture.” Especially, in the inculturation of the Liturgy, the Pope highlighted that “the Liturgy is a decisive means of evangelization.” At any occasion, “Scriptures should be made known among the followers of other religions” because “the word of God has an inherent power to touch the hearts of people” (EA 22).

Another important factor of inculturation is “to adapt the formation of evangelizers to the cultural contexts of Asia.” In this context, John Paul II underlined the necessity of “a solid grounding in biblical and patristic studies, [...] a detailed and firm grasp of the Church’s theological and philosophical patrimony.” Focusing on these elements, evangelizers will “benefit from contact with Asian philosophical and religious traditions” and “seminary professors” will gain “a profound understanding of the elements of spirituality and prayer akin to the Asian soul” (EA 22).

Interreligious Dialogue. In *Ecclesia in Asia*, Pope John Paul II has underscored that “dialogue is a characteristic mode of the Church’s life in Asia” (EA 3). Today the situation of the Church and the world is “particularly challenging for religious belief and the moral truths.” Hence, the relationship between the Church and the contemporary world will be better “in a spirit of dialogue” (EA 29). The document clarifies that interreligious dialogue is not only as “a way of fostering mutual knowledge and enrichment” but “it is a part of the Church’s evangelizing mission.” Two fundamental truths that the Pope remarked for interreligious dialogue are “the firm belief that the fullness of salvation comes from Christ alone,” and “the Church community is the ordinary means of salvation” (EA 31). In this context, John Paul II in

his letter to the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences reminded them:

Although the Church gladly acknowledges whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all people, this does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without failing Jesus Christ who is 'the way and the truth and the life'. The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people (EA 31).

In interreligious dialogue, "witness given and receive" can help in "mutual advancement on the road of religious inquiry and experience" and brings about "elimination of prejudice, intolerance and misunderstandings." People who are involved in dialogue with other religious partners, the document stresses, must have "a mature and convinced Christian faith" and be "happy in their faith community." It is expected of the Asian Church to "provide suitable models of interreligious dialogue," with the faithfulness to the principle: "evangelization in dialogue and dialogue for evangelization" (EA 31).

In the number 17th of *Ecclesia in Asia*, the Pope reminded that the Church's mission in Asia should rely on the Holy Spirit who "shapes the Church as a community of witnesses" and "bears testimony to Jesus the Savior." Because "she is not an end unto herself: in all that she is and all that she does" but "she exists to serve Christ" and being the "seed of the Kingdom of God" (EA 17). Hence, in doing mission in Asia, the Church must find ways to proclaim the Word of God through inculturation and interreligious dialogue for the development of the human beings. By doing so, wherever the Gospel is preached, people will acknowledge God as their Savior and share the joy of being the children of God through their daily lives.

4. FABC²⁵⁵

How did the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) begin? Cora

Mateo says:

The Asian Bishops' desire to 'foster among them solidarity and co-responsibility for the welfare of the church and society in Asia' began to crystallize when they met in Manila during the visit of Pope Paul VI in 1970...and this is considered the beginning of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) the only recognized body that can represent the particular Catholic churches in Asia.²⁵⁶

Facing the many challenges of the Church in Asia was one of various reasons of establishing FABC. Felix Wilfred, a renowned Asian theologian, points out:

The establishment of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) is certainly a landmark in the history of Christianity in Asia. ... The origin of the Federation dates back to the historic gathering of 180 Asian bishops in Manila in November 1970 on the occasion of the visit of Pope Paul VI. Never before had Asian bishops come together to exchange experiences and to deliberate jointly on common questions and problems facing the continent. The meeting marked the beginning of a new consciousness of the many traditional links that united the various peoples of this region of the globe.²⁵⁷

The First Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) was held in Taipei, Taiwan, on 22 to 27 April 1974. In their Final Declaration,

²⁵⁵ The Asian Catholic Bishops' Conferences (FABC) comprises as full members such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Laos-Cambodia, Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as ten associate members such as Hong Kong, Kyrgyzstan, Macau, Mongolia, Nepal, Siberia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and East Timor. The FABC convenes in Plenary Assembly, the highest body, with the participation of all presidents and delegates of member conferences once in every four years. All official FABC documents issued from 1970 to 2006 have been published in a four-volume collection: Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G. Arevalo (eds.), *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences*, Documents from 1970 to 1991, vol. 1 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1992), hereinafter referred to as *FAPA I*; Franz-Josef Eilers (ed.), *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference*, Documents from 1992 to 1996, vol. 2 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997), hereinafter referred to as *FAPA II*; *Ibid.*, *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences*, Documents from 1997 to 2001, vol. 3 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2002), hereinafter referred to as *FAPA III*; Franz-Josef Eilers (ed.), *For All The Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences*, Documents from 2002-2006 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2007), hereinafter referred to as *FAPA IV*.

²⁵⁶ Cora Mateo, "Rerooting the Faith in Asia through SCCs," in *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, eds. Joseph Healy and Jeanne Hilton (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 123.

²⁵⁷ Felix Wilfred, "The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC): Orientations, Challenges and Impact," *FABC Papers* 69: Sixth Plenary Assembly (1995), 2, http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/fabc_paper_69.pdf (accessed on 5 November 2016).

they said that the work of evangelization was the building up of a truly Asian local church.²⁵⁸ Therefore, they have been striving to create a new way of being church and a new way of missioning.²⁵⁹

At the first Plenary Assembly, the Asian bishops affirmed that “evangelization is the carrying out of the Church’s duty by word and witness of the Gospel of the Lord” that “local churches can most effectively preach Christ to our peoples”²⁶⁰ through the triple dialogue. This Asian way of mission focuses on three dimensions that relate to each other. They are proclamation, triple dialogue, and renewal Church.

Proclamation. The bishops of Asia saw very clearly that the first and most important task of the Church’s mission, especially evangelization, was to proclaim Jesus Christ. They asserted:

We affirm that there can never be true evangelization without the proclamation of Jesus Christ. The proclamation of Jesus Christ is the center and the primary element of evangelization without which all other elements will lose their cohesion and validity.²⁶¹

Above all, this proclamation of Jesus Christ in Asia means “the witness of Christians and Christian communities to the values of the Kingdom of God, *a proclamation through Christ-like deeds.*”²⁶² For Christians in Asia, the FABC stated:

Therefore, we commit ourselves: ... To take every opportunity to make Jesus Christ and his message known in a way that is acceptable to Asians, presenting him to them with an ‘Asian face’, using Asian cultural concepts, terms, and symbols.... To present the Gospel message as humble servants of the Kingdom of God, always sensitive to the religious and cultural traditions of the people where the Spirit leads us to make Jesus known.²⁶³

²⁵⁸ “Evangelization in Modern Day Asia, Statement and Recommendations of the First Plenary Assembly,” 27 April 1974, Taipei, Taiwan, in *FAPA I*, 11-25.

²⁵⁹ Felipe Gomez, “Two thousand years of the Church’s mission in Asia: waves of evangelization, holiness and martyrdom.” 9, <http://www.laici.va/content/dam/laici/documenti/aamm/proclaiming-jesus-christ-in-asia/conferences/two-thousand-years-church-mission.pdf> (accessed on 5 November 2016).

²⁶⁰ *FABC I*, 25; *FAPA I*, 16.

²⁶¹ *FAPA I*, 292.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 281.

²⁶³ *FAPA III*, 206.

In fact, “Christ cannot yet be proclaimed openly by words” in many places in Asia but “through witness of life” by living Christian faith more fully, living in peace and harmony with other people, and by appreciating human and religious values of their non-Christian neighbors to “promote human community.”²⁶⁴ In doing so, therefore, “people will recognize the Gospel that we announce when they see in our life the transparency of the message of Jesus and the inspiring and healing figure of men and women immersed in God.”²⁶⁵

Triple Dialogue. According to Felix Wilfred, the orientation of FABC can be summarized in one word: dialogue.²⁶⁶ Because dialogue can connect the Church and other people in various aspects of life, the Asian bishops affirmed:

Dialogue frees the Church from becoming a self-centered community and links it with the people in all areas and dimensions of their life. In the view of the bishops, dialogue in Asia needs to be pursued in three interrelated spheres in particular: Asian religions, Asian cultures, and the immense multitude of the poor.²⁶⁷

According to Peter C. Phan, the way to fulfill the mission in Asia “is by way of dialogue, indeed a triple dialogue with Asian cultures, Asian religions and the Asians themselves, especially the poor.”²⁶⁸

It struck a deep chord with Asia’s bishops and Christian communities, precisely because it captured the mind and mission of the local Churches, who struggle to be “in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions – in brief, with all the life-realities of the people.”²⁶⁹ It means that, Michael

²⁶⁴ *FAPA I*, 105.

²⁶⁵ *FAPA III*, 13.

²⁶⁶ Felix Wilfred, in *FAPA I*, xiv.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, xiv-xv.

²⁶⁸ Phan, “*Ecclesia in Asia*,” 179.

²⁶⁹ *FAPA I*, 14.

Amaladoss states, “we do not import readymade structures of ‘salvation’ from somewhere, but we let the people of Asia dialogue with the Good News in a creative and relevant way.”²⁷⁰ The Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly reaffirmed that “mission will mean a dialogue with Asia’s poor, with its local cultures, and with other religious traditions.”²⁷¹

For the relationship between proclamation and dialogue, the FABC pointed out that “dialogue and proclamation are complementary.”²⁷² Therefore, proclamation should not be understood and integrated into threefold dialogue. In addition, discussing proclamation in the context of the United States with insights from the FABC, Phan also stated:

It is through this triple dialogue ... that the Church in Asia performs its evangelizing mission and thus becomes the local church. Hence, dialogue is not a substitute for proclamation or evangelization; rather, it is the way, indeed the most effective way, in which the proclamation of the good news is done in Asia.”²⁷³

Once again, the Sixth FABC reaffirmed the “triple dialogue” that “this is the vision of a renewed Church that the FABC has developed over the past thirty years. It is still valid today.”²⁷⁴ This is also a challenging vision of the renewal Church in Asia.

Renewal Church. For a renewed Church, she should be involved in the joys and sorrows of Asian people. She has to be a humble companion and partner of all Asians in the common quest for God, in the struggle for justice and harmony, for a better human life. The Church has to be a lowly servant of the Lord and Asian people in the journey

²⁷⁰ Michael Amaladoss, “Missionary Challenges in Asia,” *Jeevadhara* 30 (2000): 339-350, esp. 340.

²⁷¹ *FAPA I*, 280.

²⁷² *FAPA I*, 120.

²⁷³ Peter C. Phan, “Cultures, Religions, and Power: Proclaiming Christ in the United States Today,” *Theological Studies* 65/4 (2004): 714-740, esp. 729.

²⁷⁴ *FAPA III*, 4.

to God's Kingdom. She has to be a Church of compassion for the weak and the oppressed.²⁷⁵

To renew the Church in Asia from institution to deep interiority, the Second FABC Plenary Assembly that was held in Calcutta, stated that "experience of God's presence and action is intensified and deepened, the heart opened to the fresh outpouring of love, of peace, goodness, gentleness – of all the fruits of the Holy Spirit."²⁷⁶ Accordingly, the Church must be "fully a true community of prayer"²⁷⁷ and "a clear witness of service and love."²⁷⁸

The Church, in term of renewal, is an authentic community of faith that is rooted in the life of Trinity. It has to be a community of authentic participation and co-responsibility, one with its pastors, and linked "to other communities of faith and to the one and universal communion" of the holy Church of the Lord.²⁷⁹ As the Sixth FABC Plenary Assembly asserted that "all Christians will make the Church a communion of committed disciples – be they clergy or laity – working for the liberation of Asia."²⁸⁰ In conclusion, it is a community of faith.

The Church is God's mysterious purpose for the world. The Church's identity is a mystery that is given to her and to which she must be faithful. Therefore, the Church in Asia must take "holy pride" in her identity, a confidence or security in the gift entrusted to her (EA 31). By engaging the world and its cultures, the presence of the Church in society invites people to a reconciled relationship with God, neighbors and

²⁷⁵ See *FAPA II*, 283-84.

²⁷⁶ *FAPA I*, 32.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 191.

creation, to justice and peace.²⁸¹ Therefore, the Church must renew herself to follow her Lord more faithfully.

The renewal Church also allows the experiences of non-Christians to uncover for the Church herself the mystery of Christ she possesses, in the same way that she shares that mystery with people of other faiths.²⁸² Because, in the Asian mindset, “truth does not impose itself, but rather attracts everyone and everything to itself by its beauty, splendor and fascination.”²⁸³ Therefore, the Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly elaborated that “in an Asia marked by diversity and torn by conflicts, the Church must in a special way be a sacrament – a visible sign and instrument of unity and harmony.”²⁸⁴ To avoid the one-way monologue, Felix Wilfred observes:

Any work of mission which does not recognize what God has been doing with a people, with a country and continent and with their history, is simply and purely arrogance *vis-à-vis* God’s own bounteous gifts... Triumphalism and exclusivism of any kind are diametrically opposed to spirituality. They fail to recognize and appreciate the thousand flowers God has let grow, flourish and blossom in the garden of the world; they fail to acknowledge in practice the presence and working of the Spirit in the life and history of peoples.²⁸⁵

More importantly, by the acknowledgment and acceptance of a fundamental relationship between the Christian Gospel and the Asian people with their rich religious and cultural traditions, as well as their daily socio-economic challenges, the local church enables to move away from “an institution planted in Asia” towards “an evangelizing community of Asia.”²⁸⁶ Clearly, the FABC has great hopes that the local

²⁸¹ Wilbert R. Shenk, “Mission, Renewal, and the Future of the Church,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21 (1997): 154-159, esp. 154.

²⁸² Luis Antonio G. Tagle, “Renewal that awaits the Church in Asia: A theological and ecclesiological reflection on Renewal,” *FABC Papers* 91: Seventh Plenary Assembly, 11, http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/fabc_paper_91.pdf (accessed on November 5, 2016).

²⁸³ Felix Wilfred, “Inculturation as Hermeneutical Question,” *Vidyajyoti* 52 (1988): 422-436, esp. 427.

²⁸⁴ *FAPA I*, 282.

²⁸⁵ Felix Wilfred, “Fifth Plenary Assembly of FABC: An Interpretation of its Theological Orientation,” *Vidyajyoti* 54 (1990): 583-592, esp. 590.

²⁸⁶ *FAPA I*, 338.

Church is able to be deeply inculturated in the Asian soil to the extent that it becomes not seemly a Church in Asia, but truly an Asian Church.”²⁸⁷

C. Mission Theology in Asia and its Features

In the context of Asia, the theology of Church mission implies a new missionary spirituality.²⁸⁸ Antonio M. Pernia, former superior general of the Society of the Divine Word, suggests that mission in Asia comprises three elements: powerlessness, contemplation, and stewardship.²⁸⁹ The following is a short reflection on a threefold feature of mission in Asia.

1. Powerlessness

Historically, many countries in Asia are characterized by colonization. In reality, Asia is marked by a socio-economic condition of poverty and a religious situation where Christianity is a minority. Therefore, instead of acting from a position of power, evangelization in Asia must be done from a position of powerlessness and humility. In Asia, the missionaries must not look down on people but pass over to and stand by them in genuine solidarity.²⁹⁰

Leon Bloy spoke of the power of God in the world: “God seems to have condemned himself until the end of time not to exercise any immediate right of a master

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 333.

²⁸⁸ See Peter C. Phan, “Crossing the Borders: A Spirituality for Mission in Our Times,” in *In Our Own Tongues*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 130-150.

²⁸⁹ Antonio M. Pernia, “Mission for the Twenty-first Century: An SVD Perspective,” in *Mission for the Twenty-first Century*, eds. Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder (Chicago: Chicago Center for Global Ministries, 2001), 19.

²⁹⁰ Antonio M. Pernia, “Theology Whose Heart is Mission,” *Loyola School of Theology* (May 11, 2016), <http://www.lst.edu/academics/landas-archives/965-qtheology-whose-heart-is-missionq-address-of-fr-antonio-m-pernia-svd-at-lsts-commencement-exercises-on-may-11-2016> (accessed on March 15, 2017).

over a servant or a king over a subject. We can do what we want. *He will defend himself only by his patience and his beauty.*”²⁹¹ God revealed that kind of power in the Incarnation, out of human expectation, as a child, helpless and powerless. Therefore, in Mark’s gospel, Jesus ordered his disciples:

... to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them” (Mark 6:8-11).

This kind of missionary spirituality, as Leo Kleden states, is a good opportunity for missionaries “to follow the example of the first disciples of Jesus, who were sent empty handed but who were inspired by the Spirit of the Crucified and Risen Lord.”²⁹²

As already mentioned, mission is the work of God, therefore, it must be done in God’s way. And the way of God was carried out through powerlessness and humility of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Hence, it is necessary for missionaries to look on Jesus himself. For this point, St. Paul describes Jesus in the famous Christological hymn that “who [Christ Jesus], though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Phil 2:6-7). Jesus submitted to powerlessness to become truly powerful, “highly exalted” by his Father (Phil 2:9-11).

²⁹¹ Ron Rolheiser, “God’s Power as Powerlessness,” *Pius News* (February 5, 2017). <http://www.oblates.com.au/Portals/0/Uploads/Province/Australia/sa/Pius%20X/170205.pdf> (accessed on February 8, 2017).

²⁹² Leo Kleden, “*Missio ad Gentes: An Asian Way of Mission Today*,” in *Mission for the Twenty-first Century*, eds. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder (Chicago: Chicago Center for Global Ministries, 2001), 188.

In addition, the Second Vatican Council says about the Christ's model for the Church in *Lumen Gentium*:

“[T]he Church, although it needs human resources to carry out its mission, is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to proclaim, even by its own example, humility and self-sacrifice. Christ was sent by the Father ‘to bring good news to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart,’ ‘to seek and to save what was lost.’”²⁹³

It is important to keep in mind that a missionary vocation is not pursuing for wealth or power or glory but for living and doing what the poor and humble Christ did.²⁹⁴

The missionaries – disciples of their Master, Jesus Christ – should follow him in doing their mission by seeking the power of the Word and the Spirit. The fundamental mission is God's and Christians are called and sent to work for it. Like Paul, Jesus also tells missionaries:

I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles – to whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me (Acts 26:17-18).

In Asia, this call can be fulfilled by the power of love, particularly in self-giving. Moreover, the idea of powerlessness can be applied for mission in Asia through dialogue since “there is always more to be revealed. In this sense, dialogue takes place not just to ‘explain,’ but even more fundamentally to ‘discover.’ It is an approach characterized by respect and humility.”²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (1964), 8, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed on December 3, 2016). Hereafter LG.

²⁹⁴ David Hirt, “*Lumen Gentium* and the Mystical Body of Christ,” *Midwest Capuchin Franciscan Vocations* (February 22, 2012), <http://www.capuchinfranciscans.org/blog/lumen-gentium-and-the-mystical-body-of-christ> (accessed on April 11, 2017).

²⁹⁵ Fox, *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church*, xii.

2. Contemplation

The second feature of mission in Asia is contemplation. In 1927, the Church proclaimed two saints as patrons of the Church's missionary work. St. Francis Xavier who traveled to Asia, was one of the most dynamic missionaries and the other was St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who lived a cloistered and contemplative life.²⁹⁶ She desired to be a missionary but with her poor health, she could not go out and work directly in the missionary field. She wrote in her seminal book and autobiography *Story of a Soul*:

But O my Beloved, one mission alone would not be sufficient for me, I would want to preach the Gospel on all the five continents simultaneously and even to the most remote isles. I would be a missionary, not for a few years only but from the beginning of creation until the consummation of the ages.²⁹⁷

In another way, she lived her quiet life in prayer for the sake of the Church's mission. Because of her deep experience of God in prayer and contemplation, she was chosen as a patroness of missionaries by the Church. She became a spiritual missionary and a model for all missionaries of being in "contact with the living God."²⁹⁸

After many encounters with religious leaders and Buddhist masters, Pope John Paul II expressed that missionary activities, especially in Asia, should rely heavily on contemplation. If a missionary is not a contemplative "he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way" (RM 91). In other words, Christian contemplation and spirituality would bear rich fruits under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, all missionary works must be based on a profound inner life of contemplation that "makes us discover God's presence and activity within society."²⁹⁹ Besides contemplating the Word of God, missionaries must also contemplate their people whom they serve and work with and

²⁹⁶ Bevens and Schroeder, *Constant in Context*, 366.

²⁹⁷ Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, trans. John Clarke, Third edition (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1996), 192-193.

²⁹⁸ *FAPA I*, 31.

²⁹⁹ *FAPA I*, 231.

must be able to “link the message of a biblical text to a human situation, to an experience which cries out for the light of God’s word” (EG 154).

Pope John Paul II also remarked that in Asia “people are more persuaded by holiness of life than by intellectual argument” (EA 42). Furthermore, he noted that in many places in Asia, where explicit proclamation is forbidden and religious freedom is denied or systematically restricted, “the silent witness of life still remains the only way of proclaiming God’s kingdom” (EA 23). “The true missionary,” according to Pope John Paul II, “is the saint” (RM 90). In sum, holiness is then one of the essentials of a truly missionary spirituality. It means that prayer, especially contemplation, is the seedbed where a missionary spirit takes root.

According to the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, “[t]he search for God, a life of fraternal communion, and service to others are the three chief characteristics of the consecrated life which can offer an appealing Christian testimony to the peoples of Asia today” (EA 44). In other words, these three elements cannot be separated from each other and from the life of missionaries. As Rene Padilla claims that Christian spirituality is a gift and also a task:

It requires communion with God (contemplation) as well as action in the world (praxis). When these two elements are separated, both the life and the mission of the church are deeply affected. Contemplation without action is an escape from concrete reality; action without contemplation is activism lacking a transcendent meaning. True spirituality requires a missionary contemplation and a contemplative mission.³⁰⁰

According to the Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams, “[m]ission is finding out where the Spirit is at work and joining in.”³⁰¹ It is “to search for our place in God’s

³⁰⁰ C. Rene Padilla, “Spirituality in the Life and Mission of the Church” (Edinburgh 2010 Study Group 9), 1, quoted in Daryl M. Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds.), *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today*, vol. II (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 241.

³⁰¹ Rowan Williams, quoted in Stephen B. Bevans and Cathy Ross, “Introduction: Mission as Prophetic Dialogue,” in *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context, and Prophetic Dialogue*, eds. Cathy Ross and Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), xvi.

work for the redemption of the earth and humankind.”³⁰² The contemplative mission is the way of the present and of the future but focusing on spirituality without action is also devoid of the fullness of Christ’s call. Both are essential in the advance of God’s mission on earth. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, which is one of the most significant teachings of the Second Vatican for mission, emphasizes:

[I]t is evident to everyone, that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity; by this holiness as such a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society. In order that the faithful may reach this perfection, they must use their strength accordingly as they have received it, as a gift from Christ. They must follow in His footsteps and conform themselves to His image seeking the will of the Father in all things. They must devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor. In this way, the holiness of the People of God will grow into an abundant harvest of good, as is admirably shown by the life of so many saints in Church history (LG 40).

In Asia, “[m]ission is contemplative action and active contemplation” (EA 23).

There was a special emphasis on the Triune God at the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Willingen Germany in 1952 saying that mission is the work of God and the Triune character.³⁰³ Therefore, missionaries, the participants in God’s mission, must encounter with the mystery of the Tri-personal God such as the mystery of God’s salvific plan for the world, the mystery of the presence and action of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in the world. For it is impossible to lead people into the mystery of God if missionaries do not approach mission in contemplation to seek out, discern and strengthen it.³⁰⁴

³⁰² Tore Laugerud, “Mission and Contemplation: Mission Spirituality in the 21st Century,” in *Mission to the World - Communicating the Gospel in the 21st Century*, eds. Tormod Engelsen, Ernst Harbakk, Rolv Olsen and Thor Strandenæs (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2007), 131.

³⁰³ See Wilhelm Andersen, “Further Toward a Theology of Mission,” in *Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald Anderson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 300-313.

³⁰⁴ Pernia, “Theology Whose Heart is Mission.”

3. Stewardship

According to *Dictionary of the Bible*, steward is translated from the Greek word *oekonomos* which means the manager of a large household or estate, who might be a slave and had the management of the children of the owner (Gal 4:2). In the New Testament, apostles are managers of the mysteries of God (1 Cor 4:1-2; Titus 1:7), and the Christian is a steward of the grace of God (1 Peter 4:10).³⁰⁵ In the ancient culture, steward was not the owner of the house but was hired to manage the owner's house affairs. Therefore, steward is the one who is responsible for and takes care of the owner's property.³⁰⁶

Stewardship is a core Christian practice deeply rooted in Scripture. It is the recognition that everything we have is a gift from God that we are to use to help others. Having been entrusted with gifts from God, it is our responsibility to nurture and share those gifts with others. Stewardship is a response to the mission of God. People invited to discipleship are also invited to faithful stewardship. It is said clearly in 1 Peter: "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received" (1 Peter 4:10). Stewardship is destroyed when missionaries have turned inward to focus on their wants and needs, when they address their own religious idea instead of *missio Dei*. Therefore, missionaries should say like John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

The slogan or mission of the Catholic non-profit organization, *Stewardship: A Mission of Faith* states clearly: "To be an instrument in sharing the Gospel message of stewardship which is: everything we have is a gift from God that we are to use to help

³⁰⁵ John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1965), 847.

³⁰⁶ Robert Charles Sproul, "What Is Stewardship?" *Ligonier Ministries* (June 18, 2014), <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-stewardship/> (accessed on April 10, 2017).

others.”³⁰⁷ In the context of Asia, missionaries must share their faith as a gift received from God with the whole consciousness of themselves as stewards or servants of the Lord, their master.³⁰⁸ The stewardship of Jesus can be seen in John 13 which shows that, Jesus “recognized that everything in his life was entrusted to him by the Father... That is why he says that the Son can do nothing by himself. He can do only what he sees his Father doing.”³⁰⁹ Therefore, according to Daniel Oh, “We need to rediscover intimacy with the Father through reaffirming our sense of stewardship to him for everything he has entrusted to us.”³¹⁰

Additionally, Pope Francis began his pontificate by saying in his opening homily in 2014, “We can walk as much as we want, we can build many things, but if we do not confess Jesus Christ, nothing will avail. We will become a pitiful NGO, but not the Church, the Bride of Christ.” He continued saying, “Humanity greatly needs to lay hold of the salvation brought by Christ.”³¹¹ This call of proclamation is similar with St. Paul who was obliged to preach the Gospel (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 9:16), and impelled by the love of Christ (2 Cor 5:14). In the multiple contexts of Asia, missionary stewardship can be seen in 1 Cor 9:22b-23 when Paul says: “I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings” (1 Cor 9:16). The FABC-sponsored “Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church” (1977) deepened the Church’s awareness that

³⁰⁷ Stewardship: A Mission of Faith is a Catholic non-profit organization, founded by David Z. Abel. The quotation is retrieved from the mission of this organization on websites: <http://stewardshipmission.org/about/chairman/> and <http://stewardshipmission.org/about/> (accessed on February 13, 2017).

³⁰⁸ Pernia, “Theology Whose Heart is Mission.”

³⁰⁹ Daniel Oh, “Mission Spirituality of Jesus,” *Missiology* (January 1, 2012): 77-82, esp. 80.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 81.

³¹¹ The first homily of Pope Francis when he celebrated the *Missa pro Ecclesiae* in the Sistine Chapel on Thursday. Vatican Radio website: [http://en.radiovaticana.va/storico/2013/03/14/pope_francis_1st_homily_\(full_text\)/en1-673526](http://en.radiovaticana.va/storico/2013/03/14/pope_francis_1st_homily_(full_text)/en1-673526) (accessed on October 29, 2016).

being led by the Lord, she “has to discover time and again what ministries and ministerial structures she requires in order to fulfill her mission to offer to a human society the salvation brought about by Jesus Christ and to enable the members of that society to become what God intends them to be.”³¹² Therefore, mission is not possible without stewardship and stewardship is not healthy without mission. As the deep links between stewardship and mission, Christians must keep in mind that God’s word guides them to understand both mission and stewardship.

Jesus did his mission on earth with powerlessness to become powerful, contemplation to know the Father’s will, and stewardship for the good of humanity. Hence, missionaries must follow Jesus’ example to do mission. Especially in Asia, mission cannot be carried out by actions without faith. As Bosch states, “Our good works are a sign and a proof of our faith, but it is ultimately by faith, not by all our good works, that we are justified. We may therefore indeed cast all our weaknesses and even failures on the Lord.”³¹³

Summary

Fundamentally, all Christians are called to participate in God’s mission. In detail, many documents of the Church, based on *missio Dei*, point out various ways of doing mission in the context of the world today. The Church is also open for renewal and calling for the balance between dialogue, inculturation and proclamation. Therefore, in Asia, missionaries must follow Jesus in doing mission for Asian people with threefold feature of mission theology: powerlessness, contemplation, and stewardship in order that people will see Jesus in and through the missionaries and the Church.

³¹² *FAPA I*, 72.

³¹³ David J. Bosch, *A Spirituality of the Road* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 74.

CHAPTER III

MISSION IN ASIA AS PROPHETIC DIALOGUE

Introduction

John Paul II said that “mission is a single but complex reality, and it develops in a variety of ways” (RM 41). This chapter will focus on the most recent and insightful synthesis of Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, namely prophetic dialogue. To apply this idea for doing mission in Asia, the first section will look at the biblical values of dialogue. The next part deals with mission as prophetic dialogue. The last portion promotes mission through prophetic dialogue with Asian cultures, Asian religions, and the poor in Asia.

A. Biblical Values of Dialogue

Pope Paul VI said that “the whole history of [humanity’s] salvation is one long, varied dialogue, which marvelously begins with God and which [God] prolongs with men [and women] in so many different ways” (ES 70).

1. Old Testament

In the Old Testament, God who identified himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and disclosed to Moses his personal name, Yahweh, is the God of the whole world (Exod 3:5-7). According to Karla R. Suomala, Exodus 32-34 is “the Biblical

dialogues” in which “Moses and God converse with each other, working toward a resolution of the catastrophe that is about to befall the Israelites.”³¹⁴

In the words of John A. McIntosh as mentioned in chapter II that God’s mission is to do everything possible to communicate salvation to the world. Based on two creation narratives, Gen 1:1-2:3 and Gen 2:4-3:24, Virma Barión asserts: “Creation as a constant dialogue between Creator and creature”³¹⁵ has never stopped; it is a constant dialogue. Particularly, it is a special dialogue between God and his chosen nation, Israel as the beginning instrument of God for the universal salvation (Isa 49:6).³¹⁶

Other stories of dialogue can be seen in the Old Testament prophets. The following will illustrate examples of those who positively engaged with others in their midst in dialogue. They are found in the meeting of Abram and the King of Salem, Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20), and of Solomon and King Hiram (1 Kgs 5). Other stories of dialogue are also found in Midian between Moses and his father-in-law, Jethro (Exod 18:1-27); in the book of Ruth (Ruth converses with Naomi, her mother-in-law, and with Boaz); in the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-16); in the Edomite sheik, Job (Job with three friends).

However, dialogue can be understood in a broader sense, as Brink has suggested, “if the definition [of dialogue] is expanded, then one can, indeed, find examples in [the Old Testament] of compassionate response to the other.” In Leviticus and Deuteronomy, Israel is urged to treat the alien with justice and compassion:

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God (Lev 19:33-34).

³¹⁴ See Karla R. Suomala, *Moses and God in Dialogue: Exodus 32-34 in Postbiblical Literature* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004), 21-36, quotations at 21.

³¹⁵ Virma Barión, “Biblical foundation: Intercultural Dialogue,” *Vedruna: Dialogue and Encounter* 18 (November 2015): 8-13, esp. 9.

³¹⁶ Arnulf Camps, *Partners in Dialogue: Christianity and Other World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 31.

You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin. You shall not abhor any of the Egyptians, because you were an alien residing in their land.” (Deut 23:7).

In addition, Elijah provides sustenance for the widow of Zarephath and her son during a famine, and later restores the son to life. (1 Kings 17:1-24). A wealthy Shunammite woman hosts Elisha. The prophet returns her hospitality by interceding to God on her behalf: first that she may bear a child and then that the child is restored to life. (2 Kings 4:8-37). Elisha cures Naaman, an Aramean army commander, of his leprosy (2 Kings 5).³¹⁷

2. New Testament

In the New Testament, Jesus can be portrayed as “a man of dialogue.”³¹⁸ In the Gospels Jesus was portrayed as the one who, says Pope Francis in *The Joy of the Gospel*, “used to dialogue with his people, to reveal his mystery to all, and to attract ordinary people to his lofty teachings and demands” (EG 141). His model of communication transmits a signal that “the Lord truly enjoys talking with his people” and that joy is a primal importance for dialogue (EG 142). Typically, there are two evangelical accounts that demonstrate Jesus’ model of dialogue. In Mark 7:24-30, Jesus encounters with the Syro-Phoenician woman. Likewise, in John 4:4-42, Jesus meets and engages in conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. Both situations have a perspective of prophetic dialogue.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Laurie Brink, “In Search of the Biblical Foundations of Prophetic Dialogue: Engaging a Hermeneutics of Otherness,” *Missiology: An International Review* 41/1 (2013): 9-21, esp. 14.

³¹⁸ Bevens and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 25.

³¹⁹ Brink, “In Search of the Biblical Foundations of Prophetic Dialogue,” 17.

The first is that of the Syro-Phoenician woman, as narrated by Mark (7:24-30). The encounter and dialogue actually began in confrontation, but ended up in deep empathy. Jesus is impressed with the poor woman who tells him that the food can be given to the Jews and the Gentiles at the same time but in different ways: some at the table and others below it. Then, Jesus pays attention to her, undergoing a change of mentality and extending his blessings to all his people.

The second text is found in John 4:4-42. The dialogue becomes difficult as cultural prejudices preoccupies the Samaritan woman. Jesus opens up all the doors to the conversation with the woman until such time that he reveals himself as the waiting Messiah and provokes her to announce Jesus to others and lead them to him. Interestingly, he stayed with them for two days.³²⁰

If dialogue is seen in “new insights”³²¹ such as “a profound openness to the place and to the people,”³²² it includes a sense of compassion. In the New Testament, based on Jesus himself, this dialogue of compassion can be found. For instance, Jesus feels compassion with the crowds who are like sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34; Matt 9:36) and who had nothing to eat (Mark 8:2; Matt 15:23). In addition, Jesus healed a servant of the Gentile Centurion (Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10) and a royal official’s son (John 4:43-54). Other cases of Jesus’ direct dialogue can also be found Jesus’ dialogue with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21), with Zacchaeus, the tax collector (Luke 19:1-10). Another example of dialogue is found in Acts 17:

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:22-23).

³²⁰ See Barión, “Biblical foundation: Intercultural Dialogue,” 11-12.

³²¹ Brink, “In Search of the Biblical Foundations of Prophetic Dialogue,” 13.

³²² Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 59.

That is why the Apostle Paul is called “a good example of the importance of interreligious dialogue.”³²³ Regardless of race, culture and every human situation, he says: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of [human beings] are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Furthermore, the Gospel requires both the annunciation of good news and the denunciation of injustice and evil. But this proclamation is most effective when presented with compassion.³²⁴ Paul describes himself as gentle like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children (1 Thess 2:7b). “So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us” (1 Thess 2:8). In this regard, Bevans and Schroeder say that “in today’s world mission needs first of all to be imagined, thought about, and practiced as ‘gentle among’ women and men - *as dialogue*.”³²⁵

B. Mission as Prophetic Dialogue

“If mission is and must be dialogical because God is dialogical both in God’s deepest nature and in the way God acts in the world, mission is and must be prophetic because God’s inner nature is also prophetic, and because God is prophetic in dealing with creation.”³²⁶

³²³ Angela Ann Zukowski, “The Word of God: Ecumenical, Inter-religious, and Cultural Dialogue,” *Catechist*, http://www.catechist.com/articles_view.php?article_id=2347 (accessed on March 14, 2017).

³²⁴ Brink, “In Search of the Biblical Foundations of Prophetic Dialogue,” 12.

³²⁵ Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 21.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

1. Nature of Prophet

The name “prophet,” from the Greek meaning “forespeaker” is an equivalent of the Hebrew, which signifies properly a delegate or mouthpiece of another (Exod 7:1), from the generic Semitic sense of the root, “to declare,” “announce.” Synonymous to a certain degree was the word “seer”, which, as 1 Sam 9:9 indicates, was an earlier designation than “prophet,” at least in popular speech. There are several Hebrew terms for divination of one kind or another; but none of these is used as a synonym for “prophesying.” At the same time it must be remembered that “seeing” is always an essential condition of true prophecy; hence the continued use of the term “vision” to the last days of prophetic history, long after the time when seeing had ceased to be the most distinctive function of the prophet.³²⁷

In the Old Testament, prophets are known as those who fulfill two ministries. The first is to speak to people on behalf of God by making them known God’s point of view as God’s ambassadors. The second is to represent the people before God as people’s representatives. Mostly, they have to plead with God to forgive people’s wrongdoings that they should have been punished.³²⁸

Prophets as God’s ambassadors. Firstly, prophets must make people known God’s law and call them back to obedience to God if they fall into sin and unfaithfulness. They teach people, “cease to do evil; learn to do good” (Isa 1:16b-17a). Secondly, they must be concerned about social justice, such as caring for the poor, the orphan, the alien, the widow (e.g. Ezek 22:7; Mal 3:5; Jer 22:3; Zech 7:10). What God requires them is to do justice (Micah 6:8). Thirdly, one task of the prophet is to warn of the Lord’s

³²⁷ Emil G. Hirsch, J. Frederic McCurdy, and Joseph Jacobs, “Prophets and Prophecy,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12389-prophets-and-prophecy> (accessed on April 10, 2017).

³²⁸ Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets*, 10-11.

judgment as a watchman of Israel's moral life. They use images to describe imminent judgment, such as a boiling pot (Jer 1:13-14), surging waters (Isa 8:7-8; Jer 46:7), a devouring sword (Hos 11:6; Isa 1:20), a cutting razor (Zech 14:12-18), a trap (Jer 48:43-44). For the Lord says, "I will draw near to you for judgment" (Mal 3:5). Therefore, through their predictions of judgment, prophets also call people to repent, to change their lives, and to return to God in order to have hope for salvation (Isa 45:22; Joel 2:13-14). Fourthly, prophets did not work for their own sakes but for Yahweh's divine sovereignty. They must claim Yahweh as king of all nations (Jer 10:7; Zech 14:9; Isa 14:26).³²⁹

Prophets as people's representatives before God. Thomas Leclerc widened the idea of prophet as an intercessor or defender before God, a "prophet who must stand in the breach, who must stand up to God and plead for mercy."³³⁰ In the Old Testament, prophets were defined as those whom God called to live a difficult life of prophecy, such as lives of isolation and duties of criticizing their Jewish people because of breaking covenants with God. Even though they faced many difficulties, like being persecuted, cursed, attacked, imprisoned, expelled (Jer 15:10; 1 Kgs 18:17; Jer 37:13; 38:4; Amos 7:12), yet they were faithful to their mission because they had deeply rooted experiences of God, and of the reality of their people. They were depressed and afraid, such as Elijah (1 Kgs 19:1-18). They were confused at times, as Jeremiah was (Jer 20:7-18). And the best example in the New Testament was Jesus who was tempted by the idols of pleasure, power and possessions (Luke 4:1-13). But they never lost their

³²⁹ See Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets*, 108-115.

³³⁰ Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets*, 10-12, esp. 11.

prophetic identity to proclaim God's vision for humankind and denounce what opposes this purpose.³³¹

In terms of mission today, particularly in Asia, a prophet is the one who speaks against what is contrary to God's reign and speaks forth the message of God's reign through Jesus Christ.³³² It means that prophecy contains two dimensions: witness and proclamation. Witness is "the first means of evangelization" (EN 41), and proclamation is "the permanent priority of mission" (RM 44). Therefore, as Schroeder states, "proclamation needs to provide an answer for the spiritual and human yearnings that people have in today's multiple contexts."³³³ The prophetic voice of the Old Testament is clearly affirmed in 2 Peter 1:20-21 that "no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

According to Bevans, firstly, prophets are those "who have listened carefully to God, who are able to discern the signs of the times, who are attentive to people's expressions, tone of voice, body language."³³⁴ Secondly, a prophet is the one who "speak forth" by announcing a message in words and deeds, and by foretelling the future events according to God's plan of salvation. Thirdly, prophets are women and men who speak out in God's name when people live unworthy to their calling.³³⁵

³³¹ Thomas Hughes, "Consecrated Life and Prophetic Mission: A Latin American Perspective," in *Mission Beyond Ad Gentes: A Symposium*, eds. Jacob Kavunkal and Christian Tauchner, Studia Instituti Missiologici SVD 104 (Siegburg: Franz Schmitt Verlag, 2016), 66-67.

³³² See Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 40-45; also Roger Schroeder, "Mission as Proclamation and Dialogue," in *The Gift of Mission: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, ed. James H. Kroeger (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 126.

³³³ Schroeder, "Mission as Proclamation and Dialogue," 127.

³³⁴ Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 42.

³³⁵ Ibid.

Prophets in scripture were called “to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8) and “to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice” (Gen 18:19). According to West, prophets not only put justice at the center of what it means to be chosen as a Jewish people but also made compassion to human suffering and kindness to the stranger the fundamental features of the most noble human calling.³³⁶ As a dangerous calling, Thomas Hughes adds, “[t]hey reflect a world in crisis, often camouflaged, which they unmask. This leads them to be people who confront the powerful in order to defend the weak.”³³⁷ This can be a model for all missionaries, especially those who work for and in Asia.

2. Understanding Dialogue

The word “dialogue” comprises of a word *logos* – meaning conversation or discussion, and a prefix *dia* which means through, across or apart.³³⁸ Therefore, dialogue means discussion or conversation across. A description of *Oxford Advance Learners’ Dictionary* states that dialogue is a formal discussion between two groups or countries, which are trying to solve a problem or to end a dispute.³³⁹

According to Jacob Kavunkal, “[d]ialogue is a conversation on a common subject between two or more persons [...] with differing views, the primary purpose of which is for each participant to learn from the other so that they can change. [...] The

³³⁶ Cornel West, *Democracy matters: Winning the fight against imperialism* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 112–114, quoted in Anna M. Young, *Prophets, Gurus, and Pundits: Rhetorical Styles and Public Engagement* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 41.

³³⁷ Hughes, “Consecrated Life and Prophetic Mission: A Latin American Perspective,” 66.

³³⁸ Stuart E. Brown. “Witness and Dialogue: Essential Elements in Christian Ministry,” in *The Interface between Research and Dialogue: Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa*, ed. Klaus Hock (Muenster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 118.

³³⁹ A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary*, 6th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 321.

point of dialogue is change and growth in mutual understanding.”³⁴⁰ Additionally, in the words of Arnulf Camps, “dialogue is a comprehensive approach.”³⁴¹ Meaning that, Michael Amaladoss explains, dialogue can be seen as “a way of acknowledging and accepting the other’s identity shown in the readiness to listen, to change, and to collaborate.”³⁴² Mikhail M. Bakhtin asserts, “Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth.”³⁴³

Dialogue, especially interreligious and ideological, is very necessary in this contemporary world. It “requires respect and reverence for the dignity of others.”³⁴⁴

Pope Paul VI stated in his encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*:

[Dialogue] is demanded nowadays.... It is demanded by the dynamic course of action which is changing the face of modern society. It is demanded by the pluralism of society, and by the maturity man has reached in this day and age. Be he religious or not, his secular education has enabled him to think and speak, and to conduct a dialogue with dignity (ES 78).

Therefore, “dialogue is *not* debate”³⁴⁵ but “[u]nderstanding one another and building relationships are the primary goals of dialogue.”³⁴⁶ It aims to build peace for oneself and for humanity. For this purpose, Angela Zukowski states,

³⁴⁰ Jacob Kavunkal, “Dialogue: On Conversion,” in *Mission and Dialogue: Theory and Practice*, eds. Leonardo N. Mercado and James J. Knight (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1989), 122.

³⁴¹ Camps, *Partners in Dialogue*, vii.

³⁴² Amaladoss, “Identity and Harmony,” 34.

³⁴³ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky’s Book,” in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, ed. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 293 quoted in L. Juliana M. Claassens, “Biblical Theology as Dialogue: Continuing the Conversation on Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Theology,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122/1 (January 1, 2003): 127-144, esp. 129.

³⁴⁴ Donald Senior, “Dialogue and the Quest for Peace: Biblical Foundations,” *The Bible Today* (September 1, 2014): 277-283, esp. 281.

³⁴⁵ Leonard Swidler, Reuven Firestone, and Khalid Duran, *Triologue: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Dialogue* (New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2007), 27.

³⁴⁶ Terry C. Muck, “Missio-logoi, Interreligious Dialogue, and the Parable of the Good Samaritan,” *Missiology: An International Review* 44/1 (January 1, 2016): 5-19, esp. 7.

Dialogue is a way of encountering and understanding oneself and the world at the deepest level, opening up possibilities of grasping the fundamental meaning of life (individually and collectively) and its various dimensions. This in turn transforms the way we deal with ourselves, others, and the world. Indeed, the word dialogue, in theory, most appropriately describes the nature of a meeting of minds. Dialogue is not the only way that individuals or groups interact – but dialogue is indispensable for inner peace and peace in the world.³⁴⁷

Pope Francis also speaks of Jesus' model of dialogue with joy. He writes in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*:

Dialogue is much more than the communication of a truth. It arises from the enjoyment of speaking and it enriches those who express their love for one another through the medium of words. This is an enrichment which does not consist in objects but in persons who share themselves in dialogue (EG 142).

Evangelii Gaudium, according to John O'Malley, is a document that focuses on dialogue and fraternity.³⁴⁸ In his Apostolic Exhortation, the Pope writes that “the Son of God, becoming flesh, summons us to the revolution of tenderness” (EG 88). “Such a God is a God of dialogue, a God who understands, a God who listens with compassion and feels people’s pain. The dialogue to which the Church is called is a dialogue practiced by God as such.”³⁴⁹

Particularly, searching for “new ways of being Church”³⁵⁰ in Asia, according to the FABC, implies a threefold dialogue with Asian religions, cultures, and poverty.³⁵¹ For them, dialogue is “intrinsic to the very life of the Church.”³⁵² It is “an integral part

³⁴⁷ Zukowski, “The Word of God: Ecumenical, Inter-religious, and Cultural Dialogue”.

³⁴⁸ See John J. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2008), 43-52.

³⁴⁹ Stephen Bevans, “*Evangelii Gaudium* and Prophetic Dialogue,” *Australian eJournal of Theology* 22/1 (April, 2015): 11-18, esp. 14. It is available at AEJT website: http://aejt.com.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/741671/Evangelii_Gaudium_and_Prophetic_Dialogue_Bevans_Apr15_Vol22.1.pdf (accessed on April 10, 2017).

³⁵⁰ Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta* on the “New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith,” Chapter One: Time for a ‘New Evangelization’ calls for a re-evaluation of the Church-World relationship and invites people to search for “new ways of being Church.” It is available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20110202_lineamenta-xiii-assembly_en.html#CHAPTER_I (accessed on April 11, 2017).

³⁵¹ *FAPA I*, 14.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 111.

of evangelization,”³⁵³ an “essential mode of all evangelization,”³⁵⁴ and “a true expression of the Church’s evangelizing action.”³⁵⁵ Especially, dialogue “is the very being and life of the Church as mission.”³⁵⁶ In the context of Asia, the proclamation of Jesus Christ is realized through “dialogue and deeds.”³⁵⁷ As FABC VII asserted, this proclamation needs to integrate commitment and service to life, witness of life, and threefold dialogue.³⁵⁸

Realizing the importance of dialogue as one of most relevant ways to do mission in Asia, the FABC’s purpose of dialogue is to promote mutual understanding and enrichment for both partners including various aspects of life.³⁵⁹ Similarly, in the words of Knitter, dialogue is “the exchange of experience and understanding between two or more partners with the intention that all partners grow in experience and understanding.”³⁶⁰ Therefore, dialogue needs an attitude of openness to and respect for people of other religions, cultures, castes, creeds, etc. Moreover, dialogue also tends to transform oneself and society.³⁶¹

The Church in Asia “must live in *companionship*, as true *partners* with all Asians as they pray, work, struggle and suffer for a better human life, and as they search

³⁵³ Ibid., 100.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 131.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 101.

³⁵⁶ The FABC Theological Advisory Commission’s Theses on Interreligious Dialogue: An Essay in Pastoral Theological Reflection, *FABC Papers* 48 (Hong Kong: FABC, 1987), art. 3.3. It is available at: http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/fabc_paper_48.pdf (accessed on April 11, 2017).

³⁵⁷ FABC V states that “the proclamation of Jesus in Asia means, first of all, the witness of Christians and of Christian communities to the values of the Kingdom of God, *a proclamation through Christlike deeds*. For Christians in Asia, to proclaim Christ means above all to live like him, in the midst of our neighbors of other faiths and persuasions, and to do his deeds by the power of his grace. Proclamation through dialogue and deeds – this is the first call to the Churches in Asia.” *FAPA I*, 281-282 (emphasis is original).

³⁵⁸ *FAPA III*, 8.

³⁵⁹ *FAPA I*, 120.

³⁶⁰ Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 207.

³⁶¹ See Javier, *Dialogue: Our Mission Today*, 115.

for the meaning of human life and progress.” Therefore, “the Church must walk along with him/her in human solidarity”³⁶² through dialogue.

3. Mission in Asia as Prophetic Dialogue

The original term of ‘prophetic dialogue’ was used by Michael Amaladoss in 1992.³⁶³ Later on, this term appeared at the Fifteenth General Chapter of the Society of the Divine Word in 2000 as introduced by Stephen B. Bevans.³⁶⁴ Once again, the term was chosen by Bevans and Schroeder in their book *Constants in Context* in 2004 to propose a synthesis of the understanding of mission.³⁶⁵ Consequently, Bevans and Schroeder described in their book *Prophetic Dialogue* that prophetic dialogue is like a dance to the “beautiful but complex rhythm of dialogue and prophecy, boldness and humility, learning and teaching, letting go and speaking out.”³⁶⁶ The relationship between dialogue and prophecy is that “dialogue also needs to be prophetic in that the Christian must witness to and speak the truth of the Gospel with honesty, conviction, and faith.”³⁶⁷

The concept of prophetic dialogue, at first, seems self-contradictory. Dialogue means to share one’s ideas with others without commitment, while prophecy is linked

³⁶² *FAPA I*, 283.

³⁶³ Amaladoss used the term ‘prophetic dialogue’ in this way: “Religion is called to enter into a prophetic dialogue with the world.” See Michael Amaladoss, “Mission as Prophecy,” in *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations*, eds. James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 64-72, esp. 72. Originally, this article appeared in French in *Spiritus* 128 (1992): 263-275.

³⁶⁴ Society of the Divine Word, “Listen to the Spirit: Our Missionary Response Today,” in *Documents of the 15th General Chapter SVD 2000* (Rome: SVD Publications, 2000), par. 54.

³⁶⁵ Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 348-352.

³⁶⁶ Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 156.

³⁶⁷ Schroeder, “Mission as Proclamation and Dialogue,” 127.

with denunciation. To help overcome a limited understanding of both prophecy and dialogue, the *Documents of the XVI General Chapter SVD 2006* clarified:

All parties to a sincere dialogue must honestly put forward their own views and concerns. In Jesus many recognized a prophetic figure who, like prophets of old, proclaimed God's word. But what captures our attention is that he exercised his prophetic ministry in constant dialogue with those he encountered. Dialogue is rooted in mutuality and so is the prophetic aspect of it. We do not enter into dialogue arrogantly presenting ourselves as the only prophets. Instead, we give witness to our partners, they give witness to us, and the Spirit calls all of us to "acknowledge our own sinfulness and to engage in constant conversion... Together with our dialogue partners we hope to hear the voice of the Spirit of God calling us forward, and in this way our dialogue can be called prophetic."³⁶⁸

In prophetic dialogue, all partners need mutual understanding, cooperation, challenge and learning. Therefore, it is necessary for them to be clear of the motive, process, and goals before engaging in dialogue.³⁶⁹

According to Bevans and Schroeder, missionaries can "perceive a particular context in a new way" or a "spirituality of dialogue" with a respectful attitude towards various aspects of society's situation.³⁷⁰ They describe,

Mission as dialogue is the ministry of presence, of respect. It is a witness, at base, to the God who moves among us in dialogue, the Word became flesh, and to the communion in Godself who calls us to communion with our universe and with one another. [...] But authentic mission also involves prophecy, and this in several senses. First, the basic motivation for mission must be to share the astounding, challenging, self-convicting, amazing, *good* news about the God of Jesus Christ and God's vision for the world.³⁷¹

In the context of Asia, therefore, mission must be done in prophetic dialogue, meaning both dialogue and prophecy.³⁷² In some cases, it requires a patient and careful dialogue. Other cases, it needs to be prophetic in speech and action. Through the daily lifestyle of missionaries, the beautiful, powerful, and transforming message of the

³⁶⁸ *Documents of the XVI General Chapter SVD 2006*, In Dialogue with the Word 6 (September 2006), 21.

³⁶⁹ Raj Susai, "Prophetic Dialogue as a Model for Theological Formation in Japan," *Journal of the Nanzan Academic Society Humanities and Natural Sciences* 9 (January 2015): 149-166, esp. 159.

³⁷⁰ Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 22.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 61.

Gospel can be expressed as exciting, urgent news, a hopeful and liberating word in Asian circumstances of injustice, hopelessness, dehumanization, environmental degradation, violence, and so forth.³⁷³

Mission in Asia needs both dialogue and prophecy. According to Bevans and Doidge, mission as prophetic dialogue should be reflected on six elements: witness and proclamation; liturgy, prayer and contemplation; justice, peace and the integrity of creation; interreligious dialogue; inculturation; and reconciliation.³⁷⁴ Elsewhere it is said that dialogue requires a faithful life in speaking and acting to truth. Relating to this view, Raimon Panikkar said, “[t]ruth is not something that we possess, but something that possesses us, or besets us, something in which we find our being.”³⁷⁵ However, in Christian point of view, there is only an absolute truth, namely God who calls Christians into a living relationship with his Trinitarian communion and his creation. This call is “a deepening of [Christian] beliefs, a respect for those of the other, and an experience of mutual hospitality. This is a dialogue that is personally prophetic.”³⁷⁶ Therefore, prophetic dialogue can be understood as “a two-way process”³⁷⁷ that benefits both Christians themselves and their dialogical partners. In this regard, there are two cases that can be applied for doing mission in Asia as prophetic dialogue: Thomas Merton and Mahatma Gandhi.

³⁷³ Bevans, “*Evangelii Gaudium* and Prophetic Dialogue,” 13.

³⁷⁴ See Stephen Bevans and Eleanor Doidge, “Theological Reflection,” in *Reflection and Dialogue: What MISSION Confronts Religious Life Today?*, ed. Barbara Kraemer (Chicago: Center for the Study of Religious Life, 2000), 37-48; and Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 348-394.

³⁷⁵ Raimon Panikkar, “The Existential Phenomenology of Truth,” *Philosophy Today* 2 (Spring 1958): 13-21, esp. 16.

³⁷⁶ Brink, “In Search of the Biblical Foundations of Prophetic Dialogue,” 19.

³⁷⁷ Gerard Hall, “Marist Mission as Prophetic Dialogue,” *Forum Novum* 14 (December 2012): 31-48, esp. 34.

Thomas Merton represents the former. When Merton encountered Eastern religions, he discovered points of intersection with Buddhist practice that led him to experience his own traditional practices more deeply. He shares,

I believe that by openness to Buddhism, to Hinduism, and to these great Asian traditions, we stand a wonderful chance of learning more about the potentiality of our own traditions, because they have gone, from the natural point of view, so much deeper in this than we have. The combination of the natural techniques and the graces and the other things that have been manifested in Asia and the Christian liberty of the gospel should bring us all at last to that full and independent liberty which is beyond mere cultural differences and mere externals – and mere this and that.³⁷⁸

The latter is a case of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) who experienced dialogue on prophetic faith claims.³⁷⁹ In his book *What Jesus Means To Me*, as a response for this question, he writes,

To me, he was one of the greatest teachers humanity has ever had. To his believers, he was God's only begotten Son. Could the fact that I do or do not accept this belief make Jesus have any more or less influence in my life? Is all the grandeur of his teaching and of his doctrine to be forbidden to me? I cannot believe so... And because the life of Jesus has the significance and the transcendency to which I have alluded, I believe that he belongs not solely to Christianity, but to the entire world; to all races and people, it matters little under what flag, name or doctrine they may work, profess a faith, or worship a God inherited from their ancestors."³⁸⁰

Mission in Asia as prophetic dialogue provides a new way of Christian **life** and witness to the Gospel. In dialogical and prophetic conversation with various situations of Asians, this new way of living should “embrace the continuum of memory, experience, and expectation.”³⁸¹ It means that, as Thomas Merton defines, “[l]iving is the constant adjustment of thought to life and life to thought in such a way that we are

³⁷⁸ Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions Books, 1973), 343.

³⁷⁹ Brink, “In Search of the Biblical Foundations of Prophetic Dialogue,” 15.

³⁸⁰ Mahatma K. Gandhi, *What Jesus Means To Me* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing, 1959), 8-9. It is available at: <http://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/whatjesusmeanstome.pdf> (accessed on April 7, 2017).

³⁸¹ Cardoza-Orlandi, “Prophetic Dialogue,” 32.

always growing, always experiencing new things in the old and old things in the new. Thus, life is always new.”³⁸²

It is worthy to note that mission is the work of the Holy Spirit who is present both in the visible Church and outside. In this regard, John Paul II, in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, affirms: “The Spirit’s presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions” (RM 17). Therefore, as participants in God’s mission, missionaries who engage in mission in Asia must not only do their best in prophetic dialogue with others, but also rely on the Holy Spirit for a successful mission in the world, particularly in Asia.

Following Jesus’ plan for mission (Luke 4:14-21), in doing mission in Asia as prophetic dialogue, one should get involved in both challenge and opportunity to “bring good news to the poor...[,] to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”³⁸³ In reality, Asians are facing many problems such as poverty, religious pluralism, ethnic and cultural diversity, mass migration, environmental degradation, and so on. The relevant language that ought to be used for dialogue in Asia should be the language of love. As a famous saying of St. Joseph Freinademetz, – pioneer of the Divine Word Missionaries in China, “The only language understood by people everywhere is the language of love.”³⁸⁴ Furthermore, in this continent, prophetic dialogue can be carried out in the words of Jeremiah: “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope” (Jer 29:11).

³⁸² Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 17.

³⁸³ Luke eliminates from Isa 61:1-2; 58:6.

³⁸⁴ Stefan Ueblackner (ed.), *Joseph Freinademetz: Serving the People of China* (Rome: Societas Verbi Divini, n.y.), 1.

C. Promoting Mission in Asia through Prophetic Dialogue

At the 1999 Synod of the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), the Asian bishops said that it is necessary to develop a threefold dialogue with Asia's poor, its cultures, and its religions, in order to deal with the three contexts of Asia: massive poverty, cultural diversity, and religious pluralism.³⁸⁵ These three dialogues are interdependent. It is difficult to make a clear line among them because the poor is "the most religious and most attached to their cultures."³⁸⁶ Therefore, they should be practiced together. However, in this section, the triple dialogue will be analyzed independently.

1. Prophetic Dialogue with Cultures

Historically, Asian people have imported various forms from Western culture and Christianity is one of many examples. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, Pope John Paul II mentioned:

It is paradoxical that most Asians tend to regard Jesus – born on Asian soil – as a Western rather than an Asian figure. It was inevitable that the proclamation of the Gospel by Western missionaries would be influenced by the cultures from which they came (EA 20).

It is necessary for Asian churches to be transformed by taking inculturation seriously.³⁸⁷ Similarly, Peter Phan also asserts that the future of the Church relies on the success or failure of inculturation.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ See Peter C. Phan, "Christian Mission in Asia: A New Way of Being Church," in *In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 13-31.

³⁸⁶ Gerard Hall, "Prophetic Dialogue: A Foundational Category for Practical Theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 14 (2010): 34-46, esp. 42.

³⁸⁷ Hall, "Prophetic Dialogue," 43.

³⁸⁸ Phan, *In Our Own Tongues*, xii.

It is necessary to have a short reflection on culture and its effects on people, especially Asians. There are many ways of defining or describing culture.³⁸⁹ However, based on a classical sociological definition, Cardinal Tagle modified it in a chewable way: “Culture is the whole complex of forms of feeling, acting, and thinking shared by a society which allows members of the group to survive, provides them a sense of identity and belonging, and gives their lives meaning.”³⁹⁰ This definition shows that culture plays an important role in the life of people. In this regard, Raj Susai states, “Cultures, constantly grow, sustain and give meaning to people. At any given time people look up and look into their cultures for direction and evaluate their present way of living. As a life-giving and sustaining organism cultures occupy important place.”³⁹¹

Having seen how important culture is, the following question is that how to apply prophetic dialogue to deal with Asian cultures? As already mentioned, prophetic dialogue is not a self-contradictory concept, but it is a mutual relationship where partners in dialogue must bear witness to each other. In addition, when one uses this term, he/she must be careful, Jonny Baker remarks,

I hope that dialogue does not end up being thought of as the culture friendly part where we listen, and be, and discern in mission, and then prophetic is simply countercultural. This would be a mistake or at least it is not the way the prophetic always flows in culture. It is all too easy to imagine prophets as outside of cultures or over and against them which seems to me to be a false imagining. Jesus was very much loved by the people as a prophet, who was fully inside the culture.³⁹²

³⁸⁹ See Helen Spencer-Oatey, “What is culture? A compilation of quotations,” *GlobalPAD Core Concepts* (2012), 2, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills> (accessed on April 14, 2017).

³⁹⁰ Luis Antonio Tagle, “Catechesis: The Eucharist and the Dialogue with Cultures,” *Be Reconciled* (2016), <http://www.lasalettephilippines.org/catechesis--the-eucharist-and-the-dialogue-with-cultures--his-eminence-luis-antonio-cardinal-tagle.html> (accessed on April 14, 2017).

³⁹¹ Susai, “Prophetic Dialogue as a Model for Theological Formation in Japan,” 160.

³⁹² Jonny Baker, “Prophetic Dialogue and Contemporary Culture,” in *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context, and Prophetic Dialogue*, eds. Cathy Ross and Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 210.

Understanding prophetic dialogue in that way can avoid two dangers. The first danger is that people tend to condemn the values of other cultures, when they feel strange to them. Susai observes, “Dialogue with people of different cultures first of all invites one to go beyond one’s cultural confinements, prejudices and value system. It is an invitation to enter into the other person’s sacred space without judgment but with openness.”³⁹³ For people express their own cultures in different ways, but they may contain some dimensions of the Christian view. Therefore, dialogue must grow with discernment. The second danger that should be avoided is accepting anything, including what are unfitting with the Christian view.³⁹⁴ For such an understanding, Bevans and Schroeder insist that “not everything in a culture is good; something might even need to be denounced as evil and eradicated from a culture.”³⁹⁵

Prophetic dialogue as Inculturation. In reality, according to C. S. Song, Asian people live in and with “rich cultures to which the power of image had greatly contributed.”³⁹⁶ He goes on to say that Asian cultures are “shaped by the power of imaging, not by the capacity to conceptualize.”³⁹⁷ Therefore, Asian theologies should be based on Asian soil with Asian “needs, hopes, and struggles” so that they can “foster human life and humanizing visions.”³⁹⁸ As Pope Francis says in *Evangelii Gaudium*,

[The Church] gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the ‘smell of the sheep’ and the sheep are willing to hear their voice (EG 24).

³⁹³ Susai, “Prophetic Dialogue as a Model for Theological Formation in Japan,” 160.

³⁹⁴ Tagle, “Catechesis: The Eucharist and the Dialogue with Cultures.”

³⁹⁵ Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 388.

³⁹⁶ Choan-Seng Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 61.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ S. Rayan, “Decolonizing Theology,” in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, eds. V. Fabella and R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 65.

Andrew Walls speaks of the “indigenizing” and “pilgrim” principles.³⁹⁹ For him, the indigenizing principle means that people who live in their own societies and cultures are accepted by God. This principle makes people’s faith of Christ “a place to feel at home.”⁴⁰⁰ But the pilgrim principle states that all will be transformed, not by adopting a new culture, but by and in Christ. Walls says,

to be faithful to Christ will put [us] out of step with [our] society; for that society never existed, in East or West, ancient time or modern, which could absorb the word of Christ painlessly into its system. Jesus within Jewish culture, Paul within Hellenistic culture, take it for granted that there will be rubs and frictions - not from the adoption of a new culture, but from the transformation of the mind towards that of Christ.⁴⁰¹

Inculturation needs, as Bevens calls, a spirituality of “letting go” and “speaking out.” For outsiders, at first they must live as strangers and guests to listen, to learn, and also to be evangelized by the context. Then, when they have enough experiences and comprehension through living with and learning from local people, they might dare speak out with both suggestions for inculturation and critiques of the context. In contrast, insiders, by their understanding of their cultural or social context, have confidence to speak out what they think differently or courage to point out mistakes in the past and to create new ways of encounter between gospel and local cultural context. After carefully listening in dialogue with their context, they might pay attention to criticism of their cultures and let go of their comfort and accustomed instincts.⁴⁰²

In any case, missionaries need to encourage, foster, and reinforce the richness that has already been marked by Christianity (EG 69). Pope Francis also speaks of the

³⁹⁹ See Andrew F. Walls, “The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture,” in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 3-15.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² See Bevens and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 88-100.

Church as a “mother with an open heart” (EG 46) and “the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems” (EG 47). Furthermore, he goes on saying, “In the Christian customs of an evangelized people, the Holy Spirit adorns the Church, showing her new aspects of revelation and giving her a new face” (EG 116).

Prophetic dialogue with other non-Christian cultures. For Asian enrichments, the diversity or plurality of cultural realities in Asia should be accepted in resolving common human problems. Felix Wilfred states: “The developments in Asia and all over the world indicate that we are moving irreversibly towards an age of decentralization, which has become essential for true unity.”⁴⁰³ It is similar with the harmonious concept of nearly almost Asian peoples that family is one of the highest values, “including love, integrity, honesty, thrift, and mutual support.”⁴⁰⁴ According to the Asian bishops, “harmony embodies ‘the realities of order, well-being, justice and love as seen in human interaction ... Harmony is not simply the absence of strife ... The test of true harmony lies in acceptance of diversity and richness.’”⁴⁰⁵

In his address to the United States Catholic bishops in Washington, DC in 2015, Pope Francis spoke of an important engagement through dialogue:

We are the promoters of the culture of encounter. We are living sacraments of the embrace between God’s riches and our poverty... Dialogue is our method, not as a shrewd strategy but out of fidelity to the One who never wearies of visiting the marketplace, even at the eleventh hour, to propose his offer of love (Matt 20:1-16)....

The path ahead, then, is dialogue among yourselves, dialogue in your presbyterates, dialogue with families, dialogue with society. I cannot ever tire of encouraging you to dialogue fearlessly.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Wilfred, *Sunset in the East?*, 20.

⁴⁰⁴ Fox, *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church*, 118.

⁴⁰⁵ *FAPA II*, 278.

⁴⁰⁶ Pope Francis, Address to the Bishops of the United States of America, Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle, Washington, D.C., September 23, 2015, cited in Katherine Hayes, “The Joy of Conversation: Evangelization, Wisdom, and Dialogue,” *Word & World* 36/4 (Fall 2016): 346-354, esp. 348.

The Pope's call demonstrates that dialogue is a necessary process for building good relationship among human beings. For other cultures, this process will need "long-term planning" (EG 69) that must involve the "sincere and patient dialogue" (AG 2) with other individual and communities in every situation of Christian life. Firstly, in generic sense, as citizens, Christians live together with others in many differences, such as gender, race, language, religion, etc. Therefore, they should have a respectful attitude towards others as the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity states:

In our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace. Thus defined, cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity. Indissociable from a democratic framework, cultural pluralism is conducive to cultural exchange and to the flourishing of creative capacities that sustain public life.⁴⁰⁷

Secondly, dialogue can be done in any places, groups, especially parishes. In the words of Dalai Lama, people should establish "a culture of dialogue"⁴⁰⁸ or of Pope Francis, a "culture of encounter" (EG 220) in their daily lives. It means that people habitually gather together to explore their lives, their differences, their dreams. It implies people to learn together, to build healthy relationships with each other, and to co-create better prospects for their future.⁴⁰⁹ Therefore, they "need to practice the art of listening" which is "an openness of heart" (EG 171). The Pope also says that if one enters into dialogue without humility, he/she would "fail to understand the thinking of

⁴⁰⁷ "From Cultural Diversity to Cultural Pluralism," art. 2, in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Records of the General Conference*, 31st Session, Vol. 1: Resolutions (Paris: The Workshops of UNESCO, 2002), 62. It is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001246/124687e.pdf#page=67> (accesses on April 10, 2017).

⁴⁰⁸ Dalai Lama, quoted in Minu Hemmati, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Participatory Dialogue: Towards a Stable, Safe and Just Society for All* (New York: United Nations Publication, 2007), 58.

⁴⁰⁹ Tom Atlee, "Building a Culture of Dialogue (among other things)," *The Co-Intelligence Institute*, http://www.co-intelligence.org/CIPol_CultrOfDialog.html (accessed on April 15, 2017).

others.”⁴¹⁰ Accordingly, in dialogue with other cultures, Christians must practice the “‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other” (EG 169).

Thirdly, for evangelizing cultures, the Christian message must touch the essentials of cultures and change them from within in order that the Word of God can renew, correct, purify, and nourish the culture (GS 58). This is because God is present in every person as well as in the heart of every human culture. His Spirit is also at work in all people and nations; the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ is also for all. Therefore, the gospel must be concretized in the way people live their traditions and values; the gospel has to be a leaven in the culture in order to purify it from within, to strengthen its weak points, and to enrich it. This evangelization of cultures is an essential task for all categories of the Church.⁴¹¹

Fourthly, the collaboration between theologians and cultural anthropologists can be helpful for seeking solutions to Asian theological problems. Prophetic dialogue with cultures needs a “culture of encounter” among these “high levels” as Susai suggests:

[A]ll those who are involved in theological formation must be exposed to other cultures; theologians should work with cultural anthropologists to find solutions to theological problems that might arise out of cultural differences; as cultural issues are sensitive they must be approached cautiously and at the same time courageously to learn and to challenge.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ Pope Francis, Address to the Bishops of the United States of America, cited in Hayes, “The Joy of Conversation: Evangelization, Wisdom, and Dialogue,” 348.

⁴¹¹ Manuel G. Gabriel, *Themes of John Paul II's Mission Theology* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1999), 156.

⁴¹² Susai, “Prophetic Dialogue as a Model for Theological Formation in Japan,” 161.

Prophetic dialogue with cultures “touches on *moral values, on our account of human nature, on how we live together, on hope, purpose and fulfillment.*”⁴¹³ It should be taken seriously for people who involve in dialogue. According to Paul Knitter, for any genuine exchange between different persons to take place, they need to have a full and free access to the table of dialogue; all must be heard and taken seriously.⁴¹⁴ In prophetic dialogue with cultures, Christians seek to be open for conversation with the other in order to speak the truth in boldness and courage. Therefore, the Church must be “a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel” (EG 114).

2. Prophetic Dialogue with the great Asian Religions

In the Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II defined both proclamation and dialogue as “a subgroup of the same legitimate drive to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.”⁴¹⁵ And another document *Dialogue and Mission* also highlights, “Dialogue is ... the norm and necessary manner of every form of Christian mission, as well as of every aspect of it, whether one speaks of simple presence and witness, service, or direct proclamation.”⁴¹⁶ It is a “mutual opening of persons to each other, arising from the desire to learn from one another’s faith and to be enriched by

⁴¹³ John McDade, “The Jesuit Mission and Dialogue with Culture,” 9, <http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/mission/pdf/cu9.pdf> (accessed on April 12, 2017).

⁴¹⁴ Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 85. See also Hyacinth Kalu, *Principles and Practicalities of Interfaith Relationships in Nigeria*, Interfaith Series, vol. III (Bloomington, IN: Universe, 2011), 11.

⁴¹⁵ Katharina Smith-Muller, “Meeting God in Friend and Stranger: Making the Theology of *Nostra Aetate* Relevant for Teaching and Practice in England and Wales,” in *The New Evangelization: Faith, People, Context and Practice*, eds. Paul Grogan and Kirsteen Kim (London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 255.

⁴¹⁶ Secretariat for Non-Christians, “The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission,” 29, http://www.pcinterreligious.org/uploads/pdfs/Dialogue_and_Mission_ENG.pdf (accessed on April 17, 2017).

it.”⁴¹⁷ “Here dialogue remains a mutual conversation about religious experiences and the contents of one’s faith in order to arrive at better mutual understanding and hence cooperative efforts.”⁴¹⁸ Therefore, as mentioned, in the context of Asia with interreligious conflicts, violence and wars, the aim of interreligious dialogue does not tend to convert the religious partners. As Zukowski remarks,

Dialogue draws life from friendly relations and service. Genuine dialogue aims at listening and learning from each of the conversation partners. Obviously, we need not adopt an uncritical attitude in relation to other religions. But we can open ourselves to their spiritual and moral values and join them in defending religious liberty, social welfare, and peace.⁴¹⁹

As a relevant way for promoting peace, especially in Asia, Wayne Teasdale states that “dialogue is a survival skill, and interfaith dialogue may well prove to be the most valuable vehicle for promoting peace and harmony in society and the world.”⁴²⁰ In addition, in Hans Küng’s well-known words that interreligious dialogue is an important step for peace of humanity: “There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions.”⁴²¹ “At this level, then, interreligious dialogue can be seen as a service to humanity and the world.”⁴²²

⁴¹⁷ Ulrich Schoen, “Dialogue,” in *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*, eds. Karl Muller, et al (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 109.

⁴¹⁸ Camps, *Partners in Dialogue*, 11.

⁴¹⁹ Zukowski, “The Word of God: Ecumenical, Inter-religious, and Cultural Dialogue.”

⁴²⁰ Wayne Teasdale, *Catholicism in Dialogue: Conversations across Traditions* (Oxford: Sheed & Ward Book, 2004), 27.

⁴²¹ Hans Küng, cited in Darren Lammarino, *Religion and Reality: An Exploration of Contemporary Metaphysical Systems, Theologies, and Religious Pluralism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), xiii.

⁴²² Hall, “Prophetic Dialogue,” 44.

In fact, there are the “seeds of the Word” (AG 11, 15) and the “truth which enlightens all men [and women]”⁴²³ dwelling in the heart of all human beings. Hence, as Pope John Paul II said, “dialogue is a means of seeking after truth and of sharing it with others.”⁴²⁴ Although some aspects in other religions are unfitting with the Christian understanding, but “the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue” (RM 55). In addition, the document *Dialogue and Proclamation* puts it,

[A]ll men and women who are saved share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit. Christians know this through their faith, while others remain unaware that Jesus Christ is the source of their salvation. The mystery of salvation reaches out to them, in a way known to God, through the invisible action of the Spirit of Christ. Concretely, it will be in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions and by following the dictates of their conscience that the members of other religions respond positively to God’s invitation and receive salvation in Jesus Christ, even while they do not recognize or acknowledge him as their savior.⁴²⁵

Interreligious dialogue is a challenging dimension for the Church. Every religion has its own tradition and influences its people’s identity and behavior in various ways.⁴²⁶ Hence, according to Cunningham, “interreligious dialogue actually leads participants to a deeper understanding of their own tradition as a result of being asked new questions or of viewing their own tradition from the other’s perspective.”⁴²⁷ Similarly, Klenicki also states,

⁴²³ Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate* (1965), 2, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html (accessed on April 12, 2017). Hereafter NA.

⁴²⁴ John Paul II, Address to representatives of non-Christian religions in Madras, India (January 5, 1986), 4, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1986/february/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19860205_religioni-non-cristiane.html (accessed on March 17, 2017).

⁴²⁵ Pontifical Council on Interreligious Dialogue and Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991), 29, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html (accessed on March 20, 2017). Hereafter DP.

⁴²⁶ Zukowski, “The Word of God: Ecumenical, Inter-religious, and Cultural Dialogue.”

⁴²⁷ Philip A. Cunningham, “The Beginning of the Beginning,” in *Nostra Aetate: Transforming the Catholic-Jewish Relationship*, ed. Philip A. Cunningham (Boston, UK: Anti-Defamation League, 2005), 23.

Real dialogue calls persons into their own being while also acknowledging the others as persons with a way and a commitment. Interfaith dialogue is a recognition of the other as person, and God as the common ground of being. ... Ours is a search in humility for God's presence and call.⁴²⁸

Interreligious dialogue is also a prophetic challenge of the Church in the modern time.⁴²⁹ David Tracy speaks of conversation that includes a dimension of prophetic dialogue:

Conversation is a game with some hard rules: say only what you mean; say it as accurately as you can; listen to and respect what the other says, however different or other; be willing to correct or defend your opinions if challenged by the conversation partner; be willing to argue if necessary, to confront if demanded, to endure necessary conflict, to change your mind if the evidence suggests it. ... In a sense they are merely variations of the transcendental imperatives elegantly articulated by Bernard Lonergan: "Be attentive, be intelligent, be responsible, be loving, and, if necessary, change."⁴³⁰

As Bevans and Schroeder mentioned in their book *Constants in Context* about demanding rules of prophetic dialogue with other religions: "Interreligious dialogue is indeed prophetic dialogue. As dialogue it demands attentive listening, conversation skills, empathy, study, respect. As prophetic, it demands honesty, conviction, courage and faith."⁴³¹ Therefore, according to Marcello Zago, who gave a statement on proclamation and dialogue, "the dialogue method should be characteristic of all the activity of the Christian community and its leaders." But there also needs to be "a constant deepening and strengthening of one's own Christian identity."⁴³²

Pope John Paul II said on April 19, 1998, "We would like to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches, so that they can proclaim Christ in the context of

⁴²⁸ Leon Klenicki, "Nostra Aetate: A Jewish View 'From Disputation to Dialogue,'" in *Nostra Aetate: Transforming the Catholic-Jewish Relationship*, ed. Philip A. Cunningham (Boston: Anti-Defamation League, 2005), 15-16.

⁴²⁹ See Hall, "Prophetic Dialogue," 44-45.

⁴³⁰ David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 19, quoted in Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 385.

⁴³¹ Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 384.

⁴³² Marcello Zago, "The New Millennium and the Emerging Religious Encounters," *Missiology* 28 (January 2000): 17-18, cited in Schroeder, "Mission as Proclamation and Dialogue," 129.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism and all those ways of thinking and living which were already rooted in Asia before the preaching of the Gospel arrived there.”⁴³³

All human beings are facing the same questions about suffering and death and searching for the meaning of life and happiness.⁴³⁴ Therefore, human beings turn “to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence” (NA 1). In Asia, people speak of religion in term of “way.”⁴³⁵ For instance, those who follow Jesus are called the people of “the Way.” In Islam, the *Shariah* (the way) is the external path that must be followed. In Hinduism, there are three *margas* (paths) that lead to salvation or liberation. In Buddhism, the Noble Eightfold “Path” is the way to attain *Nirvana*. Taoism comes from Tao that literally means “the Way.” Confucius taught that “The Way of Humanity” (人道 *Ren Tao*) is to follow “The Way of Heaven” (天道 *Tien Tao*). In Japan, Shintoism is referred to as “The Way of Gods.”⁴³⁶ According, it is necessary to recognize the fact that “the Church and other religions are deeply connected, and that, in dialogue, it is possible to find ‘nuggets’ of the same Truth, inspired by the same Holy Spirit, in the practice and in the faith of others.” If not, Christians would “neglect one of the ways in which they can come closer to their God and his revelation to humankind.”⁴³⁷

⁴³³ The homily of Pope John Paul II during the opening Mass of the special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops (April 19, 1998) on the Vatican’s website: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19041998.html (accessed on March 10, 2017).

⁴³⁴ Annemarie Mayer, “The New Evangelization and Other Religions: Proclamation and Dialogue,” in *The New Evangelization: Faith, People, Context and Practice*, eds. Paul Grogan and Kirsteen Kim (London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 200.

⁴³⁵ See Leonard Swidler, *The Meaning of Life at the Edge of the Third Millennium* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 7-9.

⁴³⁶ Chia, “Dialogue with Religions of Asia: Challenges from Without.”

⁴³⁷ Smith-Muller, “Meeting God in Friend and Stranger,” 253.

For a better life of all humanity, interreligious dialogue is seeking not only for solutions of human problems, but also nourishing one's religious experience. This dialogue is called "dialogue for life" as Cardoza-Orlandi observes,

God is present in other religions, and that presence is evident in people's lives. For this reason, we approach interreligious dialogue knowing that 'we are on sacred ground,' and we share struggles, disappointments, joys, and hope that nourish our religious experience. We call this dialogue a *dialogue for life*.⁴³⁸

It is worthy to note that "knowing full well that what today may be relevant tomorrow may not be... with deep faith in the guidance of the Spirit, seek an interreligious dialogue that may heal our peoples and save our Creation."⁴³⁹ As Pope Francis teaches: "The same Spirit everywhere brings forth various forms of practical wisdom which help people to bear suffering and to live in greater peace and harmony. As Christians, we can also benefit from these treasures built up over many centuries, which can help us better to live our own beliefs" (EG 254).

Interreligious dialogue seeks to respond to the prophetic challenge of playing our role in building the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1) that includes rather than excludes the religious and secular other.⁴⁴⁰ "Rather, proclamation and dialogue, in theory and practice, should be seen as necessary complementary aspects of [mission] in its richness and complexity."⁴⁴¹ Through prophetic dialogue with other Asian religions, a better life can be foreseen in terms of peace and harmony in the future of this continent.

⁴³⁸ Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi, "Inter-Religious Dialogue: Why Should It Matter to Our Academics and Grassroots Communities?," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espin (Malden, MA: John Wiley and Sons, 2015), 480.

⁴³⁹ Cardoza-Orlandi, "Inter-Religious Dialogue," 490.

⁴⁴⁰ Hall, "Prophetic Dialogue," 44-45.

⁴⁴¹ Schroeder, "Mission as Proclamation and Dialogue," 129.

3. Prophetic Dialogue with the Poor

Ecclesia in Asia confirms the importance and urgency of dialogue as a characteristic mode of the Church's life and mission in Asia to encourage the mutual exchange and enrichment of the poor. Mother Teresa of Calcutta is the best-known representative as "an icon of the service to life which the Church is offering to Asia... [because of] her loving and selfless care of the poorest of the poor."⁴⁴² Having observed what all members of her communities did for the poor, someone has said: "In these sisters we see the Lord Jesus Christ returning in the midst of human beings and going around to do nothing but good."⁴⁴³

The Second Vatican Council gave reasons for being involved in dialogue with the poor in the world today:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men [and women] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men [and women]. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every [human being]. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with [hu]mankind and its history (GS 1).

In the realities of this secularized world, "the rich will continue to grow richer and the poor will continue to grow poorer." People tend to turn into *homo consumens*, meaning more possessions, industrialization, urbanization, income, etc., being let by jealousy of what others have. They focus on themselves to be more satisfactory without a care for other who are lacking of a basic sufficiency. Therefore, it is necessary to create a *homo serviens* (Phil 2:7; Matt 20:28) in which real solidarity with the poor is focused in order to become mutual brother- and sisterhood in term of sharing and serving for the poor. In doing so, all members of the Church, especially those who

⁴⁴² Kroeger, "Continuing Pentecost in Asia: Introducing *Ecclesia in Asia*," 72.

⁴⁴³ Camps, *Partners in Dialogue: Christianity and Other World Religions*, 174.

engage in dialogue with the poor will discover Christ through the face of lowliest (Matt 25:45) and in turn, the poor will recognize Christ through their concrete words and deeds.⁴⁴⁴

The Church in Asia must work for and walk with the poor and distinguish various kinds of poverty in which the poor suffer such as homeless, refugees, migrants, domestic workers, victims of human trafficking, discriminated by culture, color, race, caste, economic status, etc.⁴⁴⁵ According to Michael Seigel, the first step to enter into dialogue with the poor is to enter into fellowship with them by listening. It can be applied for the beginning of all dialogue.⁴⁴⁶ In addition, Benigno Beltran asserts: “If you want to dialogue with the poor, you must first be one with them.”⁴⁴⁷

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis speaks of the necessity for the Church that she must be “poor and for the poor” (EG 198). Being based on this idea, the Church has to witness to the gospel to the poor by the simplicity of her life. For all members of the Church, the Pope emphasizes that they have to be close to the poor without any excuses (EG 201). In another paragraph, prophetic words indeed, he goes on to speak clearly,

Any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone, will also risk breaking down, however much it may talk about social issues or criticize governments. It will easily drift into a spiritual worldliness camouflaged by religious practices, unproductive meetings, and empty talk (EG 207).

⁴⁴⁴ Camps, *Partners in Dialogue*, 226.

⁴⁴⁵ It is retrieved from The International Eucharistic Congress (IEC), “Theological and Pastoral Reflections in Preparation for the 51st International Eucharistic Congress,” *The 51st International Eucharistic Congress* (24–31 January 2016), 35, <http://www.catholic.org.tw/en/images/IEC/51st%20IEC%20Theo%20and%20Pasto.pdf> (accessed on March 20, 2017).

⁴⁴⁶ Michael T. Seigel, “Reflection on a Few Hours at Smokey Mountain,” in *Mission and Dialogue: Theory and Practice*, eds. Leonardo N. Mercado and James J. Knight (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1989), 5.

⁴⁴⁷ Benigno P. Beltran, “Dialogue: The Poor in Smokey Mountain, Manila,” in *Mission and Dialogue: Theory and Practice*, eds. Leonardo N. Mercado and James J. Knight, (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1989), 8-9.

The Church does not have technical solutions for all the problems of the poor in Asia, but she “offers the truth about Christ, about herself” through love and service to the poor and the powerless (EA 32). It is necessary for all members of the Church to be aware of “the inescapable and unrenounceable challenge” in working for human rights, justice, and peace (EA 33). Therefore, Christians, especially religious members and missionaries, should keep in mind that although they cannot improve the state of the poor immediately, such as the poor become rich, but one thing they cannot ignore is to show their love for the poor in word and deed. This is one of the most important commandments that Jesus himself has taught us: love one another (John 13:34). In doing so, the poor will find their best reason for hope in the Gospel.

According to Pope Francis, proper attention should be paid to the poor in order to understand their cultural and spiritual dimensions. In so doing, the poor are also able “to teach the rich and the elite about the joys of the Good News.”⁴⁴⁸ The Pope goes on to say that it is necessary to draw closer to the simple people who have deep faith with a respectful attitude of dialogue.⁴⁴⁹ The “other face” of God can be revealed to those who “face to face” with the poor. In this regard, says Antonio M. Pernia, “[staying] with the poor long enough can lead us to a new sense of the nearness of God.”⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ Leonardo N. Mercado, “Filipino Popular Devotions in the Light of *Evangelii Gaudium*,” *Missio Inter Gentes* 1/1 (January 2015): 57-66, esp. 66.

⁴⁴⁹ Bevans, “*Evangelii Gaudium* and Prophetic Dialogue,” 15.

⁴⁵⁰ Antonio M. Pernia, “The Stranger and the Poor: Two Challenges to the Missionary Church in *Evangelii Gaudium*,” *Missio Inter Gentes* 1/1 (January 2015): 37-56, esp. 41.

Pope Paul VI said that “the Church has the duty to announce liberation to millions of people... the obligation to bring to birth that liberation, give witness to it and make it total” (EN 30). This issue of liberation can be addressed as dialogue with the poor in their pursuit of justice. In addition, as Camps affirms, “Raw poverty must be eliminated through real-life dialogue with the poor.”⁴⁵¹

Summary

The triple dialogue with the poor, cultures, and religions are challenging and instructive.⁴⁵² However, it is an appropriate way to do mission in the world today. This is a hope for promoting mission in Asia in order that all Asians will hear the Good News on the one hand, and they will live in peace and harmony on the other.

⁴⁵¹ Camps, *Partners in Dialogue*, 180.

⁴⁵² Hall, “Prophetic Dialogue,” 45.

CONCLUSION

In the context of Asia, where multi-religions, multi-cultures, and the immense multitude of the poor are co-existing, the Church must participate in God's mission, particularly in dialogue of salvation with all men and women. As the document *Dialogue and Proclamation* states, "God, in an age-long dialogue, has offered and continues to offer salvation to humankind" (DP 38). Through dialogue, Christians can witness to the truth of their faith by respecting the cultures, religions, and contexts of other people. In some situations, Christians must have the courage to live out and speak the truth of the gospel to the people of Asia in prophecy, so that "they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

Mission in Asia as prophetic dialogue includes numerous complex aspects such as dialogue and prophecy, boldness and humility, learning and teaching, letting go and speaking out. The FABC's new approach on theology and practice of mission that contains the main missiological teachings of the Catholic Church, "impels [Christians, especially missionaries] to understand and undertake mission as 'prophetic dialogue,' with its threefold component of peace and justice, inculturation, and interfaith dialogue."⁴⁵³ This mission opens an opportunity for the Church in Asia to be closer to its people and to learn from, cooperate and contact directly with other non-Christians. The Church is also challenged to change within her life in order that one day, all people will join a dance together in harmony and peace.

⁴⁵³ Phan, "World Christianity and Christian Mission," 198.

Just as Jesus, the missionary sent by the Father and through incarnation has become one like us in everything (except sin), the Church in Asia must also be incarnated to the Asian context. To be truly Asian, the Church must be incarnated and inculturated.

The FABC's missiological approach is best described as *missio inter gentes* (mission among the nations) rather than the traditional *missio ad gentes* (mission to the nations). The greatest challenge that the Asian bishops face with respect to the task of doing Christian mission is the question of the diversity and plurality of the Asian milieu, with its myriad religions, cultures and peoples. If Asian Christians want to "take their Asianness seriously as the context of their being Christian,"⁴⁵⁴ they have to accept such diversity and pluralism through engaging in dialogue of life with their Asian neighbors. Don't you think that evangelization as prophetic dialogue requires an approach that is *missio inter gentes*. Therefore, promotion of the integral development of peoples as part of evangelization as prophetic dialogue. Prophetic dialogue involves the promotion of social justice in the midst of rampant poverty in Asia.⁴⁵⁵

The Final Statement of the Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly concluded that "we look at the image of the [holy doors of churches that are being opened] and are gladdened to rediscover our calling to enter into the community of Christ's disciples and to share in his life and mission. It is through the same doors that we now go out into the world of the peoples of Asia and into their struggles and joys, which are also ours."⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁴ Peter C. Phan, "Ecclesia in Asia: Challenges for Asian Christianity," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 37 (2000): 215-232, esp. 218.

⁴⁵⁵ See Jonathan Y. Tan, *Missio Inter Gentes: Towards a New Paradigm in the Mission Theology of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)*, *Mission Studies* 21/1 (2004): 65-95.

⁴⁵⁶ *FAPA III*, 15.

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