

SUMMARIES – JOURNAL OF MISSION THEOLOGY 8/2006

TIMO VASKO

Three Hundred Years from the Beginning of Pietistic Lutheran Missions in Tranquebar, India

Organized Lutheran missions began only about two hundred years after Luther's Reformation. They started in Asia, Tranquebar city and port, a Danish colony in India. In this article I discuss the central starting points of missions in India, Pietistic-Lutheran missions, and the influence on this work by the University of Halle and King Frederick IV of Denmark. The first Lutheran and at the same time first Protestant missionaries in India were the Germans Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau. I examine more closely the formation of the mission vision of Ziegenbalg in the India context – his literary work and the problems of encountering other religions.

JUHA AUVINEN

"For Every People, Tribe and Language..." — Radio Ministry in India

The Population of India is over one billion and more than 1600 languages are spoken in the country. Christian radio programmes are broadcasted to India in tens of minority languages. Where ever possible, radio ministry is done in cooperation with local churches. Where there are no churches radio programmes aim to plant one and eventually lead the new Christians to an existing church in the region. The aim of the radio ministry is twofold. First the programmes lead the radio listeners to Christian faith, and secondly they provide encouragement to the Christian minority living amidst the mainly Hindu environment. About fifty percent of the Indian population is literate. Therefore the radio programmes have an important role. The listeners are sending tens of thousands of responses and contact and material requests each month.

RIIKKA UUKSULAINEN

Puja for Jesus? — Aspects of Religious Pluralism and Popular Religion in India

Hinduism, the religion of India, consists of multitude of religious movements, sects and spiritual traditions. One possibility to approach Hinduism is to separate local, popular religion from the authoritative Sanskrit Hinduism. Popular Hinduism is generally an oral tradition and it dynamically reacts to changing circumstances. People adopt practices and godheads according to their needs. This is the usual situation with Christian mission. People receive it well and include it among their varied beliefs. This article is based on the fieldwork experiences and interviews among low caste communities in the states of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

MARKETTA ANTOLA

*Christianity in the Chinese Context —
Paternalism and Provision Today and in the Past*

In China, there is no tradition of religious freedom. According to human rights organizations, China is a country where human rights are violated. – On the other hand, there has always been a current of independent thinking underneath the surface: the Daoist and Buddhist folk traditions have co-existed side by side with the official philosophy. This article tries to describe the situation of the Chinese Church today. I also evaluate the possibilities of obtaining reliable information about religious activities.

In short, studies on religion are difficult to make. The officials interfere research and results. The numbers of believers are difficult to verify, because the majority of believers belong to the unofficial home churches. In addition, every publication in China is examined and approved by the state officials. There is an approved theology of the official church (China Christian Council) and there is a critical and sometimes unorthodox theology of the so called home churches.

JAAKKO MÄKELÄ

Emerging Contextual Lutheran Theology in Thailand

The joint ministry of Nordic Lutheran mission agencies and Asian Lutheran churches in Thailand began in 1976. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand was established in 1994. Only less than one percent of the population are Christians. Most crucial contextual theological questions for Lutherans seem to be the encounter with Buddhism and the nature of grace.

KAISA NIKKILÄ

*Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos Seen From the Point of View
of the Students of Hong Kong Lutheran Theological Seminary*

These three South-East Asian countries have in common their mainly Buddhist religious tradition, and each has a long history and tradition which includes the experience of Western colonization which they overturned through communist revolutions. One would think church or mission in this complex situation would have disappeared, yet today the church is growing and spreading the gospel despite restrictions, and the countries are slowly opening up again. The church has learned to survive through hardship, keep the essentials, and contextualize the gospel, developing theology that is more suitable to and better understood in the local context.

JUKKA VÄNSKÄ

*Sola Fide, Sola Gratia — Lutheran View
to a Dialogue Between Pure Land Buddhism and Christianity*

From the very beginning of the Christian mission in Japan, similarities between teaching of Shinran, the founder of Jōdoshinshū, and teaching of Martin Luther have been noted. This article outlines the development of Pure Land Buddhism

to a Japanese faith-centred religion, and presents some interpretations that Christian theologians have made of it. Recently, Buddhist scholars have criticized dominant understanding of Pure Land tradition in the West, because it accommodates Buddhist concepts to Christian frames of reference and pays little attention to the differences between Christianity and Pure Land Buddhism. Critical study of differences casts light to the original thinking of both Shinran and Luther.

KOSTI KALLIO

*Problems Concerning the Existence
and the Church Growth of the Lutheran Churches in Japan*

This article deals with some problematic issues of a Lutheran mission work in Japan conducted by Finnish Church over a hundred years. It investigates difficulties to start working, the problem of national employer's education, position and tasks in the church lead by a missionary society. After the Second World War co-operation between Lutherans was emerged. It resulted an idea about a common Lutheran church, which failed anyway. However, the churches gained an independency. Those churches have been struggling with a position and tasks of missionaries besides problems with radio mission and literature work. An ancestor worship, a general secularisation process and a lack of church workers create hindrance to the church growth. In the end this article will examine some plans of church growth. The writer of this article has been working as a missionary in Japan about 20 years.

OLLI-PEKKA LASSILA

*Missio Pacifica —
Some points of view to Christianity in the Pacific region*

The first Christian missionaries came to South Pacific in 1797 when the British (*London Missionary Society*) missionary ship *Duff* arrived in Tahiti. From Tahiti the work was expanded, mainly through local evangelists to other islands in the Pacific. The mission of the Protestant churches of the LMS was carried out in confessionally open and contextual spirit. However, from the very beginning tensions emerged with the Roman Catholic Church with echoes until today.