



The Christian Approach to Buddhists in Thailand

by Sada Chatwan

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By

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PREFACE

This paper is a historical study of the Christian approach to Buddhists in Thailand from the sixteenth century to the present. It deals with Buddhist teaching, religious and social customs, and methods of approach to Buddhists who strongly believe in and are loyal to their religious founder, Buddha. The persecution of Christianity and the edict of religious toleration are also included. Christian influences on Buddhism, tracing back to the early Christian encounter with Buddhists in Tibet and China, from where the ancestors of modern Thai immigrated to Thailand, are carefully studied. This study deals with Christian influences, not only on the Buddhist religion, but on the economy and education in Thailand as well. The problems which have been faced by Christian converts, indigenous leaders and missionaries are embraced in this paper. There are some suggestions in the last chapter which are considered as most important and effective strategies for conveying the Gospel to Thai Buddhist adherents.

I wish to express special thanks to Dr. Valentine S. Sitoy, Head of the Department of Asian Studies, Silliman University, Philippines. He not only read the first draft of this paper but also gave some significant comments which were necessary for clarification in order that this paper might be comprehensible to scholastic and ordinary minds. I also want to express my appreciation to Miss Gertrude McMorran, our beloved English Secretary at Thailand Theological Seminary, Chiang Mai, who patiently typed all this paper, so that it might be of use to the theological students as well as professors and missionaries in Thailand. S.C.

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INTRODUCTION

In presenting Jesus Christ to Thai Buddhist society, we will not be successful if we simply introduce him to Buddhist adherents without carefully studying their religious and social customs. It is part of the effective strategy of conveying the Gospel to the Thai Buddhists to pay due attention to the religious and cultural setting which is precisely Buddhist in character. The long establishment of Buddhism in Thailand has made the Thai way of life unique. We, therefore, should first of all know the belief and practices of the Thai Buddhists, particularly the Buddhist philosophy which formulates their way of life.

According to tradition Buddhism was brought to Thailand in the third century B.C. by missionaries from India sent by the great Buddhist emperor, Asoka. At that time Thailand was inhabited by the Mons and Khmer. The ancestors of the modern Thai people were still in Yunnan, in China. Before they came, the earlier Buddhism of Asokan origin had already spread in the south, as far as Malay Peninsula. The Khmer, who comprised the majority of the population then, were inclined to believe in Mahayan Buddhism. When Theravada Buddhism was brought to Indo-China in the twelfth century and introduced to the people and making it the religion of the ordinary men and women, it displaced the Mahayana Buddhism which the people formerly followed. When Theravada Buddhism had firmly established in Thailand, Hindu-Thailand, in fact, had been "Hinduized" before Buddhism reached this area, and Mahayana temples were gradually converted to Theravada, though Hindu and Mahayana elements were not wholly eliminated up to the present day.

It is necessary to distinguish these two main schools of Buddhist teaching and thought. Dr. Paul Eakin, who had been in Thailand for years, had distinguished these two great schools as follows:

HINAYNA	or	MAHAYANA
THERAVADA		
- Scripture, the Pali Canon		- Scripture, the Sanskrit
- "Little Vehicle" or Narrow		- "Great Vehicle" or Broad
Way of Salvation		
- Conservative. Rationalistic		- Liberal, mystical, speculative,
,and ethical		and in some aspects, spiritual.
- Orthodox. Salvation is		-Heterodox. All, laymen as well

possible only for the few who retire and as ascetics, have equal chance of gaining
devote themselves wholly to religious salvation
matters

- Denies a God or the individual soul - Gotama is God. There are pure souls in paradise...

- Is held in Ceylon, Burma and Thailand for the most part¹ - Is held in Tibet, Nepal, China, Korea, Japan

However, Eakin felt that this division is not absolute, because one can find some Theravada doctrines in China and some traces of the Mahayana teaching in Ceylon and Thailand. At any rate, Thailand is held to be famous for the purity of its Theravada Buddhism; even Ceylon after its crisis had to send the Singhalese Buddhists to Thailand to receive the pure forms of Theravada Buddhism from the Thai.²

It might be said that to this day, the King of Thailand is the protector and sponsor of Buddhism in his country, and even becomes a Buddhist monk for a certain period of time during his reign.

Let us look at the kernel of the Buddhist teaching which influences the Thai way of life. Buddhist teaching starts off with the Four Noble Truths, namely suffering, desire, cessation, and the Noble Eightfold Path: that life is composed of suffering, this means that all states of mind are engaged in suffering; suffering results from desire (tanha); cessation of desire ends life and suffering; and this desirable outcome can be attained by the pursuit of the Eightfold Path:

¹ P. Eakin, *Buddhism and the Christian Approach to Buddhists in Thailand*. (Bangkok: Rung Ruang Ratana, 1960), p.17.

² B. Morgan, "Thai Buddhism and American Protestantism," *Sinclair Thompson Memorial Lectures, Fourth series* (Chiang Mai: Thailand Theological Seminary, 1966), p. 21.

1. Right understanding,
2. Right aspiration,
3. Right speech,
4. Right conduct,
5. Right vocation,
6. Right effort,
7. Right alertness,
8. Right concentration.³

The most important teaching of Buddha is the doctrine of Karma, an action. This word is problematic as far as religious scholars are concerned; even among Buddhists themselves understand this word differently. The average people hold that what a man sows that and that alone shall he reap and he alone. Then the circumstance of any life, the sex, status, talents, happiness, and sorrow are the direct results of acts performed in the past existence, and deeds done now prepare the bed on which we must lie in other lives. But Buddhist scholars for example, the Venerable Bhikkhu Buddhadasa Indapanno, the great Buddhist-scholar monk, the author of hundreds of books both in Thai and English, insists that God and Karma are one and the same thing which is ruling the world. The difference is only words. In his lecture at Thailand Theological Seminary in 1967 he asserts:

...If there be any God he would be nothing but the Law of Karma.... In language of Dhamma – (the viewpoint of absolute truth) – God and the “Law of Karma” are one and the same thing. They differ only the usage of the words “God” or “Karma.” If we do the work which is to be done properly keeping in mind the Law of Karma we receive the result accordingly. Doing evil the result will be

³ Ibid., p. 5.

evil according to the same Law... One reaps the fruits as one acts no matter how one interprets the action. In this way we help ourselves by acting in accordance with the Law of Nature or Karma which is always straightforward, sure, and impartial; it wields absolute power. As the Law of Karma is absolute and unbiased we can make it God as well. To see this with reference to Christianity we may say that God, through whom we harvest the fruits of our actions, undoubtedly is no other than the "All Mighty – Law of Karma of Buddhism."⁴

The life of each individual is controlled by the Law of Karma. Happiness and sorrow are the results of his action of previous life or present life. Generally, they are held as the results of previous life. Therefore in the present life, one must be aware of his acts, which will affect the next life, that is, life after death. Professor Noel Busch states:

After death, according to popular interpretation not always accepted by Buddhist theologians, an individual may spend some time doing penance for bad acts, and some time being rewarded for good ones, in four possible major conditions, each with numerous sub-divisions: heaven, life as a human, life as an animal, or hell.⁵

Religiously speaking, Buddhists believe that if in this lifetime one performs a good Karma, a good act, after death he will obtain merit and live in paradise, where good things he has done on earth are prepared for him. However, whether an act does in fact contribute to a good Karma depends on the interior intention and motivation of the actor. Thai people for the most part, therefore, hold to this belief, which issues forth in various attitudes and actions in daily life. Coolness or calmness, for instance, is a visible attitude which expresses one's freedom from agitation, one's capacity to

⁴ B. Indapanno, "Christianity and Buddhism," Sinclair Thompson Memorial Lectures (Chiang Mai, 1967), p. 32f.

⁵ N.G. Busch, Thailand: An Introduction to Modern Siam (New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1959), p. 119.

transcend the temptation to conflict and aggressiveness or the temptation to greed, or one's ability to remain cool in the face of discouragement and difficulties. Thus the social and family life of the Thai people is unique and admirable in the eyes of Westerners. Paul Eikin asserts:

Dignity and reticence pervades the whole system. Gentleness and courtesy (are) great one. Lavish hospitality and readiness to please, even at great inconvenience, characterize the majority. When they are lacking, so-called western culture can usually be traced.⁶

The present writer feels that not only This Buddhists but also Christians in Thailand who are influenced by Buddhist principles Believe the maxim, that "do good and you will reap goodness, do evil and it will be done unto you." The Christian message, "*Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap*" (Gal. 6:7) is understood in terms of Buddhist teaching in this regard. What a man does to life, life does back to him. What a man sows, he reaps; and he reaps in kind, as he sows. One, who sows carelessness can never reap the confidence of people. One who sows "supersensitiveness"⁷ will not reap happiness. This is how they understand Jesus' statement: "*Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*" (Matthew 7:16). Therefore, they will help the poor, clothe them, provide them with food, welcome the stranger, in order that after death they may reap what they have sown. In a nutshell, they are making merit. Therefore, every act is considerably meritorious.

In regard to social customs there are some things that should be taken into account here. The foot, for instance, is regarded as an inferior part of the body. Therefore, it should not be used for pointing at anything whether the latter is close to the foot or not one must refrain from using his foot

⁶ Eiken, op. cit., p. 55.

⁷ The word "supersensitiveness" in this case means one who is too much sensitive to a little criticism or the like, and expresses emotionally barbarousness to the people.

to point. Because among the Thai it is considered disrespectful to use the foot instead of the finger to point. Likewise one should not put his foot on the table. Whoever wants to get into the Thai Buddhist temples, or even some Christian churches and houses, he must take off his shoes, because the temples and churches are regarded as the holy places. If anyone violates this social rule, he is not only regarded as one who looks down upon the other person, but also as a “de-culturalist,” that is, one who destroys the culture. Furthermore, Thai people have a high respect for the old, the educated and teachers, besides for their King and Queen. It is bad manners to put your hand in your pocket while you are talking with them. Failure to observe this social custom is considered being disrespectful to these sacred places, or to the host, or to the person. Therefore, anyone who wants to communicate effectively with Thai people must indispensably observe their customs.

I. THE ARRIVAL OF MISSIONARIES

A. ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSTONARIES

The westerners came to South East Asia with three purposes: God, gold and glory. The Portuguese and the Spaniards who came to this part of the world early in the sixteenth century not only hoped to Christianize the inhabitants, they also wanted to share in the lucrative orient trade, especially in spices, as well as to bring glory to their kings.

The acquaintance of the Christian world with the kingdom and people of Siam in the course of the early sixteenth century is due to the adventurous and enterprising spirit of the Portuguese. The great discovery of the new route to India and the Spice Islands by Vasco da Gama and his successors brought to the astonished eyes of Europeans the intoxicating vision of a New world.⁸ The Portuguese were very active in the affairs of South East Asia at that time. As a matter of fact, they did not want to gain territory to any great extent, they only wanted to establish commercial centers and harbors in order to control the trade between India and eastern Asia and to have direct contact in the trade with South East Asia. However, it was impossible to establish commercial bases without fighting. They had to fight against Muslims in Malaca and Sumatra. The Muslims were defeated in the long run. Later on the Portuguese had conflict with the Spaniards who came from Central America through the

⁸ K.S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity: Three Centuries of Advance A.D. 1500 – A.D. 1800* (new York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1939), vol. III, p. 4.

east route and reached the Spice Islands. They fought against each other quite a long period of time till the Portuguese completely won in 1542.⁹

B.R. Pearn, formerly professor of history at University of Rangoon, in Burma, said that the Portuguese traded with the mainland countries as well, and "had trading posts in Ayuthia..."¹⁰ The first European visitor to Siam after Marco polo was Duarte Fernandez, an emissary sent to Ayuthia, the capital of Siam, by Alfonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese Viceroy of India.¹¹ When Alfonso de Albuquerque conquered Malaca in 1511 on behalf of the king of Portugal, he heard stories about the power and wealth of Siam. Consequently, he determined to find out for himself if such stories were indeed true. Thus he dispatched his envoy, Fernandez, to the Court of Rama Tibodi II in Ayuthia in 1511. If Fernandez had been accompanied by a missionary, Christian missions might have been established in Siam since that time. Professor Ray C. Downs, the founder of the Student Christian Center in Bangkok and lecturer at Chulalongkorn and Thammasat Universities wrote:

The first missionary actually to reach the shores of Siam, a Roman Catholic priest, arrived in the year 1511; and Catholic missionaries have been in continuous residence since 1555.¹²

But there was no corroborating for this year 1511 at all. Donald F. Lach held that the two Dominicans came to Siam in 1567.¹³ It seems to be questionable, because in 1566 one of the two named Jerome de la Croix was killed, according to a book authorized by J. Nittayo, Archbishop of Bangkok:

⁹ B.R. Pearn, *An Introduction to the History of South-East Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: Longmans Malaysia, 1968), pp. 67-69.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹¹ Busch, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹² R.C. Downs, "Thailand: A Struggling Church in a Stable Land," in G. H. Anderson, Ed., *Christ and Crisis in Southeast Asia* (New York: Friendship Press, 1968), p. 32.

¹³ D.F. Lach, *Asia In the Making of Europe* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965) Vol. I, Book two, p. 536f.

The earliest missionaries known in Thailand were the two Dominicans from Malaca in A.D. 1555. One was Jerome de la Croix. He was killed on January 26, 1566; and another one was Sebastian de Canto, who proclaimed the Gospel for three years afterward and was killed on February 11, 1569.¹⁴

The present writer, therefore, is inclined to believe that Archbishop Nittayo is the better authority, because Ray Downs, as mentioned above, insists on the same date, 1555.

Lach says that when these two friars arrived in Ayuthia, they were received by the people with the greatest kindness, and provided with suitable houses in the best quarter of the city. Unfortunately, due to the conflict between some Portuguese and Muslim traders, the latter made attempts on their lives when the Buddhist monks and laity come along with the Portuguese to hear the friars' sermons.¹⁵ Thus, Jerome was killed on the date mentioned above, by the thrust of a spear, and Sebastian was wounded by a stone. Due to the incident, the leading Siamese nobles offered Sebastian an apology. The king, Maha Chakrapat, punished the guilty by having them trampled to death by elephants. Sebastian was graciously granted an audience by the king, and for his personal safety he was asked not to leave the country without permission, so that he might be provided with adequate protection.

During this period of time Christian missionaries were tolerated in the country. Sebastian was allowed by the king to bring some more missionaries from Malacca. Indeed, two new missionaries

¹⁴ Pravat Prasasanachakra Sakol le Pravat Prasasanachakra Nai Pratet Thai ("History of the Universal Church and of the Church in Thailand") (Bangkok: Assumption Printing Press, 1967), p. 195f.

¹⁵ Lach, *op. cit.*, p. 537.

came with him on his return. Unfortunately, they preached the Gospel only a few years, all of them perishing when the Burmese captured Ayuthia in 1569.¹⁶

According to Latourette, there were also some Spanish Jesuit missionaries from the Philippines, who attempted to gain a foothold in Siam.¹⁷ But apart from this brief reference, nothing else is known of the results of their labours.

Quite unlike the later history of Protestant missions, the Catholic missionaries had to suffer even die for the sake of the ministry bestowed on them. In accordance with the petition of Diego Beloso, an ambassador of the king of Camboja (present day Cambodia) to the Spanish king during the years 1593-97, Christians and missionaries in Siam had grievously suffered. Beloso states:

In fact the Sianese robbed and captured us and we are carried as prisoners to the City of Judea, which in the kingdom of Sian. Hear we found the fathers and other Christians who had come from Camboja, and who were in a sad and unfortunate captivity; they were allowed no Churches or provisions, but must seek their food as alms from the heathen, so that the affliction and misfortune which they undergo is a most pitiable thing. When we were all joined together and saw what we must suffer, ewe decided to seek some remedy... he (the king) is a very cruel tyrant and a persecutor of the holy Catholic faith, and will consent no Christian place of worship in his kingdom, but rather destroys them, and burns those which he may find in other kingdom.¹⁸

As a matter of fact, persecution befell Siamese Christians every now and then. Christianity in Siam in the course of four centuries from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries depended mostly upon the kindness of the kings. For example, when the Spaniards attacked the Dutch, the were considerably

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 537.

¹⁷ Latourette, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

¹⁸ "Expedition to Camboja," in Emma H. Blair and James A. Robertson, *The Philippine Islands* (1493-1989), (n.d.), vol. IX, p. 164.

under the protection of the king of Siam, establishing their trading center on the bank of Chow Phya River, and the Dutch were captured, The king of Siam was informed of it, then he sent a message to Don Fernando de Silva, who was stationed somewhere up the river and the leader in attacking the Dutch, asking him to set the Dutch free and give them back their ship and the property which he had taken from them. But Don Fernando de Silva refused to do so and broke out in words that might have been avoided toward the king. The latter therefore collected a numerous fleet of boats and attacked the Spaniards and killed them, only some thirty were captured. These captured Spaniards were taken to the Court of the king, which was in Ayuthia. Two priests, Father Pedro de Morejon, a Spaniard, and Antonio Cardin, a Portuguese, were sent to Siam in 1626 to negotiate with the king with regard to the deliverance of the captives. They were received graciously, the document saying about them as follows:

Father Pedro de Morjon was given a cordial reception by the king, who showed many favors. At his departure the father told the king that he was leaving Father Cardin in his kingdom, and asked his Highness to protect him. The king offered to do so, and gave permission for all who wished to become Christians. Father Cardin erected his church and commenced his ministry.¹⁹

Bishop La motte Lambert, a Frenchman, who was appointed Vicar-Apostolic to Cochinchina, arrived in Ayuthia in 1662 during the reign of King Narai. He was requested to be present in the court of the King in order that the latter could inquire about France, its armed forces, wealth, commercial enterprises, and also about Lambert's purpose of coming to Siam. "Do you think that your religion is better than the religion of Siam?" asked the king. The Bishop did not answer him

¹⁹ "Relation of 1626," in Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, vol. XXII, p. 141.

directly, but took advantage of this time to explain to him about Christianity.²⁰ The result of the interview was that the king provided Lambert with a piece of land by a river and materials in order that he might erect a church and school.²¹ In 1666, Lambert and Bishop Francois Pallu, who joined Lambert in 1664, decided to establish school at Ayuthia, for the purpose of training clergy not only from Siam, but also from its neighboring clergy not only from Siam, but also from its neighboring countries. Siam, therefore, became the center of the Society des Missions Etrangères²² since then. LaTourette states that Siam seemed to be a more secure place for the founding of a seminary. This school subsequently became the Society's College General in the Far East.²³ It remained here until 1769 when the Burmese again invaded Ayuthia, after which it was removed to French territory, at Verampatnam, in India.²⁴

During the reign of King Narai, Christian missionaries enjoyed full freedom to prosecute their work in Siam, because of the good favor of the Siamese King. Due to his friendliness and support, the French missionaries mistakenly thought that he would become a Christian. They attempted to convert him to Christianity, but for reasons of his own, he refused to become a Christian. George B. Bacon, writing towards the end of the last century, said:

The King refused to converted, and was able to give some dignified and substantial reasons for distrusting the religious interest which his "esteemed friend, the King of France", had taken "in

²⁰ Pravat Prasasanachakra Sakol..., *op. cit.*, p. 208

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209

²² LaTourette, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

affair which seems to belong to God, and which the Divine Being appears to have left entirely to our discretion.”²⁵

When the king realized that the French missionaries attempted to convert him to Christianity, the Jesuit priests gradually found difficulties, and finally were put under restraint, even the military force which accompanied the mission could do nothing but met with an inglorious fate. The hope of bringing a good news and glory to the throne of France was in vain.

However, Roman Catholic Christianity in the course of the seventeenth century had spread throughout the nearby provinces of Ayuthia. Though they were not able to convert the kings and the noble people, they achieved in converting the tribal peoples. The Catholic missionaries paid due attention not only to the proclamation of the Gospel, but also the health of the people. They founded a hospital in Ayuthia, and gave free treatment, and gave food before the patients left for home. At present, there are a number of schools and hospitals established by Roman Catholic missions. Their outstanding clergy are teaching not only at their own schools, but also in the State universities throughout the country.

B. PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES

Protestant work in Thailand was begun three centuries after Catholic mission established in the country. The first two Protestant missionaries reached Siam on August 23, 1828, were the Rev. Dr. Carl Augustus Friedrich Gutzlaff, M.D., a German, and the Rev. Jacob Tomlin, an Englishman of the London Missionary Society.²⁶ Both of them received permission to work among the Chinese.

²⁵ G. B. Bacon, *Siam: The Land of the White Elephants As It Was and Is* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), p. 4.

²⁶ K.E. Wells, *History of Protestant Work in Thailand 1828-1958* (Bangkok: Church of Christ in Thailand, 1958), p. 5.

Within six months of their arrival, they translated the four Gospels and the Epistle to the Romans from Chinese into Siamese, with the help of a Chinese named and Hon, a Burmese. Translation was quite imperfect because nobody knew Siamese well. Moreover, the Chinese expressed what he understood the Bible to the Burmese, who knew Siamese language better than the former, did, to write down in Siamese. Not surprisingly, the two missionaries were not satisfied with the translation. They, therefore, attempted instead an English-Siamese dictionary, and proceeded as far as the letter "R".²⁷ This was continued by other missionaries who came later.

The first American missionary to Siam was the Rev. Dr. David Abeel, M.D. He stayed only a year on account of ill health, then left for Singapore and then he back to America, and never to return.²⁸

There were many other Protestant missions to Siam in the course of the first half of the nineteenth century. The most active, and which won many Siamese to Christianity, was the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. There were many outstanding pioneers of this mission group working in both the North and South of Siam. Most of them were medical doctors, among whom the Rev. Dr. Daniel Beach Bradley was especially outstanding. He was not only a physician and preacher, but also a translator, writer and printer. In fact, it was he who first introduced the typing press to Siam.²⁹ The Rev. Dr. Samuel R. House, another missionary of the Presbyterian Church, was equally well known in the country. Of him, Dr. K.E. wells says: "In the later years Dr. House started the first school health program in Siam."³⁰ Dr. House played a notable role in the government officially,

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁹ Downs, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³⁰ Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

especially when sir John Bowring came to Siam to negotiate a treaty between Britain and Siam, he was the one who helped in this case and drafting treaty proposal during the negotiations.³¹ He saved many lives while smallpox broke out in 1851 by vaccination.

Missionaries in those days, whether they were physicians or not, were expected to know medicine. Wherever they went the people would call them “Mo”, doctor. It is not surprising, when the older generation say that the early missionary held the Bible in one hand and medicine in the other. This is quite true. But this missionary strategy in fact did not win even one Thai Buddhist to the Christian faith in the course of the first decade of Protestant missions in Siam. As wells puts it, “it took the Presbyterian nineteen years to win the first Siamese, and one more year to obtain the first Siamese woman Christian.”³² Why were they not able to win anyone to Christian faith in the first decade of their labour? There were, of course many factors involved which will be elucidated in the subsequent sections.

Every denomination that coming to Siam attempted to establish institutions, such as schools, hospitals and Bible schools. The Rev. George B. McFarland, who arrived in Siam in the second half of the nineteenth century, was by nature a teacher and builder, and erected schools in the southern Siam. He introduced sewing machines and taught their use. The Rev. Dr. Daniel McGilvary, the pioneer in northern Siam, the founder of the seminary called “McGilvary, Theological Seminary,” had laboured in Siam for 53 years (1858-1911). The seminary has now become the center of higher theological education, and is now given a new name as “Thailand Theological Seminary.” It is a

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29f.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

member of the Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia and the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology.

Up to the present, there are more than thirty Protestant groups working in Thailand, such as the American Baptist Mission (since 1833), the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (1840), the Church of England (1894), the Disciples of Christ (1903), the Seventh Day Adventist Mission (1918), the Christian and Missionary Alliance (1928), the Baptist Convention (1949), and the Marburger Mission (1953), etc.³³

While Christianity is not a newcomer to Thailand, and the economic depression which began in 1929 in the U.S.A., which had repercussions on the Christian work in Thailand, too, the indigenous leaders and missionaries decided to form the National Christian Council (NCC). In 1930 the N.C.C. was formed. In the following year it requested the Synod of New York to release the Presbyterian missions in northern and southern Thailand, in order that they might form a national church. This request then was granted in 1932,³⁴ The first General Assembly of the Church of Christ in Thailand took place in 1934, which is regarded as the inauguration of the Church of Christ in Thailand (C.C.T.). A union church, the C.C.T. is composed of the United Presbyterians (U.S.A.), the Disciples of Christ, the Marburger Mission, and the American Baptist Mission. Moreover, there are also fraternal workers from the Presbyterian Church of Korea, the Church of South India, and the United Church of Christ in Japan. The C.C.T. became a member of the world Council of Churches in 1948.

With regard to the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., it should be mentioned here that it integrated its work and missionaries into the C.C.T. in 1957.³⁵ There is not a Presbyterian

³³ *Guide to Christian Work in Thailand* (Bangkok: The Church of Christ in Thailand, 1969), p. 1f.

³⁴ Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 142f.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Mission or Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. in Thailand ever since. The Presbyterian fraternal workers are now parts of the National Church of Thailand.

II. THE PERSECUTION AND THE EDICT OF RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

A. THE PERSECUTION OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

As mentioned earlier, Catholic missionary work in Siam in previous centuries depended upon the good favour of the kings and of circumstances. The relationship between missionaries and the people was sometimes good, and sometimes bad. It depended, first of all, upon the missionaries themselves, in particular, on how much attention they paid to the customs of those to whom they preached the Gospel. The fact is that we have inadequate evidence with regard to this matter, because much of the information on it was written by Christians, especially by missionaries themselves. Generally they praised themselves and blamed others.

Secondly, the cause of persecution of Roman Catholicism was due to political causes, for example, war between the Siamese and the Spaniards in the course of the first quarter of the seventeenth century.³⁶

Thirdly, the cause of Roman Catholic persecution was also due to the Greek adventurer, who became the Minister of Finance and adviser of King Narai, named Constantine Phaulkon. He was pro-French in order to be lucrative, and led those Siamese who were like-minded to make friends with French, and was about to give Siam under the protection of France. "The power exercised by

³⁶ *Supra*, p. 12f.

Phaulkon and the presence of French troops aroused the anger and fear of the Thai nobility."³⁷ Prince Petrajah had to make alliance with the Dutch, who also established their commercial center in Ayuthia. This tension led to the civil war between the two parties: Siamese-French and Siamese Dutch Alliance in 1687.³⁸ As Victor Purcell states:

...Meanwhile the French cause was aided by the active support of the Minister of Finance and agent in all foreign relations, Constantine Phaulcon, a Greek by birth, who belonged to that order of adventurer-states-men of alien race of which Marco Polo, John Law, and Disraeli were fellow members. Phaulcon was pro-French and discouraged the Dutch and English trade. This led to trouble and war seemed imminent. To protect Siam from the Dutch and English, the French in 1687 sent six warships and 1,400 soldiers to act as mercenaries in the service of Siam. At the crucial moment, in 1688, the Roman Catholic priests chose to seek the King's conversion by intensive tactics, but Phra Narai had no urge to save his soul. Fearing that the foreigners meant to subjugate their country, some Siam nobles formed a plot against both the French and their own King. They killed Phaulcon and three possible successors to the throne, but Pra Narai, being on his death-bed, was allowed to die naturally. The coup ended in the departure of the French and, the closing of the doors to foreign trade... Diplomatic relations were not reopened with European nations until the nineteenth century.³⁹

During the crisis that ensued, especially while the French soldiers were leaving, the French missionaries and their converts were imprisoned.⁴⁰

³⁷ Pearn, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

³⁸ Pravat Prasasanachakra Sakol..., *op. cit.*, p. 231.

³⁹ V. Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 87.

⁴⁰ Pravat Prasasanachakra Sakol..., *op. cit.*, p. 231.

Finally, persecution recurred in 1769 and 1782, when King Tak Sin went through brief spell of insanity. A Thai church history says that one day the King stayed in the temple and told the people that he was a god, who could ascend to the heaven. As the missionaries and the Christian converts did not believe in this, he therefore did not permit their existence. A number of Christians were killed during the reign of this King, some of them being burned alive.⁴¹ However, persecutions only made them stronger in their faith.

B. PERSECUTION OF PROTESTANTISM

In comparison, persecution of Protestantism was only of brief duration. There were two Protestant martyrs in 1869 at the command of Chaw Kawiloros, the old Prince of Chiang Mai, who was called “the Lord of Life”, because he had authority to set anyone free and to put anyone to death. The execution of the two martyrs, according to the “Lord of Life,” was due to the fact that they became Christians. After McGilvary made conversation with Chaw Kawiloros, the former recalled:

He said, “He had Killed them because they had embraced Christian religion. And he would continue to kill everyone who did the same. Leaving the religion of the country was rebellion against him and he would so treat it.”⁴²

McGilvary, in fact did not believe that the two Christians were killed because of embracing of Christian religion, rather because of “the innovation brought by the missionaries,”⁴³ which caused the old order and customs pass away. The present writer does not concur with McGilvary on this matter, because Buddhists wanted to preserve their own religion, which was that of the State. This is

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 320-330.

⁴² Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

the reason why the first two Protestant missionaries to Thailand were given permission to work only among the Chinese, but not among the Thai. When King Mongkut himself wrote a letter to Mrs. Anna H. Leonowens, asking her to teach English at the palace, he said:

To Mrs. A. H. Leonowens:

Madam: We are in good pleasure, and satisfaction in heart that you are in willingness to undertake the education of our beloved royal children. And we hope that in doing your education on us and on our children... you will so your best endeavor for knowledge of English language, science and literature, and not for conversion to Christianity; as the followers of Buddha are mostly aware of the powerfulness of truth and virtue, as well as of the followers of Christ, and are desirous to have facility of English language and literature, more than new religions.⁴⁴

Thus, persecution usually occurred due to two main factors, firstly, the people wanted to retain their customs and way of life; secondly, they wanted to preserve their religion. It was understood that anyone who did not care about the nation's and social customs was a rebel against Thai society, and must be punished accordingly.

C. THE EDICT OF RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

Christians not only had to suffer under the rulers, but were also forbidden to marry non-Christians. As a case in point, the first Christian wedding that was to have been performed by the missionary McGilvary had to be postponed, just as the ceremony was about to begin, because the

⁴⁴ M. Landon, *Anna and the King of Siam* (New York: John Day Company, 1944), p. 20.

girl's father did not allow it. When McGilvary asked help from the High Commissioner of the government, the latter simply answered that none but the King of Siam had authority in this matter.⁴⁵

McGilvary realized that the Gospel could not be proclaimed unrestrictedly unless religious toleration to be promulgated. He, therefore, sought first the promulgation of the religious toleration. The High Commissioner, however, helped McGilvary prepare a petition to the King for a pronouncement on religious toleration.

Fortunately, a favourable reply came from King Chulalongkorn, granting all of McGilvary's requests. A part of this edict of religious toleration, promulgated on October 8th, 1878, says:

That religious and civil duties do not come in conflict. That whoever wishes to embrace any religion after seeing that it is true and proper to be embraced, is allowed to do so without any restriction. That the responsibility for a right or wrong choice rests on the individual making the choice. That there is nothing in the laws and customs of Siam, nor in its foreign treaties, to throw any restriction on the religious worship and service of any one.

To be more specific: - If any person or persons wish to embrace the Christian religion they are freely permitted to follow their own choice. This proclamation is to certify that from this time forth all persons are permitted to follow the dictates of their own conscience in all matters of religious belief and practice.

It is moreover strictly enjoined on Princes and rules and on relatives and friend of those who wish to become Christians, that they throw no obstacles in their way, and that no one enforce any creed or work which their religion forbids them to hold or to do – such as the worship and feasting of

⁴⁵ Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 59f.

spirits and working on the Sabbath day. Except in the case of war and other great unavoidable work, which, however, must not be a mere pretence, but really important.⁴⁶

Christians, as well as missionaries of other religions, have been permitted to proclaim their respective faiths throughout the country ever since.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 61f.

III. THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON BUDDHIST SOCIETY

A. RELIGION

Christian influences on Buddhism in Thailand, in fact, began even before the introduction of Christianity into the country. Christian influences on Buddhism in Tibet and China can perhaps be seen through the theism of the Mahayana Buddhism in these countries. As already mentioned, the ancestors of the modern Thai came from Yunnan in southern China, the kingdom of Nan Chao, where they seem to have already been influenced by Mahayana Buddhism. Professor Richard Garbe of Tübingen, Germany, an outstanding Sanskrit scholar and student of Hindu philosophy and religion during his time, asserted:

Christian influences on Buddhism of Tibet and China have been possible since 635, for from this year we have evidence of a Nestorian mission that set out for those lands under a leader by the name of Olopen or Alopen. This mission was received in northern India by the famous king Shiladitya at his court in Kanauj in the year 639.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ R. Garbe, *India and Christendom* (Illinois: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1959, p. 176.

Buddhism, as already mentioned above, has been influenced by Christianity since the first half of the seventh century. Odoricus of Pordenone, the first European who succeeded in reaching Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, in 1330, found Christian missionaries and some converts already there.⁴⁸

Due to Buddhism in Tibet and China, from where the Thai ancestors immigrated to Thailand, has been influenced by Christianity, Lamaism or Mahayana Buddhism, which was brought with them, has similarity to Christianity, especially Catholic faith. For example, the religious ceremonies are very similar to Christian ceremonies. The holy water or the “sacred wine,” for instance, they believe that if the participants taste it they will have attained the “long life.” By long life may be understood another term for the Christian idea of eternal life. Some of these beliefs and practices still exist in Thai Buddhist society. Though Theravada Buddhism has replaced Mahayan Buddhism since the course of the thirteenth century, it has not completely eliminated Mahayan elements from the country, because it is rooted firmly in the life of the Thai people.

Buddhism is flexible, and can make itself more relevant to new situations. If Christians have Sunday Schools, so have Buddhists in Thailand. If Christians have seminaries, Buddhists have their own universities for the purpose of training Buddhist monks and priests. If Christians preach the Gospel in vernacular, Buddhists also preach in the vernacular, though not long ago they used Pali and Sanskrit. As Morgan asserts: “I suspect that Buddhism is facing important changes in Thailand, now and in the near future. I cannot imagine Thai Buddhism is dying.”⁴⁹ Buddhists assimilate their religion to Christianity: and the consequence of this assimilation is that Buddhism is becoming more relevant to the situation, so that it would be indeed difficult to “imagine Thai Buddhism dying.”

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 178f.

⁴⁹ Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

The old Buddhist temples (Bot) also seemed to be influenced by Christianity. The structure of the roof and the pillars were similar to the basilicas. The Publication Committee of the book entitled Thailand: Past and Present says:

In an old Bot (temple) the timber structure of the roof could be seen as in many Christian Basilicas. Afterwards due probably to European influence, a wooden red coloured ceiling decorated with gilded studs was added.⁵⁰

B. ECONOMY

As already mentioned earlier, the Europeans came to this part of the world with a three-fold purpose: God, gold, and glory. Ayuthia was, in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one of the trading centers in Southeast Asia. As T. H. Silcock asserts:

The Ayudhya monarchy was willing to encourage western traders from the time of the first arrival of the Portuguese at the beginning of the sixteenth century to the death of King Narai in 1688 (Skinner, 1957). By this time, British, French, Portuguese, and Dutch were all engaged in trade with Ayudhya, but in that year a revolution against French intervention in Thai affairs led to a virtual severance of contact with the West until after the fall of the Ayudhya monarchy.⁵¹

Thailand was drawn into the commercial rivalries of European powers in the course of time. Already, in the seventeenth century, European and Japanese traders made it a point to come to trade at Ayuthia. By 1669, the Dutch (Protestants) had obtained a trade monopoly with Thailand.⁵² Due to the

⁵⁰ M.M.V. Rangsrisht, President of the Committee, Thailand: Past and Present (Bangkok: The Publicity Committee, Ninth Pacific Science Congress, 1957), p. 86.

⁵¹ T.H. Silcock, Thailand: Social and Economic Studies in Development (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), p. 3.

⁵² W. Bingham, H. Conroy, et. al., A History of Asia (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1965), vol. II p. 194f.

Greek adventurer, Constantine Phaulkon, who was appointed by the Thai government at first as superintendent of foreign trade, and then became as chief minister to the king, Phra Narai, there was introduced not only Christianity, but also science and technology, such as telescope, copper types and siphons to convey water supply the city in the dry season.⁵³

In 1826, Thailand signed a commercial treaty with Great Britain, and in 1833 became the first Asian nation to sign a similar agreement with the United States.⁵⁴ Woodbridge Bingham adds that “these treaties permitted the arrival of missionaries, both French Catholics and American Protestants, although they did not grant the powers the right of extraterritoriality.”⁵⁵

In a nutshell, Christian countries provided Buddhist society, like other countries, not only with Christian faith but also with economic development.

C. EDUCATION

“Seek knowledge when you are young, seek wealth when you are old.” This is an old saying which Thai children, from time immemorial, have often been heard from their parents. It shows that from a very early period of history, the Thai have always realized the importance of education. This proverb is generally attributed to the thirteenth century Thai king, Phra Ruang, who laid down the letters of the Thai alphabet.

For a long time, Buddhist temples have been regarded as schools. Buddhist monks, as a rule, can read, write, and translate the Pali Scriptures into Thai language.

⁵³ Bacon, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁵⁴ Busch, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁵⁵ Bingham, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

The Thai have an inherent curiosity and desire to learn. In coming in contact with foreigners, they will not hesitate to learn something from them. That is why Buddhism has something similar to Christianity.

Wherever missionaries established their missions, they set up schools for the training of indigenous clergy. As described above, Roman Catholic missionaries established schools in Thailand as early as 1666, teaching not only their languages but even Thai itself. Protestant missionaries established similar schools beginning with the first half of the nineteenth century, but equally after 1878.

King Mongkut (Rama IV) of the present dynasty devoted his protracted period as a priest in the monastery to the study of Western science, history, and languages, especially English. This is evidenced by his letter to Mrs. Anna Leonowens, inviting her to teach English in the new English School founded within the palace precincts. On this particular subject the book Thailand: Past and Present has this to say:

King Rama IV was so keenly interested in the progress achieved by nations in the Occident that he himself started learning English and attempted to establish diplomatic and friendly relations with countries in Europe and America. The result was that, instead of losing, Thailand gained considerably from her encounter with the Western powers.

Afterwards, King Rama IV engaged some Europeans to come and teach his children English and sent scholars to study in Europe for the first time. His son who succeeded him to the throne founded the first school in Thailand within the Royal Palace precincts early in his reign. In 1871, his Majesty commanded that an announcement be made persuading princes and courtiers to send their

sons to this school. This was the first time in Thailand that the State took measures for the people's education.⁵⁶

Therefore, it may not be exaggeration to say here that, Christian influence on Thai Buddhist society is considerably unmeasurable. It is absorbed into the lives of the people.

⁵⁶ Rangrisht, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

IV. PROBLEMS OF PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN BUDDHIST CULTURE

A. INTERNAL PROBLEMS

There are many problems in presenting Christ to Buddhists in Thailand. The first is the division of Christians into different confessions, which is one of the most difficult problems to solve. There are, in fact, about forty Christian groups in Thailand. Every Christian is loyal to his own group rather than to Christ; at the same time that he criticizes other denominations as if they were demonic in character. Insisting that only his denomination is right in the light of the Bible, he, therefore, attempts to proselytize other Christians.

The fact is that to some extent, Thai people have an admiration for Christ. But we Christians fail to use this to further advantage because of denominational walls which separate us from one another. We lack true Christian unity into which the convert can pass. If divided Christendom is the source of weakness in the West, in non-Christian lands it is a sin add a stumbling block.

The second problem is that of the relationship between indigenous leaders and foreign missionaries. Because he is hired by the mission, the native minister appears to be but a missionary's servant, and commands no respect. Money comes with power. Indigenous ministers may have objections to certain mission policies which may be against their culture and customs, but they cannot articulate them, because they are hired by the mission. V.S. Azariah, an outstanding Indian Christian leader, told at the Edinburgh Conference of 1910 about the problem of co-operation between foreign and native workers, and that friendship is more than condescending love. Hans-Ruedi Weber, Associate Director of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute near Geneva, paraphrases Azariah's statement as follows;

... He (Azariah) said that the pioneer missionaries had been "fathers" to the converts, who had been glad to be their "children." The difficulty now was that the new generation of younger missionaries wished to be looked on as the fathers, but the new generation of Christians did not want

to be treated like children... The missionary was the paymaster and the native worker his servant, and thus no self-respect and individuality could grow in the Indian church.⁵⁷

These conditions were true almost everywhere in Asia and Africa, and indeed characterize some Christian missions in Thailand.

The third is the problem of Westernization. Missionaries attempt to Christianize the Thai people after the Western pattern, taking into account that the more effective strategy of Christianization is through the indigenized forms. In effect, missionaries attempted to convert the Thai not only to Christianity but also to the Western way of life. Because they imposed Western patterns of church organization, culture, thought, and support firmly upon the emerging churches, people often identify Christianity as a Western religion. Everyday the government radio station reveals the public that "Everyone has a right to choose and embrace any religion, but Thai religion is Buddhism."

B. EXTERNAL PROBLEMS

The external problems here mean those occurring between Christians and Buddhists. We may divide these problems into two categories: problems between missionaries and the natives, and between the new converts and the non-Christians.

The relationship between missionaries and the native people seemed to be unpleasant. It was due to the fact that missionaries had inadequate knowledge of Thai culture and customs. They might think that the way they treated the natives was as good as they did to their own people. But the concept of good in one culture may not be the same in another. Quite often, Christian missionaries

⁵⁷ H.R. Weber, *Asia and Ecumenical Movement, 1895-1961* (London: SCM Press, LTD, 1966), p. 118.

had difficulty in communicating with the natives, because they did not pay due attention to the local culture and social customs. Thus, they were sometimes regarded as the “deculturalists” or the destroyers of culture. The little things may, of course, be obstacles in missionary work, and will forever be a handicap to the development of Christianity in Thailand.

Sometimes missionaries did not know the best psychological approach to the natives, categorically and hostilely condemning anything which in their views contradicts Biblical teaching. Instead of making friends, they make enemies. Bacon tells of the Catholic missionary bishop Pallegoix, who one day was drawn by pleasant music to a house where he found

“a mandarin surrounded by his dozen wives, who were playing a family concert. The mandarin took the opportunity to seek information about Christianity; and listened patiently and pleased enough, until the missionary told him one wife must satisfy him if he embraced the Catholic faith, which closed controversy...”⁵⁸

Indeed often what the missionary said was true, but he did not know when or where not to say it. He failed to win men to Christ, simply because he did not know how to put correct psychology into practice.

The second external problem is the problem of the relationship between the Christian convert and his neighbours. When the former became Christian, he had (as missionaries often suggest) to destroy, sometimes publicly, the ancestral tablet and sever one’s connection with the ancestral halls as a sign of conversion. It might be good from the convert’s point of view to destroy idols and superstition, but from the non-Christian perspective, it was interpreted as nothing less than the Christian insistence that, upon conversion, one had completely to discard reverence and remembrance

⁵⁸ Bacon, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

of ancestors. In fact, native Christians and missionaries could transform the commemoration of the ancestors into Christian ceremony a special memorial day. At Easter, for instance, the churches could conduct a memorial service in remembrance of deceased parents of their members. Such is not necessarily anti-Christian; in fact it would be good testimony of their respect of local customs in the eyes of their non-Christian neighbours.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY

Roman Catholic missions began in Thailand three hundred years earlier than Protestant ones. Many methods of approach to Buddhists had been used by both Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries: dispensing medicine to the sick, visiting the poor their homes, and establishing schools and hospitals. To some extent one could say that Buddhist society had been influenced by Christianity.

Though the number of conversions to Christianity is presently not great, the social results of missionary efforts have been notably large. Indeed, it is probable that missionary teaching has had more influence on the public sentiment of the country than in many other lands where the number of converts has been greater. As already mentioned, several of the reforms inaugurated by the government are directly traceable to the influence of Christianity.

Christians in the early period of Christian missions had to suffer persecutions and even martyrdom, often due to the attitudes of the rulers and other circumstances. For example, missionaries failed to observe the social customs, especially using foot instead of finger to indicate something, which is considerably disrespectful to the person whom one is indicating. On the other hand, the church was not sufficiently indigenous, it was foreign to the environment. Thus, resistance was required.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are some effective and significant strategies in presenting Christ to Buddhists in Thailand. As Dr. Paul Eakin, Presbyterian missionary to Thailand, suggests:

1. Patience and readiness to go over the ground.

The Buddhist books are written on this line. The very size of the Tripitaka is due to this fact of endless repetition. The mind seems to work in the line of repetition.

2. Continuity of character.

Be the same, day in and day out. Let the character be known that it can be relied on. The great genius or saint often fails at this very point, and much power may be thus lost. A Thai reads character far more than we do.

3. The careful choice of similes and analogies.

These will impress where logic fails. A good analogy is far better than a clear argument. This is not easy for a westerner, for we are inclined to resent producing an effect on others by a means that does not convince ourselves. However, once the truth is driven home argument can be resorted to and one's conscience relieved, though in most cases the student will still see more power in the analogy than in logical vindication.

4. Let the missionary be careful about unnecessarily taking life.

This is perhaps not as important as it used to be, but it is still important. Of course it is often necessary to take life for food or for the preservation of life, and constantly for cleanliness. But even when life must be taken, avoid doing it in a spectacular way, or with the idea of flaunting the deed in the face of those who consider it a sin. A wide breach might be caused which will long delay the development of the idea of man's relation to both God and man, which is so fundamental in leading a soul to Christ.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Eakin, *op. cit.*, p. 64f.

There are some other recommendations which are so important that they must be mentioned here.

First of all one should bear in mind that Christianity, along with Buddhism, is under the patronage of the King who is entitled "Defender of Religion." He makes annual contributions to both Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, as well as to the institutions of his own faith. The per capita subsidy that the government makes to Buddhists and Muslims is also made to Christians. Christian missions are tax-free, like Buddhist wat (temples). If Christians attack other religions, they would be regarded as disturbers of the public peace and perpetrators of lese majesty. Committed a crime, they must be sentenced accordingly.

Secondly, missionaries as ambassadors of Christ, who wish to successfully present Christ to the followers of Buddha, must not only carefully study Buddhism, but also enthusiastically seek knowledge of the history, manners, and the customs of the realm.

Thirdly, financial management should be taken into consideration with the local Christians, Church administrator, or the national Church, in order to prevent the utterance of such typically missionary phrases as "our money" "our control." C.C. Hwang and C.H. Yung gave profound statements on this matter at the Edinburgh Conference. Hans-Ruedi Weber paraphrases these statements as follows:

...Missionaries must consult the local Christians over the distribution of money because it was intended for the advance the Kingdom of God in that area, which would not be possible without the cooperation of the converts. Yet money was only one of the means of power. Equally fatal has been leaning of the missionaries on power of colonial governments... He (C.C. Hwang) urged

missionaries to refrain from the utilization of extra-territorial privileges for foreigners imposed on China by Western powers. "The more you fall back on these resources, the weaker you show yourselves to be in your belief and trust in God, who is after all the King of King, the Supreme Minister of Justice... The defence of Christianity is not with sword."⁶⁰

Fourthly, the ecumenical cooperation is indispensable in a land where Christians are in the minority. How can we tell non-Christians that we love one another when we keep walls of traditions between ourselves. They want love in terms of concrete reality, not in the abstract. Christians of all denominations felt the same necessity of bearing a unique witness for Christ before their Buddhist friends, without giving up the distinctive identity. The scandal of division which belies the message of reconciliation must be abolished, so that an undivided Christ may be shown clearly in the presence of our neighbors.

Finally, the most important of all is indigenous consciousness. The effective strategy in conveying the Gospel to Thai Buddhists includes attempts to make the Word of God understandable in terms of Thai culture, and showing both Christian converts and non-Christians that Christianity is not necessarily a Western religion. Indigenous leaders know the situations better than foreigners, therefore, they should be encouraged to do this work. Count Okuma, a Japanese veteran politician and educator, speaking at the World Conference of Christian Students at the Japanese Y.M.C.A. in Tokyo some years ago, said:

"If you wish Christianity to dominate the thought and life of the whole Orient, it is indispensable that it should be done by the might of the Japanese people. As Rome expanded

⁶⁰ Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

Christianity in the early centuries, so I believe that the Japanese people are destined to give it a vast impetus in these days..."⁶¹

V.S. Azariah also added:

"No country can be fully evangelized except by its own sons, The fifty millions of Japan, the four hundred millions of china and three hundred millions of India can only be fully evangelized by the sons of Japan, China, and India. It is, therefore, of supreme importance that the Christian students of the best talents and of the highest culture should be enlisted in the course of evangelization of their own countries."⁶²

If the Church is not rooted in indigenous soil, it will cease to exist in the face of the greatest persecution. R. Pierce Beaver, Professor of Missions at the University of Chicago Divinity School, who is well known as an authority on foreign missions, has said: "Twice the church was planted in China, but disappeared under persecution because it was not sufficiently indigenous."⁶³

If the church is to be truly indigenous, it should adapt its life to the cultural environment socially and economically in organization, forms of ministry, ways of ministry, evangelism, cultus, and means of support. The Church of Christ must be rooted in Christ, but it must grow in the soil of Thailand.

The present writer wants to conclude with the words of Prof. Dr. Kosuke Koyama, former Dean of the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology. He states:

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁶³ R.P. Beaver, *The Missionary Between the Times* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), p. 129.

...But today's EACC is called to preach Christ in "neighbor-ological" language... This means that our neighbors in Asia are ready to hear our message of Christ if we put it in "neighbor-ological" language, though they would reject Christ if we present him in Christological language.⁶⁴

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